

Hundreds of Trails, Thousands of Mules

The Chilton Ranch is undefended from illegal border crossers and too many drug packers, thanks to the Sinaloa Cartel.

By Jim Chilton

PHOTOS & MAP COURTESY CHILTON FAMILY



Border crossers wear camouflaged clothes, backpacks and carpet shoes and almost all are men. For the six months ending June 2022, ranch motion-activated cameras recorded 1,467 images of illegal border crossers. Of approximately 100 crosser trails on the ranch, only five have cameras. Consequently, those persons filmed are a small percentage of the total.

BELOW: Chilton Ranch boundaries: south of Arivaca, Ariz., and west of Nogales. Five-and-a-half miles of the southern end of the ranch is the U.S./Mexico international border. The 50,000-acre ranch, like many western ranches, is composed of U.S. Forest Service allotments, State Trust Land and private land. The red line is Ruby Road which runs through much of the ranch.



August 20, 2022. The Chilton Ranch is located next to the international boundary with Mexico south of Arivaca, Ariz., and west of the border city of Nogales. This 50,000-acre historic cattle ranch includes a 30,000-acre U.S. Forest Service allotment, 18,000 acres of State School Trust land, and about 2,000 acres of private land. My brother and I run over 950 cows and bulls year-round and are thankful for an average of 18 inches of rain each year.

The map shows that five-and-a-half miles of the ranch is the actual U.S./Mexico boundary. In addition, the ranch folds toward the west around three other border grazing allot-



Mexican cartel scouts occupying our ranch mountaintops guide these border crossers. The scouts communicate with their bosses through encrypted satellite phones with radio function. Scouts are also equipped with the finest binoculars, night vision and backpack roll-down solar panels. Their purpose is to know where the Border Patrol is at all times and guide the drug packers to sites where cartel operatives inside the United States can pick up and then distribute drugs and people throughout the country.



ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Jim Chilton; father, Ken; and brother, Tom. RIGHT: Jim Chilton on April Star. The Chilton family has ranched in Arizona for 137 years. BELOW: Trump wall construction was halted by President Biden on Jan. 20, 2021 (the day he started to serve), leaving large gaps where numerous washes cross the international boundary. Five border gaps on the Chilton Ranch are open doors for cartel border crossers. BOTTOM: This four-strand barbwire fence marks the border between Mexico and the Chilton Ranch prior to President Trump's wall construction.

ments resulting in a 14-mile exposure to illegal border crossers virtually all controlled by the Sinaloa Cartel.

For seven years, my wife Sue and I and my friends at Secure Border Intel have collected motion-activated camera film of drug packers, previously deported persons and other illegals crossing through our ranch. Of approximately 100 trails traversing our ranch, only five have hidden motion-activated cameras. Just during the six months ending June 2022, these cameras have recorded 1,467 images of illegal border crossers. [For video go to https://youtu.be/u_9H1P1KXc]

On our ranch, border crossers are wearing camouflaged clothes, backpacks and carpet shoes. Almost all are men, in stark contrast to Texas crossers who wear casual street clothes and often include women or children.

The aforementioned video documents an approximately 10-fold increase in the number of international border crossers on our ranch compared to prior years. One Border Patrol intelligence officer estimates 20 percent of these crossers are drug packers. Only 40—less than three percent—of these 1,467 intruders appear to be women. Since this is a rugged, between-ports-of-entry route with minimal Border Patrol presence, it seems probable that those choosing this rough,



mountainous route are highly motivated to evade detection and know they are ineligible for asylum status.

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On our ranch, five miles of the Trump wall were well started but still under construction when President Biden was inaugurated on Jan. 20, 2021. One of his first executive orders was to stop all construction on border security structures. At the end of the wall on our ranch, there is a four-strand barbwire cattle fence for over five more miles, leaving a “convenient” gap of no wall at all along the international boundary right in a favored entry point for the cartels.

This section of Arizona, including our ranch border, was just described by a Trump-era highly informed, highly placed Border Patrol spokesman as leading the entire border in “got-aways”—i.e., crossers who are not apprehended.

From our perspective, it is impossible to separate the drug crisis from the immigration issue. Some border crossers are repeat professionals who work for the cartel and walk back to Mexico after each fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine or cocaine delivery. In addition, the cartel forces other undocumented persons to pay to traverse the international



LEFT: Jim and Sue Chilton with some of their just-weaned steers. In August 2022 they celebrated 59 years of marriage.

BELOW: Jim Chilton's great-grandfather Edward Cospier, left, is pictured with two of his brothers. Jim's great-great-grandfather and five sons (three pictured) drove cattle from Texas to Arizona and settled in eastern Arizona in 1885.

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boundary either in cash or at a discounted rate if they pack drugs. Those crossing in this area are reportedly charged about \$3,000 if Mexican; \$7,000 to \$10,000 when from South America; or \$25,000 to \$75,000 for Asians. After paying the cartel to cross, some groups are used as decoys to distract the Border Patrol while the cartel runs drugs into the



United States five to 10 miles away.

Government reports indicate a massive increase in fentanyl traffic through the Arizona border. The precursors of this drug arrive from China and are off-loaded at Mexican seaports to be processed in Mexican labs, packaged and hidden for transport. This is *chemical warfare*. Many Border Patrol officers

who were formerly trying to put a dent in this border disaster have been dispatched to help handle the diversionary tactic of floods of undocumented immigrants crossing the Rio Grande River in Texas. This tactic clearly opens the between-ports rural ranching trails with unfinished border wall openings to nearly unimpeded passage.

In my opinion, President Biden must finish the wall, including all the planned fiber-optic cable, electronics, sensors and cameras. Then ports of entry on the Mexican border need to be staffed and equipped to handle the

flood of drugs overwhelming these ports. The current “mobbing-Texas tactic” guarantees that between-port ranches like ours remain open and undefended from cartel operations.

Biden just signed a bill to hire 87,000 IRS agents to “patrol” Americans and zero new agents to patrol illegal immigration and drug packing. Hiring guidelines for new IRS

agents announce that applicants should be able to handle firearms and be willing to use deadly force; meanwhile, Border Patrol agents court serious repercussions if they use force to interdict illegal crossers or suspected drug packers. This must change. The U.S. government must truly secure the border at the border. ■

Jim Chilton, a fifth-generation Arizona rancher, was born in Arizona in 1939 and raised on farms and ranches. He and Sue married in 1964 and celebrated 59 years of marriage in August 2022. In 1979, Jim, his father, Ken Senior, and brother, Tom, formed the Chilton Ranch & Cattle Company, a cow-calf business. In 1987, Jim, Sue and sons Ken and Tomas purchased a 50,000-acre ranch south of Arivaca, Ariz., that expanded the family operation. Jim was honored as Rancher of the Year in 2002 by the Arizona Cattle Growers' Association. In 2005, he and his wife received the Arizona Rancher of the Year award from the Arizona Farm Bureau. In 2005, he received the True Grit Award from the ACGA and was named the Individual of the Year by the Arizona/New Mexico Coalition of Counties. In the same year, he and Sue received the Arizona Farm Bureau Environmental Stewardship Award. In 2011, they were selected as recipients of the Arizona Game & Fish Department's Wildlife Habitat Award. In 2018, they received the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts Ranching Conservation Leadership Award.

Jim began his professional career as a municipal financial consultant in 1970. Prior to forming his own municipal investment banking business in 1983, Jim was senior vice president and manager of the Shearson/American Express Public Finance Division for the western United States. A graduate of Arizona State University, he received a Bachelor of Science in economics, a Master of Science in economics, and a Master of Arts in political science. After graduation and before beginning his career in municipal finance, Jim served as special assistant to U.S. Sen. Carl Hayden of Arizona for three years.