

# On the day before election, Homeland Security officials decry big tech censorship, tout Trump border achievements



Mark Morgan, the acting commissioner for Customs and Border Protection, touted President Donald Trump's border policies during a press conference at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson on 2 November 2020 - Rafael Carranza/The Republic.

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TUCSON — Two senior Homeland Security officials traveled to southern Arizona Monday to decry censorship and tout the Trump administration's achievements on border security and immigration, just hours before polls opened in Arizona.

Homeland Security Acting Deputy Secretary Ken Cuccinelli and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Acting Commissioner Mark Morgan took an aerial tour of border wall construction near Sasabe on Monday morning ahead of a news conference at the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson.

Cuccinelli defended his decision to travel for the first time to Arizona, which is considered one of the key battleground states in this presidential election, on the eve of Election Day. He dismissed the idea that his visit served to prop up President Donald Trump and sway voters.

“We don’t stop doing our job because there’s an election coming or going, and this is part of that whole effort,” Cuccinelli said, adding that it was similar to other visits he had undertaken as acting deputy secretary to other border communities.

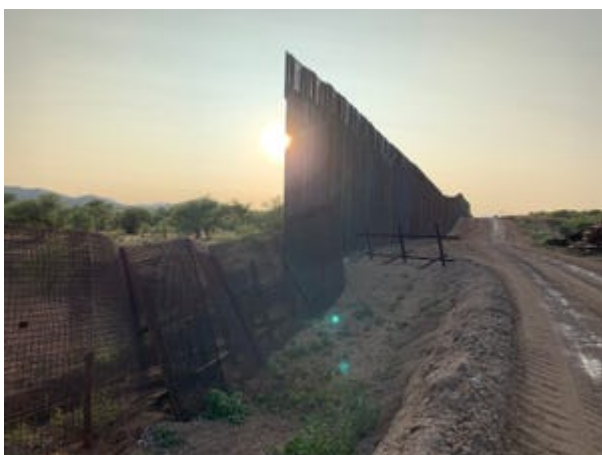
“I make no apologies for being here. This is my job. It’s part of the commissioner’s job and we’re proud to do it, proud to trumpet what’s been accomplished and recognizing fully there’s plenty more to do,” he added.

During his remarks following the border wall tour, Cuccinelli said the Trump administration’s achievements on border security and immigration can be summed up in three words: “stop, detain and deter.”

The news conference focused mainly on two areas: the construction of physical barriers and the reduction of illegal immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border.

President Donald Trump has been campaigning on the construction of nearly 400 miles of border wall that has gone up under his administration as an example of him keeping the promises he made four years ago. Cuccinelli said an additional 50 miles will be completed by the end of the year.

Arizona is the epicenter of border wall construction. More than 200 miles have been completed or are under construction in the state. That includes about 100 of the 128 miles planned for the Border Patrol’s Tucson Sector, which covers the eastern two-thirds of the Arizona border, according to Roy Villareal, the chief patrol agent for the Tucson Sector.



The sun sets over newly built sections of the border wall east of Sasabe, Arizona on 16 September 2020. Rafael Carranza/The Republic

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Cuccinelli and Morgan also talked about policies that have reduced the apprehension of undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border. They cited an end to the “catch and release” policy, referring to the process of detaining and then releasing potential asylum seekers into the interior of the U.S. with a notice to appear in court at a later date.

But Morgan acknowledged the policy has not ended completely. In 2019, when a surge in migrant families seeking asylum in the U.S. overwhelmed border agents and officers, CBP released 230,000 migrants from their custody. This year, the number is down 1,000 migrants he said.

They attributed the large reductions in apprehensions to the Trump administration’s agreements with the Mexican government to crack down on the flow of migrants through that country, and to accept more than 68,000 U.S. asylum seekers under the Migrant Protection Protocols, better known as “Remain in Mexico.”

Since March, CBP has been immediately expelling migrants detained at the U.S.-Mexico border during the pandemic under an emergency health order known as Title 42 and ground nearly all asylum processing to a halt.

Morgan warned about the consequences of repealing those policies in a not-so-veiled jab at Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.

“If you remove MPP, prematurely end Title 42, and take other actions to stop building the wall, I wanna be clear, it will drive another massive illegal immigration crisis, one that will make last year’s crisis pale in comparison,” he said.

Both Morgan and Cuccinelli decried what they called censorship at the hands of “big tech” companies, with especially pointed words for Twitter, which they accused of arbitrarily suspending Morgan’s account last week for sharing information about border wall construction and arrests of migrants with criminal backgrounds.

“Not everyone trying to enter the country illegally are good. It’s why we need the tools like the wall,” he said. “This is exactly what Twitter didn’t want the

American people to hear. Yes, Twitter, walls work, borders matter.”

Despite their claims that their visit was not meant to influence the upcoming election, Monday’s tour was the second time in two weeks that senior DHS officials have traveled to Arizona to tout Trump’s achievements on immigration and the border.

The acting Homeland Security secretary delivered similar remarks Oct. 22 from Phoenix during a meeting with local law enforcement groups in the state. He did not travel to the border on that occasion.

Trump himself has visited the state seven times this year, underscoring Arizona’s significance as a battleground state in the election. Two of those visits in June and August were to the Arizona-Mexico border in Yuma.

Monday’s visit was also Morgan’s second to Tucson in the past month. He traveled here Oct. 14 for a news conference on CBP’s enforcement statistics for Fiscal Year 2019.

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