

# NEWSRELEASE

Pinal County Sheriff's Office • 971 Jason Lopez Circle  
Florence, Arizona 85132 • 520-866-5208 • Fax: 520-866-5195

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Director of Communications, Tim Gaffney, 520-705-8124



Paul Babeu, Sheriff

## **Sheriff Babeu announces Anti-Smuggling Posse**

*Florence, Ariz.* - Today, Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu held a press conference at 10 a.m along with State Senator Sylvia Allen, Chief Deputy Steve Henry and SWAT Commander Lieutenant Matt Thomas to announce the creation of an armed Anti-Smuggling Posse (ASP) to assist in fighting the rampant drug smuggling in Pinal County. The posse will be comprised of unpaid volunteers.

The ASP will provide surveillance and intelligence support to the Pinal County Sheriff's Office Regional SWAT during tactical operations they perform against the Mexican Drug Cartels in western Pinal County.

Some of the largest drug trafficking routes in America come through Pinal County. In October of 2011, PCSO led a multi-agency drug bust against the Sinaloa Drug Cartel. The cartel was smuggling more than \$33 million dollars worth of drugs each month. The operation took away two to three billion dollars worth of illegal money from the Sinaloa Drug Cartel, the operation arrested 76 cartel members, seized 108 weapons including multiple assault weapons, two of which were traced back to the ATF's Fast & Furious failed gun running program.

ASP members are required to pass a full background investigation and will be trained on Pinal County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedures. The armed posse members will also be required to participate in quarterly weapons training and qualifications. The members will receive tactical training prior to participating in any operations.

Sheriff Paul Babeu stated, *"The creation of the armed Anti-Smuggling Posse will assist our tactical team and narcotics task force as they continue to track, identify and arrest those responsible for drug and human trafficking in Pinal County. The cartels of Mexico have between 75 to 100 lookout posts through this known drug and human smuggling corridor. They use these high vantage points to ensure their loads, whether they are humans or drugs, make it through. The armed Anti-Smuggling Posse will help provide additional strength to our operations to ensure the safety of our citizens and our members. We will continue to bring the heavy hand of enforcement to those who think they can smuggle drugs or humans through Pinal County."*

State Senator Sylvia Allen stated, *"I have worked on legislation over the years to create a State Guard to help protect our citizens against those involved with drug and human smuggling which comes through our state every day. I am proud to stand by Sheriff Babeu as he took some of my ideas and created an armed Anti-Smuggling Posse. While the Federal Government is not doing their job to protect our State as your State Senator, I will stand with law enforcement as they do."*