



The Nebraska Sheriff

A Publication of the Nebraska Sheriffs' Association

2019 NSA Hall of Fame Award



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'IT'S CREEPY': UNEXPLAINED DRONES ARE SWARMING BY NIGHT OVER COLORADO

Sheriffs in western Nebraska and eastern Colorado say they don't know who's flying the drones — or why. The F.A.A. is investigating. They come in the night: Drones — lots of them — flying in precise formations over the Colorado and Nebraska prairie. Whose are they? Unknown. Why are they there? Unclear. "It's creepy," said Missy Blackman, who saw three drones hovering over her farm outside Palisade, Neb., on a recent evening, including one that lingered right above her house. "I have a lot of questions of why and what are they, and nobody seems to have any answers." **Full story on pages 34-36.**

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More on the 2019 NSA/POAN Conference on page 21-23.

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Only submitted articles pertinent to criminal justice, law enforcement, and NSA members will be featured.

We will accept articles from law enforcement agencies, their representatives, or related fields to be considered for publication in the magazine.

Photographs of minors must be accompanied by verifiable permission to publish and list their names, whether the photo is emailed or sent through USPS.*

We reserve the right to edit all submissions for content or space.

We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please let us know about them.

The Nebraska Sheriff Magazine
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The Nebraska Sheriffs' Association website has all the county sheriffs' contact information, links to dates of special training offered to law enforcement in Nebraska, links to county websites, and much, much more. There are also special businesses that help to sponsor this website with their ads. It pays to be a member.

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The 2020 NSA/POAN Annual Conference is once again the place to be for professionals involved in law enforcement. The convention will feature educational sessions requested by law enforcement professionals that will draw members from across the state.

For four days this fall, professionals from across the state will come together in Kearney to take advantage of leading educational programming and an exhibit hall offering tools, ideas, and products applicable to their everyday work lives.

Be sure to mark October 4-7, 2020, on your calendar now. The deadline for early registration is August 31, so take a few minutes today to complete the registration form in this brochure.

We look forward to seeing you in Kearney!

OCTOBER 4-7, 2020

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The **Nebraska**Sheriff

Official publication of the Nebraska Sheriffs' Association

Published 2x yearly.
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The Nebraska Sheriffs' Association, established in 1894, is the oldest organization of its kind in the nation.

Mission Statement

To provide continuing education to Sheriffs' Offices, youth, and the public in general.

Nebraska Sheriffs' Association

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Contributors' names are listed with their articles and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Nebraska Sheriffs' Association or imply their endorsement.

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Please feel free to contact us with any questions or suggestions regarding the magazine.

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“Dedicated to the youth of Nebraska.”

Committed to Nebraska Youth for over 124 years! In its mission statement, The Nebraska Sheriffs' Association has included “dedicated to the youth of Nebraska.” Over the years, association members have consistently worked to educate children and teens on the dangers of distracted driving and drug and alcohol abuse.

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BADGES ACROSS AMERICA CAPTURES SERVICE

Retired sergeant takes camera on police patrol

By Caitlyn Nelson and Emily Hemphill, The Milford Times

Badges Across America supported the Seward and Milford law enforcement agencies when they were asked by the Seward County Sheriff's Office for their services.

Badges Across America is a non-profit organization created in April 2019 and is run by husband and wife Charlie and Tricia Simmons of Golden Colorado.

The Simmons travel to police agencies and set up free photography sessions with the officers and deputies.

Charlie also goes on ride-alongs with those on duty and gets live-action photos. Charlie is a retired sergeant from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office in Colorado. In his 27 years of service, he realized that he did not have many photos of himself on the job and wanted his fellows to have some.



"Photography had been a hobby of mine for years so I decided to start carrying my camera on shift. When the situation allowed for it, I could capture those moments of my fellow deputies doing their jobs. I had found my passions - law enforcement and photography," Simmons said on his website.

He started sharing the photos he had taken and "it just kind of went crazy," Simmons said.

After he released his photos, he received compliments, and got asked to come photograph other teams.

He has done a K-9 training team and SWAT, as well as a motorcycle unit. He made photo montage videos to share.



After more people realized what he was doing, he was told to take this bigger and do this all the time. They did this by adding stories about the officers to go along with the photos to upload to their website and share with the public.

"We had a retired dispatcher that we interviewed and her husband is a sergeant so therefore she is dispatching her spouse. For us, it was kind of intriguing, that idea of 'what was that like sending her husband into potential danger.' She dispatched Columbine, and so having those conversations, it's really heartwarming," Tricia said.

"The stories help to make them more relatable."

Charlie was in law enforcement for 27 years and Tricia is a meeting and event planner. A big learning curve for them has been social media. Charlie built their website and Instagram page, and Tricia runs the Facebook page.

"It's a new concept to people," Charlie said.

He offers everything from headshots, portraits, team photos and action shots. "I am willing and excited to do anything. I love obviously the action, I like the portrait and the fun stuff," he said.

Continued on next page...



The Simmonses were in Milford Aug. 23 to photograph the Milford Police Department.

"We went to a couple different areas here in the city and he took photographs of us and our patrol units," Milford Police Chief Forrest Siebken said.

Siebken said the department has had photos taken before to document staff members and for a law enforcement booth at the Seward County Fair years ago, but he'd never been photographed quite like this.

"I think what Charlie is doing is very valuable to us and also to the public. I think it provides a face behind the badge," Siebken said. "That shows that we're people, too. I think it's a very good opportunity to establish a better rapport with the community."

"It's been great to have them here," Seward Sheriff's Department Administration Captain Paul Vyhldal said. "It's a good thing he's doing."

The photos Charlie takes can be used as or for training materials, social media, wall portraits, distribution to employees, websites or however the agency chooses to use them.

Siebken said the photos of the Milford department will be shared on social media and given to the officers. Vyhldal said they will use the photos for themselves and to make a calendar.

To learn more, visit badgesacrossamerica.org or follow them on Facebook, Badges Across America.



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2 CORRECTIONS OFFICERS RECOGNIZED FOR SAVING INMATE'S LIFE

Written By: Leeanna Ellis, Washington County Pilot-Tribune & Enterprise

Two Washington County corrections officers were recently recognized for their efforts that saved the life of an inmate on Jan. 15.

Officer Craig Schlachter and Cpl. Shelby Keas were presented with letters of commendation by Sheriff Mike Robinson and Capt. Rob Bellamy, jail administrator, during the department's annual goal-setting and statistics meeting.

Schlachter discovered an inmate who attempted suicide by hanging himself by a bed sheet from a desk in his cell. The inmate was not breathing.

Keas responded to Schlachter's call for assistance and the two were able to loosen the sheet.

"He was not breathing when they found him," Robinson said.

But moments after loosening the sheet, the inmate began breathing on his own.

Robinson said the pair were honored for the quick action, which went "above and beyond" their normal job duties.

"They saved a life. At the end of the day, they went home knowing they saved a life. That inmate is still here today," Robinson said. "I'm very proud of them. I'm very proud of the actions they took."

Robinson said a suicide attempt doesn't warrant an investigation from the state. However, the sheriff's department completed an internal review of the incident, including policies and procedures.

"They did exactly what they were supposed to be doing, they reacted and they saved a life," he said.

"It's always a concern or fear that a suicide (will happen) in the jail," Robinson added. "You do everything you can to prevent it."

Picture Caption: Capt. Rob Bellamy, left, and Sheriff Mike Robinson present Craig Schlachter and Shelby Keas with letters of commendation for saving the life of a Washington County Jail inmate.



This is a reminder that the Nebraska Sheriff's Association is now a part of the Western States Sheriff's Association. So far the WSSA has provided us with a lot of useful information.

WSSA is a very strong voice for Sheriffs at the national level and offer their assistance at the local level as well.

For more information visit <https://westernsheriffs.org>

GOOD-BYE JOAQUIN "EL CHAPO" GUZMAN-LOERA

Written By: Jim K. Lawson, Scottsbluff County Retired Sheriff

The anticipation, excitement and the made-for-movie twelve-week trial and subsequent sentencing of notorious drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapa" GuzmanLoera is over and done with.

Following six days of deliberations, a jury of five men and seven women found Guzman guilty of all ten counts on February 12, 2019. The list of charges began with something titled, "Engaging in a Continuing Criminal Enterprise." This essentially accused him of being the mastermind behind the vast Sinaloa drug cartel.

According to Jimmy Gurule, a professor of law at Notre Dame and former federal prosecutor, jurors had to decide if they believed the witnesses, many who themselves were drug dealers or other corroborating evidence that Guzman was the man directly behind the operation.

U. S. District Judge Brian M. Corgan kept a watchful eye on the proceedings which took place at Brooklyn, New York. As you can imagine, security was extremely tight. When Guzman wasn't in court, he was housed at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan.

On July 17, 2019, the 62 year-old Guzman was handed a life sentence by Judge Corgan. An additional 30 years was tacked on due to the fact that jurors also convicted him of using firearms (including a machine gun) in connection with drug trafficking. There will be no parole - only confinement. Within 48 hours, Guzman was airlifted to the United States Federal Penitentiary at Florence, Colorado, dubbed the "Alcatraz of the Rockies."

Cameron Lindsay, a prison consultant and retired former warden commented, "I would have been shocked if they designated him anywhere else ... it is run with absolute structure and security in mind ... it's the most secure prison on earth."

U. S. Attorney Richard Donoghue was ominously quoted as saying, "he's staring at a sentence from which there is no escape and no return."

Other notorious residents at USP Florence include "shoe bomber" Richard Reid, (2001 attempted murder of aircraft passengers) Olympic Park bomber Eric Rudolph, Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, Boston Marathon Bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 9/11 conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui, Oklahoma City bombing accomplice Terry Nichols, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, organizer of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, Robert Hanssen, the former FBI agent-turned traitor and about 400 other miscreants the federal government has dubbed the "worst of the worst."

Did Guzman's arrest and subsequent conviction stop the flow of illegal drugs? Did it slow things down? Is the Sinaloa Cartel dismantled? Has the violence subsided? Of course not - it's business as usual just as everyone expected. No surprise there.

His extradition has resulted in a power struggle among the different factions of the cartel as well as his competitors. Why didn't his faithful lieutenants attempt to break him out of jail or somehow see that he never reached a prison cell? Not a chance. With Guzman out of the picture, the opportunity for advancement now presents itself. But one thing is clear - somebody is finally being held accountable. Not only for his personal involvement but for the actions of hundreds and hundreds of others associated either directly or indirectly with him and/or the Sinaloa Cartel. He was the chief, the man at the top. He was the guy in charge and they got him.

How many people did Guzman personally kill? How many orders did he issue for others to be killed? How many overdosed after consuming "his" drugs laced with "his" fentanyl or who knows what? What about those who were merely killed because of mistaken identity or simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time and getting caught



in the cross fire? How many more lost their lives due to traffic accidents or suicides brought on by the scourge of drug abuse?

And how many families are now left devastated because of the actions of Joaquin Guzman-Loera? I'm talking about the thousands who are hopelessly addicted and left with incalculable pain and suffering for the remainder of their lives.

We all know if it were not for our insatiable appetite for cocaine, heroin, marijuana and methamphetamine here in the United States, Guzman would have been required to fill that consumer void somewhere else. So, we are partly to blame. Supply and demand - simple business principles.

Those in the know have said that Guzman's reach even surpassed that of Pablo Escobar, the Colombian drug baron at the head of the feared Medellin Cartel. The U. S. Drug Enforcement Administration had labeled Guzman as the "Godfather of the drug world."

Numerous sources estimated that Guzman and the Sinaloa Cartel shipped hundreds of tons of drugs into this country and elsewhere. And their transportation network was second to none. Automobiles, airplanes, boats, trucks, trains, transnational underground tunnels. You name it - even submarines. One such report identified seven tons of cocaine that had been concealed in jalapeno cans!

According to courtroom testimony, Guzman earned a reputation for being able to deliver his "product" faster than his competitors. In fact, it earned him the nickname, "El Rapido."

On January 9, 2016, Rolling Stone Magazine published an article in which Guzman boasted to Hollywood actor Sean Penn, "I supply more heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and marijuana than anybody else in the world. I have a fleet of submarines, airplanes, trucks and boats."

If nothing else, Guzman was a cunning and shrewd businessman, albeit a killer. Between 2009 and 2011, Forbes magazine ranked Guzman as one of the richest men in the world. Authorities in Mexico and the United States are feverishly attempting to locate the proceeds of what has been estimated as a \$14 billion drug empire. Not too bad for a man with an extremely limited education!

Continued on next page...

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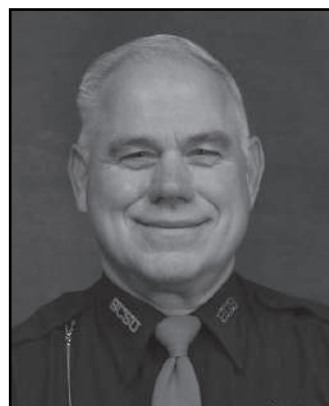
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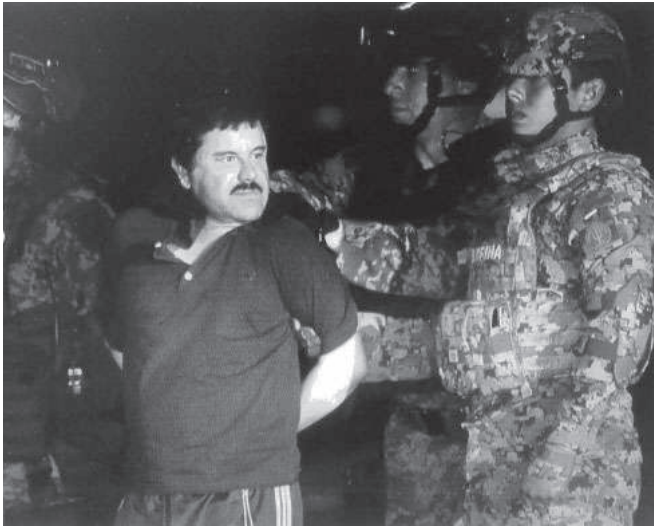
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See pages 38-40 for county businesses that are supporters of their local sheriff's office and the NSA!



According to Jack Riley, the former number two man at the U. S. Drug Enforcement Administration, "Guzman was the most business-savvy sonofabitch who ever ran a criminal organization."

Riley went on to say that Guzman had anticipated the opioid crisis. He knew Americans were being hooked on pain pills and he gambled that when they were unable to get prescription meds anymore, they would turn to his heroin.

All this was made possible by devising and utilizing an extensive, transnational narcotics manufacturing, importation, distribution and transportation organization involving hundreds and hundreds of accountants, chemists, cooks, drivers, enforcers, hit men, field workers, growers, logistics specialists, mechanics, pilots and shippers.

Don't forget about the fraudulent bankers, money launderers, "front" corporations, and political contacts as Guzman was delegating to hundreds of people while running an international drug business with tentacles stretching around the world.

But there was another side to the drug lord and his cohorts. A very dark side. Officials say the Sinaloa Cartel was responsible for much of the cartel-linked violence that has left an estimated 80,000 dead since 2006.

Those who did not perform their jobs correctly, ran up too high a drug debt, presented a security concern or cooperated with law enforcement obviously became targets of Guzman's wrath.

Acts of retribution included severe beatings, beheadings, burnings, murder, torture and even reports of injecting amphetamine into semi-conscious victims so they could be awake to endure more pain and suffer longer. Various associates recall victims who were boiled in drums or fed to exotic animals. Multiple trial witnesses testified the drug kingpin preferred to kill his victims in "creative ways" such as blowing them up with hand grenades or burying them alive.

Needless to say, the Sinaloa Cartel was extremely dangerous. Guzman's final capture and shootout with Mexican and U.S. authorities at Los Mochis on January 8, 2016 cost the lives of five Guzman associates. When the smoke finally cleared (literally) authorities uncovered two armored cars, eight assault rifles, two M-16 assault rifles with grenade launchers and one rocket-propelled grenade launcher. It's no wonder the Mexican marines had been dispatched to assist with this particular operation.

Just think of those brave souls who tried their very best to enforce the law or promote justice only to have their family members assaulted, intimidated, threatened, disappear or end up being murdered.

On October 17, 2016, Vincente Antonio Bermudez-Zacarias, a federal judge involved in Guzman's extradition proceedings was brazenly assassinated in broad daylight while jogging through the streets of Mexico City!

The drug lord was no fool. He probably didn't know a whole lot about computers but he knew enough to stay abreast of the latest technology. Witnesses said that Guzman employed Columbian IT specialist Jorge Cifuentes to install advanced encryption spyware on 50 special telephones including those carried by his five wives and serial mistresses.

The irony of it all was that the FBI had secretly "recruited" Mr. Cifuentes to work for them. So while Guzman was



listening in on some of his "inner" circle, the FBI was listening in on him.

Computer specialists at Quantico hacked their way into a custom encrypted communications system designed by Colombian computer technician Cristian Rodriquez.

You guessed it. The FBI "flipped" Rodriquez and had the cartel's computer servers moved to the Netherlands where agents could more easily unscramble the data in order to eavesdrop on Guzman.

And how about those Flores brothers, Pedro and Margarito, said to be the most prolific drug dealers in Chicago. When they finally felt the DEA closing in, they decided to cooperate and went down to the local Radio Shack electronics store and began making surreptitious telephone recordings.

By capturing incredibly incriminating calls with Guzman, the Flores brothers were able to cut possible life sentences in the federal prison system down to 14 years. When faced with years and years of hard prison time, the "offer" of cooperating with the government probably didn't sound like a bad idea for guys as young as Pedro and Margarito, or anyone else for that matter.

It was interesting to watch and listen as an exceptional number of Guzman's trusted lieutenants and business partners "ratted him out." Of the 56 witnesses called by the prosecution, 14 of those had run afoul of the DEA or the FBI and were already in federal custody or serving their sentences.

There is no way that Guzman and the cartel could not have survived without corruption. It was rampant and ran deeper than anyone could possibly imagine. From prison guards, airport officials, police officers, prosecutors, tax officials, government agents and military personnel, the list seemed to be endless. People continue to ask, just how far did this corruption go?

You may recall that a fellow by the name of Alex Cifuentes-Villa testified that two months before Enrique Pena-Nieto became President of Mexico in 2012, he accepted \$100 million from Guzman who had originally asked for \$250 million! (Pena-Nieto did not immediately respond when asked to comment.)

By the way, Pena-Nieto was beset by a series of corruption scandals throughout his six-year term.

Continued on next page...

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Another of the government's witnesses, Jesus Vicente Lambada-Niebla told the court that the Sinoloa Cartel budgeted a staggering \$1 million per month in bribes to Mexican officials, including a high-ranking defense chief as well as a security guard assigned to former Mexican President Vicente Fox!

And the witnesses kept right on telling it all (or most of it.) One former Mexican army general was accused of routinely collecting payoffs of \$100,000 to permit the flow of drugs through his military district. Even Mexico's former Public-Safety Director was named as having taken briefcases stuffed with cartel cash.

Say it ain't so, but Guillermo Gonzalez-Calderoni, the legendary Chief of Mexico City's Federal Police, perhaps best known for having helped the American authorities crack the case of slain DEA Agent Enrique Camarena-Salazar in 1985 was said to be supplying Guzman with secret information on an almost daily basis.



When examining the list of those suspected of "being on the take" everyone publically-named (so far) resided on the south side of the border. But how do you manage to operate a multi-billion dollar international drug empire involving only those people on one side of the border? I don't buy it.

Once captured, it seemed impossible to keep Guzman locked up. Following his arrest on June 9, 1993, he bribed his way out of Puente Grande (maximum security) federal prison at Jalisco and on January 19, 2001 he was rolled out the front door hidden in the bottom of a laundry cart.

His second arrest took place at Mazatlan on February 22, 2014. While incarcerated at the Altiplano (maximum security) federal prison at Almoloya, Guzman simply waited while his buddies dug an elaborate escape tunnel (almost a mile long) conveniently right under the prison. On July 11, 2015, he entered his shower stall, crawled down into that tunnel and away he went!

Following his third capture on January 8, 2016, the Mexican government had simply run out of options (and patience.) Guzman had flaunted his nose at the federal police, military, courts and prison system for many years. He had become a liability as well as a huge embarrassment. It was time to do something different - and do it quickly.

Did Guzman deserve the death penalty? Of course he did. But that was not part of the Mexican government's agreement with the United States which was seen by many as a "farewell gift" to outgoing U.S. President Obama. It has been said if there is any one thing feared by Mexican drug lords, it is something called extradition - extradition to the United States. And that is exactly what took place on January 19, 2017.

That morning, Guzman woke up (again) in the custody of the Mexican government. Before the day was over, he was placed on a jet plane (complete with DEA accommodations) and on his way to New York City. The rest is history.

Guzman leaves behind a charming (x-beauty queen) wife and two young daughters. His extravagant lifestyle which probably included delicious Mexican cuisine, beverage and traditional music in the very best restaurants will be no more. He must say good-bye to those luxurious homes in the finest resort cities and all the expensive "play toys" that money could buy.

The days of being able to "rub shoulders" with the rich and famous as well as the aspiring (or "has been") movie stars, politicians and various other "mucky-mucks" are over. (Money seems to have a way of attracting a lot of friends.) Prior to his final capture, Guzman was unquestionably in control. He had the power reserved only for the elite (if you "catch my drift.")

Just think about the adrenaline rush Guzman must have experienced after being pursued and then getting away. The "hunt and the chase," so to speak. Staying two steps ahead of the law. Going to jail and being able to escape. Looking death in the face and laughing out loud.

Guzman seemed to bask in the notoriety but undoubtedly wanted more. Fame and fortune had followed him for many years but so did the federales, Mexican military, competitive drug cartels, former x-wives/girlfriends - and the DEA.

He certainly must have enjoyed a very "interesting" life style, but after being sentenced by Judge Corgan and transported to a life of incarceration, I'm sure things are going to change.

The sights, sounds and unpleasant smells of a correctional facility, 24 hours every day, seven days every week for the remainder of his natural life. And not just any prison lock-up. USP Florence was built in 1993 for a specific reason, reserved for specific people and Guzman certainly qualifies.

Correctional wisdom predicts that Guzman will undoubtedly be locked-up in an ultra-secure unit identified as "Range 13," a four-cell wing within the prison's disciplinary unit, where inmates have virtually no human contact. And maybe that's best. El Chapo could be a "marked man" in prison. Authorities are unlikely to let him anywhere near other inmates. Prison officials are very much aware that killing a high-security inmate such as the drug kingpin is viewed as a "badge of honor," so to speak.

Security concerns dictate that Guzman will spend 23 hours a day of solitary confinement in a 12 x 7 foot soundproof cell made of concrete with a 10cm window that is aimed upwards so he can only see a glimpse of the sky.

The rooms are specifically designed and include a combination sink/toilet, shower, desk and bed, all forged from concrete. Video programming will be used to provide spiritual guidance, medical consultation and educational programming. Inmates eat in their cells. Depending on Guzman's attitude and subsequent behavior, he might be able to "earn" small privileges. What more could he possibly want?

Quoted former Prison Warden Robert Hood, "This [facility] is not built for humanity. Day by day, it's worse than death." So to you, "El Chapa," we must say good-bye. Enjoy your new home. You earned it.

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See pages 38-40 for county businesses that are supporters of their local sheriff's office and the NSA!

IT MAKES OUR CHRISTMAS

Written By: Leeanna Ellis, Washington County Pilot-Tribune & Enterprise

Trinity Dickes looked up at Washington County sheriff's deputy Greg Corns with a smile.

"Let's go shopping," he told her.

Trinity, 5, her mom, Courtney, brother Xavier, 1, and cousin Halie Ingraham followed Corns, wearing Christmas lights around his neck, to the toy section at the Blair Walmart on Monday.

They were among the 43 children from Arlington, Fort Calhoun and Herman whose Christmases will be a little brighter with help from the "Shop With A Sheriff" program, which is a joint effort between the Washington County Sheriff's Office and the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge No. 36.



The Washington County Sheriff's Office and Fraternal Order of Police Lodge No. 36 helped 43 children this year for the annual Shop With A Sheriff program.



Santa poses for a photo with Johanna La Grange, her mother, Michelle, and Washington County sheriff's deputy Austin Kelly on Monday during Shop With A Sheriff at Walmart.

Deputies, corrections officers and dispatchers helped children and their parents choose \$200 in gifts per child. Each family also received a \$50 gift card.

This is one of the greatest things we do," Detective Sgt. Brian Beckman told the families. "We truly do enjoy it."

Sheriff Mike Robinson agreed.

"It's a night we look forward to every year," he said.

Courtney Dickes, an Arlington resident, said the opportunity for her children meant so much to her family after her husband has had to change jobs several times this year.

"It's a guaranteed Christmas this year," she said. "I've been a stay-at-home mom for six years and I actually had to take up a job this year."

Lacey Redding shopped with her children, Draven, who is an Arlington student, and Vedder.

"It means a lot. It makes our Christmas," she said.

The children's father, Dagan Draven, was killed in a car crash near Hooper in June.

Redding said spending time with the deputies is a positive experience for her children.

"Cops and sheriffs are good people. They can trust them and they like them and that's a good thing," she said.

Shop With A Sheriff is funded through donations and the sheriff's offices No Shave November fundraiser. In the last week, Beckman, who organizes the event, said they were \$5,000 to \$6,000 short. "Miraculously, the community came through," Beckman said.



Tasha and Lacey Exley shop for toys with Washington County corrections officer Shelby Keas on Monday during Shop With A Sheriff in Blair.

In the week before the event, Robinson said they received \$5,000 in donation — \$3,000 from Olsen Auto.

"Tim and Monica Hirchert are some amazing people and they have been great sponsors of the sheriff's office and the FOP for the last several years, not just for this but for other things as well," Beckman said.



Washington County sheriff's deputy Coltin Bebenssee dresses in a Santa costume Monday during Shop With A Sheriff in Blair.

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MENTAL HEALTH PROGRESS

Written By: Matt Lindberg, The Columbus Telegram

As the conversation regarding mental health continues at the state and national levels, local leaders are taking action to implement solutions in hopes to better the community.

In 2019, the Platte County Board of Supervisors budgeted almost \$13,000 to address mental health issues those in the law enforcement and justice fields have come across through their everyday work. The decision to fund these efforts came after a presentation by Platte County Deputy Attorney Elizabeth Lay in mid-2019. Lay handles various mental health commitments on behalf of the county attorney's office.

"I am so excited about this programming," Lay told The Telegram. "We already have people utilizing the funding and I think it is going to help a lot of people get on the path towards better choices and a better life."

The Supervisors put money toward three aspects of mental health programs to address local needs. First, the board approved \$5,000 in the Platte County Sheriff's Office budget to fund evaluations for defendants in criminal cases that cannot afford the evaluation on their own. To be eligible, defendants must be part of a pending adult case, be appointed an attorney by the court, and participating in a plea deal that contemplates an evaluation and treatment to be eligible for the funds.

The board also approved \$5,000 in the General Assistance budget for counseling services for defendants in criminal cases that cannot afford treatment on their own. The same eligibility requirements exist for these funds as for the other. The county will pay up to three sessions for a defendant, according to Lay.

The board put an additional \$2,500 toward mental health treatment costs in the Adult Diversion Program, which aims to provide an alternative to court for eligible adult offenders charged with lower-level offenses.

"I think it is safe to say that they understand how big of an issue this is for our community," Lay said about the Board of Supervisors.

Funding mental health programs was important when considering the future of the county as a whole, according to Platte County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jerry Engdahl. He said more people are facing mental health problems in the area each year, noting that it's unfortunate some of those folks end up in a prison cell because of it.

"We need to look after everybody, including those with mental health problems," Engdahl said. "We're striving and hoping to make a positive influence."

Coming from Lincoln, Lay moved to town seven years ago and said she has seen firsthand what happens when people with mental illness don't have the support they need to get better.

"It's awful to see that cycle – it's a vicious cycle," she said. "They do things they normally wouldn't do. It's really important to have someone who is sitting back and trying to figure out how we solve that."

Platte County Sheriff Ed Wemhoff said he believes there is a direct correlation to mental health and criminal activity, noting there have been many people who have served time in the local facility that have mental health problems, substance abuse issues, and sometimes, both.

Although the sheriff's office was already working with a mental health professional, Wemhoff said he was all ears when Lay approached him about how the sheriff's office could help identify mental health problems in the area. The goal was to develop a plan that would have minimal impact on the day-to-day operations of the sheriff's office, while also being able to make something like an evaluation work within officers' other duties.

"It was beneficial having other supervisors here at the sheriff's office understanding and recognizing the benefits of working with such a program," he said.



Platte County Sheriff Ed Wemhoff, left, and Platte County Deputy Attorney Elizabeth Lay discuss programs regarding mental health in the area during a discussion in January in the sheriff's office in Columbus.

Mental health hits home for Lay. She suffered from postpartum depression and anxiety after the birth of her first child, and though her anxiety went away, for the most part, she acknowledged she struggles with it to some degree even today.

"I, however, am lucky enough to have had needed resources available to me and to know where to find resources when I needed them," Lay said, noting she has seen family members and friends deal with depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety and more and watched how the effects of those diseases radiate through family units and wreak havoc in people's lives.

"So many people don't know where to turn when things go south. So many people don't have resources available to them."

Having lived in larger communities, Lay emphasized there is a gap right now between what can be done for mental health in urban areas and the rural ones. Lay said she has seen more and more people she deals with in the mental health system enter the criminal system and vice-versa.

"That is why I am so passionate about making sure people have the help they need when they need it," Lay said. "People are dying, and if we can save lives, then we have a duty to do so. I am so proud that our county now has a hand in that. I think it's a really big step for a smaller county to take initiative on that and say, 'OK, we're not getting enough help in this area. We need to do something.'"

Wemhoff said he doesn't believe the issue will ever go away completely and the impact of the funds might not be seen for a while. But, he noted, he believes they will make a difference down the line.

"I would say these funds will be more likely to benefit the County Attorney's Office as they evaluate and access each case, as they attempt to do what is best for the community as a whole," Wemhoff said. "Together we recognize that many individuals currently incarcerated are suffering from mental health and if we can get them the help and support they need to keep them out of jail, this would be a direct relation to less criminal activity."

Matt Lindberg is the managing editor of The Columbus Telegram. Reach him via email at matt.lindberg@lee.net.

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Written By: Lobbyists Jon Edwards & Russell Westerhold, Nowka & Edwards

The 2020 session of the Nebraska Legislature is in full swing. This year's 60 day session began on January 8th and is scheduled to conclude mid-April. The NSA has been actively working on several legislative bills of interest to NSA members, including:

- **LB816 (McCollister) Provide for information and training on firearm safety and suicide prevention and place restrictions and requirements on certain transfers of firearms.** With the amendment proposed by Senator McCollister, this bill would: (1) increase the fee for a handgun purchase permit from \$5 to \$10; (2) increase handgun purchase permit application processing time from three days to five; (3) create a mandatory two day waiting period for the permit; and (4) require a chief of police or sheriff to prepare suicide prevention and firearm safety information to be distributed when certificate of use is issued. The bill also contains separate provisions aimed at addressing the "gun show loophole."
- **LB1156 (Vargas) Provide for a statewide school panic button program.** This bill would establish a school panic button program by requiring the Department of Education to develop a program allowing for automated text message apps.
- **LB924 (Chambers) Change provisions relating to racial profiling and require law enforcement training.** This bill prohibits the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement from providing loans, grants, funds or donations to any law enforcement agency that is not providing a specified amount of "anti-bias and implicit bias training and testing designed to minimize apparent and actual racial profiling" and requires agency reporting of training efforts.



- **LB58 (Morfeld) Adopt the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act.** Otherwise known as the "Red Flags" bill, The Extreme Risk Protection Order Act allows a court to intervene in extreme cases where a person has demonstrated that they are a danger to themselves or others, have access to a firearm and have made threats of violence. An affidavit may be filed with the court by a law enforcement official seeking such an order. If the court finds that a person poses a significant risk of injuring themselves or others with a firearm, that person could be temporarily prohibited from purchasing and possessing guns and required to turn over their guns while the order is in effect.

Members who have questions or want additional information about these or any other legislative items are invited to contact Nowka & Edwards (the NSA's lobbyists) to discuss.

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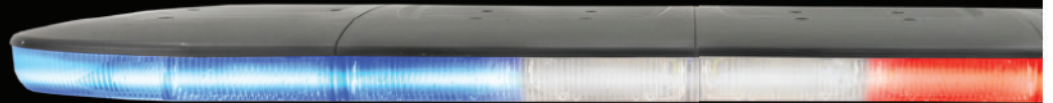


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OSCEOLA PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT RANDOM STUDENT DRUG TESTING

Written By: Erin Dickey, Polk County News

At the December 9, 2019, Osceola School Board of Education meeting, a motion passed to approve Random Drug Testing Policy 5013 as written by KSB Law and to hire Sport Safe Testing Service, Inc. to implement the drug testing program effective January 2020. Random student drug testing will be implemented for grade 7-12 students participating in any school activity and conducted by School Safe Testing Service, Inc.

The five primary goals of implementing a student substance testing program are:

1. To assist parents in keeping their children substance free.
2. To deter and prevent substance use.
3. To reinforce all other prevention efforts.
4. To identify students who need help getting and staying substance-free.
5. To prepare students for workplace drug testing.

On January 6, 2020, the program will start with a mandatory student and parent meeting for all students grades 7-12 who want to be involved in school activities. It is not mandated that students be a part of the testing pool; however, in order to participate in school sponsored activities, parents must sign a release form that places students in the testing pool. At this meeting parents will be asked to sign a release form allowing their child to go into the testing pool and continue to be involved in extracurricular activities at Osceola Public Schools.

Each day that students are present in school, they are eligible for a random test even if they were tested the day before. Students are randomly selected and are individually excused from class for a short period of time. Students are brought to the school's office where they instructed that they have been randomly selected to be tested on that day. Students will have the opportunity to self-identify at this time. The entire process is minimally invasive and is completely conducted by experienced and trained individuals of Sport Safe Testing Service, Inc. The test is sent to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) certified laboratories. Substances that students participating in extra-curricular activities may be randomly tested for: nicotine, alcohol, amphetamines, cannabinoids, cocaine, opiates, synthetic opiates, and PCP, and other substances, such as but not limited to steroids, barbiturates, and benzodiazepines without advance notice as part of tests authorized by the Board for safety purposes. Such tests will be coordinated with the Drug Program Coordinator.

"It's not that we want to catch our students doing wrong, it's that we want to help give our students another way out and be able to say no to peer pressure. And like our school, we want our programs to be drug free!" explained Superintendent Steve Rinehart.

A positive drug test result may indicate recent use of illegal drugs. Throughout the following procedures, confidentiality is kept among all parties involved. The positive test is verified by a Medical Review Officer (MRO) who is a licensed physician who is responsible for reviewing laboratory drug test results and evaluating medical explanations for certain drug test results. The School Principal is contacted by the 3rd Party Administrator, parents are then notified by the School Principal. No law enforcement is involved. Students who test

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positive may choose to pay for a drug counseling class chosen by the district and not be able to participate in extra curricular activities for 21 days. Otherwise, students who test positive the first time will not be able to participate for 45 days. Second offense will be for 90. Follow-up testing takes place to help the student remain drug-free. If on follow-up testing after the student is evaluated, the student will meet with the school counselor to further discuss the consequences of substance use.

Osceola joins other schools such as Adams Central, Fairbury and Central City who provide their students with the support to not only manage peer pressure but to receive help for substance abuse issues. This step lays a foundation for the integrity of Osceola Public Schools and all extra-curricular activities by setting a standard with realistic consequences and opportunities for assistance if needed.

To find out more please visit osceolaschools.org

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READY, AIM, ENGAGED: WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES TO MARRY AFTER UNIQUE PROPOSAL

Written By: Leeanna Ellis, Washington County Pilot-Tribune & Enterprise



Washington County sheriff's deputies Ashley Robinson and Alex Judkins got engaged last week following a unique proposal at a gun range.

It was the most important shot of Ashley Robinson's life and she didn't want to miss it.

Robinson and her boyfriend, Alex Judkins, were headed to Omaha on May 7 for what Robinson thought was a dentist appointment.

But as the couple, who are both Washington County sheriff's deputies, arrived at the 88 Tactical shooting range, Alex told her he had cancelled the appointment and they were going to the range instead.

Another officer was just finishing in the range, so Alex asked Ashley to get a rental gun.

"While she was gone, I quickly made the target, put it out and loaded the pistol and set everything out," Alex said.

When she returned, Alex took Ashley's hand and led her down the range to the target. The other officer video recorded the event.

"We don't really need the pistol," Alex said.

"We don't?" Ashley asked.

About halfway down, Ashley realized what was happening. The target read, "Will you marry me?" with two boxes — one for yes and one for no.

"I made the no box significantly smaller than the yes box," Alex said later. "She had a chance, but she really had to work to say no."

Alex got down on one knee, slipped the ring on her finger and then handed her a pistol.

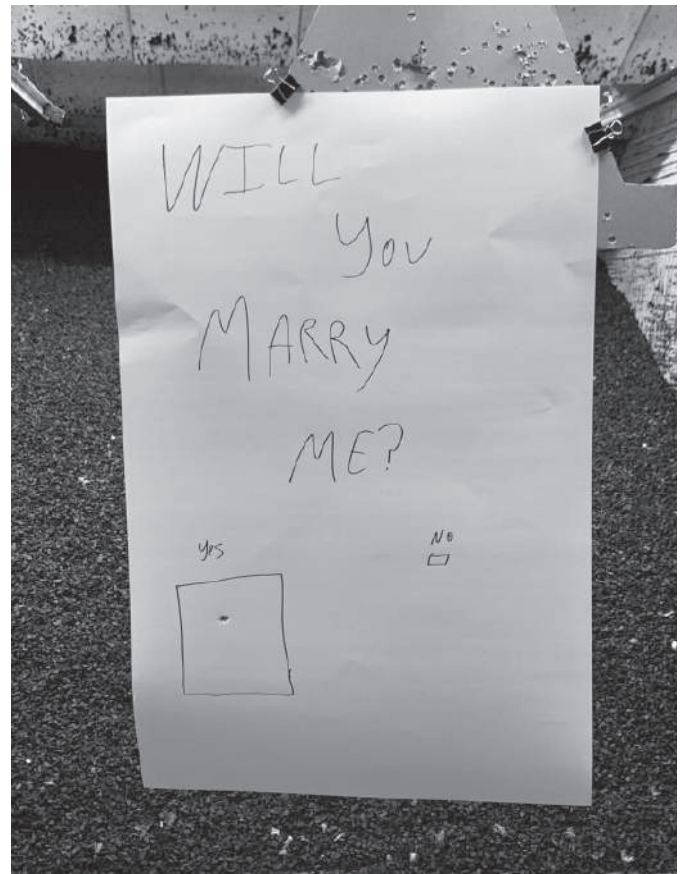
"You do have to shoot your answer," he said.

"What if I miss?" she asked, her hands shaking.

But she didn't. Ashley hit the target nearly dead center in the yes box.

As is tradition, Alex sought permission from Ashley's father — who happens to be Sheriff Mike Robinson — for her hand in marriage. Alex admitted it was more than a little intimidating.

"After I talked to him, I told him I had to go home and have a drink because it was actually scarier than being deployed overseas," he joked. "I've always had a lot of respect for him. He's been a fantastic leader and boss. I'm thrilled to have him as a father-in-law, quite honestly, but it was nerve racking."



Alex Judkins made a sign for his girlfriend Ashley Robinson to answer a special question he posed to her last week.

Continued on next page...

2020 NSA/POAN CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020

- 12:00-6:00 PM Open Registration
- 1:00-2:00 PM Nebraska Crime Commission Update
- 2:00-5:00 PM Speaker – TBA
- 5:00-7:00 PM NSA Annual Meeting
- 5:00-7:00 PM POAN Board Meeting
- 7:00-11:00 PM Hospitality Room

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2020

- 7:00-8:30 AM Open Registration
- 8:30-9:00 AM Opening Session Attorney General
National Anthem
Color Guard
- 9:00-10:00 AM Speaker – TBA
- 9:00-1:00 PM Spouses Program
Corky Creations & Lunch
- 10:00-10:30 AM Break In Vendor Area
- 10:30-12:00 PM Speaker – TBA
- 12:00-1:00 PM Lunch Provided in Vendor Area
Highway Safety Luncheon *(invite only)*
- 1:05 PM Afternoon Drawing in Classroom
- 1:15-2:30 PM Speaker – TBA
- 2:30-3:00 PM Break in Vendor Area
- 3:00-4:45 PM Speaker – TBA
- 5:30-7:30 PM President's Reception
- 7:30-11:00 PM Hospitality Room –
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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020

- 8:00-10:00 AM Speaker – TBA
- 10:00-10:30 AM Break in the Vendor Area
- 10:30-12:00 PM Speaker – TBA
- 12:00-12:45 PM Lunch On Your Own
POAN Annual Luncheon *(POAN Members Only)*
- 1:00-2:30 PM Speaker – TBA
- 2:30-3:00 PM Break in Vendor Area
- 3:00-5:00 PM Speaker – TBA
- 6:00-9:00 PM NSA & POAN Awards Banquet
- 6:00-6:30 PM Cocktails
- 6:30-9:00 PM Conference Banquet and Awards
Entertainment: TBA
- 9:00-11:00 PM Hospitality Room –
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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2020

- 8:00-10:00 AM Speaker – TBA
- 10:00-10:30 AM Break in the Vendor Area
- 10:30-12:00 PM Speaker – TBA
- 12:00-12:15 PM Closing Comments
- 12:15-1:15 PM POAN Board Meeting

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Ashley Robinson shows off her ring after Alex Judkins proposed May 7.

Alex took a lesson from a former co-worker, who would often buy the sheriff a Nutty Buddy Bar prior to asking him for anything.

"I went to Sam's Club and I got a giant industrial pack of Nutty Buddy Bars, brought them with me and presented them to him first before I asked for her hand in marriage," he said.

Mike said he was happy for both of them and supports their decision.

"I always thought they would be a good couple if they got together," he said.

Alex and Ashley first met about a year ago.

"The first time I met her was in jail," he said.

"I was working in corrections," Ashley clarified.

At the time, Alex didn't know she was the boss' daughter. He had been employed with the sheriff's office for about a year, but had yet to meet her because they worked different shifts.

"I remember seeing her and thinking who is this girl?" he said. "She was fun and quirky and not your typical corrections officer."

At first, Ashley wasn't too keen on Alex, who admitted he can come off as "cocky." But soon, Ashley got to know "the real" Alex and they developed a friendship.

They are best friends, the couple said. However, they only began dating about a month ago.

Alex had a "huge" crush on Ashley.

"But, quite honestly, I thought she was out of my league," he said.

"I thought he was dating other people, so he must not be interested," Ashley said.

At the encouragement of Deputy Nikki Kruse, Alex finally asked Ashley out on a date through a text message. Upon reading the text, Ashley literally walked into a wall.

"I was taking the dogs out so I was reading and walking through the house, talking to my parents and the dogs," she said. "I was trying to read it and pay attention, but there was too much going on. I read it and — crack — right into the doorway."

After one date, Alex said he knew Ashley was the one for him.

Ashley agreed.

"You just know when it's right," she said.

Though they are both deputies, the couple works separate shifts. They also keep their personal life separate from their work life.

"When she's in uniform, she's in uniform. When we're on duty, we're on duty. I look at her like I would any other deputy," Alex said. "I have immense respect for what she does, especially being a female officer."

The couple is planning a June 2020 wedding, but first Ashley will complete her certification at the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center in Grand Island. She left this past weekend and will graduate in August.

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THE REGIONAL APPROACH TO 911

SOUTH CENTRAL/PANHANDLE REGIONAL MODEL

Written By: Lt. Robert Tubbs, Buffalo County Sheriff's Office 911 Division

Buffalo County started looking at the regional approach to 911 when we began hearing of places talking about consolidation. We felt it was a better option to be able to regionalize and share the expense of the backroom call handling equipment.

By sharing expenses, it would allow the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) to keep 911 local to their communities while still being cost effective. Other places in the state were also doing the same thing and regions were starting to develop throughout the state.

In 2015, Buffalo and Dawson counties started looking at a multi-node for their 911 call handling equipment, and the South Central Nebraska 911 Regional group was formed.

In a multi-node environment, two or more nodes share the backroom equipment with remote PSAPs. This allows a cost effective way to share the expensive backroom equipment along with the maintenance to the system.

The South Central NE 911 Region started working through the logistics and how we could make this system robust. In the event of a problem, such as fiber cuts and equipment failures, we wanted to insure that we had a system that would have a failover. At that time Kearney, Frontier and Furnas counties, and Holdrege were interested in joining the multi-node.

In the beginning, the plan was to have Buffalo County be the main node and Dawson County to be node B. However, due to the extra cost of last mile service for connectivity in Buffalo County it was more cost effective to have Dawson County be the main node and Buffalo County be node B.

In 2015, Kearney County, Holdrege and Frontier counties became remotes off Dawson County. In 2016, Furnas County joined the region.

We were also working toward making Buffalo County the secondary host or node B at that time. It took some time to upgrade the equipment at Buffalo County to allow us to be a secondary host and change those configurations. That was completed in February of 2017 and we became a true multi-node with failover between the two host equipment sites at that time.

After getting both hosts up and running, we began diversifying the 911 lines by placing the remote PSAPs main 911 lines at Dawson County. Failover 911 lines were also placed at the secondary node at Buffalo County.

This would allow 911 calls to be answered in Dawson and Buffalo County if the remote PSAP lost connectivity to the hosts. This also allowed the 911 call to traverse the network if one of the nodes had an equipment failure.

We also set up ring groups that allowed the system to reroute calls to other ring groups if the call is not answered within in 30 seconds. We set these up to ring positions at both hosts, their neighboring PSAP and keep ringing the original PSAP. In this scenario, the chance of a 911 call going unanswered was reduced considerably.

The regional PSAP could then use the state Regional Operability Channels (ROC) to get that call information back to the original PSAP to be dispatched locally if the regional 911 network was down.

In 2018, North Platte and McCook joined. In 2019, we had interest from the Panhandle region combining with the South Central Region, and the South Central/Panhandle NE 911 Region was developed. Then in 2019 Howard County, Garden County, Chase County, Franklin County and Keith County joined.

In 2020, we are looking to add Cheyenne, Kimball, Hitchcock, Dundy, Morrill and Box Butte counties, and Chadron. at having Cheyenne County, Kimball County, Hitchcock County, Dundy County, Morrill County, Box Butte County and Chadron being connected. We are also looking at adding a third 3rd node in Chadron with

the upgrade of our 911 Call Handling Software that would allow for more than two nodes, which would help diversify geographically the locations of our nodes.

With the amount of fiber cuts we were starting to experience, we also started looking at how we could develop a failover system if the regional 911 network would fail in the event of a fiber cut. We looked at a software defined Wide Area Network or SD WAN solution along with Border Gateway Protocol, or BGP Solution.

We decided to use the BGP solution, which would allow the network traffic to traverse the PSAP's already existing internet in a 911 network failure. In the end, it was decided the BGP was the best solution for what we were doing.

That solution was tested for proof of concept at both North Platte and Buffalo County in January 2020, and it worked well. At this time, we are working to bring Dawson County and the remote PSAPs online with the BGP solution.

The benefits we have seen in this regional approach are the cost savings of the maintenance and upgrade costs being shared for the host equipment by the region. Secondly the failover scenarios we have seen have kept PSAPs able to answer 911 calls with location information in a failure scenario rather than having those 911 calls go to an administrative line as they may have previously.

When those calls go to an administrative line, they are not receiving that critical location information, or worse, not being answered at all. All of this is done automatically by the system without taking the time to do manual reroutes.

Lastly, the information sharing that occurs between the PSAPs in our region has been beneficial at helping each other. This will also allow all the PSAPs in the region to share Emergency Services Internet Protocol Networks (ESInets) in next generation 911.

By having all these PSAPs connected, you only need to place ESInets at the hosts and those can then traverse the regional network that is in place. This is a huge cost savings for all those PSAPs in the region, along with the cost savings to the state.

The 911 world is constantly evolving and the regional approach will help us keep up with these ever-changing environments. While bringing in Next Generation 911 as cost effective as possible and ensuring the chance of a 911 call going unanswered has been reduced significantly.

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'IT'S CREEPY': UNEXPLAINED DRONES ARE SWARMING BY NIGHT OVER COLORADO

Written By: Mitch Smith, *The New York Times*

Sheriffs in western Nebraska and eastern Colorado say they don't know who's flying the drones — or why. The F.A.A. is investigating.

They come in the night: Drones — lots of them — flying in precise formations over the Colorado and Nebraska prairie.

Whose are they? Unknown.

Why are they there? Unclear.

"It's creepy," said Missy Blackman, who saw three drones hovering over her farm outside Palisade, Neb., on a recent evening, including one that lingered right above her house. "I have a lot of questions of why and what are they, and nobody seems to have any answers."

Since before Christmas, sheriff's departments in the region have been bombarded with reports of large drones with blinking lights and wingspans of up to 6 feet flying over rural towns and open fields. The drones have unnerved residents, prompted a federal investigation and made international news, even though they may be perfectly legal. And still, they remain unexplained.

"In terms of aircraft flying at night and not being identified, this is a first for me personally," said Sheriff James Brueggeman of Perkins County, Neb., who has worked in law enforcement for about 28 years and who saw the drones while on patrol Tuesday night.

He said he had heard rumblings about people wanting to shoot down a drone, and had urged residents to report the sightings to law enforcement instead. "I think it's kind of a joke, but you have to remember the part of the country we live in," the sheriff said. "People here don't like their privacy to be invaded."

The flights have drawn attention just as the Federal Aviation Administration last week proposed sweeping new regulations that would require most drones to be identifiable. Ian Gregor, a spokesman for the F.A.A., said that the timing of the proposed rule was coincidental, but that the agency had opened an investigation of the sightings in Colorado and Nebraska.

"Multiple F.A.A. divisions and government agencies are investigating these reports," Mr. Gregor said in an email. He declined to discuss the inquiry in detail, but said investigators were trying to determine who was operating the drones and the purpose of the flights.



A drone flown by Colorado farmers in 2015. The Federal Aviation Administration has opened an inquiry into mysterious drone sightings over Colorado and Nebraska.

On Facebook, 911 dispatch lines and local newspaper columns, the drones have been the talk of rural Colorado and Nebraska. And as sightings increase — people in four counties said they had seen them on Tuesday — so too does the urgency of residents' questions.

Some have suggested they might be part of a simple mapping operation, or a land survey conducted by an oil and gas company — but why would such flights run at night?

Senator Cory Gardner, Republican of Colorado, said on social media that he would "closely monitor the situation." A newspaper headline in Akron, Colo., asked, "What's with the drones?"

Multiple law enforcement agencies warned residents that shooting a drone out of the sky would be a crime.

"They're high enough where you couldn't shoot one anyway, but they're low enough that they're a nuisance," said Dawn George, who lives near Wray, Colo., and whose Border collie has barked at the drones when they fly over her property.

Ms. George said she had heard wild speculation about who might be responsible for the flights — the government? a cartel? a gas company? — and feared they would never know the truth.

"All the sudden, it's just going to stop and we're not going to have answers," Ms. George said. "And that's very unsettling to a lot of people. It's the fear of the unknown."

Unmanned drones, which have exploded into popular usage in recent years and can be used for everything from mapping to photography to farming, can be difficult to track. Operators of all but the smallest drones have been required to register with the federal government since 2015, but there is no straightforward, legal way for state and local officials to identify the owner of a particular drone or to track that drone's location.

"Like in many other areas of drone regulation, the statutory and regulatory framework is lagging the technology," said Reggie Govan, a former chief counsel to the F.A.A. who now teaches at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. "It's just that simple."

Mr. Govan said that federal officials had tracking tools to figure out where the Colorado and Nebraska drones were coming from, but that the vast area over which the drones were operating could make that task difficult.

Limitations in drone detection have allowed rogue drone operators to approach the White House without raising alarms and, in another extreme case, to deploy homemade bombs in a Pennsylvania neighborhood. Though it was not clear that the drones flying over Colorado and Nebraska were violating the law, residents and local officials said they would welcome the proposed new F.A.A. rule that would make it easier to identify drones.

"Most people are very reasonable, and they say it could be somebody mapping or doing topography," said Michael Yowell, a sheriff's captain in Lincoln County, Colo.,

Continued on next page...

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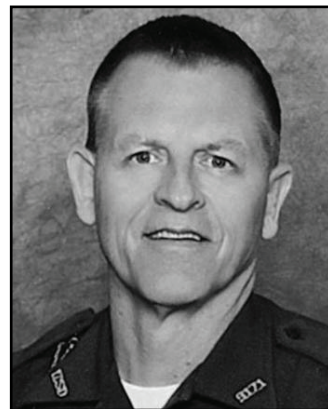
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whose house was buzzed over by a drone squadron on New Year's Eve. "But you can't rule out what you don't know."

The drone sightings started in northeast Colorado around mid-December and have only grown more widespread since then. Almost all the sightings have occurred between sunset and about 10 p.m., though Ms. Blackman said she had seen them out later one night in Nebraska and, for the first time on Wednesday, during daylight hours. She said

she had looked at them through binoculars and did not see any markings, just plain silver and white coloring.

Across the state line in Colorado, Captain Yowell tried to photograph the drones on Tuesday night with the camera he uses to document crime scenes, but came away without a clear image. He estimated that up to 30 drones were flying each night, though not all in the same place.

He said local officials were studying the flight path of the drones and coordinating across county lines to figure out where they were coming from. If his analysis was correct, he said, the drones would be back out on Wednesday night, flying in a grid pattern in the rural area between Hugo and Karval, Colo., about 100 miles southeast of Denver.

"We want to know, at around 10 o'clock, when we start to lose visuals of these, which direction are they homing? Which way are they heading?" Captain Yowell said. "We hope that's how we can contact somebody on the ground." Sheriff Todd Combs of Yuma County, Colo., said in a Facebook post Tuesday that the drones appeared to be staying at least 150 feet from buildings or people, based on the footage he has seen.

"There are many theories about what is going on, but at this point, that's all they are," he said. "I think we are all feeling a little bit vulnerable due to the intrusion of our privacy that we enjoy in our rural community, but I don't have a solution."

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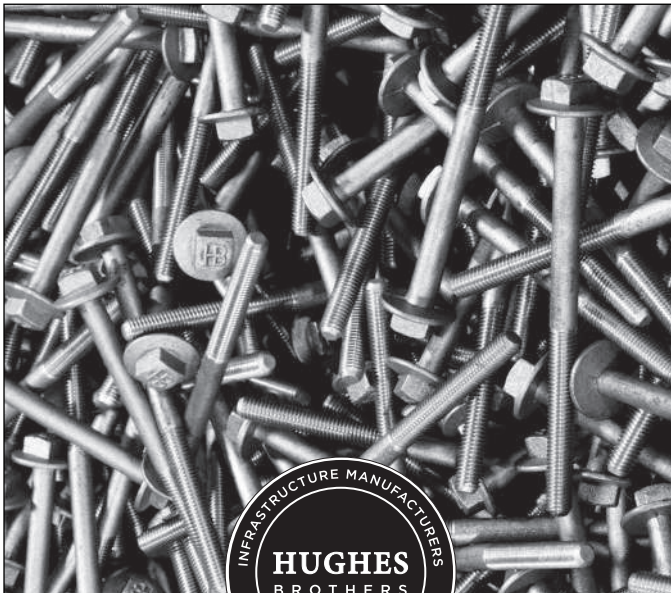
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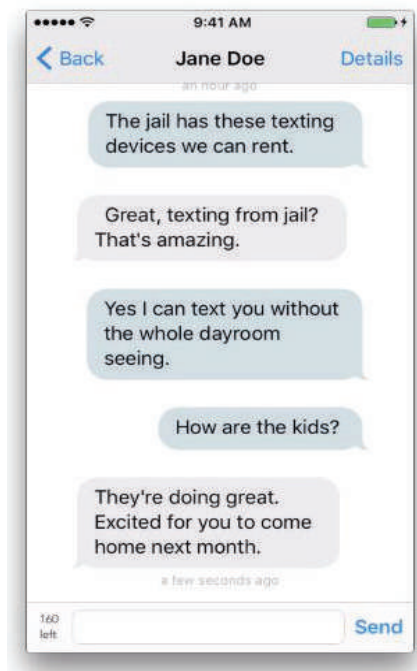
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