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Man Apprehended in Remote Arizona Location Pronounced Deceased

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On January 13, 2023, at approximately 11:00 a.m., Border Patrol agents assigned to the Ajo Border Patrol Station apprehended seven undocumented migrants approximately 39 miles northwest of the Lukeville, Arizona, Port of Entry. One of the migrants, later identified as a male citizen of Mexico, sustained an injury to his left ankle while attempting to elude apprehension. Agents contacted Tucson Sector radio communications and requested medical assistance for the injured migrant via radio at 11:08 a.m. A Border Patrol agent certified as an Emergency Medical Technician was transported on a Customs and Border Protection helicopter to the remote location to treat the man. The agent EMT arrived at the area at approximately 12:05 p.m. and evaluated the man.

After the medical evaluation, the Border Patrol agents then escorted the group to U.S. Border Patrol vehicles to transport them to a CBP facility for processing. Prior to transporting the group to a CBP facility, the agent EMT reportedly conducted a second medical evaluation of the man between 12:45 and 1:00 p.m. and observed increased bruising and slight swelling on the man’s foot. The group was transported to a forward operating base located 23 miles northwest from the Lukeville Port of Entry. The injured migrant was transported in the back seat of a U.S. Border Patrol four-door pickup driven by an agent and accompanied by the agent EMT. Other members of the group were reportedly transported in a

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Border Patrol transport van. The agents and migrant group reportedly arrived at the forward operating base at approximately 1:50 p.m., according to the agent EMT's patient care report.

The agents fingerprinted the migrant group at the forward operating base for identification purposes. The agents then transported the group to Ajo Border Patrol Station in Why, Ariz. The agents and migrants reportedly departed the forward operating base at approximately 2:00 p.m. Again, the injured migrant was transported in the back seat of a Border Patrol four-door pickup driven by an agent and accompanied by the agent EMT and the other members of the group were transported in a Border Patrol transport van. The agents transported the migrants over rough terrain and mountain roads and arrived at the Ajo Border Patrol Station at approximately 3:14 p.m.

The man was evaluated by a CBP-contracted medical personnel at 3:18 p.m. at the Ajo Border Patrol Station. The man complained of left lateral ankle pain extending up his leg to his pelvis. The CBP-contracted physician observed swelling, but no deformities were obvious. The physician recommended the man be transported to the emergency room for x-rays and further evaluation. The man initially stated he did not want any additional medical treatment and signed a patient medical refusal form and reportedly stated he wanted to return to Mexico instead. Later, the man reportedly changed his mind and requested additional medical care.

An agent transported the injured migrant in a wheelchair to an interview room to wait while preparations were made to transport the man to the hospital. The man reportedly told that agent at 4:01 p.m., while waiting in the interview room, that he felt like vomiting and asked the agent to retrieve a trashcan. The agent handed him a trashcan, and he reportedly stuck his finger in his mouth to induce vomiting. However, the man was unsuccessful and told the agent that he was okay.

A while later, the agents handcuffed the man with his hands in front and placed him in the rear passenger seat/prisoner compartment of a U.S. Border Patrol four-door pickup truck to transport him to the Abrazo Buckeye Emergency Medical Center in Buckeye, Ariz. Reportedly no other restraints were applied. The Ajo Border Patrol Station's surveillance cameras captured the Border Patrol pickup truck transporting the man, leaving the Ajo Border Patrol Station at 4:21 p.m.

During the trip, the man reportedly became agitated and began to kick the interior of the USBP vehicle.

Additionally, the man questioned the transporting agent whether he had any backup during the transport. The agent decided to stop for assistance from other agents at the Arizona State Route 85 immigration checkpoint. The checkpoint is located in a remote area between Ajo, Ariz. and Gila Bend, Ariz. and approximately 35 miles north of the Ajo Station.

The agent arrived at the SR 85 immigration checkpoint at approximately 4:58 p.m. and was assisted by another agent and a supervisory agent, who both reportedly observed the man acting in a combative and agitated manner while sitting in the back seat. The man was holding his t-shirt in his hands with his hands in front of him and appeared to be sweating. The agent and supervisory agent offered the man water while trying to calm him down. The agent and supervisory agent suspected the man's behavior may be related to the ingestion of drugs. The agent placed a phone call to a supervisory agent at the Ajo Border Patrol Station and suggested that Emergency Medical Services be dispatched.

After a brief period of time, the supervisory agent at the SR 85 checkpoint decided to call 911 on his cell phone; however, due to the cellular signal in the area the supervisory agent reportedly had difficulties completing the call. The supervisory agent spoke with a 911 operator at approximately 5:14 p.m. At that point, the man was calm and the supervisory agent told the 911 operator that there was no longer a need to send EMS, which was located approximately 20 miles away. The man reportedly told the supervisory agent, "I'm okay." The supervisory agent instructed an agent assigned to the immigration checkpoint to accompany the transporting agent for the remainder of the trip, for safety due to the man's behavior. The two agents departed the SR 85 immigration checkpoint at approximately 5:21 p.m.

The agents arrived at the Abrazo Buckeye Emergency Center, located approximately 59 miles from the SR 85 immigration checkpoint at approximately 6:25 p.m. The agents indicated the man was calm and quiet for the trip from the SR85 immigration checkpoint and believed he was sleeping. Due to the number of people in the emergency room and a concern that the man might become violent when awakened, the agents coordinated with emergency room staff to have the man taken into the emergency room via the ambulance entrance.

Upon arrival at the ambulance entrance, one of the agents attempted to wake the man to no avail. Emergency room medical staff were called to the Border

Patrol vehicle and were unable to locate a pulse. The man was moved to a gurney by medical staff, with assistance from the agents, and the man was transported into the emergency room. Despite lifesaving efforts, the man was pronounced deceased by medical staff at 6:38 p.m.

The Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office performed an autopsy on January 15, 2023. The final cause and manner of death are pending further investigation including toxicology testing.

CBP's Office of Professional Responsibility special agents reviewed incident driven video recording system footage captured by a body worn camera of one the agents who transported the man to the hospital. The footage captured Abrazo medical personnel and agents removing the unresponsive man from the Border Patrol vehicle, placing him on a stretcher and moving him into the emergency room. OPR special agents noted what appeared to be signs of postmortem change indicating the individual may have been deceased prior to arriving at the hospital.

CBP's OPR is investigating this incident. The Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General was also notified of the incident. Additionally, CBP's Office of the Chief Medical Officer and an independent clinician will be conducting a mortality review of this incident.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the comprehensive management, control, and protection of our nation's borders, combining customs, immigration, border security, and agricultural protection at and between official ports of entry.

**Tags: Accountability and Transparency,
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