



ARIZONA SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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THE ARIZONA SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION IS THE ONE UNITED CREDIBLE VOICE REPRESENTING LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY FOR THE COUNTIES OF ARIZONA

January 26, 2026

An Open Letter: Response Mayes Stand Your Ground

On January 21, Attorney General Kris Mayes participated in an interview with 12News in Phoenix during which she made a series of statements and legal assertions that have caused substantial confusion about the authority of law enforcement officers, the role of federal agents conducting immigration enforcement, and the application of Arizona's self-defense and so-called "stand your ground" laws.

Since that time, and despite significant concern expressed by law enforcement leaders across Arizona, those statements have not been properly clarified.

In the interest of public safety, the Arizona Sheriffs' Association is compelled to make clear that any use of force against law enforcement officers is unlawful and cannot be justified. This is clearly stated in the state's stand your ground law, A.R.S. 13-419(C) (4)

<https://www.azleg.gov/viewdocument/?docName=https://www.azleg.gov/ars/13/00419.htm>

For the Attorney General to state otherwise shows a lack of understanding of state law – or much worse, a willful and reckless interpretation of the law.

First, the Attorney General does not speak for Arizona law enforcement. Some of the Attorney General's remarks gave the impression that deadly force against law enforcement could be justified if an individual claims they did not know the person was a law enforcement officer. That implication is incorrect. Arizona law is clear and unambiguous: law enforcement officers are expressly exempt from Arizona's self-defense and "stand your ground" statutes.

Arizona's justification statutes do not permit the use of physical or deadly force to resist a known or reasonably identifiable law enforcement officer acting in the performance of official duties (A.R.S. §§ 13-404(B)(2) (<https://www.azleg.gov/ars/13/00404.htm>) 13-405 (<https://www.azleg.gov/ars/13/00405.htm>) 13-409 (<https://www.azleg.gov/ars/13/00409.htm>))

While officers are required to make reasonable efforts to identify themselves, individuals bear full responsibility for the decisions they make when using force. The decision to use deadly force carries grave legal consequences. Misjudging that decision will result in lawful use of force by officers in their own self-defense and criminal prosecution, including for resisting arrest or assault on a peace officer (A.R.S. §§ 13-1204 (<https://www.azleg.gov/ars/13/01204.htm>) 13-2508 (<https://www.azleg.gov/ars/13/02508.htm>)

The Attorney General's comments were also directed at federal immigration authorities, suggesting that federal officers could face prosecution or violent retaliation from members of the public. Immigration and Customs Enforcement performs lawful, constitutionally authorized law enforcement duties expressly delegated to the federal government by Congress (8 U.S.C. § 1103 (<https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title8-section1103&num=0&edition=prelim>)) Federal officers acting within the scope of their authority are entitled to carry out those duties free from threats of violence or unlawful interference. While the tactics and policies of any law enforcement agency may be debated and criticized — activities protected by the First Amendment — the legality of federal immigration enforcement itself is not in question. Disagreements over immigration policy at the highest levels of government must never be directed at the men and women on the ground who are sworn to enforce the law.

And any disagreement with the duties or performance of officers have a place in our society — the courtroom.

The suggestion from a constitutional office that retaliating against lawful law enforcement officers performing their duties is deeply concerning. Attempts to deter lawful law enforcement officers from carrying out their duties through threats of prosecution or implied violence are inappropriate, dangerous, and must stop. If left uncorrected, such rhetoric risks being misinterpreted or misused in ways that could endanger all law enforcement officers, anywhere, whom we ask to perform an extraordinarily difficult and dangerous job.

The Arizona Sheriffs' Association calls on Attorney General Kris Mayes to clarify her comments and make clear that shooting at a law enforcement officer is never justified. Her statement influences conduct in the real world and carries direct public safety consequences.

The Arizona Sheriffs' Association rejects any suggestion that the use of force against law enforcement officers may be justified. Arizona law does not permit it, and public safety depends on this principle being clearly understood.

Arizona Sheriffs' Association

Sincerely,



David Clouse
President
Navajo County Sheriff



William Ponce
Vice President
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