

WASHINGTON – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell has asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to examine federal efforts to identify and remove criminal aliens in an effort to improve the government's ability to combat drop houses that act as way stations for drugs and humans smuggled across the border.

“Drop houses are a danger to our community and they are beyond the reach of the U.S. Border Patrol,” said Mitchell. “Our local police are stretched thin because the federal government isn't getting the job done. We need to know Immigration and Customs Enforcement is allocating its resources effectively.”

Mitchell, who has worked to boost the federal government's efforts on interior enforcement, was joined in his request by Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.).

In a joint letter to Comptroller General David Walker, Mitchell and Thompson noted that, despite increased attention to border crossings, “there has been relatively little examination of the federal funding and other resources devoted to attacking the criminal enterprises that smuggle aliens into the United States and identifying and removing aliens who are a threat to public safety.”

Specifically, Mitchell asked the GAO to examine

- How Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) allocates staff among its various interior enforcement responsibilities particularly with regard to alien smuggling and criminal alien removal.
- What actions ICE has taken to identify staff needs and address staffing shortfalls related to alien smuggling and criminal alien removal activities.
- What actions ICE has taken to address previous GAO recommendations in these areas.

Phoenix metropolitan area is believed to have about 1,000 drop houses, many of which are home to human smuggling operations. [Source: Associated Press, Jan. 16, 2008]

## Mitchell Requests Study on Interior Immigration Enforcement

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Last year Mitchell “met at the Mesa Police Department headquarters with local, state and federal law enforcement officials, including Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard and representatives of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Arizona Department of Homeland Security” to discuss how Congress and law enforcement can work together to improve immigration enforcement in Arizona. [Source: The Arizona Republic, May 30, 2007]

“The group painted a dire picture of the human- and drug-smuggling trade in Arizona, which results in murders, kidnappings, accidents and other violent crimes.” [Source: The Arizona Republic, May 30, 2007]

They also said in order “to truly crack down on violent crimes associated with human and drug smuggling, they’ll need more resources.” [Source: Associated Press, May 30, 2007]

Mitchell and the House of Representatives have strengthened the ICE budget in an effort to boost interior enforcement efforts. Mitchell voted to approve \$4.7 billion for ICE – \$567 million above the President’s request and \$700 million more than 2007 levels.