

Arizona Rangers – Detailed Response to Allegations and Senate Bill 1071

Executive Summary

This document addresses recent public claims and blog publications targeting the Arizona Rangers, specifically allegations against 3 members of the Board of Directors: Major Hernel Aitken (State Secretary), Lt. Colonel Lisa Penney (State Deputy Commander), Colonel Barry Adams (State Commander).

The allegations originated from historical employment issues, civil disputes, credential interpretations, and a rejected membership applicant who publicized false claims. This document presents factual context, statutory and policy-based analysis, and internal review findings for each allegation.

It demonstrates that all three BOD members acted within law, policy, and organizational standards, and that the Arizona Rangers' disciplinary process was properly followed.

Section 1: Background – Blogger Allegations

- **January 2025:** An applicant submitted a membership application with one of our Ranger companies and completed an oral board interview. The panel denied the application citing past DUI convictions, history of bench warrants for traffic citations, and an attitude inconsistent with Ranger values. Panel observations noted the applicant's "haughty" demeanor, overemphasis on uniform and badge, and insufficient alignment with the mission.
- **February 5, 2025:** Applicant formally notified of denial.
- **February 6, 2025:** Applicant published claims on a personal blog alleging a "corrupt and broken organization unfit for volunteers." False claims included being denied with a "clean background" and allegations of age discrimination (applicant age 44 vs. company members 70+). The blog further threatened ongoing investigations and grievance filings with county supervisors and state senators.
- **June 24, 2025:** The same blogger released a series of four articles targeting BOD members, including the State Secretary, Deputy State Commander, State Commander, and State Training Director. Allegations included misconduct, misrepresentation of professional history, and failure of internal oversight.

Section 2: Major Hernel Aitken – State Secretary

Alleged Claims

1. Employment History and Termination

- Investigated by AZPOST between 2005–2008.
- Allegedly terminated from the Yuma Police Department in December 2008.

2. Financial Misconduct Allegations

- Failure to pay hotel bills.
- Alleged provision of a bounced check and unpaid personal loans totaling approximately \$60,000.

3. Fraud and Deception Allegations

- Use of an alias (“Isaac Jamison”) to conceal identity.
- Forged spouse’s signature for loans.
- Alleged false statements during internal investigations and under Garrity protections.

4. Abuse of Position

- Alleged misuse of police authority for personal financial gain or favors.
- Improper use of department-issued motorcycle.

5. POST Rule and Statutory Violations

- Alleged violations of ARS §13-2310 and conduct unbecoming an officer.

6. Arizona Rangers-Related Allegations

- Leadership role despite prior misconduct.
- Alleged violation of Rangers’ Code of Conduct.

7. Organizational Governance Concerns

- Leadership allegedly failed to act on concerns; internal oversight questioned.

Factual Response

- Allegations arose during a contentious personal civil dispute nearly 20 years ago. No criminal charges were filed.
- Alias use was acknowledged by investigators as a protective measure during a personal dispute.

- Alleged forged signatures were consistent with marital practice (spouse signing for spouse).
- **Yuma PD & AZPOST:** Resigned December 2008. Information submitted to AZPOST January 2010. Report listed as “termination,” though documentation notes **resignation**. Administrative hearings led to formal certification revocation 1/9/2011.
- **Internal Review:** Voluntary review under Arizona Rangers policies found **no policy violations**.
- **Service Since 2017:** No adverse actions or misconduct recorded.
- **Membership Standards:** Criminal background checks and Arizona Concealed Weapons Permit verification passed.

Conclusion:

- Historical civil allegations and financial disputes do not reflect Ranger service.
- No ongoing investigations or grievances during Ranger service.
- Transparency ensured via internal review; no misconduct documented.

Section 3: Lt. Colonel Lisa Penney – State Deputy Commander

Alleged Claims

- 1. Law Enforcement Misrepresentation**
 - Allegedly overstated prior law enforcement service or peace officer authority.
- 2. Corrections Training vs. Peace Officer Status**
 - Completion of Washington State Corrections Academy allegedly misrepresented as commissioned service.
- 3. POST / Certification Records**
 - Allegedly lacking required certifications.
- 4. Nursing Credential Claims**
 - Alleged “trauma nurse” misrepresentation.
- 5. Public Representation Concerns**

- Statements during Ranger meetings and magazine publications allegedly overstating qualifications.

6. Organizational Governance Implications

- Senior leadership position allegedly inappropriate.

7. Absence of Criminal or Regulatory Action

- No evidence of criminal or licensing violations.

Factual Response

- **Employment:** Corrections officer, dispatcher/deputy in small rural department (non-sworn), detention nursing, court security.
- Corrections officers are explicitly included in **RCW 10.108.020(4)** as law enforcement officers.
- **Application Allegation:** Checkmark indicating law enforcement experience was added **after submission**, based on analysis of altered document and numerous other checkmarks on application.
- **Police Academy:** Dismissal administratively closed; no POST disciplinary action. Eligibility maintained for future academies.
- **Internal Review:** No Arizona Rangers policy violations; all employment history and statements verified.

Conclusion:

- Allegations based on **stolen, altered documents**.
- Semantic disputes over “law enforcement” do not equate to deception.
- Compliance with Ranger policies fully documented; internal review confirms adherence.

Section 4: Colonel Barry Adams – State Commander

Alleged Claims

1. Disclosure of undercover law enforcement personnel
2. Federal agent misrepresentation
3. SWAT and K-9 program leadership
4. Concealment of professional records

5. Knowledge of Major Aitken's history and non-disclosure
6. Statements intimidating Board members

Factual Response

- **Undercover Officer Allegation:** Based on secondhand information; no operational breach confirmed. Cleared by Border Patrol, TPD polygraph.
- **Federal Agent Statement:** Official federal personnel records, including a Notice of Personnel Action, document that Colonel Barry Adams served as a U.S. Border Patrol Agent and resigned during his initial probationary period. His separation occurred prior to completion of probation and was not the result of disciplinary action, termination for cause, or findings of misconduct.
- Colonel Adams has stated that he served a short term as a federal agent, which is accurate and consistent with his documented employment as a Border Patrol Agent during the probationary period.
- A biographical statement attributed to Colonel Adams reads:
“During my twenty-four year career, I have served in numerous supervisory positions at the county, state, and federal levels.”
- This statement reflects leadership and supervisory experience within organizations operating at county, state, and federal levels and does not assert or imply ongoing or career federal law enforcement authority beyond the documented period of service.
- Internal review confirmed that Colonel Adams' statements regarding his federal service are factually accurate, limited in scope, and consistent with official personnel records.
- **SWAT/K-9 Program:** Letters from Yuma County Sheriff (2013–2014) confirm service and foundational role in K-9 unit. Adams provided detailed email and documents outlining contributions. Paralegal statements refuted by documentation. Adams never claimed to be a SWAT commander, he did however lead the SWAT team on 9/11.
- **Records and Disclosure:** Internal review confirmed no concealment or false reporting.
- **Aitken Review:** Awareness limited to personal/financial matters; no criminal conduct or policy violations relevant to Ranger application.

- **Intimidation Claims:** Statements referenced public information; no threats or interference occurred, no investigations have resulted from the information.

Conclusion:

- Allegations rely on misinterpretation, anecdotal accounts, and incomplete records.
- Independent verification confirms accuracy and credibility.
- No criminal, regulatory, or disciplinary findings.

Section 5: Arizona Rangers Disciplinary Process – BOI Justification

Basis for Not Convening BOIs

1. **AZRF-280 Forms:** Completed voluntarily by accused BOD members to document allegations and fact finding.
2. **Absence of Valid Complaint:** Allegations originated from an external blogger; no Ranger or agency complaint was submitted.
3. **No Jurisdictional Misconduct:** Historical matters, civil disputes, or external credential interpretations do not constitute misuse of Ranger authority.
4. **No Probable Cause:** Preliminary review found no violations of Arizona Rangers policy.
5. **Protection Against Improper Motive:** The disciplinary system guards against BOIs being convened under reputational or external pressure.
6. **No Disciplinary Predicate:** No criminal convictions, application falsifications, abuse of authority, or on-duty misconduct exists.

Conclusion

- AZRF-280 documentation ensured transparency and internal review.
- No jurisdictional misconduct, no probable cause, no policy violations.
- BOIs were not convened in strict adherence to the Arizona Rangers Reference Manual and due process.
- Decisions reflect organizational policy and procedural integrity, not avoidance or lack of transparency.

Section 6: Key Takeaways

1. Allegations were largely historical, anecdotal, or semantic.
2. Documents used to allege misconduct were often altered, stolen, or incomplete.
3. Each BOD member underwent internal review confirming compliance with policies and standards.
4. Membership verification and concealed weapons checks further ensure integrity.
5. Allegations have **no impact on current service, leadership capability, or organizational governance.**

Final Statement:

The Arizona Rangers uphold high standards of conduct, transparency, and adherence to statutory and organizational requirements. Allegations circulated through external media and anonymous sources have been thoroughly reviewed, documented, and rebutted. No BOD member has violated policy, committed criminal acts, or failed to meet organizational standards. The Arizona Rangers continue to evaluate leadership based on verified records, current conduct, and adherence to policy, not historical disputes, semantic disagreements, or unsubstantiated blog claims.

Section 7: Additional Issues Surrounding Senate Bill 1071 – Company-Level Disputes

Background

During the review and internal investigation related to Colonel Barry Adams, a single company commander out of 23 companies aggressively contested the original investigation, claiming that the internal review into Colonel Adams' background and service was completed "too quickly" and challenging both the thoroughness and legitimacy of the process.

Investigation and Findings

- The **State-level Internal Affairs (IA) officer** conducted a comprehensive investigation, including:
 - Interviews with all relevant parties,
 - Collection and review of original documentation of allegations regarding Colonel Adams,

- Verification of employment records, certifications, and internal Ranger documentation.
- The IA officer **determined that no Arizona Rangers policy violations had occurred.**
- The expedited timeline of the investigation was due to the fact that all documentation and evidence were readily available or promptly produced, allowing for a thorough but timely review.

Subsequent Actions by the Company Commander

- Following the closure of the investigation, the company commander began sending a series of emails to Governor-level contacts, expressing disagreement with the IA findings.
- Multiple company commanders subsequently presented formal charges regarding disruptive conduct and violations of the Arizona Rangers Reference Manual (ARRM).
- A formal concern was raised internally on July 10, 2025, noting that the company commander's communications:
 - Contained critical commentary regarding leadership decisions,
 - Expressed dissatisfaction with an internal investigation that had been properly completed,
 - Went beyond constructive feedback, creating a climate of tension, undermining leadership, and detracting from organizational unity and professionalism.
- Internal assessment described the behavior as a “cancerous influence”:
 - Slowly eroding organizational trust and morale,
 - Interfering with normal operational workflow,
 - Distracting members from mission readiness.

Disciplinary and Corrective Actions

- Prior to escalation, the company commander had already received a memorandum outlining corrective and disciplinary expectations consistent with ARRM Sections 3.17 and related provisions.

- Due to the continued pattern of disruptive behavior, the company commander was suspended pending a Board of Inquiry (BOI) initiated by the submitted formal charges.
- The accused refused to participate in the BOI process, which is a procedural right under ARRM but also a recognized failure to cooperate with due process.
- Following policy guidelines, the company commander was ultimately dismissed from the organization, consistent with established disciplinary procedures.

Organizational Context and Lessons

- The Arizona Rangers maintain clear procedures for internal investigations, disciplinary actions, and member accountability.
- Timely completion of investigations is consistent with policy when evidence is available and procedural requirements are met.
- The refusal to participate in a BOI and the continued dissemination of disruptive communications violated multiple ARRM standards, including Section 3.17 on conduct detrimental to organizational cohesion.
- Leadership decisions regarding disciplinary actions are documented, consistent, and in line with due process, reinforcing organizational integrity while maintaining mission readiness.

Summary

The events surrounding the company commander's conduct illustrate:

1. **The importance of following structured investigation and disciplinary procedures.**
2. **The effectiveness of the Arizona Rangers' policies** in addressing disruptive behavior without undermining organizational mission.
3. **The necessity of member cooperation** in preserving morale, trust, and professional culture.

The company commander's actions and subsequent dismissal demonstrate that the Arizona Rangers act decisively when individual behavior threatens organizational integrity, and that formal procedures exist to address misconduct fairly, transparently, and consistently.

8. Subsequent Claims Made Against the State Secretary – Major Hernel Aitken

A formal complaint was filed regarding a statement Major Hernel Aitken made in an interview referenced by *The Arizona Republic*. The statement, in full, was:

“Really and truly, if you were to pose and ask every Ranger in this organization to give you their background, I’m probably going to tell you that I think a good 25% of them would refuse to because they’ve got shady things in their background.”

This comment was the only complaint filed against Major Aitken stemming from the article. The complainant and the Board of Directors engaged in discussions to facilitate a conflict resolution or amicable resolution regarding the statement.

The outcome provided Major Aitken with two options:

1. Proceed through the established internal process for formal action, or
2. Resign from both his Board of Directors (BOD) and Board of Governors (BOG) positions while remaining a member of the organization.

To address repeated calls from external sources and internal pressure for his resignation, Major Aitken chose to step down from his BOD and BOG roles. This decision allowed him to remain a member of the Arizona Rangers while resolving the dispute without further escalation.

All other historical matters referenced in the article regarding Major Aitken, including civil issues with his former spouse, loans, or AZPOST certification revocation, were already documented, reviewed, and addressed as outlined in previous internal reviews. These matters had no bearing on his continued membership or participation in the organization following his resignation from leadership positions.

Section 9 – Senator Mark Finchem and SB1071

In 2025, the Arizona Rangers Board of Directors (BOD) received repeated correspondence from Senator Mark Finchem concerning allegations against senior members of the organization, including Colonel Barry J. Adams and other leadership personnel. Senator Finchem demanded a full BOD meeting to discuss the materials he had collected regarding alleged misconduct.

Initial Correspondence and Legal Coordination

Colonel Adams, acting as State Commander, coordinated with legal counsel, Jared Simmons, to ensure that all interactions were handled through formal channels.

Counsel sent a detailed response to Senator Finchem, emphasizing:

- All future correspondence must be directed to counsel rather than individual BOD members.

- The **Arizona Rangers** are a nonprofit organization recognized by statute (A.R.S. 41-4201) but not created or controlled by statute.
- The Rangers provide volunteer, noncommissioned support to law enforcement agencies and participate in community service programs such as DUI Task Forces, MADD, SADD, DARE, and youth explorer programs.
- Before an in-person meeting could occur, the Board requested specific legal and factual grounding for the alleged civil and criminal claims cited by Senator Finchem.

Scheduling and the November 18, 2025 Meeting

A date was agreed upon for **November 18, 2025**, at the Senate building. All but one BOD member were able to attend. During the meeting:

- Senators Finchem and Payne presented their concerns regarding alleged misconduct by senior leadership.
- They claimed possession of an extensive stack of evidence and repeatedly stressed that failure to address these issues could result in legislation to terminate the organization.
- The Board requested access to the documentation for review. The senators declined to provide it in-person, offering to submit files via counsel's secure Dropbox.
- The senators instructed the Board to conduct a "complete and meaningful review" of dismissals and leadership actions over the past year to ensure due process and compliance with organizational standards.

Allegations and Threats of Legislation

Senator Finchem's communications included claims of criminal infiltration, regulatory violations, and internal misconduct. In an email dated **December 26, 2025**, he stated:

"I have a deep personal respect for the rank-and-file Rangers, who give their time and talent in the spirit of public service. Sadly, we have hard evidence that the organization has been infiltrated by a criminal organization that has been linked to drug trafficking, extortion, child sex trafficking, and more, all of which I am sure you are unaware of. Moreover, we have discovered significant violations of the Code of Ethics and internal controls governing due process and ethical behavior... courageous Rangers themselves have come forward begging that the Legislature take action."

In a **January 13, 2026 interview** with the California Globe, Senator Finchem publicly stated:

“Senate Bill 1071 is narrowly focused on aligning oversight standards for organizations that provide security services. What it does is it causes a shift in accountability... in the direction of the same level of accountability that a security guard company or security company would have to carry... The exemption doesn’t do away with the Rangers. They are a 501-C3. I love the Arizona Rangers... I have great respect for the rank and file.”

These statements frame SB1071 as targeting statutory exemptions rather than dissolving the organization itself, while asserting legislative authority over oversight and accountability.

Documentation and Evidence Submission

Following the November 18 meeting, Senator Fincham provided the BOD with multiple documents, including non-redacted personally identifiable information, via email and Dropbox. This included reports referencing historical matters involving Colonel Adams, specifically allegations from Lt. Darren Simmons of the Yuma County Sheriff’s Office about purported associations with the Hells Angels. The Rangers maintain that:

- These allegations are false, longstanding, and debunked almost 20 years ago.
- The AZPOST records referenced reflect the administrative closure of Adams’ certification, not validation of any criminal affiliation.

The senators also requested the Board to review the prior year’s dismissals to ensure compliance with internal SOPs. The Board began this review, in accordance with the Arizona Rangers Reference Manual, as a matter of internal governance and due process.

Organizational Response and Legal Position

The Board, through counsel, formally responded to Fincham, emphasizing:

- Colonel Adams and other leaders were never associated with criminal organizations, including the Hells Angels.
- The Arizona Rangers are a volunteer nonprofit organization and do not fall under statutory regulatory licensing because they are exempt per statute.
- All internal reviews, disciplinary procedures, and dismissal actions were conducted according to the ARRM, ensuring due process.
- Allegations that leadership misrepresented credentials or acted unethically were thoroughly reviewed and found unsubstantiated.
- The Rangers reserve the right to pursue legal and public clarification regarding defamatory statements and improper legislative pressure.

Summary

The interactions with Senator Finchem illustrate significant external pressure on the Arizona Rangers, including public claims of criminal infiltration, threats of legislation, and direct communication to all BOD members with unredacted personal information.

- **Internal reviews** confirmed no violations of policy or law occurred among senior leadership.
- **SB1071**, as described by the senator, seeks to remove statutory exemptions for regulatory oversight, not to abolish the nonprofit organization.
- The Arizona Rangers maintain transparent, policy-compliant operations while cooperating with legislative requests through counsel, all without conceding to defamatory or unsubstantiated claims.