



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

The Honorable Gabrielle Giffords
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Giffords:

Thank you for your May 14, 2007, letter outlining the concerns which were raised during meetings of the Community Workgroup. In your letter, you state that the workgroup is concerned with the increasing violence along the I-19 corridor. My staff and I have reviewed your letter and the workgroup's concerns.

It is important to note that there have been no incidents of violence associated with illegal aliens in or near Tubac for more than two months, and the presence of Border Patrol Agents assigned to Tubac has ensured a rapid response to citizen calls from the area. While most of the violence is directed at Border Patrol Agents, we have also seen a rise in the violence associated with smugglers fighting with one another or amongst themselves over illegal alien loads and drugs. The cooperation of our local, state and federal partners, along with a realignment of Tucson Sector resources, has allowed us to mitigate incidents of violence to a large extent.

In your letter, you offered three suggestions to improve community safety. These requests were for the Border Patrol to: (1) increase Agent staffing at the I-19 checkpoint and in surrounding communities; (2) deploy additional technologies, such as sensors, cameras, and ground surveillance radar, to detect those attempting to circumvent the I-19 checkpoint; and (3) prioritize the relocation of the checkpoint to another location along I-19 to mitigate the impact on businesses and residents.

One of the key objectives to the National Border Patrol Strategy is to reduce crime in border communities, thereby improving the quality of life and economic vitality of these areas. The Tucson Sector, under the leadership of Chief Patrol Agent Robert Gilbert, is in the process of taking several steps to address the issues that you raise about the safety concerns of Tubac residents. For example:

- Tucson Sector has assigned three Agents per shift to patrol Tubac and its immediate area, including Aiso Springs. These Agents are mobile and highly visible in the Tubac area. These Agents will respond to sensor activations, calls from concerned citizens, and will proactively patrol neighborhoods.
- Tucson Sector has also assigned four Agents per shift to patrol the area north of the I-19 checkpoint to interdict persons or contraband that attempt to circumvent the checkpoint.

- A total of 11 Agents on horseback covering two different shifts are patrolling the areas flanking the I-19 checkpoint.
- The Nogales Station Community Relations Office is working with the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office in a neighborhood watch program in the Aliso Springs area, which encompasses the west side of Tubac.
- Ground sensors have been redeployed to the area surrounding Tubac, which alert Agents of potential illegal traffic in the area.
- Sky Watch towers equipped with day and nighttime cameras will flank the I-19 checkpoint. The towers will work in conjunction with the redeployed sensors and additional Agents and provide video surveillance of much of the flanking area.
- The Tucson Sector will be utilizing a Ground Surveillance Radar (GSR) unit from Ajo, Arizona, on the west side of the I-19 checkpoint. Once deployed, Agents on all-terrain vehicles will support the unit as needed.

In order to better address residents' concerns, I propose we reassess the current working group and its desired results. I believe the outcome of this forum should be to identify ways to mitigate checkpoint impacts and gain input and support for qualities that would be required in the determination of an effective checkpoint site. While site selection will take into account discussions with the community and the Border Patrol enforcement assessment, it is important to recognize that the strategic location of the site is the most crucial aspect to the overall success of the checkpoint. I know you would agree that the best strategic location must be determined through law enforcement principles (to include legal precedents), and that all planning efforts should take this into account. I value your support and leadership in bringing the community into the group; I look forward to your recommendations, and I support Chief Gilbert's goal to refocus the forum to its original purpose.

Thank you for your continued interest in border security and support of the U.S. Border Patrol.

Respectfully,


David V. Aguilar
Chief
U.S. Border Patrol