## U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPUBLICANS

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## House Republican Warnings Ignored as Arizona Sheriff Deputy Shot by Drug Smugglers on Federal Wilderness Lands

**WASHINGTON D.C.** – Only weeks after Republican Committee Ranking Members introduced legislation to ensure Border Patrol agents' operational control of the border isn't compromised by Department of Interior environmental policies, a shooting occurred on public lands near the border. On Friday, April 30, Pinal County Sheriff Deputy Louie Puroll was ambushed and shot by five drug smugglers in the Table Top Wilderness Area, federal land just south of Phoenix, Arizona. Puroll, on foot patrol for drug smugglers, was forced to abandon his vehicle as he entered Table Top due to the prohibition of motorized vehicles in Wilderness Areas.

This is the <u>latest violent crime</u> to occur on federal Wilderness areas along the U.S. border where Border Patrol is unable to effectively monitor the land due to <u>environmental policies</u> enforced by Department of Interior (DOI) land managers.

According to Bureau of Land Management sources there have been 11 shooting incidents in Table Top Wilderness Area in 2010. Action needs to be taken by the Department and Congress before another incident occurs.

House Republicans have <u>repeatedly</u> called upon Interior Secretary Salazar to work with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure Border Patrol has reasonable access to public lands and Wilderness Areas along the border.

Unfortunately, criminals, drug smugglers, human traffickers, and potential terrorists have targeted public lands along our borders for illegal activities – making them unsafe for Border Patrol, law enforcement officers, land managers and Americans visiting their public lands. Ironically, the criminal actions on public lands lead to extreme <a href="environmental">environmental</a> <a href="degradation">degradation</a> of the land that DOI policies are supposed to be protecting.

Due to the inability of DOI to allow Border Patrol agents to have operational control of the border, House Republicans introduced legislation (<u>H.R. 5016</u>) to ensure that DOI and USDA do not impede or restrict Border Patrol from effectively doing their to job to secure the border on public lands.

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