



*"Legislation introduced last week by House Republicans would bar Interior from interfering with Border Patrol efforts to keep drug smugglers, human traffickers and potential terrorists out of the U.S."*

### [Securing the border is the first priority](#)

Washington Examiner

Editorial

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A feud between the Departments of the Interior and Homeland Security over federal wilderness areas that constitute 40 percent of the nation's southern border has been undermining the mission of both agencies for nearly a decade. This adolescent refusal to cooperate threatens the security of all Americans. That much was made clear March 27 when Arizona rancher Rob Krentz and his dog were shot to death by someone crossing the border illegally. The murderer then escaped in a pronghorn antelope protection area that the Interior Department placed off limits to Border Patrol agents. Krentz had repeatedly complained that illegals were threatening his family, stealing and destroying his property, and even sabotaging his ranch's water supply. Something's very wrong when law-abiding, tax-paying citizens like Krentz have to live in constant fear and get less protection from their own government than desert pronghorns.

On April 6, the Examiner's Sara Carter quoted a confidential law enforcement report warning that 23 Somalis with suspected ties to al Qaeda were headed for the same unguarded border areas after being mistakenly released by Mexican authorities. If they entered the United States via the 4.3 million acres of federal wilderness areas, the Border Patrol was powerless to stop them.

But legislation introduced last week by House Republicans would bar Interior from interfering with Border Patrol efforts to keep drug smugglers, human traffickers and potential terrorists out of the U.S. Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, one of the bill's sponsors, says most of the illegal traffic occurs on government land. But Interior's interpretation of its responsibilities prevents Homeland Security from doing its congressionally mandated job, leaving its agents vulnerable to arrest for violation of wilderness and endangered-species laws.

As the Examiner's Barbara Hollingsworth reported in February, the biggest beneficiaries of the bureaucratic turf battle have been illegal immigrants and smugglers working for the Mexican drug cartels. So many drug smugglers, human traffickers, rapists and other criminals enter the U.S. that the wilderness park areas are now considered unsafe for American citizens.

A recently posted YouTube video of about 700 people crossing the border illegally on just

one trail between February and March of this year is a chilling reminder of the federal government's continuing failure to secure the border.

It's time to let Border Patrol do its job. Congressional Democrats should put aside partisan considerations and pass this GOP proposal without delay, as it is literally a matter of life and death.

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