



NEWS Texas/Southwest

Phoenix steps up to fight smuggling

Sheriff to use tip line, federal agents to stop illegal immigration

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PHOENIX – Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio says his office is launching a new crackdown against human smuggling of illegal immigrants.

The intense effort includes working to spot human smugglers, a tip line and deputized federal agents.

"We are quickly becoming a full-fledged anti-illegal-immigration agency," Sheriff Arpaio said.

The effort centers on using 160 deputies cross-trained in immigration law to scour Phoenix-area highways and roads, Sheriff Arpaio said.

Deputies will use SWAT, aviation and electronic surveillance, night vision and high-tech weaponry to target vehicles commonly used to move large numbers of illegal immigrants, Sheriff Arpaio told the *East Valley Tribune*. If such a vehicle is stopped for speeding, for example, anyone inside the vehicle who's determined to be an illegal immigrant will be arrested.

Sheriff Arpaio said enforcement won't be based on racial profiling.

"We're not going to go out on a street corner and round up people because they look like they're from a foreign country," he said.

However, a county official said she is concerned about another initiative – a new telephone hotline to report information about illegal immigrants.

"I think a lot of innocent people will get caught up in this, just because their skin's brown," said county Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox.

Sheriff Arpaio didn't know how the tips will be used.

"It's an intelligence-gathering tool," he said.

On Monday, the sheriff will deputize 64 federal immigration agents to act as both federal and local law enforcement agents.

The Associated Press