

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee On Border and Maritime Security**

**Testimony by
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**“Protecting the Maritime Borders –
Leveraging Law Enforcement Cooperation
to Enhance Security Along America’s Coasts”
July 12, 2011**

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Introduction

Good morning Chairwomen Miller and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Tim Donnellon and I currently serve as Sheriff of St. Clair County, MI. It is my great pleasure to be before you today to discuss the great strides we have taken to secure our part of the U.S./Canadian border. In St. Clair County we recognize the assistance we have received from the federal government, which has provided the necessary support to increase the security of our border, and look forward to continued collaboration in order to continue these efforts.

International Geographic Location

St. Clair County sits at the southern end of Lake Huron, approximately 45 miles north of the city of Detroit. We are a county of nearly 837 square miles. Our eastern border is 110 miles long and is made up of Lake Huron, the St Clair River and Lake Saint Clair, all of which is a continuous border with Canada thus making St. Clair County the largest international bordering county of any of the eighty-three counties in the State of Michigan.

St. Clair County has two main border crossings and two secondary crossings. The main crossings are the Blue Water Twin Bridges and the Rail Tunnel from Port Huron, Michigan to Sarnia, Ontario. The Blue Water Bridges are the second busiest commercial border crossings on the northern border and the Rail Tunnel is the busiest railroad crossing between the United States and Canada. Secondary crossings are the ferry crossings located in Marine City and Algonac.

As you can see, from the map of St. Clair County listed under attachment "A", what makes St. Clair County beautiful also makes it extremely challenging for law enforcement. In addition to the 110 miles of international waterways St. Clair County also has two interstate freeways running through the county to the border, which places a greater emphasis on the need for heightened border security. The appendix shows we have multiple divisions within the sheriff's office that partner with our federal agencies to promote homeland security.

Marine Division

Our Marine Division is tasked with providing public safety to the waterways within our jurisdictional boundaries. In addition to above listed major bodies of water there are many connecting tributaries which increase the Marine Division's responsibilities. The St. Clair River handles a very high volume of commercial shipping traffic. This region of Michigan is the busiest main thoroughfare for pleasure craft in the United States. Any pleasure craft or commercial freighter traversing between the lower and upper Great Lakes must pass through St. Clair County.

The Marine Division is a part of "Operation Channel Watch", which is a collaboration of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies composed of marine, air, uniform and covert intelligence units. Surveillance is conducted on the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair and Lake Huron. The goal of this operation is intelligence gathering, reporting procedures, communications and overall strategy for intercepting vessels crossing the international border.

There are numerous events that take place along our international waters that draw thousands of participants. These events create the potential for border incidents or terrorist activities. The Marine Division works in conjunction with federal and state agencies as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ontario Provincial Police, First Nation Walpole Island Police and Ministry of Natural Resource to increase the safety on our international waterways.

In another effort to make the most of our local resources, our Marine Division along with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) through the HSIN (Homeland Security Intel Network) also share a working calendar. This calendar ensures no duplication of patrol sectors. Additionally, we partner with CBP assigning their agents to our vessels as a force multiplier.

Dive Team

Another large component of border security is the Sheriff's Dive Team. As the only team in the area, they have been requested to respond to incidents not only on our own shoreline but the Canadian shoreline as well. These responses have included assisting the following Canadian agencies: Sarnia Police, Sarnia Fire, Point Edward Fire, Point Edward Police, St Clair Township Fire (Ontario), Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Ontario Provincial Police. They have assisted with Water Rescues, Suicides, Body Recovery, Homicide Investigations, Automobile Recovery and Evidence Recovery.

St. Clair County is home to a multitude of critical infrastructure components, most notably the potable water intakes in the area. The Detroit Water Intake is one of the largest in the country. It serves millions of people and is located in Lake Huron 10 miles north of the Blue Water Bridges in approximately 200' of water. There are ten more potable water intakes in St Clair County. A chemical weapon attack on any of these intakes could sicken or kill thousands of people.

There are four power plants in St. Clair County all of which depend on cooling water to operate. Two railroad tunnels and numerous oil and high pressure gas lines cross under the St. Clair River. An underwater terrorist attack on any of these locations could cause the disruption of the vital services and potentially the deaths of citizens in both the United States and Canada.

A threat to power plants, water plants and intakes are obvious above water. To lessen the risk we have installed security cameras, fences, set crash barriers,

police patrols and continued pre-plan for possible terrorist attacks. But underwater it is out of sight and out of mind. Perhaps our greatest risk is in an underwater attack. There are no fences, guards or gates. Yet a diver could enter the heart of a power plant or water plant through an intake without ever encountering a guard and destroy its ability to operate. In addition to basic water rescue, if any threat is received to any water plant, power plant, tunnel or pipeline the Dive Team is prepared to intervene.

Drug Task Force

Another component is our Drug Task Force Unit. It has been in operation for over 20 years. Information has been received every year pertaining to cross border drug and smuggling operations. We came to the conclusion that information sharing with federal law enforcement agencies was not occurring as efficiently as possible. In October of 2010 a partnership was formed with the CBP where an agent was assigned to the Drug Task Force. This agent focuses on drug cases with emphasis on border nexus and those cases involving potential illegal aliens. This in turn has improved information sharing between the local and federal law enforcement agencies providing a timely and fluid intelligence flow between them. This agent's vast knowledge of border crimes and illegal aliens has heightened local law enforcements awareness of border crimes. This partnership has enhanced the ability to share not only information but equipment and assets.

Interdiction Unit

In 2009, The sheriff's office realized the need for a unit dedicated to drug interdiction. As a result of multiple narcotic seizures, information was passed onto CBP and ICE agents regarding suspected international narcotic smuggling, illegal hiring practices, illegal immigrant smuggling, and international transportation of stolen vehicles. Our interdiction unit works constantly with CBP in operational activities and information sharing. We assist at the international bridge and tunnel crossings with K-9, rail yard and inbound/outbound vehicle searches. Both agencies have benefited from this collaboration resulting in improved border security. In 2010, CBP made more than 7,400 arrests along the northern border. Nearly 1,700 arrests took place along the 863 miles that make up the Detroit Sector, which is the largest of the northern border's eight sectors.

Operation StoneGarden

Since its inception, the intent of Operation StoneGarden (OPSG) has been to enhance law enforcement preparedness and operational readiness along the land borders of the United States. OPSG provides funding to designated localities to enhance cooperation and coordination between law enforcement agencies in a joint mission to secure the border.

Law enforcement agencies along the border in St. Clair County were awarded the Operational StoneGarden Grant. This funding provides for overtime wages, fuel/maintenance, and equipment. This has allowed us to put more boots on the street and significantly increase maritime operation along our border. This funding has enhanced security in border areas not normally afforded patrols due to shrinking budgets.

Operational Integration Center

In March of 2011 CBP opened its new Operational Integration Center (OIC) on Selfridge Air National Guard Base. The OIC provides a centralized location for CBP, along with federal, state, local, and international partners, to gather, analyze, and disseminate information. The OIC will enhance information sharing with all partners in the Great Lakes Region. Real time video feeds into the OIC's situational awareness room from 11 towers equipped with high-tech cameras and radars built along 35 miles of the St. Clair River. Local law enforcement agencies in collaboration with federal agencies now have the ability to utilize this technology in a variety of applications, such as: drug and human smuggling, boating accident reconstruction and local criminal activity.

Corrections Division

Not only have we established solid working relationships with government agencies on the law enforcement component of our office, but we have a solid internal relationship also. St. Clair County Jail is one of only four jails in the State of Michigan qualified to house ICE detainees. We currently house an average of 155 federal prisoners including ICE detainees, US Marshal and Federal Bureau of Prisons inmates in our county jail. This internal relationship was taken to new levels this past year as St. Clair County holds video court proceedings for ICE detainees. ICE has also assigned a full time agent to our facility in a liaison capacity. Additionally, our office provides detainee transportation services. This includes to and from correctional facilities, courthouses and airports for the entire eastern half of Michigan.

Conclusion

Chairwomen Miller and Committee Members I would like to thank you for your service and the opportunity to testify before you today. It has been a great honor to represent the citizens of St. Clair County and local law enforcement at this hearing. I hope this has aided you in regards to the ongoing partnership between local and federal law enforcement agencies on the northern border and our challenging maritime environment.

Attachment "A"

