

Ranch.2.1

Chris Simcox won't stop fooling with his gun. He paces his tiny office, bouncing on the balls of his feet, and every fifteen seconds his hands go to the gun on his belt -- hiking it up, adjusting its angle, checking its safety. It's a big gun, a two-toned .45 in a hard plastic holster, and whenever he is photographed by the media -- which is often these days -- Simcox makes sure the pistol is in every frame.

Simcox speaks of sovereignty, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the rule of law, but his body language is all about the gun. Sooner or later he's going to use it, he wants everybody to know, in a showdown with the illegal aliens and Mexican drug dealers he believes are ruining the United States. "These are enemies who are wrecking our economy," he says, his eyes shiny with emotion. "This is about national security." If Simcox dies in a blaze of border gunfire, so be it, he says. "Damn them. That's how much I care about my country."¹

Simcox would be naught but an anonymous zealot with a death wish if, in October, he hadn't flamboyantly demonstrated the dictum that freedom of the press is best enjoyed by those who own one. At 42, he is owner, editor, and publisher (and reporter, ad director, and circulation manager) of the weekly Tombstone, Arizona, Tumbleweed, circulation [TK]. His October

¹ Chris Simcox, 520-457-3008

24 issue bore the headline: "Enough is Enough! A Public Call to Arms!" The paper invited readers to join a "Citizens Border Patrol Militia"² whose function, Simcox says, will be to "shame the government into doing its job" of controlling the nation's border with Mexico. "We need some good old-fashioned discipline in this country," Simcox explains as he fitfully circles the Tumbleweed's one-room office. "I invite someone to come up with a damned solution."³

The Tumbleweed doesn't circulate beyond Tombstone, a hamlet of 1,400 amidst the vastness of the southern Arizona desert. But the Internet took Simcox's article global, and about a hundred people, he says, have since signed up to join him. Simcox says the only requirement for membership in his Citizen's Militia is an Arizona license to carry a concealed pistol. "That will screen out the criminals and loonies," he says. Hundreds more people are e-mailing messages of support, he says, and "thousands" of dollars in contributions are pouring in. Simcox is vague about what exactly his volunteers will do. For the last few months, he and a handful of friends have been offering, in their spare time, to serve as private security guards for ranchers, and when his militia gets off the ground it will probably do likewise, he says. "We challenge (migrants), detain them for fifteen minutes, and evict them," Simcox says. "We hold them any more than that, and we

² Tombstone Tumbleweed, October 24, 2002

³ Chris Simcox, 520-457-3008

can be charged with kidnapping.” He says he hasn’t yet had his gun out of its holster.

He has, however, attracted a lot of attention. Reporters are pouring in. Simcox can’t meet at 4:00 because he has an interview with the Chicago Tribune, and then another at 5:00 with the Frankfurter Allgemeiner. Perhaps predictably, two other border militias are edging into his spotlight. Ranch Rescue of Texas has been quietly sending armed volunteers to private spreads around the southwest since 2000, to repair damage caused by migrants and, less commonly, run them off.⁴ So far, no one has been reported hurt in a confrontation, its organizer says. Another new outfit called American Border Patrol is gearing up to send volunteers equipped with webcams and satellite uplinks along the border, to stream live online video of migrants crossing illegally into the U.S.⁵ The groups differ in tactics, but all three share an apocalyptic vision of an America under siege. “We cannot let (the Mexicans) export their failures,” says Glenn Spencer, the long-haired, [TK] year-old organizer of American Border Patrol. “They are a threat to our entire culture.”⁶

None of these “organizations” can produce more than a handful of supporters, and an informal poll – in restaurants, gas stations, and on the streets of southwest Arizona – turns up few ready to strap on a gun and join

⁴ Jerry Foote, Ranch Rescue Texas 915-888-0518

⁵ Scott Spencer, American Border Patrol, 520-227-1315

⁶ Scott Spencer, American Border Patrol, 520-227-1315

them. "If you ask me, Simcox and them are assholes," says Cathy, who declines to give her last name when I meet her at a Chevron station in Bisbee, four miles from the border. "(Migrants) come through our land all the time, but so what? They're not doing any harm."

Joanne Young, who tends bar at the Crazy Horse Saloon in Tombstone, says "Simcox doesn't have ten people in this town on his side." Tombstone lives on tourism, she says, "and visitors are down this year from last. People are calling and saying, 'I don't want to bring my children there; it isn't safe.'"⁷

Still, few in Arizona dismiss the border militiamen. While reporters are drawn by the photogenic firearms, fiery Rambo quotes, and a morbid certainty that sooner or later somebody's going to get killed, locals know Simcox and his allies are on to something. In their half-baked, xenophobic, scary-screwball way, they've identified a real problem: the U.S.-Mexico border is a disaster.

Consider the small town of Douglas, Arizona, which hunkers up to the line 40 miles southeast of Tombstone. Last year, the Border Patrol station here arrested an average 150 illegal immigrants a day.⁸ That's more than 54,000 border jumpers in a town of only 14,000 residents, and it doesn't count ones that get away. The total coming through might be three or five or ten times more. Nobody knows.

⁷ Joanne Young, 520-457-3827

⁸ Border Patrol Supervisor Mike Hyatt, 520-805-6600

What turned the stampede of illegal immigrants through this corner of Arizona was a Border Patrol policy shift in 1994. Until then, Border Patrol agents concentrated on catching illegal migrants. They'd hang back from the border and hide behind boulders until the migrants crossed in front of them, or spend hours and even days tracking them across the desert. They chased them at high speeds through the streets and back yards of El Paso and San Diego. Agents polished their careers by catching illegals, and the only way to do that was to let them cross first.

In 1994, the chief of the Border Patrol's El Paso office, Sylvester Reyes, turned that policy on its head. He decided to put all his men right on the line to deter migrants from crossing in the first place. And he built the Border Patrol's first Berlin Wall-type fence right along El Paso's southern border, dividing it from Ciudad Juarez. He called his new strategy Operation Hold the Line, and measured success not by how many migrants and agent caught, but, in a sense, by how few. Reyes didn't want migrants crossing at all. The Border Patrol in San Diego quickly followed suit, and the policy of hardening the border in and near populated areas spread along the border. (Reyes now represents El Paso in Congress.)⁹

As it became increasingly hard to cross the border in cities, migrants had no choice but to venture farther into the desert, where the risks are tremendous. Since the fortification of the cities, more migrants die each year

⁹ Carlos Carrillo, assistant chief of the Border Patrol's Tucson sector, (520) 670-6871

on the U.S.-Mexico border than died trying to cross the Berlin Wall during its entire 28-year history.¹⁰

But the 1994 strategy change has been hard on rural Americans living near the border, too. All three militias are active here in Cochise County, Arizona, because this is the most popular new migration route. Depending on how you estimate the ratio of immigrants captured to the total, it's possible that ten times as many illegal aliens pass through Cochise County – a million or more -- as there are Americans living here.¹¹ "I have them through my property all the time, every day," says Gary McBride, who ranches 30 miles north of the border, near Tombstone. "They leave stock fences open so the cows get out. They damage water tanks. They leave behind an unbelievable amount of trash, which my cows sometimes eat and get sick. We're damned tired of it."¹²

"They come through town here sometimes like damned locusts, taking anything that isn't nailed down," says Lynn Kartchner, who owns a down-at-the-heels safe, alarm, and gun store in Douglas.¹³ Though Kartchner's insect allusion is harsh, it makes sense that some of the 500-odd desperately poor people scrambling like fugitives through Douglas every day are sticky-

¹⁰ The Berlin Wall, MSNBC Web Site, <http://www.msnbc.com/onair/msnbc/TimeAndAgain/archive/berlin/wall.asp>

¹¹ Ryan Scudder, US Border Patrol, 520-670-6871 ext. 3343 says the number could be as high as 1.5 million migrants. World Almanac and Book of Facts 2002, page 423, lists the population of Cochise County as 118,000

¹² Gary McBride, 520-824-3598

¹³ Lynn Kartchner, (520) 805-1970

fingered. To a marginal businessman like Kartchner, and to others in this economically depressed region, that may indeed feel like a plague.

“The rights of a U.S. citizen shouldn’t be contingent on where they live and how much income they’ve got,” says David Stoddard, an angry Cochise County resident. “What the Border Patrol is saying is: ‘the rights of the people in (the cities) exceed those of the ranchers,’”¹⁴

(To this, Carlos Carrillo, the Border Patrol’s deputy chief in Tucson, just shrugs. “We go out to cover (the ranches) and we open up everybody in El Paso and San Diego to a high level of crossings,” he says.)¹⁵

During the summer of 2001, when President Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox were talking about making immigration “safe and legal,” the problems of the border were page-one news. Then came 9/11, and the issue vanished, leaving people like Kartchner and McBride feeling abandoned once again, hostages to a border policy that few in power seemed interested in correcting. So while the militiamen’s diagnoses are hateful and their prescriptions toxic, their presence isn’t altogether unwelcome in southern Arizona. By their very extremism they’ve found a way to attract the public’s attention away from Al Qaeda and Iraq and back to the problem in their backyard, the tide of illegal immigration.

The attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon figure in the rise of the border militias in more ways than one. Simcox and his allies talk

¹⁴ David Stoddard, 520-378-3425, or (cell) 520-508-1605;

¹⁵ Carlos Carrillo is reachable through Ryan Scudder, US Border Patrol, 520-670-6871 ext. 3343

almost as much about the terror attacks as they do about Mexican campesinos hogging American jobs and welfare checks.

The Border Patrol says it hasn't yet detected any evidence of Middle-Eastern terrorists trying to sneak through the southern border.¹⁶ But last year, the Border Patrol of the Tucson district – an area the size of Minnesota – caught illegal immigrants from 152 different countries.¹⁷ (Only 1.2 percent of migrants arrested are from countries other than Mexico, and only 0.2 percent are from outside Latin America.)¹⁸ At the Border Patrol station in Douglas, the agents clearly have one eye on the possibility that Al Qaeda will try to sneak in through the southern border. When migrants are captured, they're held in three chain-link cells while agents process them for return to Mexico. It's a dreary, fluorescent-lit scene with a world-weary air about it. The migrants sit patiently in their unlocked cages looking neither distraught nor worried – in a few hours, they'll be politely driven back to the border and will probably try again. The agents are relaxed and good-natured, going through an oft-repeated process neither hurriedly nor brusquely. They keep a sharp eye on their computers, though, as they run the migrants' digital photos and index fingerprints through a computer to look for repeat border-jumpers, drug dealers, and fugitives of all kinds. On the wall are tacked photos of known coyotes, the guides who lead groups of migrants through

¹⁶ Mario Villareal, Border Patrol spokesman, 202-305-0843

¹⁷ Ryan Scudder, US Border Patrol, 520-670-6871 ext. 3343

¹⁸ Ryan Scudder, US Border Patrol, 520-670-6871 ext. 3343

the desert. And scotch-taped above the bank of computer terminals are six grainy photos of young Middle-Eastern men with a hand-lettered sign: Suspected Terrorists.¹⁹ The Border Patrol has just been folded into the new Department of Homeland Security and deterring terrorism is now at least part of its rhetoric. Still, it's hard to deny that if Osama bin Laden himself wanted to cross the desert into Arizona, he'd stand a good chance of making it.

In the militiamen's Armageddon worldview, the United States is in a kind of liberal trance, drowsily mouthing globalist claptrap while letting hordes of shiftless, malevolent brown people sap its resources, corrupt its greatness, and plot its destruction from within. While our leaky Mexican border has had its opponents for decades, Simcox, Spencer, and their allies are a distinctly post-9/11 phenomenon. They're worth getting to know because they advocate the most extreme bunker strategies against the uncertainties of the post-9/11 world. In a word, they speak for America at its most freaked-out.

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By his own account, Chris Simcox went a little crazy after 9/11. Once a "liberal and pacifist," he says his worldview changed after he was mugged twice in New York by people who didn't speak English. He moved to Los Angeles, and for 13 years taught kindergarten-through-second-grade

¹⁹ Border Patrol Supervisor Mike Hyatt in the Douglas station, 520-805-6600 or michael.g.hyatt@usdoj.gov

children at the private Wildwood School on Washington Place,²⁰ all the while growing increasingly annoyed at what he calls the liberalism and lack of discipline of southern California, particularly toward immigrants. “You see what rampant illegal immigration has done in L.A.,” he says with a visible shudder. “The gangs, the people standing on the street corners.”

Then came the terror attacks on New York and Washington, and Simcox’s equilibrium snapped. “For a while, I wouldn’t talk to anyone if they couldn’t recite the Pledge of Allegiance,” he says. “I got very aggressive about my views, like, ‘I’m not going to talk to you until you agree to talk to me about my constitutional rights.’” His behavior grew so wacky that he lost joint custody of his 15-year-old son.²¹ In a rage, Simcox left Los Angeles for the Arizona desert a month after 9/11. For two-and-a-half months, he camped alone among the mesquite and cactus, trying, he says, to “reinvent” himself. In that time, he says he saw five “paramilitary groups of drug dealers” -- pickup trucks packed with dope and moving at walking speed, flanked by men holding automatic rifles. “I saw this with my own eyes,” he insists. Simcox tried to join the Border Patrol and the military, he says, but was turned down because he was too old. He drifted into Tombstone, got a job at the Tumbleweed, and eventually bought it for \$50,000. Simcox, who rarely sleeps more than four or five hours a night and looks it, is vague

²⁰ I have calls in to Wildwood to confirm this, but they seem to have taken a duck-dive since Simcox hit the headlines.

²¹ I’ve sent for the records of this custody hearing, but it could take as long as three weeks. If this story gets held that long, we may have more information from those documents.

about exactly where he'll deploy his vigilantes or how he'll manage them. "What I really hope is that the government wakes up and makes all this unnecessary by doing its job and sealing the border with troops," he says. But Simcox also itches for action. "If we see one of those (drug) convoys, we'll stand strong," he shouts, punching his chest. "If they fire on us, we'll fire back. We want to go up against those drug dealers."

Twice during our hour-long conversation he refers to himself as Paul Revere. "This has gotten so big even I can't control it," he says. Which raises the question: what if his call brings to the border members of the 26 "state militias" he says have contacted him? What if some racist yahoo takes the "call to arms" seriously, opens fire on a group of migrants and kills someone? "I realize we've awakened a sleeping giant," Simcox says, lowering his voice for the first time. "It's on my conscience."

And then the interview is over. Rising to go, he punches his arms into a black woolen jacket embroidered on the back with a colorful movie logo: Lost in Space.

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Ranch Rescue, headquartered in Abilene, Texas, purports not to care about immigration reform but only about respect for private property. The only assaults on property it seems to concern itself with, though, are those caused by migrants -- damage to fences, pumps, and water tanks. And it doesn't take five minutes into a phone call for their coordinator, Jerry Foote,

to get around to some sweeping characterizations about the “pure orneriness” of Mexican migrants and their “churlish disdain for American private property owners.”²² And when Foote refers me to David Stoddard to articulate the problem in southwest Arizona, he’s steering me straight back to the politics of immigration and race.

David Stoddard retired in 1996 from a 27-year career with the U.S. Border Patrol, and says he knows, from long experience, that our government could seal the U.S.-Mexico border if only we had the will. Broad and compact, with a steel-gray Brylcreem haircut, Stoddard is affiliated with no organization “except the Republican party,” but has been a regular face in TV news segments, serving as a kind of ad hoc spokesman for the loose-knit confederation of Ranch Rescue, American Border Patrol and Simcox’s group. He meets me at the home of his friend, Ben Anderson, a retired Army colonel, in Sierra Vista, a strip-mall town serving the Army’s Fort Huachuca, about twelve miles from Tombstone. Anderson, rotund and slow-spoken like a sleepy bear, tells me he studied modern Arabic, “Gulfie talk,” at the Pentagon’s prestigious Defense Language Institute in Monterey. As we take seats in his living room Anderson opines that “Islam is not a religion, it’s a cult. It’s bad.”²³ And so we begin.

Stoddard agrees with Simcox that the Border Patrol has no hope of sealing the border. “It’s a social service organization. The current policy is

²² Jerry Foote, 915-888-0518

²³ Ben Anderson, 520-439-4627

catch and release. And only one in five get caught, on a good day." Only the military has adequate muscle: Stoddard insists that 100 helicopters using infrared scopes, supported by observation posts on every hill between Brownsville, Texas, and San Diego, could effectively seal the 2,000-mile border. "Give me a division," he says. "Fifteen to twenty thousand men."

"Look at the Iron Curtain," says Anderson. "The border between the Koreas; people don't cross that sucker."

"It wouldn't have to be that stringent," says Stoddard. "Machine guns and tanks -- that's not what I'm talking about. There isn't even a need for military patrols. Just the presence of the military in prominent locations would be the real deterrent."

He talks a long time, with an impressive command of tactics and technology. Anderson, the ex-Army colonel, adds that the Posse Comitatus law of 1878, which forbids military involvement in law enforcement,²⁴ wouldn't apply. "The military controlled the border until the Border Patrol was formed in 1924, and could again," he says. "There was a time when the border was a law enforcement issue, but at 9/11 it became a national-security issue."

Stoddard and Anderson produce a much-circulated clipping from the December 17 Los Angeles Times saying the U.S. plans to finance 177

²⁴ Posse Comitatus law of 1878

checkpoints, staffed by 12,000 guards, on the borders of Afghanistan.²⁵

“They can seal the Afghan border,” Stoddard barks. “But our weak-kneed, BB-nutted politicians whine Posse Comitatus when we want to do it here. Bullshit.”

(In fact, the military never had responsibility for enforcing immigration law on the southern border, according to Marian Smith, staff historian of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Troops were sent to pursue Pancho Villa during the Mexican Revolution, and were stationed near border posts during World War One to make a show of excluding German saboteurs. But the army never functioned as Stoddard and Anderson recommend, Smith says.)

Stoddard and Anderson turn to the question of need. “National security involves culture, sovereignty, and economics,” says Anderson.

“The life boat is full,” says Stoddard, driving a fist into the tabletop. “America is importing poverty, and there are only so many resources available. The U.S. is headed into third-world conditions.” The current rate of immigration is dangerous, he says. “Double the schools we’ll need by 2050. Double the sewage plants, water use, roads, housing.”

He collects himself and sighs. “These people crossing the border, they’re victims,” he says tiredly. “I know that. The villains are the globalists, Vicente Fox, who’s talking about nations without borders. The European

²⁵ US to Build, Pay for, Border Checkpoints in Afghanistan, LA Times, December 9, 2002

Union are globalists. The multinational corporations, NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), and GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade)."²⁶

Surprised to hear a Republican sounding like a anti-corporate protestor at the 2000 meeting of World Trade Organization in Seattle, I try to get him to explain more fully his views on globalization. Instead, though, Stoddard descends into a long, angry rant that begins with his own ancestors, who immigrated as Puritans in the 1600s to a United States "that was founded as a Christian, English-speaking nation."

The new immigrants, Stoddard insists, not only suck more out of the economy in welfare than they contribute in taxes, they also dilute American culture. "I am a Christian conservative," he says. "The liberal mantra is that my beliefs, my culture, my morays are no more valid than some asshole who comes in from El Salvador and thinks it's perfectly all right to have sex with 13-year-old girls."

While I try to interpret this, he forges ahead, first about a school board in Georgia that changed the name of Christmas break to "semester break," and then into a complaint that students in California are studying Islam, "yet Christianity is banned from the public schools."

Turns out, the Census Bureau predicts the US population will increase by 41 percent, not double, by 2050.²⁷ Even in the nineties, when more

²⁶ David Stoddard, 520-378-3425, or (cell) 520-508-1605; and Ben Anderson, 520-439-4627

immigrants arrived than in either the seventies or eighties,²⁸ immigrants constituted between a quarter and a third of the American population's increase.²⁹ Immigrants make up about six percent of the US population, with naturalized citizens adding another 3 percent,³⁰ according to the Census – though when it comes to counting illegal immigrants the numbers get slippery indeed.

Stoddard is right when he points out that in many immigrant communities, two or three families crowd into a single-family house or apartment.³¹ And he notes, correctly, that unlike immigrants from Europe or Asia who had to cross oceans to get here, many migrants hope to work in the US for a few years and then return home; many have no intention of staying in the U.S. or becoming Americans.³²

But as for immigrants “sucking more out of the economy than they contribute,” Stoddard has it only partly right, according to a big National Academy of Sciences study in 1997. Asked by Congress to study the question, the NAS found that legal and illegal immigrants indeed receive

²⁷ World Almanac and Book of Facts 2002, pae 868

²⁸ Foreign-Born Population by Sex, Age, and Year of Entry: March 2000

²⁹ Population by Sex, Age, and Citizenship Status: March 2000 and Population Change and Distribution, 1990–2000

³⁰ Population by Sex, Age, and Citizenship Status: March 2000

³¹ this is certainly true here in Watsonville, a largely immigrant town

³² this was true among the people in the Mexican village where we lived for two years, and among those I wrote about in my three-part series on Mexican immigrants that ran in Rolling Stone last year. Two other people who make such estimates are Jeffrey Passel, the Urban Institute, 202-261-5678, jpassel@ui.urban.org and Wayne Cooper, the Honorary Mexican Consul in Charlotte, North Carolina, 704-394-2198, 704-906-2584 (cell), cooper@arconmfg.com

more in publicly funded services than they pay in taxes. But that's no more true for immigrants than for low-paid Americans; low wages are expensive to society as a whole. And a straight services-for-taxes calculation doesn't tell the entire story. Whole industries – such as hospitality, textiles, and agriculture – “would not exist on the same scale without immigrant workers,” NAS found. Immigrants' willingness to do the kind of hard, dirty, dangerous, and low-paid work Americans don't want adds add as much as \$10 billion to the U.S. economy, according to the NAS.³³

As the afternoon with Stoddard and Anderson wore on I felt further and further through the looking glass. How odd, I thought, to be lectured by conservative Republicans, in Arizona of all places, about how the federal government isn't doing enough. The great Arizona senator, Barry Goldwater – father of the modern conservative movement – is buried barely 200 miles from here,³⁴ in the same rocky, thorn-strewn soil. Goldwater and his GOP descendents made it their life's mission to reduce the size and reach of the U.S. government. It was all I could do not to yell at Stoddard and Anderson: hey, you wanted small government, and you got it.

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“We're being sacrificed on the altar of globalism!” thunders Glenn Spencer, organizer of American Border Patrol. Here we go again. We're

³³ Overall U.S. Economy Gains from Immigration But It's Costly to Some States and Localities

³⁴ Goldwater is buried in Paradise Valley, a neighborhood of Phoenix

sitting in Spencer's "command center," a den stuffed with three computers, four television sets tuned to various news channels, a forest of peripherals, a regiment of remotes and lots of VCRs. The emblem of the CIA hangs on a wall, but Spencer, who has gray-blond hair falling over his collar and vaguely resembles William F. Buckley, says he never worked there.

Spencer's words echo eerily, because aside from a flossy "reception area" off the kitchen, his gigantic house has hardly any furniture. Gilded Corinthian columns hold up the living room ceiling but there's no easy chair or rug. The house, at a Sierra Vista address Spencer rarely gives out "for security reasons," might once have been a funeral parlor. A semi-circular driveway sweeps to the front door through a swath of brown earth where the lawn will someday be installed. Around back, a huge patio cradles a murky kidney-shaped swimming pool. Inside, Spencer and a few friends rattle around the stripped-bare rooms, giving this erstwhile mansion the feel of an overgrown clubhouse.

Spencer is retired from a career in computer-enhanced geophysical engineering. So it's no surprise that his solution to the border problem relies more on high-tech electronics than firearms. His volunteers, who he says number about 50, carry GPS devices and radios. When they spot migrants they radio Spencer, and he calls the Border Patrol. "I don't like the idea of going out in fatigues with military-looking weapons," Spencer says. "A lot of our people carry weapons, but we don't take a position on that."

Spencer's favorite toy is not a gun; it's a Mobile Internet Satellite Transmitter that is parked in the driveway and looks like the little car the Apollo astronauts drove around the Moon. Soon, he says, volunteers with video cameras will photograph migrants, beam the signal to this uplink, and put live streamed video on the web. The purpose is not to identify individuals for law enforcement but to give a sense of human forms entering the country -- for propaganda purposes.

"People will be able to go on the 'net and see, live, people coming into their country illegally," Spencer says. "They'll be able to download a piece of software that, if there's live video up, will put a little American flag on their screen." Spencer is largely financing the operation out of pocket, and says he has invested about \$50,000 so far.

"You have big corporations who want no barriers to the making of their profit. You have the AFL-CIO that is now advocating open borders," Spencer says, apparently in reference to the labor federation's call, in 2000, for an amnesty on illegal aliens and a stop to prosecuting businesses that hire them.³⁵ You have Gray Davis, who said, 'In the future, people will look at California and Mexico as one magnificent region.' The power elite have decided we won't be an independent nation but are going to be folded into the global village." He taps away at a G4 Macintosh, and out comes the voice of former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo speaking to the National

³⁵ AFL-CIO Calls for Amnesty for Illegal U.S. Workers , LA Times, February 17, 2000

Council of La Raza in 1997. "I have proudly affirmed that the Mexican nation extends beyond the territory enclosed by its borders," Zedillo's disembodied voice says, "and that Mexican migrants are an important part of it."

"He declared war on us by migration!" Spencer yells. "Mexico has one national objective: to reverse the results of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo." That 1848 pact, in which Arizona, New Mexico, and California were ceded to the United States, is certainly a thorn to Mexican activists. Most would be surprised to hear, though, that making motel beds or picking cucumbers for minimum wage in the United States might constitute reversing the treaty.

Like Simcox, Spencer wants to shame the government into sealing the border. "Why not build a 2,000-mile fence?" he asks. "They did it in East Berlin. There was a dividing line between one way of doing things and another." When you press him, he defines the difference this way: "As long as historians can remember, lying and deceit have been part of the Mexican culture."

It's lines like this that get the militiamen accused of being racist. Raul Grijalva, a Democrat elected to Congress in November to represent a new district that runs from Tucson to Yuma, says his first official act will be to ask the FBI to investigate alleged links between the militias and white

supremacist groups. "If you shine the light on the cockroaches, they don't like it," Grijalva said at a December press conference.³⁶

Mention racism, though, and Spencer comes halfway out of his chair. "I'm not prejudiced!" he shouts. "I have a lot of Mexican friends!"

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The new border militiamen distinguish themselves by physically patrolling the border, but their ideas are not wildly outside the American mainstream. Pat Buchanan ran for president, and has had a nice career as a pundit, saying many of the things these Arizonans say. A quick Google search for the Ernesto Zedillo quote above finds it derisively cited by dozens of columnists and anti-immigration groups.³⁷ US Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-Colo.), whom Simcox, Stoddard, and Spencer all call their "hero," leads the charge in Congress to put troops on the border and encourages an anti-immigrant movement that verges on openly racist. "Consider the fact that massive immigration, combined with our own self-destructive policies of radical multiculturalism, have helped to balkanize America," he wrote recently in the Denver Post.³⁸

³⁶ Grijalva: Have FBI probe alleged militia-racist link, by Luke Turf, Tucson Citizen, December 19, 2002

³⁷ <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&ie=ISO-8859-1&q=I+have+proudly+affirmed+that+the+Mexican+nation+extends+beyond+the+territory+enclosed+by+its+borders+Zedillo>

³⁸ The Immigration Crisis Is Becoming a Constitutional Crisis, by Tom Tancredo, Denver Post, (undated on Tancredo website)

When Simcox argues government won't stop immigration because corporations want "an unlimited supply of cheap labor,"³⁹ and David Stoddard says multinationals' "sole loyalty is to the bottom line on the balance sheet,"⁴⁰ they're on to something. People in rural Mexico typically earn as little as \$3 a day, while even the worst jobs north of the border pay twice that an hour. Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan has told Congress he wants more foreigners allowed into the U.S.⁴¹ because they eagerly work millions of unattractive jobs that can neither be filled domestically nor exported. Migrants' labor is so coveted by American hotels, restaurants, hospitals, nursing homes, builders, landscapers, and farmers that those industries lobby Congress to make hiring Mexicans easier.⁴²

The militiamen are also right that the labor of migrants – whether they cross legally or not – is crucial to the Mexican economy. About nine percent of Mexico's population – nine million people – lives north of the border, about as many as in Mexico City.⁴³ Half of them are here illegally.⁴⁴ The \$8 billion they send to their relatives each year is – as everybody knows by now

³⁹ Chris Simcox, 520-457-3008

⁴⁰ David Stoddard 520-378-3425

⁴¹ Greenspan sees benefit in relaxing immigration law, Reuters, January 26, 2000

⁴² John Gay, Essential Worker Immigration Coalition, 202.289.3123 jgay@ahlaonline.org

⁴³ Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, <http://sites.netscape.net/fcsklabrie/mexstates.htm>

⁴⁴ Jeffrey Passel, the Urban Institute, 202-261-5678, jpassel@ui.urban.org

-- Mexico's third-biggest source of income after oil and tourism.⁴⁵ Mexican President Vicente Fox calls them "the greatest asset our country has."⁴⁶

Against economic forces as powerful as these, volunteer militia patrols look pretty puny. They certainly won't stop the flow of migrants. "The main danger they pose is the rhetoric, stirring the anti-immigrant sentiment," says Bob Moser, who tracks the groups for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama.⁴⁷ At this particular moment in U.S. history, that kind of fear-mongering may be exactly what the country doesn't need. After the trauma of 9/11, the country is already locked in a kind of xenophobic panic – forcing male immigrants from select countries to register with the government, holding immigrants incommunicado for months, parading them before secret courts. The new border militiamen deserve credit for reminding us how dysfunctional is our southern border, and how noxious is the economic inequality of the neighbor nations. But if all they do – with their guns and rough talk – is inspire yet more fear and hatred of foreigners, they'll have blown it.

End.

⁴⁵ Fox appeals for Mexican unity Leader seeks help of former residents to revitalize nation By Oscar Avila and Dan Mihalopoulos The Chicago Tribune, July 16, 2001

⁴⁶ Fox appeals for Mexican unity Leader seeks help of former residents to revitalize nation By Oscar Avila and Dan Mihalopoulos The Chicago Tribune, July 16, 2001

⁴⁷ Bob Moser, 334-956-8200