



ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

SHERIFF-CORONER DON BARNES

OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

March 6, 2023

The Honorable Dan Crenshaw
US House of Representatives
248 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Waltz
US House of Representatives
244 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: House Joint Resolution 18-Authorize Use of Military Force Targeting Drug Cartels

Dear Representatives Crenshaw and Waltz:

I am writing to advise you of my support for your House Joint Resolution 18, which authorizes the use of military force against drug cartels. The drug cartels are flooding American communities with the deadly drug fentanyl and they continue to destroy the lives of so many people on both sides of our southern border. It is time for the federal government to take meaningful action against these hostile drug trafficking organizations.

One of the biggest illustrations of the drug cartels' impact on America's safety is the mounting number of fentanyl related-deaths. As you are aware, for the first time in a 12-month period, nationwide drug-related deaths exceeded 100,000. The biggest component of those deaths are synthetic opioids, specifically fentanyl. In my county, the total number of fentanyl deaths was 37 in 2016. By 2021 our total fentanyl deaths was 717. According to the California Department of Health, statewide fentanyl deaths increased 2,294% in the last five years, from 239 in 2016 to 5,722 in 2021. These tragic statistics underscore the need for action.

My agency has dedicated significant resources to seizing drugs in the Southern California Region. Specific to fentanyl, in 2021 Orange County Sheriff's Department investigators seized 104.6 pounds of fentanyl and 16,278 pills. The rapid influx of this drug across our borders is demonstrated by the fact that in 2022 we seized 449.9 pounds of suspected fentanyl and 405,283 pills suspected of containing fentanyl.

We also know the cartels' operations are not limited to the trafficking of drugs. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the cartels' income from smuggling migrants into the country increased from \$500 million in 2018 to \$13 billion this year. The chaos and deficient security at our nation's border has resulted in a booming illicit economy and record profits for the drug cartels.

House Joint Resolution 18 is critical legislation needed now to help restore border security and reverse the trend in fentanyl-related deaths. Thank you for your leadership on this significant public safety and national security issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Barnes".

Don Barnes
Sheriff-Coroner

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