

Along the U.S./Mexico Border:

Aboard a U.S. Border Patrol helicopter, 20 miles south of Yuma., Arizona

Flying south of Yuma to the U.S./Mexico border in broad daylight, the last thing I expected to see was a large group of illegal immigrants but there they were. As our four helicopters sped south to tour forward base operations in the Yuma sector, we came across a group of some twenty illegals huddled under a group of desert tree attempting to evade our notice.

Our aircrews immediately abandoned our flight plan and went to their primary mission. The helicopters wheeled around as the smaller tactical copter moved close to the ground near the huddled group.

As the chopper moved to land, the group made a dead sprint back in the direction of the border and were last seen scaling a small, craggy hill immediately adjacent to the border.

Today we learned that over 300 apprehensions had been made in this barren sector, apparent evidence of an upsurge in attempted incursions. Secretary Chertoff later told agents at the ground station that he expected such period increases in attempts to continue as US Border Patrol efforts grew more and more effective.

As we flew away from the scattering group of illegals, I couldn't help but feel a combination of pride and sadness: Pride for the men and women in the border patrol who are doing a hard job for the American people every day. We task them to protect our borders and they all take that task to heart. My sadness came from the tattered and impoverished group huddled beneath that tree. They were breaking our law and our agents were right to intervene. In a very real sense, that huddled mass is testament to a broken system and broken borders. After seeing the immense proportions and human dimension, I am more convinced than ever, we must enforce the law, enforce our borders but we must also create a new system without amnesty that gets those people out from under that tree.

Rep. Mike Pence (IN-6)

Somewhere over South Arizona Desert