

Sheriff Sam Page

Rockingham County, NC Sheriff's Office

November 30, 2011

“Is Secure Communities Keeping Our Communities Secure?”

Sheriff Sam S. Page

Sheriff of Rockingham County, North Carolina

Population: 93,000

Area: 560 Square miles

1998 to present: Sheriff

1994-1998: Eden, NC Police Department/Patrol & Detective Division

1992-1994: NC Licensed Private Investigator/Bail Enforcement Agent

1981-1992: Rockingham County, NC Sheriff's Office/Narcotics, Patrol & Investigations

1980-1981: Ft. Lauderdale, FL Police Department/Patrol Division

1975-1980: United States Air Force/Security Police, K-9

1975: Graduate of Reidsville Sr. High School

2011-2012 – NC Sheriff's Association Executive Committee Chair

2011-2012 – North Carolina Gang Task Force

2010-2012 – National Sheriff's Association Border Security and Immigration Committee

2010-2011 – President of the North Carolina Sheriff's Association

My name is Sam Page. I am the Sheriff of Rockingham County, North Carolina. I would like to thank Congressman Smith and the House Judiciary Committee for allowing me the opportunity to be here.

First of all, let me say that I'm not a great public speaker. That's not what I do. That's not why I'm here. Instead, I'm here before you as a 30 year veteran of law enforcement and as a United States Air Force veteran.

As a sheriff, I'm always looking for ways to better protect the citizens of my county. I believe that the most important element in law enforcement is communication. That communication and information sharing between local, state and federal agencies is a vital tool to fight crime and get criminals off of our streets.

Today, I have three main points I'd like to make about the "Secure Communities" program. First, I want to talk about my experience with the program and how we did things before. Next, I want to discuss how it functions within my jail. And last, I want to talk about the successes and concerns with the program since it has been implemented.

So first, I want to talk about my experience with the program and how we did things before. In 2009, the North Carolina Sheriffs Association became involved in a pilot program known as "Secure Communities." Four North Carolina counties decided they would take part in this new immigration enforcement process.

Prior to "Secure Communities," this is the kind of situation we dealt with. Officers pull a guy over. He's got guns, drugs and no identification. He tells an officer his name is "John Smith," and he's from Mexico. That's the information we would have to enter into our computers, along with his fingerprints. Turns out, he's not "John Smith" at all. As you can imagine, this was not a very accurate process for identifying criminals. It left us only able to depend on what the arrestee tell us.

I.C.E. had previously trained North Carolina Sheriff's departments on how to use the national computer database to assist in the identification of illegal aliens. But, the problem was, the national database didn't link up to the I.C.E. immigrations database. So, without the ability to share information and communicate digitally between different agencies, we weren't able to know as much as we could.

Starting in October 2010, several other North Carolina counties became involved with the "Secure Communities" program, including Rockingham County. Less than six months later, all 100 North Carolina counties joined in with the program.

The main goal of "Secure Communities" is to help local jails better identify those persons arrested who are believed to be criminal, illegal aliens, and then to provide that information to assist I.C.E. and the Department of Homeland Security in their deportation process.

My next point is how the "Secure Communities" program works within my agency. The program and protocol for "Secure Communities" is reasonably simple. Our local law enforcement officers follow their normal arrest procedures for any person suspected of a criminal law violation.

After the arrest, if the suspect is committed to the local jail, booking staff conduct a standard interview and compare arrest sheet data. If it is determined that the arrestee was not born in the United States, the person is fingerprinted on our Live-Scan digital print system. The arrestee's prints are then compared against the Federal and Immigration and D.H.S. print database. Usually a match occurs within 20 minutes or less. And then, our trained booking officers notify I.C.E. personnel whether there is a print match. Even if there's not a match, we arrange an interview with an I.C.E agent and the arrestee.

Here's a side note. I.C.E. makes a determination whether to issue a detainer for the identified criminal illegal alien. If the arrestee is issued a bond, and it is posted, then we notify I.C.E. for pickup. They will respond within 48 hours. I.C.E. and the deportation hearing judge then make a determination of release of arrestee.

And my last point, I want to talk about the successes and some concerns with the "Secure Communities" program. Since the program was first implemented in October of 2010, we have processed and identified 58 criminal illegal aliens in my jail. Of those 58, I.C.E. has issued 49 federal detainers against those offenders and removed 36 of those offenders from my facility for processing.

Of the 58, two thirds of the arrestees committed driving offenses. And for the majority, I'm not talking about speeding tickets. Almost 50 percent of offenses were for driving while impaired. There's no excuse for an illegal alien, who's not supposed to be here in the first place, driving drunk on our roads and putting the lives of the people in my county in danger.

Along with the success of "Secure Communities," I have seen a downside in regards to how we handle the offender within I.C.E and the judicial system. The main issue I've seen is because of a concept known as "prosecutorial discretion." Of those 58 arrestees I just told you about, 10 of them came back to my facility for at least a second time, and none of them have been deported. But, why? From what I understand, I.C.E. agents and judges that deal with the deportation have the authority to decide the conditions of the release, after the offender leaves my facility. If the person is considered a low flight risk and not a danger to the community, he is typically released until the trial. After the trial, I.C.E. and the judges have the authority to decide who is deported and who can stay here in the United States. Here's what I think. If a person enters the U.S. illegally and commits a crime here, he should be deported.

In closing, as a sheriff, I believe that my first responsibility is to protect the citizens of my county against all threats. In order to do that, I need to know who is being housed in

my jail and who is being released into the community. I appreciate the partnership with the federal authorities and this tool that gives us the ability to receive information through the digital print process and allows us to access this information system by way of "Secure Communities".

Ladies and gentleman of this committee, I thank you for your attention. I am respectfully available for any questions.

Additional Rockingham County Information:

Rockingham County has a population of 93,643, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Of that population, 75% are white, 18.9% are black, 5.5% are Hispanic, .5% are Asian and .4% are American Indian.

Approximately three years ago while the North Carolina Sheriffs Association was beginning the 2008 immigrations project, I started looking into the problems and issues that we experienced with the whole federal immigration program and criminal illegal aliens in our jails. I also began looking at the growing problems in our communities with transnational drug trafficking organizations and the gang problem.

Over the past three years, all law enforcement agencies in my county started participating in a gang task force due to noticed increases in gang activity and gang violence in all of our communities. As of today, 28 gang organizations have been identified. Right now, we are participating with the DOJ’s safe streets initiative, “Project Safe Neighborhoods.” This program is a collaboration with the federal and local prosecutors office and surrounding law enforcement agencies. It aims to reduce, gang, gun and street violence.

Over the past few years, I have noticed an increase in drug trafficking through my district in North Carolina which has resulted in large seizures of money and illegal drugs being transported by associates of the Mexican drug trafficking organizations. That’s according to DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) reports provided to the North Carolina Sheriff’s Association.

In August of 2010, one of my deputies and I traveled to the Arizona border to work with the authorities there, at our own expense. The purpose was primarily to observe the Mexican drug cartel drug routes through the desert and to learn about the human smuggling and drug smuggling organizations. My activities were documented for future educational purposes with the North Carolina Sheriff’s Association.

Over the past year, I have tried to educate my fellow Sheriffs across North Carolina about the threats that the Mexican drug cartels and drug trafficking organizations can pose to North Carolina in as little as two to three days traveling time from the border. I have advocated that if we protect our southern borders of the U.S., we are protecting North Carolina’s backyard from the flow of illegal drugs that is affecting all of our communities.

In October 2011, I coordinated an effort to bring Sheriffs across America together in Washington, D.C. to discuss what I believe is the most serious problem today facing all Sheriffs: The drug war, Mexican drug trafficking organizations and the associated violence and crime.

With the assistance of the Center For Immigration Studies, The Mita Group, F.A.I.R., and the support of the House Caucus on Immigrations, and Rep. Steve King, we were able to come together to discuss the issues that we face today in local law enforcement settings. I.C.E. also provided representation to discuss some of the Sheriff’s concerns about the 287-G and Secure Communities programs. I reminded the panel and attendees that when your Sheriff comes to Washington you need to listen, because there is a problem back home that we need to address.

Sheriff Terry Johnson, Alamance County, North Carolina testified in our October 2011 meeting with the U.S. House Caucus on Immigrations regarding the drug related violence in his county to include two executions that were attributed to Mexican drug trafficking organizations. According to D.E.A. briefings, North Carolina is number two after the Atlanta region in drug trafficking routes used by the Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

All of the Sheriffs in attendance related stories of how they have been affected by criminal illegal aliens in their communities. At the closing of the hearing the Sheriffs were able to meet with some of North Carolina Representatives and Senators along with Representatives from Texas and Arizona.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss my concerns before the House Judiciary Committee today. I would hope that those testifying will depart some helpful information for you to consider.

For thirty years or more we have been fighting this “War on Drugs”. We have spent a tremendous amount of monies and manpower over the years.

I explain to my citizens that from what I see there is a three prong approach to winning this war.

1. To continue funding and supporting our elementary school anti-drug education programs such as D.A.R.E., and the ATF Program G.R.E.A.T. (Education)
2. To support funding for in-county and state drug rehabilitation programs. (To reduce drug demand)
3. To continue to step up our local, state, and federal law enforcement efforts to suppress drug trafficking activities within the United States. To declare the Mexican drug trafficking organizations “Terrorist” organizations, so as to be able to utilize U.S. Military assets and technology particularly along any United States borders. According to the D.E.A., the majority of all cocaine, marijuana, heroin and methamphetamines pass through our southern border with Mexico. We need to stop the flow of drugs at its source: the US border with Mexico. I am concerned about the violence occurring within Mexico

and, according to open source information, more than 40,000 people have been killed just south of our border since 2006. We must secure our borders, before one more American citizen or law enforcement officer loses their life. Agent Brian Terry and his sacrifice, along with the C.B.P. should not be forgotten or taken for granted. Homeland Security and National Security should not be about politics.

I have worked in law enforcement work for over thirty years. As we discuss the issues regarding illegal immigrations, I hear the term “chilling effect.” This is a concern that I read about and then I look at what we are doing in my county to improve communications and relations within our local Hispanic population.

We currently provide D.A.R.E. and G.R.E.A.T. training to all six of my elementary schools. All children can participate in the programs that discuss the dangers of drugs and gangs. We also work with children in the middle schools. We provide law enforcement demonstrations with representatives of our different divisions within our agency to let the kids know what we do as deputies and as a Sheriff’s Office in the community. I make personal visits and read to all of our kids in our elementary schools and also encourage my deputies to do lunch visits for positive interaction.

The Rockingham County Sheriff’s Office participates with the D.E.A. Spanish tip line to allow persons within our Hispanic community to have an outlet to report crimes anonymously.

Lastly, the Sheriff’s Office has four Hispanic uniform deputies who help each of the four patrol division shifts to better communicate while assisting persons only able to speak Spanish. These deputies help with our efforts to reach out to our Hispanic community about crime prevention, domestic violence, drug activity, etc. These deputies have been instrumental in assisting my detective division when investigating crimes effecting our Hispanic population. In Rockingham County when a person calls for assistance your immigration status is not an issue. We provide assistance to all those who request.

Traffic Stop Reporting required by NC Legislature:

All stops included age, sex, ethnicity.

Included below are traffic stop reports by Rockingham County Sheriff's Office

January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010 Total Traffic Stops 437

Race	Sex	Traffic Stops	Citations Written	% Citations
White	Female/Male	275	101	37%
Black	Female/Male	125	61	49%
Hispanic	Female/Male	40	26	65%

January 1, 2011 to September 30, 2011 Total Traffic Stops 426

Race	Sex	Traffic Stops	Citations Written	% Citations
White	Female/Male	288	136	47%
Black	Female/Male	117	65	56%
Hispanic	Female/Male	21	14	67%