

Inside the Nightmare

...what 'someone' doesn't want you to see...

By Kat Rowoldt



I drove to Del Rio a few days ago after being alerted that **“legal illegals”** were going to be transferred there for their final processing before being released into the United States of America.

I took a couple of extra eyes and ears with me. So glad I did. Before heading south, I also lined up three interviews with key people, plus had an invitation to actually see the processing facility. We really had no idea what awaited us. Even now, I have many unanswered questions.

Del Rio, Texas, is an unusual community of around 35,000 people, 45,000 if you count everyone in Val Verde county. We've all driven through other towns of this size. You're thrilled to see a Walmart, a Dairy Queen, maybe a McDonald's, among the Mom & Pop restaurants. Such is not the case in Del Rio. The fact that it has several major hotel brands, restaurants like Chili's, Rudy's BBQ, and many more, causes one to ask how such a small community can support so many restaurants and hotels? That's a question for another time.

When we were there a month ago, I was pleasantly surprised to see what a clean (my childhood memory was dry and dusty), nice little town Del Rio had grown to be since I was last there as child several decades ago. At lunch one day last month, the county Sheriff came into Julio's where we were eating, and I engaged him in

conversation. Since he did not know me, he was very limited in what he shared with me, but he shared a tidbit I hung onto.

I asked him about the number of illegals coming across the border and how they were being able to manage them locally. At that time, the Sheriff reported that they were bussing them to Eagle Pass where they were being flown out of there to states like New York, New Jersey and Maine. I asked why on earth there? His answer was “they have relatives there.” My response was one word: “Seriously?” He held his facial expression motionless. I thanked him, and his fellow officers at the table. Those three states are the last places I would “assume” people pouring over our southern border would have relatives.

During our visit there a month ago, we heard a story from a ranch woman of illegals crossing across her ranch the night before. A youth pastor reported coyotes coming to the schools and offering kids \$4000.00 to help bring people across the border. Today’s national news calls it renting a child or recycling children. This was when we first heard the Border Patrol was talking with the local churches about what was about to come their way and asking if the faith community could assist with the problem.

That was a month ago. We never saw anyone wandering around the town that did not look like they belonged there. It was a simple little town with more restaurants than San Angelo had at that size.

First part of the week, Monday, I saw a posting on Facebook which reported the overwhelming numbers of illegals in the Rio Grande Valley were being transported to Del Rio for processing. I remember questioning why they would be doing that “IF” Eagle Pass was where they were catching their flights out of Texas. A bus would be driving right passed Eagle Pass to get to Del Rio. Why?

Tuesday morning, I began receiving texts out of Del Rio giving me firsthand reports of what was happening there. I was hearing about a facility “processing” these “**legal illegals**” and then helping them get to the bus station or airport to leave Del Rio.

My team and I left San Angelo early Thursday morning with camera and tripod in tow to capture as much as we could in the four to five hours we'd have before we needed to head back. When we arrived, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that I would be able to bring my camera to the processing facility and video what I saw.

So, what did we see, what did we learn?

...and what is not being seen?

I am writing this reflectively, having been a couple of days now since I was there. I have relistened to the interviews I did with more seasoned ears, and here is my report.

This small town on the border still gives basically the same appearance to someone passing through as it did a month ago. Reality is, that is about to drastically change. What is rather hidden away in the old part of the city is a potential time bomb for the local residents and Texas as whole.

Del Rio is blessed to have a group of churches who have come together to organize a processing center as a protective means for their community. It was only less than two months ago that the Border Patrol first approached them about a means to handle the problem(s) which were headed their way.

Amazingly they were able to form the Val Verde Border Humanitarian Coalition, a 501 (c) 3, in such a short amount of time. As they worked with the Border Patrol in preparing for the influx they were going to begin "dumping" into their little city, they were told they would only be dealing the family units.

A family unit is some combination of an adult with at least one child. It could be husband/wife with child(ren), mother with child, father with child, etc. Having a father/mother combination has been really rare in the only eight days of operation they have been open.

The "legal illegals" are being brought into Del Rio via 15-seat passenger vans that are Border Patrol vehicles, driven by Border

Patrol officers. Prior to the center opening, the few drop offs were simply released into the community to fend for themselves. Now these loads of people are scheduled with the coordinator, Shon Young, who basically works the logistics at the facility 24/7. Shon is kept abreast of when and how many vans are coming in to be processed.

Day One they processed around forty people. My visit was on Day Eight and they were processing around one hundred and fifty that day. The apparent steady growth trend could be catastrophic in the days to come. At that point the “legal illegals” were only arriving via vans, but the shift was already happening. News reports indicated the Rio Grande Valley was going to be airlifting people from there to Del Rio. They are being flown into Laughlin Air Force Base where the Border Patrol picks them up and transports them over to the Processing Center.

What used to be a Boys & Girls club is now the facility where these “legal illegals” are processed before being released to go wherever they want to in this country. This is not without problems. There are HUGE holes in this system. It was mentioned to us several times in our short visit that vans have had to just drop them off at a convenience store because the facility was closed for the night or full. That means these people will not be processed, assisted, or helped in any manner. They are on their own. This is evidence of “busting at the seams” in being able to handle this situation.

I inquired as to how long these people had been in the country. Were they being released from Rio Grande Valley due to timing out after twenty days? Shon informed us the overcrowding problem is so severe some people are simply being put on busses and moved out immediately.

No DNA testing is being conducted to confirm blood relatives. The process takes longer than they can afford to wait. Medical screening is minimal due to the crisis of needing to move these people to some type of shelter. They do go through an initial process before they are sent to the processing center. In order to be released, they

have to have a sponsor somewhere in the United States who will send them the needed money to transport them to their destination.

How can so many people have relatives/sponsors in the United States, especially in Maine, New Jersey, and New York? Where is all the money coming from to finance their transportation costs to get to their sponsor? Why are the sponsors not vetted? So many unanswered questions.

Surprisingly, there is no real security at the facility. We saw no one who could control a situation if an incident occurred. When we asked about the one large room where cots were set up, we were told no one watches them at night. They are locked in at some hour, so no one else can enter, but they can exit by using the panic bars on the doors. There is no guard available to watch the facility. The local police and sheriff department do what they can with regular drive-bys.

Processing takes place in a separate building and consists of asking for full name, age, what children are traveling with them, country of origin, where are they headed and the contact phone number of the sponsor who will be sending the money or the tickets for their transportation elsewhere.

The bus lines come through a couple of times a day. There is also a commercial flight out daily. If they aren't able to get a ticket on the next bus or plane, they return to the center until the next opportunity to try again. I see this as a potential problem beginning to happen as they bottleneck more and more with the additional people who are coming to their facility.

A hundred and fifty new people arriving every day need nourishment. The local churches who have pulled together into a coalition and have divided up the days to prepare food for the people. Simple sack lunches for a total of 122 people that day cost the sponsoring church right at \$200.00 for that one meal. Those funds were not from any government agency or civilian funding source but came out of the churches' pockets. They alone are providing food and transportation to move these people out. By Day

Eight, one church was already looking at \$1000-\$1500 a month expense. Most churches do not have excessive monies to spend. Where is the money going to come from to sustain this cost?

The coalition is already looking for a second facility to handle the growing demand. They are already maxed out where they are. That means doubling the out-of-pocket costs, doubling the man-power that's needed, and where to find additional church vans to transport the growing number of people. What is being asked of these churches is beyond their capacity to fully do, yet they are trying. They do not have the funding resources, the transportation vehicles to move people, nor the time demands this full-blown military type of operation requires.

The hearts of the pastor's doing this work is priceless. They want to protect their communities. When you strip away all the politics and right/wrong opinions on what is happening and why, they see the hurting people who are pushed through this system like cattle and it brings them to tears. You can see in their eyes their love for the people, and also the grave concern on how are they going to be able to handle the growing demand?

These “**legal illegals**” crossing the border are unvaccinated. Many are sick. Those identified as sick are transported to the hospital, but many unidentified are living among the healthy in very close quarters. The volunteer workers are being asked to update their childhood vaccines and get additional vaccinations to protect themselves and their families from the diseases which are pouring into our country. Many of those diseases we haven't seen in the USA in decades.

I asked a local pastor working the center that day about the community's reaction to what is going on. He said like everyone else, they have mixed feelings, but over all they want the border closed, a wall put up, along with other measures to regain control of what is happening.

I encourage you to listen to the interviews I did and hear the people themselves who are working at our new ground zero point. Hear

their hearts, listen to what they are reporting, and consider what we need to do at this point to prevent this from blowing wide open.

As I mentioned in the subtitle of this article, ‘what someone doesn’t want you to see,’ has occurred. The day after we left the processing center, “someone” heard of our visit, and now no one is allowed on the property or in the center with a camera. Similar orders have been given previously. Katie Hopkins was ordered to stop filming at the Catholic Families Center in the Rio Grande Valley when the Border Patrol vans rolled up to unload people. Another reporter was trying to report on a house that was being used to process people and had the police called on them.

If the people inside are local volunteers trying to help with a humanitarian issue, why are reporters being pushed away and not allowed to report on what is happening?

I left with more questions than I arrived with. I am gravely concerned with what I saw firsthand. My heart goes out to the churches who are trying to “handle” an unmanageable problem. My team and I left Del Rio with an unsettled, foreboding sense that a lot is taking place behind the scenes, that there are people and forces manipulating this tragic situation.

Pray for our border cities, their churches, their residents, and the influx of workers who are coming in to try to help with this crisis. We need new eyes and ears on the ground. We need wisdom. We need a wall and we need it yesterday. God help us!

Until next time....

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