



Sheriff to serve on nationwide security panel

BY DENNIS WEBER, SPECIAL TO YUMA SUN Jun 14, 2009



LOANED PHOTO
Sheriff Ralph Ogden

Yuma County Sheriff Ralph Ogden has been selected by Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to serve on the Homeland Security Advisory Council Southwest Border Task Force.

The diverse group of national security experts is charged with examining the department's security efforts along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"I guess I was selected because I've been pretty vocal about our border security in this area," said Ogden in a recent phone interview. "I'm a member of the Southwest Border Sheriff's Coalition, and we've been saying for years that Washington should spend more time listening to the locals and less time trying to manage everything long distance."

The group held its inaugural meeting June 8 at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, N.M. The group was chaired by current HSAC chairman and former CIA and FBI director Judge William Webster.

“There are a lot of heavy hitters in this group,” said Ogden. “Looking around at the group kind of makes you wonder what you’re doing there.”

“This task force, comprised of law enforcement, elected officials and national security experts from around the country, will advise the department on key issues facing communities along the Southwest border,” Napolitano said in a news release. “I have asked this group to present me with concrete recommendations to address the complex challenges we face in this region, and their collective expertise will be a critical asset as we work to secure the border while facilitating legal travel and trade.”

“We’re going to be looking at all options, especially new technology, to help protect our borders,” said Ogden. “We want to get the local cities more involved in the planning of border crossings so they’re more efficient and we can keep people moving quickly.

“We’re just a 20-member subgroup of the HSAC specific to the Southwestern region, but we’re like the poster children for how this should work. All the agencies here cooperate fully with each other and we’re far enough away (from Washington) that we can stand on our own feet and really come up with new ways of protecting our borders.”

Ogden is currently serving in his fourth term as sheriff of Yuma County. He is a member of numerous local organizations and chairman of the Arizona Homeland Security Coordinating Council.