

Arizona death heightens concerns in border area

Border Patrol base in Bootheel region sought by members of NM congressional delegation

By **Marvin Tessneer**

Las Cruces Bulletin

New Mexico's congressional delegation issued a joint request to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to establish a Border Patrol Forward Operating Base (FOB) in New Mexico's Bootheel, which is adjacent to the U.S.-Mexico border.

The request was issued by U.S. Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall and Rep. Harry Teague following the recent shooting death of Arizona rancher Robert Krentz about 10 miles west of the Bootheel.

"The new Lordsburg Border Patrol station will significantly increase the capacity of the station to house and maintain additional agents in the area," a press release from the delegation stated. "Establishing a FOB in the Bootheel would allow agents to spend considerably more time patrolling in closer proximity to the border. The Lordsburg station is situated along the 1-10 corridor and the Border Patrol agents spend an unnecessary amount of their time driving back and forth to patrol areas within the Bootheel. Locating an FOB in this area would reduce agents' response times and enhance our ability to fight drug traffickers and apprehend individuals illegally crossing the border."

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The 35,000-acre Krentz ranch is located in Cochise County (Arizona) and has been in the family since 1907. Krentz had reported problems with illegal immigrants in the past, including a reported burglary, but he was better known as a humanitarian who never refused to give water and food to illegal aliens.

Krentz was driving around the ranch checking water supplies for his cattle and fencing. He was in radio contact with his brother Phil, and reported that he had seen some "illegal aliens" and that one of them needed help.

That was the last time his family heard from him. When he failed to return home, the Cochise Sheriff's Office was alerted. Krentz's vehicle was found with the engine still running, the lights on and his body inside. Cochise deputies found a single line of footprints that led about 20 miles to the U.S.-Mexico border.

New Mexico Department of Agriculture Director-Secretary Miley Gonzalez said he supported Gov. Bill Richardson's order for increased law enforcement along the state border with Mexico.

Richardson declared a State of Emergency along the New Mexico-Mexico border in 2005 because of escalating border violence.

"It was a problem before and continues to be an issue," Gonzalez said.