DAN ABRAMS: Hi, everyone. Welcome to a special edition of Dan Abrams Live: Crisis on the Border. We are live tonight in Arizona and Texas, at the border and are going to try something different this hour, right? It’s not going about politics. We intentionally did not book a single politician. It’s not going to be about the finger pointing. It’s going to hopefully make us all a little bit more informed about what is actually happening at our southern border and maybe — maybe — even spur some change. We just got in an exclusive interview with a current border agent. They aren’t allowed to talk. It’s a big deal. We worked it out with them where we have hid that person’s identity, not even going to disclose the person’s gender. That’s how sensitive this is. It just wrapped up. This agent tells us some amazing things about what they are facing every day and how it’s affecting not only their lives, but yours and how other law enforcement leaders are seeing the border crisis impact what they’re doing. We’re riding alongside the pros who do this every day. Anything can happen at any moment because we are live and we will take you to the scenes when it does. So, a quick look at the border. Nearly 2,000 miles of from San Diego to Columbus, New Mexico to Eagle Pass, Texas and the terrain is different wherever you go. Now, I want to switch some things around here because we were going to go somewhere else. But we have some — some breaking news because just, as we’ve been preparing for the show, Ali Bradley NewsNation’s border correspondent on the front lines has been there when they just found three migrants trying to hide there and they’ve been arrested in Hidalgo County, Texas. Ali, what just happened?

ALI BRADLEY: Yeah, hey, Dan. So we’re out here, we’re actually embedded with an elite brush team with Texas DPS. They are working in conjunction with Border Patrol, so we’ve got state and federal partners working together and we have the chopper in the air. Let me show you what we just witnessed. So, we pulled three people out of this, look at how hard it is down here. This is what they’re up against, so they had to get down in there. That’s basically a canal, a drainage ditch of sorts, pulled these three individuals out, one young man from Honduras, telling us that he was on the hook with the cartel to pay $16,000 to get to Virginia. And guess what Dan? They’re actually working another two people that are in the canal further up. So, we’re gonna go up there, I’m going to send it back to you here. We’re going to keep our feet on the ground. And we’re gonna go after these other two people that are in the water up there.”

ABRAMS: Alright, so remember. This is just happening live down there. And we’re going to be staying with Ali Bradley. We’re going go back to her in — in a moment. Ali, thank you for that reporting. You know what? Let’s go now to Pinal County in Arizona. Our senior national correspondent Brian Entin is live patrolling there, what they call smugglers highway Brian, what are you seeing?

BRIAN ENTIN: Yeah, it’s I-10 the nickname — Smugglers Highway. Just a minute ago, we pulled over a semi with Sheriff Lamb here — a semi that’s been reported stolen. I’m not sure exactly — he’s been talking to the driver. Figure out what’s going on. Sheriff Lamb, have you —
is this immigrant involved? What have you been able to figure out?

PINAL COUNTY, ARIZONA SHERIFF MARK LAMB: We’re going check the back right now. It’s a stolen — it’s stolen trailer. So, we’re going to check the back. We’ve seen ’em in — in trailers before.

(....)

09:04:50 p.m.
1 minute and 20 seconds

ABRAMS: Alright, Brian Entin, sticking around. I mean, look, you can just tell based on what we just showing you, right? We have two correspondents at the border who, in the last 10 minutes, have seen major activity related to migrants and the border. That’s why it’s important to be there and to be there live. You don’t get that sense without actually watching the stuff as it happening? All right. So we were just with Ali Bradley. Alright? And she said — she is — she’s going to be going back out to that scene following that story that we were just watching, but she’s the one who got this exclusive interview with this current border agent. And again, that is the video — oh, actually that video is just coming in, ok? So that is the video now of up to of the three migrants who were just arrested there hiding in that area and, literally in the last 10 minutes that came in. The reason we weren’t able to show that to you a moment ago is because we just got the video into us. It happened moments before we went on the air. And you heard that Ali Bradley had actually talked to — talked to one of them as they were as they were there. And again, you know, this is a quite common occurrence at the border.

(....)

9:06:23 p.m.
3 minutes and 48 seconds

ABRAMS: I’m sorry to sort of throw this on you. We planned to sort of introduce you as part of a panel. But, as this news is happening, I wanted to — to bring you in. You know, for us — for those people who are not at the border, right, seeing all of this activity happening live in real time seems kind unbelievable, right? They’re pulling over one truck with there are migrants. There are three more. But when you’re working at the border, I assume that this is pretty commonplace.

COCHISE COUNTY, ARIZONA SHERIFF MARK DANNELS: Good evening. Dan, and thanks for having me and thanks for sharing our reality of this border. Let — Let just say this. This is the new norm on our borders, whether you’re in Texas, New Mexico, or Arizona, California. This is the new norm, whether fentanyl, human trafficking, human smuggling, international crime. People coming from all United States down here to commit international crime. This is what we address every day on our border now.

ABRAMS: Yeah. And I think it’s for people to see as we’re showing it have happening now in — in real time. We had no idea whether there would be actually, you know, sort of things
happening as we were watching. You can see this is all happening now live in — in real time. All
good, Sheriff will come back to you in a moment because I do want to play this interview that Ali
Bradley was able to get with this Border Patrol agent. Now again, you’re going to hear the
person’s voice is very garbled. That’s on purpose. We are protecting this person’s identity. This
person is not allowed to speak out publicly about their experiences. But the person though it was
that important that we had they had to get the message out about what border agents are dealing
with every day. And this is Ali Bradley with that person.

BRADLEY: What do you believe is one of the things that everyday ordinary Americans don’t
understand about the southern border?

ANONYMOUS BORDER PATROL AGENT: The biggest thing is that we do not control the
border, the cartel controls the border. Everything that we do is a reaction to things that they have
planned. Usually, we’re chasing around pawns while the kings and queens are doing whatever
they want.

BRADLEY: Do you think there are people that are coming over that have the intent to do our
neighbors, our friends, our family members harm?

ANONYMOUS BORDER PATROL AGENT: Absolutely. These give up groups that we’re
getting. You know, the media is only reporting what they can report on, right, which is,
statistically speaking, a small percentage of the actual bad guys that we’re catching. Who is
getting through — the really good ones — we will never catch. You know, you don’t — you
can’t pay attention to the matches that are walking the border when all you can see is the little
bonfire. Our border is by no means secure. And, even if it was, we don’t’ have the manpower to
handle the situation that’s happening right now. No one is coming. No one is coming to protect
you. Even at the local law enforcement level, we’re seeing them be defunded and overwhelmed
to where your life has to be threatened for them to make you a priority. So, no one is coming and
you better self-help and self-protect.

ABRAMS: That person risking a lot to make sure that the public hears those thoughts from a
current border agent.

(....)

9:12:18 p.m.
2 minutes and 8 seconds

BRADLEY: When you go into your job every day, are you scared to do your job?

ANONYMOUS BORDER PATROL AGENT: I’m not scared of the people we are having to
face every day. And that’s because I have a relationship with God and I already know that He has
my back above everyone. As for being scared of the job at, like, a more earthly perspective, yes.
Just the short time I’ve been in Border Patrol, I have seen policies changed to kind of put agents
in harm’s way. Our pursuit policy has changed to a point where agents, yes, we are scared to go
after the bad guys because, if something bad happens, we have a huge potential of it completely falling on us and the agency will not back us. And that’s a huge one because the agency has kind of put the priority of the illegals and the U.S. citizens and the people that we encounter daily — it’s almost like they come before us?

BRADLEY: So are you more scared of ramifications from the government then you are from the cartel?

ANONYMOUS BORDER PATROL AGENT: Absolutely. Look at the way you have me presented to do an interview when I’m off-duty. I’m terrified to talk to the media because I’m sacred of what, you know, the government could do, which obviously, would be losing my job, right, which I don’t think is fair.

ABRAMS: Wow. That is really depressing to hear that he’s more afraid of how the government’s going to respond than the cartels.

(....)

9:18:10 p.m.
27 seconds

ABRAMS: Take a look at this chart. Encounters at the southern border over the past few years — this what our border patrol agents are up against — 2.5 million encounters for the whole of last year. That was up from 1.7, just two years before. So far this year. 1.3. It’s looking to be a lot more than last year. It’s a lot of work for the roughly 20,000 agents the Border Patrol currently employs.

(....)

9:26:28 p.m.
8 seconds

ABRAMS: Many, of course, evading detection down there. Take a look at the stat of gotaways. It surged over the last few years. 860,000 last year. 600,000, 2022. About 390,000 the year before.

(....)

9:27:18 p.m.
3 minutes and 5 seconds

BRADLEY: What’s really interesting is we pulled three individuals out of this kind of canal area. None of them wearing camouflage, Dan, and that’s something that we see very regularly in certain parts of the border and other areas of Texas, that’s very normal. But here’s the thing. Once they get across this river and across the wall, they get into a vehicle and it’s off to the races. It’s very quick here. In other areas, they’re walking for days in this desolate areas. So, I want to
show you actually have what they call like a cartel kit. I actually have the pants and the — the hoodie here. So it’s all like drawstring. It can fit any body and they get these over Mexico. They pay a fee. They get a backpack depending how much they pay. They get more things. They’ll get painkillers and things like that in their backpack as well. This has a hoodie on it. And guess what? This is a coup de gras here. Kind of, this is a carpet shoe, okay? So this goes right over top of whatever shoes you’re wearing. And you put them and you’re going to leave no tracks. And that’s how these individuals are abating, so there’s no way to track these individuals that’s tracking sign that they’re covering up down. So take a listen to what uncovered there with the people evading. [TAPED] So they’re that way, which what’s here? Oh, look, there’s an injury. [VOICE-OVER] They run and scatter, at night, and in broad daylight. Now you see them, now you don’t. Migrants hiding in thick brush until they’re paid rides up appear under the cloak of darkness. In the Texas and Arizona deserts, law enforcement trying to capture them before they seep into U.S. communities undetected.

COCHISE COUNTY, ARIZONA SHERIFF TAL PARKER: So you can see the — the area they were they crawled through and they’ve — they’ve swept out all the brush and the debris that’s on the — on the ground.

BRADLEY: They’re called brush teams on the front lines, trying to flush migrants out one by one with the help of helicopters, drones, and thermal imaging. I caught up with this brush team in the southeast corner of Arizona in Cochise County where sergeant Tal Parker says that he never knows what they’ll find.

PARKER: Are they part of a gang? Are coming here to do something else?

BRADLEY: Authorities encounter 6,100 migrants trying to get into the U.S. daily. Some legally. Others threw hundreds of miles of gaps at the border. They’ve encountered an estimated 75 people on the terror watchlist trying to come into the country illegally so far in 2024. It’s a dangerous game of cat and mouse. Law enforcement left to hunt down suspected terrorists and the cartels. Cartels that are infamous in this area of Arizona, carving out a path in a national forest now well worn by migrants on the move, even equipping them with everything from camouflage hoodies and pants to special coverings that go over shoes to cover their tracks, so border agents can’t detect them. And while I was being shown the route —

PARKER: Oh, here you go.

BRADLEY: — I was told.

PARKER: They could be watching us right now.

BRADLEY: Wave at them again. Yeah. Ha ha. They’re watching us. The one guy has binoculars. [BACK LIVE] It’s a certain feeling, too, Dan, being out there being watched constantly. That’s what they’re up against down. Cartel always kind of has the high ground, if you will.

(....)
ABRAMS: I think the question a lot of people have is, ok, what happens to those folks now? We just saw the people that were arrested, right? The three people — you just witnessed them being arrested there. Where they going? Where they being taken to? What’s happening to them?

BRADLEY: So, there are myriad of things that come to play here, Dan. It’s going to depend on what country they’re coming from. If they’re coming from Mexico, most likely, they’re going to be returned almost immediately. If they’re coming from other countries, if they’re — if they’re a single adult, they’re going to be transported and they’re going to be processed and they’re likely going to get a court date that might be six years out. That’s the reality. Now, when it comes to the gotaways, we know there are over 170,000 already, you know, just four months into this year. So something to keep an eye on for sure. They are taking down some of those aerostat blimps that track gotaways. So we’ll see if those numbers kind of shift in the coming months, Dan.

(....)

BRADLEY: So, we’re going 105 miles an hour. We are not in the pursuit, rather a response. They have five people just breached the wall. We have already apprehended two of them on site. So we are rushing to get there before they get in a vehicle. If they get loaded up, then it becomes a bigger problem, so I’m going to let Lieutenant Olivarez explain that a little bit. LT, we’re heading to the wall. What’s going on?

TEXAS DPS LIEUTENANT CHRIS OLIVAREZ: Yeah. So, Dan, right now, of course, for the audience, the area that we’re in right now, it’s a very dynamic situation because, as people across the river, they’re guided by other smugglers and then they’re able to breach the border wall in a matter of seconds and then they get loaded up in a vehicle. So, our response is, as a state police agency, you want to get there to provide support for border patrol, so we can prevent other smuggers loading them up in a vehicle where they then turn into a high-speed chase. So, we’re trying to get to that situation right now. But, as you can see, it’s a very dynamic situation. We can be in one area and then we have to respond to another area to provide that support.

BRADLEY: Now, LT, how many people are down here on the ground working this area. It’s pretty big.

OLIVAREZ: It’s a very large area and it’s a very busy area because the river so close to where we’re at right now as far as infrastructure, so it’s very easy for people to get across the river illegally and then go — get loaded up in a vehicle. It’s a matter of minutes. It’s a very fast and dynamic situation.

(....)
9:56:15 p.m.
3 minutes and 59 seconds

BRADLEY: Okay. Hey, guys, we just pulled over here. We’re tracking that group that we were
telling you about. So there’s a couple individuals here. Some single adults here that were just
picked up by Border Patrol. I — we just arrived on scene. Lieutenant Olivarez, let’s talk a little
bit about kind of what’s unfolding here. We literally just arrived, so we have not talked to Border
Patrol, so we don’t know much about these individuals.

OLIVAREZ: Right, so we know right now that we have two that Border Patrol was able to
apprehend, but they — these individuals were able to breach the border wall in a matter of
seconds. That’s why how quick it is. Actually, we got to go. We’ve got some more. We’ve got to
go. You’ve got to go get some more guys. All right. Let’s go!

ABRAMS: Okay. Hey, Ali — is Ali — once she’s sitting down —

OLIVAREZ: There’s a guy trying to get into —

BRADLEY: — yeah, yeah, yeah.

ABRAMS: Yeah, Ali, okay, once you’re sitting down —

BRADLEY: I’m sitting down. We gotta go where there’s more.

ABRAMS: Well, that’s what I was going to say. I mean, it’s — it seems that —

BRADLEY: Okay, there’s more trying to get into a car.

ABRAMS: — got it.

BRADLEY: So we’re heading down to go to respond to these individuals that are getting in the
car. So, Border Patrol’s got those two. They don’t need us there, so we’re gonna go where we’re
needed. And that’s where these individuals are trying to load up into the car that Sergeant
Casarez just got the tip on. So, that’s where we’re heading. You actually see a Border Patrol
motorcycle dirt bike over here to our left. So, we’ve got activity out here. We’re following a
Border Patrol car. A lot activity here right now down, Dan. So again, out here, you have ATVs,
you have horseback, you’ve got helicopters, we have different lights over here. We’ve got
another law enforcement vehicle that’s searching in this area, so it looks like they kind of believe
that somebody might be on foot in this area that we are — we are that we are traveling along.
And we’ve got our windows down, we’re looking out we’re trying to find if there’s anybody out
here, this is what we’re up against. So, like, Lieutenant Olivarez says, these individuals are
reaching this wall so quickly, a matter of seconds, and it is basically off to the races for these
individuals and they’re hiding in this very thick brush. And look at this, this industrial — there
are buildings everywhere. There are so many places to hide before these individuals are really
picked up by these load vehicles, so that’s what they’re contending with down here like
Lieutenant Olivarez says, it’s a very dynamic situation. So, again, we have multiple agencies on the ground right no. We are embedded with this elite brush team that, as you can see, they have to pivot and go in the vehicles and go after individuals that are getting into these smuggling vehicles before it can become a pursuit and a bigger problem for law enforcement and also for the community. It’s very dangerous when these pursuits go through these communities.

ABRAMS: Ohhh yeah.

BRADLEY: So, right now, that’s what they’re trying to prevent. Again, we’ve got a state entity here with Texas DPS under Governor Abbott’s Operation Lonestar, working hand-in-hand with the federal agents of Border Patrol, so that’s what we’re seeing unfolding right now. That is what they’re doing every single night down here. This is what we did last night as well. But right now, we are looking for people that are we are on foot that just breached the border wall and we’re trying to get them before they get into a loaded vehicle — a smuggling vehicle and then end up basically going north toward San Antonio and then north from there into whatever stash house or whatever other area they kind of disappear into in the interior of our country.

ABRAMS: And, again, I think that it’s worth repeating that the goal of the primary goal in — in these efforts is to get the smugglers, right? I mean, you heard lieutenant there — Olivarez — refer to it. You heard Sheriff Mark Daniels refer to it. That is the — you know — that’s the ultimate goal go here when — because, you know, they’re the ones who can make all of this happen. This has really been — ben something as we’re continuing to — to watch that here. This happens to be a Thursday. That’s about all that makes today special and we just decided it’s important to see what’s happening at the border on a typical day. And we’ve got a little taste of it. That’s all. That’s all we saw. Just a little bit. I want to also especially thank all of the police chiefs — Strockis, Director Wilson, Commissioner Sapienza, and Sheriff Dannels for joining us. That does it for us tonight. Thanks for watching.