

A WORD FROM THE SHERIFF

I will begin by addressing some of the accusations and concerns that were brought to light in the community meeting that took place in Red River May 31st.

First, never as Sheriff of Taos County, have I ever solicited for payment of services from Red River. Period! Ever.

Second, Deputies were in fact in Red River prior to the shooting. Friday night, 8 Deputies did security walk throughs of the bars in Red River showing a presence, especially in the bars occupied by Bandidos.

Although the epicenter of the rally was Red River, the collateral effects of this event extended throughout the entire County which is my responsibility and of which, I am bound by statutory obligation to provide services to. The increased traffic flow impacted the entire county from the Penasco Valley to the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge, Costilla and south to Pilar. The high-volume traffic areas were State Road 68 south of Taos and State Road 522, north of Taos. As the Sheriff, my responsibility and obligation is the entire County, not just Red River. Separate from the Red River incident, a very successful high intensity traffic enforcement operation was implemented and executed, resulting in 419 traffic stops with a net result of only 1 minor traffic crash, NO major vehicle crashes and more importantly *NO FATAL CRASHES*. The Sheriff's Office successfully mitigated crashes that have plagued this holiday weekend in years past.

Circling back around, not once did the Town of Red River nor the Red River Marshall reach out to ask me, the Sheriff, for assistance or inquire about resources available. The Marshalls stance is, they were not going to pay the Sheriff's Office for services. I assert again, since I have been Sheriff, I have never solicited nor expected payment from Red River for anything.

At no time did the Red River Marshall or Town share operations plans or contingencies with this Office.

During any critical incident, it is this Office's practice to fall back on the Incident Command System (ICS) in which perimeters are identified and set up. These are known as; Hot zone, Inner Perimeter, Outer Perimeter. None of which had been completed at the onset this active shooter incident. I established communications with Capt. Matt Martinez NMSP and came to the agreement that NMSP would handle the crime scene (Hot Zone). Making the decision to shut down the town would allow me to establish the Outer Perimeter in this currently still very active scene.

The fact that a chapter president of a federally recognized organized crime syndicate, particularly known for violence and violent retribution, lay dead on the streets of Red River and the fact that the whereabouts of 500 or more members of this criminal organization (Bandidos) remained **UNKNOWN**, defined the fact that as of Saturday night into Sunday morning that this was still a very active, and potentially volatile scene. In particular, after receiving information that some of these Bandidos were taking off identifying clothing and had transitioned to vehicles (as opposed to motor cycles) and were trying to gain access back into Red River.

As a result of establishing these perimeters, NMSP and Red River Marshalls Office were able to move around inside of the town unimpeded by unknown threats. At no time, while I controlled the access and the roof tops, were they left without security over watch. Sheriff's Office snipers were deployed immediately to the roof of Lifts West, where they provided threat assessment and security operations.

This dynamic active shooter incident is responded to in the same manner as an active shooter incident at a school. In the event that this occurs at a school, the school is locked down, which is common knowledge in our society any more unfortunately. Law enforcement officers and dispatchers know this (or should). This is the same scenario and warrants the same response protocols. One of the complaints levied by the Marshall and his dispatchers is the fact that they were getting a high volume of calls from parents, family members, and residents that they could not get past the check point. At a school incident are we going to allow

parents into the school for their children while the incident is still active? **Of course not.** The Marshall agreed publicly that these perimeters are NOT negotiable. One of the factors the dispatchers need to take into consideration and should know, is, in an active shooter/ threat situation whether it be at a school or down town Red River, that once these perimeters are set up, their phone lines are going to blow up with these calls. It's part of the fall out of one of these incidents.

Once I felt that the scene was secure enough, I did have a conversation with the Marshall and allowed controlled access (escorted) into Red River by escort only in order to get residents home and allow for reunification of families.

At the onset of this incident, during our response to Red River, Lieutenant Marvin Armijo and Lieutenant Rick Romero immediately took action to lock down Holy Cross Hospital, deploying the remaining Sheriff's Deputies and working closely with Taos Police Department, Taos Ski Valley as well as Taos Tribal Police. Under the supervision of Lt. Lloyd Garcia (TPD) and Sergeant Greg Trujillo (TCSO), text book perfect ICS perimeters were set up and the Hospital was secured. When it was determined that more resources were needed in Red River, the Hospital security was left to the more than capable Officers of the Taos Police Department and Taos Tribal Police. Taos Ski Valley Chief Virgil Vigil and Lieutenant Robert Salazar, selflessly and without hesitation responded alongside the second contingent of Sheriff's Deputies to Red River.

I would like to take a moment and recognize and thank all of the agencies that not only responded working tirelessly to support Red River but also Taos County.

Taos Central Dispatch provided life saving communications and flow of critical information and coordination of law enforcement and EMS.

Red River Dispatch provided lifesaving communications and flow of critical information and coordination of law enforcement, EMS and communications with Taos Central Dispatch.

Taos County EMS, Questa EMS and Red River EMS. Espanola EMS responded to Taos in order to cover Taos County while our EMS was tied up in Red River.

Taos County Fire, Chief Cordova and Fire Marshall James Hampton along with all of its volunteers from various departments

Taos Tribal Police Department

Taos Police Department under the supervision of Lieutenant Lloyd Garcia and Officers

Taos Ski Valley Police Department, Chief Virgil Vigil and Lieutenant Robert Salazar

Questa Police Department, Chief Ronald Montez and Officers

Mora County Sheriff's Office who provided deputies and the Sheriff himself who supported TCSO operations in Red River.

Rio Arriba County Sheriff's Office who also provided Deputies in support of TCSO operations in Red River.

New Mexico Mounted Patrol.

New Mexico State Police.

Red River Marshalls Office.

And last but certainly not least, your Deputies of the Taos County Sheriff's Office that worked tirelessly and conducted themselves professionally during the course of this weekend's operation and critical incident.

Are there lessons that can be learned? **Absolutely.** We must always look at what we can do better and evolve.

Would I change my actions or response if given the opportunity to do over? Absolutely not! The Incident Command System (ICS) has been devised and implemented because it has been proven to work and this Sheriff's Office will not deviate from that.

If the Mayor of Red River wants to entertain some kind of investigation into my actions, I openly invite it. This Office is transparent and accountable and answers only to the people.

In closing I will reassert. My only interest is the safety and wellbeing of the People of Taos County and in ensuring this, my decisions may not always be popular but they will be driven by, that one single interest.

I was elected to keep you all safe. I will do that to the best of my ability.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Miera", written in a cursive style.

Sheriff Steve Miera

Taos County Sheriff