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THE JUDICIAL WATCH BLOG

Arizona Atty. Gen. Finds Money Trail Between Middle East, Mexican Smugglers

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Months after six Middle Eastern men who entered the U.S. illegally through Mexico were arrested in Arizona state authorities have uncovered an extensive money trail between the Middle East and Mexico. This includes more than a dozen wire transfers sent from the Middle East to known Mexican smugglers in at least two different regions of the Latin American nation, according to the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

A [report](#) issued by the AG exposes the disturbing money trail between Mexico and terrorist nations in the Middle East as well as evidence of smuggling routes tying the region to America's southern border. An excerpt of the AG's findings was obtained by a local media outlet that published it this week. It states that the Mexican city of Tapachula, a known human smuggling hub located near the Guatemalan border in the state of Chiapas, was the top destination of Middle Eastern money transfers. Nogales, which is situated adjacent to the Arizona border, is the second destination, the investigation found. "Agents conducted a comprehensive geographic analysis of possible terrorist related transactions and/or money transfers involving human smuggling networks," the state report says.

Officials launched the probe shortly after six men—one from Afghanistan, five from Pakistan—were arrested in Patagonia, a quaint ranch town that sits 20 miles north of Nogales, on November 17. Judicial Watch investigated the matter as part of an ongoing probe on the dire national security issues created by the famously porous southern border. Special Agent Kurt Remus in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Phoenix headquarters told JW that the agency's Joint Terrorism Task Forces vetted and interviewed the six men and determined that there were "no obvious signs of terrorism" so they were returned to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody.

But a few days later, in a [story](#) reported exclusively by JW, five young Middle Eastern men were apprehended in the nearby Arizona town of Amado, which is located about 30 miles from the Mexican border. Two of the Middle Eastern men were carrying stainless steel cylinders in backpacks, law enforcement and other sources told JW, alarming Border Patrol officials enough to call the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for backup. Only three of the men's names were entered in the Border Patrol's E3 reporting system, which is used by the agency to track apprehensions, detention hearings and removals of illegal immigrants. E3 also collects and transmits biographic and biometric data including fingerprints for identification and verification of individuals encountered at the border. The other two men were listed as "unknown subjects," which is unheard of, according to a JW federal law enforcement source. "In all my years I've never seen that before," a veteran federal law enforcement agent told JW.

The money trail exposed by Arizona officials in the aftermath of these two major incidents is extremely troublesome. The AG's Financial Crimes Task Force quickly identified suspicious wire transfers sent from Middle Eastern and African nations by people with Middle Eastern names to Mexico. In 2015, one human smuggler in Mexico received 70 money transfers from 69 senders, the task force found. "All of the 69 sender names appeared to be of Middle Eastern origin," the AG writes in its report. This seems to confirm JW's reporting in the last few years on the dangerous alliance between Mexican smugglers and Middle Eastern extremists who want to attack the U.S.

Last summer JW broke a [story](#) about a Mexican drug cartel operation that smuggles foreigners from countries with terrorist links into a small Texas rural town near El Paso. They use remote farm roads—rather than interstates—to elude the Border Patrol and other law enforcement barriers, according to sources on both sides of the Mexico-U.S. border. The foreigners are then transported to stash areas in Acala, a rural crossroads located around 54 miles from El Paso on a state road – Highway 20. In 2015 JW also [reported](#) that the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) is operating camps near the U.S. border in areas known as Anapra and Puerto Palomas west of Ciudad Juárez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. That information came from high-level sources just months after JW exposed an ISIS plot orchestrated from Ciudad Juárez to attack the U.S. with car bombs or other vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED). As a result of JW's reporting Ft. Bliss, the U.S. Army base in El Paso, increased security. The threat was imminent enough to place agents across a number of Homeland Security, Justice and Defense agencies on alert. As far back as 2014 JW [reported](#) that four ISIS terrorists were arrested by federal authorities and the Texas Department of Public Safety in McAllen and Pharr.

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