



Coalición de Derechos Humanos

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Arizona Recovered Body Count Reaches 199 as the Department of Homeland Security Announces Plans to Increase and Expand Deadly Border Strategy

Arizona— The number of bodies recovered on the Arizona-Sonora border has reached 199 by the end of July 2007 according to data compiled by the Coalición de Derechos Humanos, a Tucson-based human rights group that works to raise awareness about the deadly effects of border militarization. Fifty-two bodies were recovered in the month of July alone, ensuring that last year's total of 205 will surely be passed within the month of August. Of the 52 bodies recovered in July, 36 were male, 15 female, and one whose sex is unknown because not enough of the body was recovered. With two months left in the fiscal year, the Arizona-Sonora border promises to be one of the deadliest ever recorded.

As the number of women and children dying on the border gains national media attention, the Department of Homeland Security has announced a series of reforms in order to “address border security and immigration challenges.” Despite the increasing evidence that such strategies are directly correlated to border deaths, DHS continues to announce its intentions to stay the course on these deadly policies, planning to add an additional 18,000 Border Patrol agents, 370 miles of fencing, 300 miles of vehicle barriers, 105 camera and radar towers, and three additional unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) at a cost that is estimated to be in the billions of taxpayer dollars.

“It is absolutely unacceptable that our government not only ignores the fact that the militarization of the Southern border has resulted in more than 5,000 deaths on the U.S.-México border, but then announces plans to expand this strategy.” says Anna O’Leary of Derechos Humanos. “Where is the accountability to border communities for the death and human rights violations that have ensued?”

Despite DHS claims that increasing militarization of the border results in more apprehensions and fewer deaths, evidence does not support this. Research-substantiated data indicates that as vigilance is increased in a sector or area, migrants are then pushed into the most isolated, dangerous, and deadly areas, resulting in more injuries and deaths. To correlate the number of Border Patrol apprehensions to the number of recovered bodies is an erroneous way to look at migration, as many factors can affect the number of apprehensions.

“For DHS to claim that these ramped up efforts will in any way decrease the deaths on the border, or control migration, is irresponsible and disingenuous.” continued O’Leary. “Migration is a natural phenomenon that is part and parcel of the human experience. Creating strategies that result in unnatural death is something completely of our government’s making.”

The complete list of recovered bodies is available on the Coalición de Derechos Humanos website: <http://www.derechoshumanosaz.net>. This information is available to anyone who requests it from us and is used by our organization to further raise awareness of the human rights crisis we are facing on our borders.

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