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Criminal Activity Continues to Rise on Federal Lands

Federal Land along U.S.-Mexico Border a Haven for Criminal Activity

BREAKING NEWS: Bureau of Land Management officials confirm that the two men found shot to death yesterday near the U.S.-Mexico border were discovered on federal land located in the Sonoran Desert National Monument, not far from where Pinal County Deputy Louie Puroll was [shot last month](#) by a band of suspected smugglers.

House Republicans, lead by Congressman Rob Bishop (R-UT), Ranking Republican on the House Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus, [have introduced legislation](#) that, if passed, would help reduce the ongoing criminal activity occurring on federal border lands. [H.R. 5016](#) would ensure that the U.S. Department of Interior does not restrict or impede the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) from having operational control of federal lands along the border where the bulk of criminal activity is occurring. This would allow USBP to start apprehending and deterring the criminals whose smuggling operations rely on unlimited access to the under-patrolled federal lands throughout the border region.

Federal border lands have become a haven for criminal activity including drug smuggling and human trafficking because USBP is unable to access much of these areas. The lack of access comes as a result of environmental policies created and enforced by federal land managers who cite concerns that USBP presence will cause damage to the landscape. Ironically, a significant portion of these “protected” federal lands suffer ongoing degradation from smuggling trains that have caused severe [environmental damage](#) to the lands – such as mounds of discarded trash, and destroyed vegetation.

“This recent shooting is further evidence that immediate action must be taken to bring security to federal lands throughout the border region. It is inexcusable that these areas continue to serve as a haven for criminal activity. This is not a Democrat or Republican issue, this is a matter of national security and the time for action is now. It makes absolutely no sense that H.R. 5016 sits dormant while murders and other crimes continue to overrun our federal border lands solely because federal land managers have placed their agendas before the safety and security of this country,” said Congressman Bishop.

[Two men killed in smuggling corridor](#)

By Jana Baybado/KTAR News
June 7th, 2010



CASA GRANDE, Ariz. -- Two men have been found shot to death in the desert near Interstate 8 and State Route 84, a popular route for drug smugglers and human smugglers traveling from the Arizona-Mexico border to the Valley.

Pinal County Sheriff's Lt. Tamatha Villar said the bodies were found after the sheriff's office received a 911 call from a man about 8 o'clock Sunday night. She said the man "advised us he was in the desert area near Interstate 8 and mile marker 160. He advised us that he and a friend had been shot and that they needed help. Our communications center lost the signal with them."

The shooting was in the same area where Pinal County Deputy Louie Puroll was shot April 30 while tracking a bunch of drug smugglers. He survived. Four possible suspects were arrested.

Villar said investigators had "very, very limited information" about the latest shooting on Monday.

"The scope of the crime scene is enormous," she said. "It's desert, vast desert, obviously a volatile area so our units have to be extremely cautious as they proceed through their investigation."

No information about the victims was released. Mile marker 160 on I-8 is about 18 miles west of Casa Grande.

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