

Testimony for U.S. House Homeland Security Committee Jan. 10, 2024

Good morning, Chairman Green, Ranking Member Thompson and members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing on this critical issue.

I am Gentner Drummond, and I was elected as Oklahoma's Attorney General in 2022.

As the chief law enforcement officer of Oklahoma, it is my duty to protect the people of my state. I am here to testify about the dangers my citizens face due to a porous border and the failure of the federal government to enforce the law.

In the early evening of November 20, 2022, law enforcement responded to a quadruple homicide after a Chinese national allegedly entered a garage on a 10-acre marijuana farm in rural Oklahoma. According to investigators, the assailant killed three men, execution-style, with gunshots to the back of the head, and one woman with two shots to the abdomen.

The carnage of that day is but *one* tragic example of a failed system plagued by failing leadership. Throughout Oklahoma, law enforcement comes into daily contact with foreign nationals who entered our country illegally or who remain here illegally — or both. This is *all too common* in Oklahoma's illegal marijuana grow operations.

The voters of Oklahoma legalized medical marijuana in 2018. While that legalization led to some legitimate cannabis-related businesses, organized criminals have overtaken the industry. Our law enforcement partners report that the foreign nationals most often involved in these illegal enterprises come from China and Mexico.

The one thing these criminals have in common is that they have no regard for our laws or public safety. Criminal illegal immigrants are not content with only growing black-market marijuana. They also produce and distribute fentanyl, and they engage in sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

Oklahoma's law enforcement community fights a constant battle against these evils. The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, and scores of local law enforcement agencies deserve much praise for their heroic efforts.

While there have been great successes, the ongoing border crisis ensures a never-ending flood of illegal foreign nationals who continue to perpetrate criminal activities that endanger our people.

When I was sworn in as Attorney General, I pledged to the people of Oklahoma that I would do everything in my power to protect them from these dangerous criminals.

I petitioned our legislature for greater resources and broader authority to combat this threat. They responded with millions of dollars for equipment and personnel, and they granted my office more power to fight this criminal epidemic being fueled by the border crisis.

In response, I established the Organized Crime Task Force. It is the first of its kind for Oklahoma, and it is needed primarily because federal officials have *failed* to enforce the law and secure the border. In the short seven months since its creation, the Organized Crime Task Force has investigated and is prosecuting more than 50 complex, multi-jurisdictional criminal cases. The vast majority of these cases involve Mexican or Chinese drug syndicates.

These illegal foreign actors burden my state with additional costs that cannot fully be quantified. For instance, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections reports that it currently houses nearly 500 illegal immigrants convicted of various violent crimes.

Before those criminal aliens were sent to DOC, they were in the custody of a local jail, which have their own costs for housing. Likewise, there is a significant cost for law enforcement to investigate these crimes and for prosecutors to prosecute them.

The unsecure border contributes to costs beyond the criminal justice system as well. It is widely understood that Oklahoma, like every other state, bears a significant financial burden to provide routine services to those who are here illegally.

While it is not possible to ascertain the exact amount of that cost, it is easy to understand the magnitude. The State bears the burden for the education, health and welfare of a robust and growing illegal population. It is estimated illegal immigration costs Oklahoma taxpayers more than \$750 million each year – with a minimal offsetting return.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I believe it is time for accountability.

The people of Oklahoma *don't* deserve to live under constant threat from criminal foreign nationals. We *don't* deserve to have our communities flooded with illegal drugs that were smuggled across our unsecure border. And we *don't* deserve to have our loved ones ripped away by those same drugs.

I ask that you remember the people of Oklahoma as you deliberate. Remember the murder victims, the drug overdose victims, and the families who mourn them. And of course, please remember the law enforcement officers who risk their lives every day to protect us from it all.

Thank you.