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2 border governors take aim at security

Napolitano, Sonoran chief announce anti-crime moves

By Howard Fischer
CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

NOGALES, Ariz. - Running out of patience with their own federal governments, the governors of Arizona and Sonora launched their own programs Friday designed to make the border safer and more secure.

Gov. Janet Napolitano, speaking at a joint press conference with Sonora Gov. Eduardo Bours Castelo, reeled off statistics showing a sharp increase this year in stolen cars, assaults on Border Patrol officers and deaths of illegal entrants in the desert.

Napolitano used the occasion to announce the first grant from a \$1.5 million border emergency fund to help four border police agencies put more officers on the street.

Bours said his government plans to set up border checkpoints on four state highways and increase police patrols in border communities and popular tourist spots.

Napolitano said the U.S. Constitution makes border security a federal responsibility. "Our federal government is falling short," she said.

The governor specifically cited the \$217 million the federal government now owes Arizona for the cost of incarcerating people who cross the border illegally and then commit crimes.

While states are supposed to be able to recover those costs, Congress has failed to appropriate enough money to cover the bill, Napolitano said.

Bours was less specific in his complaints about his own federal government.

But he said Mexican authorities have been slow to respond to problems created in his state by migrants from the rest of Mexico, and beyond, who crowd into Sonora.

Napolitano said the stakes are high because the future of both tourism and trade depends on cutting border crime.

The first money released from \$1.5 million that became available when Napolitano declared a state of emergency in four border counties earlier this week is going to a joint operation by the Nogales, Bisbee and San Luis police departments and the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department.

The four agencies will use the assistance to put a combined 13 additional officers on the street for each shift for a month to see if it cuts down on crime. The added manpower will come from regular officers working overtime.

They will be responsible for investigating border-area crimes, specifically drug trafficking, human smuggling, car theft and fraudulent ID cards.

Bours said he's using his authority to set up checkpoints on four state highways to screen people heading north.

Officers on those checkpoints will not only look for criminals, but also begin taking some names and fingerprints, he

said.

The goal, he said, is to create a database of those who travel regularly to the border, which can be checked against U.S. records to see if they are wanted in this country.

Napolitano said she will direct the state Department of Public Safety to set up a special task force to try to recover stolen cars and trucks before they reach the Mexican border.

The same officers will also be on the lookout when intelligence sources provide information that certain vehicles are taking large sums of U.S. money into Mexico - dollars that likely would come from drug and immigrant smuggling.

Officers assigned to the program were originally slated to help local police agencies who come across large groups of people not in this country legally.

There are problems with federal officers not responding promptly when local police call, forcing them into a "catch and release" policy, she said.

Napolitano has written to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff asking him to direct the federal officers to work with the state to implement the program.

Homeland Security officials said they were surprised by Napolitano's criticism.

"What we are talking about is quite innovative and quite complex," said Russ Knocke, an agency spokesman. "There are a number of issues you have to work through, particularly when it comes to immigration."

In California, the state Assembly leader called on Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Thursday to declare a state of emergency along California's border with Mexico, saying more federal patrols are needed, The Associated Press reported.

On Wednesday, Schwarzenegger said he supports the actions of his fellow governors in Arizona and New Mexico but does not think there is a crisis along California's border. Spokeswoman Margita Thompson said the governor continues to lobby for more federal money.

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