

I'm the Mayor of Yuma, Arizona. Trump Is Already Transforming Our Border

Douglas Nicholls

Being the Mayor of a city can be difficult. Actually, being Mayor *is* difficult. Being the Mayor of a border city when officials in Washington D.C. don't recognize the glaring border security failure is extremely difficult. That is the position I have been in for the last four years. I became Mayor of Yuma in 2014. Yuma is located at the intersection of the Arizona, California and Mexico borders. International realities are a part of life in Yuma.

In a few weeks, the Remain in Mexico policy was implemented, and in a couple of months the numbers were back to pre-surge levels. Relevant federal action addressed the federal issue that was impacting Yuma.

The Biden Administration did not have this impact. Once again, Yuma was on the front line of federal issues. ***The effective provisions securing the border were removed on the first day of the new Biden Administration.*** Within months, I proclaimed another local State of Emergency. I again had discussions with the Intergovernmental Affairs Department, but this time no access to communication with the POTUS. I had meetings with DHS officials including Secretary Mayorkas, ***yet no change in policies. I was simply told that the border was secure.***

We had a peak of ***1,500 migrants crossing the border illegally in one day, and there was still no effective federal response.*** Three and a half years into the Biden Administration, there was finally a new policy shift that had some minor impact—too little, too late.

Since President Trump was inaugurated to his second term, the volume of illegal migrants crossing the border ***is nearing the lows during his first presidency. The difference is action.*** The cartels are responding to protect their businesses. We must not lose this perspective: The trafficking of millions of people across the border grows the income of these dangerous cartels to multibillion-dollar organizations. They witnessed the effectiveness of President Trump's policies the first time around and are not waiting to go through that again. I do not believe this to be the end of trafficking people into the U.S. by the cartels. Like any multibillion-dollar business, they are attempting to strategize and find new methods to be successful in the new arena.

That leads to the question, what as a mayor am I expecting the Trump Administration to do to prevent the need for yet another proclamation of a local State of Emergency?

It starts with taking a hard stance. We must never surrender control of our border and let the transnational criminal organizations have their way... like was done in the last four years. Taking a committed stance helps Yuma change from the perception as the border community gripped by chaos to what it really is: A safe and great place to live that is beaming with opportunity.

- This hard stance prevents companies looking to expand from overlooking Yuma for "safer communities" when ours remains a very safe city.
- This stance counteracts the perception that winter visitors need another location when the welcoming Yuma environment they love remains vibrant and alive.
- This stance ensures that Yuma agriculture, which grows 95 percent of the leafy greens consumed by the nation and Canada each winter, can continue to produce food efficiently and safely.

The surge of military troops to the border is a hard stance and a welcome addition in re-establishing control. The men and women of the U.S. Border Patrol have performed heroically, doing the job of immigration officials when their stated mission is actually border security.

The 1,000 agents in Yuma are valuable members of our community: They are family, neighbors, and dear friends. They are doing a job unsupported by the head leadership in the home office. The troops will perform duties that relieve the administrative and non-law enforcement tasks, freeing the agents proactively securing our border.



A pair of migrant families from Brazil pass through a gap in the border wall to reach the United States to seek asylum after crossing from Mexico in Yuma, Arizona, June 10, 2021. AP Photo/Eugene Garcia© AP Photo/Eugene Garcia

I fully expect President Trump ***to complete the border wall system***. The Yuma Border Patrol Sector has most of the physical wall in place, but the high-tech elements of the wall system remained neglected. I expect the funding will be provided to complete these high-tech improvements. These improvements will be force-enhancers for agents and allow them to address high-speed races through our cities and harder-to-detect fentanyl smuggling operations along the border.

I also expect local governments and nonprofits will no longer be needed on a grand scale. In the case of emergency medical services associated with illegal immigration, I expect that it will be fully covered by the federal government. Our fire department is established for suburban response. Special equipment is needed to effectively respond to remote locations with rugged terrain. I expect equipment will be funded by the federal government. Medical care must be covered as to prevent those costs being paid by the residents of Yuma.

Additionally, I expect that the mission of FEMA be expanded to include border humanitarian efforts, as FEMA responds to any humanitarian effort for uncontrollable events. I was repeatedly told that the mission of FEMA did not include the humanitarian disaster along the southern border with no good explanation of "why not." So why do all this if the border is under control?" It takes only days for the situation to dramatically change, but months if not years for a federal response. These efforts ensure our border communities are prepared for the future.

I have summed this up in my emergency proclamations, which I believe is President Trump's approach: This is a federal issue, not a local issue. We need a federal response, not a local response.

Douglas Nicholls is the Republican mayor of Yuma, Arizona