

Sheriff Joe Arpaio Now Faces Criminal Charges

Maricopa County, Ariz., Sheriff Joe Arpaio faces an uncertain future after federal prosecutors announced Tuesday afternoon they intend to file criminal charges against the outspoken advocate for border security.

U.S. District Judge G. Murray Snow had previously recommended a criminal contempt of court charge against Arpaio, his defense attorney, and two of his senior deputies for conducting immigration patrols within his county after specifically being ordered not to. That order was issued in 2011, and federal prosecutors say the patrols continued for an additional 18 months.

If convicted, Arpaio faces up to six months in federal prison.

U.S. District Judge Susan Bolton has ordered Department of Justice attorneys to write an order to show cause—similar to formal criminal complaint—by Wednesday. She also has “suspended the statute of limitations clock” to deal with questions over whether or not the sheriff could face additional charges of obstruction of justice.

Arpaio, a staunch supporter of Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump—who has made immigration a signature piece of his campaign agenda—has been in and out of court for nearly a decade over his department’s patrols. The sheriff said he launched them because the federal government—particularly under the Obama Administration—has failed to do its job.

Open-borders advocates, as well as the Department of Justice, insist the patrols are racially motivated and unconstitutional.