

**Testimony**  
**Deputy Sheriff Esequiel Legarreta**  
**Hudspeth County Sheriff's Department**

**Before**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**

**“Armed and Dangerous: Confronting the**  
**Problem of Border Incursions”**  
**February 7, 2006**

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Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

On Monday, January 23, 2006, I, Deputy Esequiel Legarreta and Deputy Joseph Edward Tammen along with Sgt. Johnny Schuller were conducting operations along Interstate 10 and Highway 34. Deputy Tammen was placed undercover at the Tiger Truckstop located at milepost 87 on Interstate 10 eastbound. Sgt. Schuller and I stayed further west so not to alert any activities. It was at this time I received information that a large shipment of marijuana was supposed to be coming up from Farm Market Road 192 and up toward the Tiger Truckstop and then heading west on Interstate 10. I then advised Sgt. Schuller of the information. I then contacted Deputy Tammen, Texas Highway Patrol, and Fort Hancock Border Patrol in order to coordinate an operation to intercept this shipment.

Further information received was that the shipment was going to be transported by (3) three new model sport utility vehicles. One vehicle was supposed to be a Black Cadillac Escalade. Vehicle number two was a Blue Ford Expedition, and the third vehicle was a Grey Toyota Four Runner. All information was relayed to all officers via cell phone. Deputy Tammen was given all information and told to keep a watchful eye for these vehicles.

At approximately 2:00 p.m. information received was that the vehicles had entered and were traveling toward Interstate 10. I then advised Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Troopers to start heading west on Interstate 10. At approximately 2:11 p.m. Deputy Tammen advised me that he spotted all three vehicles crossing the overpass at milepost 87 heading westbound. At this time all information then aired over the radio. At milepost 84 Texas DPS Troopers noticed all three vehicle had crossed the median on Interstate 10 and were heading east on Interstate 10. At this time I was already heading east on Interstate 10 at approximately milepost 81. The DPS Troopers attempted to make contact with these vehicles; however, the vehicles refused to stop. These vehicles attempted to elude DPS Troopers by accelerating to speeds in excess of 100-miles per hour. DPS Troopers called out a pursuit over the radio. DPS Trooper number one was behind a Black Cadillac Escalade and DPS Trooper number two was behind a Blue Ford Expedition. The Grey Toyota Four Runner was between DPS Trooper one and the Blue Ford Expedition.

At approximately two miles south of milepost 87, I had caught up to DPS Trooper number two, who was behind the Blue Ford Expedition. The Black Cadillac Escalade blew out its front passenger tire and came to rest about seven miles south of milepost 87. DPS Trooper number one cleared the vehicle and stayed with the vehicle. The driver of that vehicle fled south

toward Mexico. DPS Trooper number two and myself continued to pursue the Blue Ford Expedition at speeds in excess of 100-miles per hour.

Approximately eleven miles southeast of milepost 87, the Blue Ford Expedition turned off Farm Market Road 192 and onto a dirt road heading south toward the American-Mexican border. DPS Trooper number two followed, but went off the road. I then continued with the pursuit following behind the Blue Ford Expedition. Approximately one and a half miles south of Farm Market Road 192, the Blue Ford Expedition continued onto the Rio Grande levee (southbound). At this time, I had gained ground on the Blue Ford Expedition, at a distance I noticed the Grey Toyota Four Runner was already in the Rio Grande River and continuing south into Mexico.

When I came up on the curve I encountered the military-style hummvee that was parked on the American side of the Rio Grande levee road. As the Blue Ford Expedition went by the hummvee, it turned around and went back toward the river. On the hummvee I noticed one subject wearing an olive drap green military fatigues with an olive green military cap. By my observation this subject was holding what appeared to be a heavy caliber weapon with what looked to be tripods mounted on it. The driver was also dressed in the same uniform, but this subject had a smaller caliber automatic weapon. The hummvee followed the vehicles in angle toward the Rio Grande River and actually got into the river crossing back into Mexico, awaiting for the two vehicles to make it back across into Mexico. The Grey Toyota Four Runner had gone first and waited in the river for the Blue Ford Expedition. The Blue Ford Expedition attempted to cross the riverbank on the Mexican side, but got stuck.

At this time another hummvee arrived and I noticed uniformed men getting out and taking position east and west along the Mexico side river banks, hiding behind heavy thick brush. After the uniformed men arrived approximately 10-15 men dressed in civilian clothes arrived. Some of the civilians were armed with unknown automatic long rifles. At this time the Grey Toyota Four Runner attempted to push the Blue Ford Expedition up the bank, but could not. The hummvee then attempted to pull the Blue Ford Expedition with a chain or strap while the Grey Toyota Four Runner pushed, but this attempt failed as well. Then, a couple of men knocked over a fence on the Mexican side of the riverbank and the Grey Toyota Four Runner drove across. The hummvee then drove back into Rio Grande River and attempted to push the Blue Ford Expedition up and over the riverbank. This attempt also failed. At this time civilian men started to offload the contraband from the Blue Ford Expedition. Once the cargo was offloaded, an unknown subject intentionally set the Blue Ford Expedition on fire. I was unable to see who did it. The contraband was then loaded on another pick up truck on the Mexican side and then the vehicle drove off. Then, the civilians' subjects then walked away from the area along with hummvee's.

It is unknown what happened to the military uniformed individuals due to the fact that once they took cover behind the heavy thick brush they were not seen again.

Sincerely,

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