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**VULNERABILITIES OF THE NATIONAL
BORDER SECURITY STRATEGY ON THE U.S.
BORDER PATROL**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes critical issues within the United States Border Patrol that have led to high attrition rates within the agency and an all-time low in morale among Border Patrol agents. A broadcast of Lou Dobbs Tonight reported, "Customs and border protection agents' hands are tied because their job no longer includes enforcement. Instead they have to man their posts 8-10 hours a day to serve as a deterrent, part of a bureaucratic decision that critics say is jeopardizing our national security."¹ The United States Border Patrol, a critical agency within the U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, is responsible for defending our borders between ports of entry. But when they are told to stand down and not do their job, who will?

In June 2004, the Border Patrol station in Temecula, California, formed a special Mobile Patrol Group that conducted a series of illegal alien sweeps in the communities of Norco, Corona, Escondido. The 12-man group made more than 450 arrests resulting in both approval and contempt. Latino activists were enraged, accusing the Border Patrol of violating their civil rights. Asa Hutchinson, then Undersecretary of Homeland Security, announced that while the sweeps were not illegal, they did breach policy and the chain of command. Robert Bonner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner, issued that same month an order that all future enforcement operations within the surrounding areas of checkpoints must first be approved by Border Patrol Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Morale at the Temecula border patrol station sank to its lowest level. "We don't know which way to turn – for once, we were doing our job, what the government pays us to do," said Ron Zermeno, shop steward for the National Border Patrol Council at the Temecula station.²

The purpose of this report is to raise significant problems within the National Border Patrol Strategy and how these problems affect the mission of the U.S. Border Patrol. This report is divided into three main parts. The first looks at the different risks and vulnerabilities that have shaped Border Patrol strategies at the northern and southwest borders. The second part focuses on Border Patrol operations: the history of Border Patrol, priorities pre and post 9/11, budget obligations and resources, and cooperation with land management agencies on federal borderlands. The last section analyzes the effects of problems internal to Border Patrol agents on national security. Areas focused on include inadequate staffing, insufficient technology, and attrition rates.

A solution for a long-term Border Patrol strategy is beyond the scope of this report. Follow-up work should include possible assessments to determine the optimal number of personnel needed to secure the border. An evaluation of the proper technology necessary to deploy to the northern and southern border is also critical. It is essential that the Department of Homeland Security develop a long-term National Border Security Strategy based on a risk and vulnerability assessment.

¹ George Putnam, "One Reporter's Opinion: Border Patrol Making Headway," NewsMax.com, 19 June 2004.

² William Finn Bennett, "Union Official: Frustration Grows at Temecula Border Patrol Station," NCTimes.com, 8 July 2004.

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Comparison Between Northern and Southern Borders	3
	a. Northern Border	3
	i. Northern Apprehensions	4
	ii. Drug Smuggling	7
	b. Southern Border	9
	i. Southern Apprehensions	11
	ii. Drug Smuggling	16
III.	Border Patrol Operations	18
	a. Pre 9/11	18
	b. Post 9/11	19
	c. USBP Sectors and Resources	19
	d. Inadequate Staffing	21
	e. Insufficient Technology	23
	f. Low Morale and Attrition Rates	24
IV.	Conclusion	34

Our investigation showed that two systemic weaknesses came together in our border system's inability to contribute to an effective defense against the 9/11 attacks: a lack of well-developed counterterrorism measures as a part of border security and an immigration system not able to deliver on its basic commitments, much less support counterterrorism. These weaknesses have been reduced but are far from being overcome.

-9/11 Commission Report

I. Introduction

On September 11, 2001, four United States airplanes were hijacked by terrorists and crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania killing almost 3,000 people in a matter of hours. The unsettling events of September 11, 2001, have left an imprint on the lives of every American. It must be remembered, though, that all nineteen hijackers were foreign immigrants who had legally gained access to our country. Despite being questioned by customs and carry fraudulent visas, some of the hijackers were allowed to enter the country; at least six of them violated immigration laws overstaying their visas or failing to attend an English language school permitted by their visas. September 11, 2001, will always be a reminder of the vulnerabilities of our immigration system and just how penetrable the United States is.

While the government has made drastic improvements in securing our aviation, the same cannot be said about our nation's borders. During the 2004 fiscal year, the United States Border Patrol apprehended close to 1.2 million undocumented aliens. Border Patrol agents predict that two to three times that number successfully cross the border unseen. While most people would agree that most illegal immigrants seeking entry into the United States do so for economic reasons, that does not undermine the crisis that our borders face. Every year, there are millions of undocumented aliens crossing our borders; less than half of them are apprehended. If indigent and poorly educated immigrants risk their life to make it across the borders, and succeed, then certainly, wealthy and professional terrorists will succeed in infiltrating the borders.

The increase in apprehensions of immigrants other than Mexican (OTMs) has also become a highlighted concern. When illegal immigrants are apprehended, they are offered the option of being deported or appearing for a deportation hearing. Most Mexicans choose to be sent back to their country, but OTMs must be held until their hearing. The problem is that the United States does not have the space to detain the growing numbers of OTMs. All OTMs from Special Interest Countries, those countries with known terrorist ties, are subject to mandatory detention and detained pending completion of removal hearing. Those OTMs that are not subject to mandatory detention are released on their own recognizance or a bond. Unfortunately, an alarming number of OTMs do not show up and disappear into the mainstream. Some of these OTMs come from 35 special interest nations with terrorist affiliations. Anyone can sneak into our country, and they can do so easily.

The 9/11 Commission Report recognized these threats and offered several proposals crafted to reduce the risk of another terrorist attack; however, much has not been done to implement these recommendations. Not only does the Bush Administration's fiscal year 2006 budget propose to cut the overall budget of the United States Border Patrol by 4%, the Administration is only providing funding for just a fraction of the agents called for

by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act 2004. However, former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge supported the proposal stating, "The notion that you're going to have 10,000 is sort of a fool's gold. It's nice to say you're going to have 10,000 more Border Patrol agents in five years, but what other part of Homeland Security do you want to take money from." Surprisingly, though, there seems to be funding available to provide illegal aliens with free flights back home in an attempt to lower recidivism rates instead of hiring and training enough agents to stop the problem before it happens.

The Customs and Border Protection Bureau (CBP) is the world's largest border agency and America's frontline defense in the war on terror. Within the Department of Homeland Security, CBP is the agency charged with securing our nation's borders, while maintaining global trade. The Border Patrol has the mission to protect our borders between ports of entry; however, the agency continues to operate inefficiently. The Border Patrol lacks the manpower and the resources to effectively patrol the border.

This report raises issues related to the United States Border Patrol and the problems affecting the agency that puts our national security at risk. Critical to the agency is a national strategy, and that is something the Administration still lacks. Failure to adopt an efficient strategy has led to the haphazard deployment of agents and technology. Failure to listen to the professional opinions of the brave individuals who defend our borders has led to low morale and high attrition rates. Consequently, careless background checks to meet hiring goals have resulted in a dilution of expertise and honor, putting our country at higher risk. Our borders are not safe, so we need to stop pretending they are.

Despite what should have been the wakeup call of September 11, 2001, there has been an unsettling lack of progress on both sides of the border to improve efficiency and strengthen security at land border crossings.

-Canada's Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defense.

II. Comparison between Northern and Southern Borders

Northern Border

It has been nearly four years since the 9/11 attacks, and yet even after billions of dollars in investment to secure our nation's borders, they still remain porous and readily accessible for terrorists seeking to enter illegally into the United States. During the immediate aftermath of 9/11 illegal immigration slowed down dramatically, but after two years, the numbers of apprehensions are rising once again. Prior to the events of 9/11, the 3,987³ mile long border that the United States and Canada share was proudly dubbed "the longest undefended border in the world." Prior to 9/11, the focus on border security was beginning to direct more attention to matters concerning legitimate international commerce as opposed to issues associated with immigration.⁴ Today, however, both Americans and Canadians are now aware that the open border they were once so accustomed to no longer provides the same comfort.

In the post-9/11 era, protecting the northern border has been elevated to an issue of national security. Both countries have come to understand that it is going to take cooperation from both sides of the border to create a more secure border. Canada has already spent nearly \$6.5 billion on border security-related issues, but many are still worried about infiltration along the border.⁵ Canadian intelligence officials believe that there are at least 50 terrorist groups that have some exiting authority in their country. Among the groups are: al-Qaeda; Islamic Jihad; Hezbollah and other Shiite groups; Hamas, the Palestinian Force 17, Egyptian Al Jihad and several other Sunni groups; the Irish Republican Army (IRA); Tamil Tigers, Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and Sikh terrorist groups.⁶ Americans have always criticized Canada for its open-door immigration policy and fear that al-Qaeda, as well as other terrorist groups, will cross the vast border illegally with ease. The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) had previously warned in 2000, "for a number of reasons, Canada is an attractive venue for terrorists. Long borders and coastlines offer many points of entry which can facilitate movement to and from various sites around the world, particularly the United States."⁷ Although no evidence has surfaced that any of the nineteen hijackers who were involved in the 9/11 attacks, there have been two confirmed attempts of terrorists illegally crossing the northern border to participate in terrorist acts:

- 1997 – Abu Mezer, a Palestinian from the West Bank, was arrested and charged with conspiracy to bomb the New York subway system. He had previously made three attempts to illegally cross into the United States at the Washington-British Columbia border. Each time he was apprehended and sent back to Canada.⁸

³ The USBP does not patrol the border between Alaska and Canada; the figure in this report represents the northern border as the border between the contiguous United States and Canada.

⁴ CRS Report to Congress, "Border Security: U.S.-Canada Border Issues", 8 July 2002.

⁵ See the article "50 Terrorist Groups Believed to Be in Canada" by Beth Duff Brown at http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20050704/ap_on_re_ca/border_canada_terror_groups_1

⁶ Canadian Surveillance and Intelligence Service website:

http://www.csis-scrs.gc.ca/eng/operat/ct_e.html

⁷ U.S. Congress. Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims. Hearings on *Terrorist Threats to the United States*, 106th Cong., 2nd Sess. Washington, Govt. 26 January 2000. Available at

http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/judiciary/hju64355.000/hju64355_0.htm

⁸ See the article "Terrorist Plot to Bomb New York Subway System" by Steve Macko at <http://www.emergency.com/ternyc97.htm> and CNN report at "Motive Sought in New York Subway Bomb Plot" <http://www.cnn.com/US/9708/02/brooklyn.bomb.pm/>

- 1999 – Ahmed Ressam, an Algerian national now referred to as the “millennium bomber,” was caught smuggling explosives into the United States through Port Angeles, WA. He was convicted of plotting to bomb the Los Angeles International Airport.⁹

In the tense months following 9/11, Canada passed its own version of the U.S. Patriot Act, known as the Anti-Terrorism Act; however, it was not until March 2004 that the first person, Mohammad Momin Khawaja, was arrested under the act. Khawaja was accused of being involved in and facilitating terrorist activities.¹⁰ Despite evidence that terrorists were utilizing the United States-Canada border to illegally enter the country, tightening security on the northern border still had not become a priority. In a report issued in February 2000, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) noted that the U.S.-Canada border was incapable of effectively countering any illegal activity due to a significant shortage in personnel and resources.¹¹ In a comparison between the manpower assigned to the Southern and Northern borders, a Senate hearing on October 1, 2001, pointed out that only 842 border patrol agents and inspectors were assigned to the U.S.-Canada border while over 9,500 agents and inspectors lined the much shorter southern border.¹² Extreme temperatures and geographical challenges, such as the extensive mountain ranges of the Rockies and the Great Lakes, make the northern border much more vulnerable to terrorist infiltration. These liabilities have highlighted the need to utilize resources accordingly. For that reason, “the rationale for the different emphasis between the two border areas is based upon historical volume in illegal cross-border activity, level of economic parity, and cooperation with foreign law enforcement.”¹³

The U.S. Patriot Act, Congress’ immediate response to the events of 9/11, authorized the Attorney General to triple the manpower on the northern border and granted \$50 million to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for the United States-Canada border to update technology and purchase additional equipment. Since then, the number of agents deployed to the northern border has increased from 340 border patrol agents in 2001 to 983 in 2004.¹⁴ **Figure 1** demonstrates this increase in manpower.

Northern Apprehensions

An analysis of the United States Border Patrol’s (USBP) data on apprehensions along the northern border, however, reveals that the increase in manpower has not had a significant effect on the number of apprehensions since 9/11.¹⁵ Despite tripling the amount of agents deployed on the northern border, **Figure 2** shows only a minor decline in the number of apprehensions in 2002¹⁶. This may reflect the different approach that USBP takes in regards to protecting the northern border, focusing more on its vulnerability to terrorist infiltration rather than unauthorized migration. Robert C. Bonner, Commissioner U.S. Customs and Border Protection, notes that “we have a multi-layered

⁹ See the article “Ahmed Ressam: the Would-be Millennium Bomber” by CBC News Online at http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/osamabinladen/ressam_timeline.html

¹⁰ See the article “Indepth: Canadian Security – Mohammad Momin Khawaja” by CBC News Online at http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/cdnsecurity/khawaja_mohammad.html

¹¹ U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Inspector General. *Follow-Up Report on the Border Patrol’s Efforts to Improve Northern Border Security*. OIG Report I-2002-004.

¹² U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on *Northern Border Security*, 107th Cong., 1st Sess. Washington, Govt. Print. Off., October 3 and December 5, 2001.

¹³ CRS Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

¹⁴ CRS Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

¹⁵ CRS Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

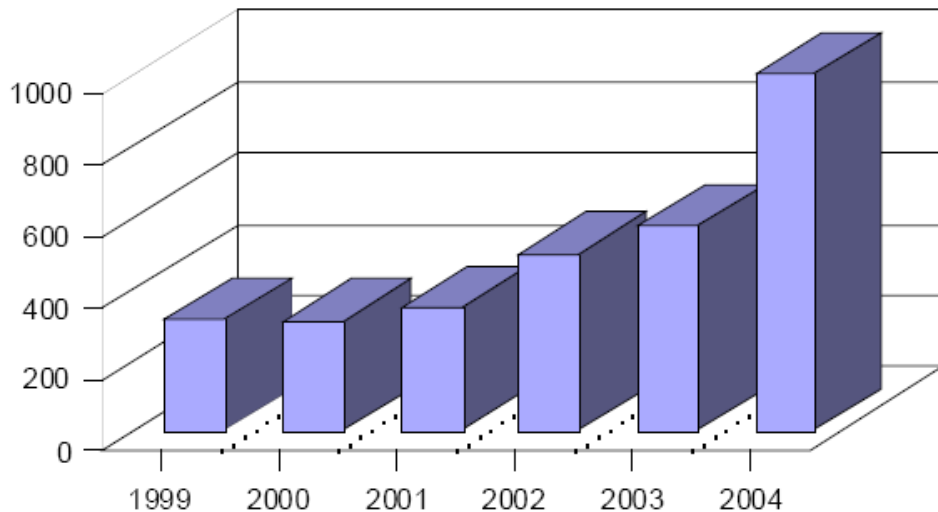
¹⁶ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “Performance and Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2003.”

approach that encompasses working with our foreign counterparts, employing intelligence, technology, advanced information in the field, and the most professional workforce worldwide.”¹⁷

The Integrated Border Enforcement Team is a multi-agency law enforcement team that promotes a more cooperative approach between United States and Canadian agencies to enhance security on the northern border. IBET’s mission is to create a strong partnership and emphasize the sharing of information and intelligence. IBET enables agencies on both sides of the border to work together on a common goal: create a border that allows cross-border commerce, but keeps criminals out. IBETs have facilitated communication between the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canada Border Services Agency, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Coast Guard. These five organizations comprise the core agencies involved in IBET. Through IBET, the northern border has been divided into fifteen geographical regions established by the five core agencies.¹⁸ IBETs have successfully disrupted drug smuggling rings and intercepted criminal networks attempting to smuggle illegal aliens across the border. Since its initiation in 1996, the West Coast IBET has apprehended an average of \$1 million per month in drugs, weapons, alcohol, tobacco, and vehicles.¹⁹

The United States-Canada border, which spans twelve states, provides unique obstacles to Border Patrol. In comparison to the southern border, the northern border differs dramatically in length and geography. As mentioned previously in this report, the northern border is approximately 4,000 miles in length, more than twice the length of the southern border.

Figure 1: Northern Border Agents and Pilots
CRS Representation of USBP Data
Fiscal Years

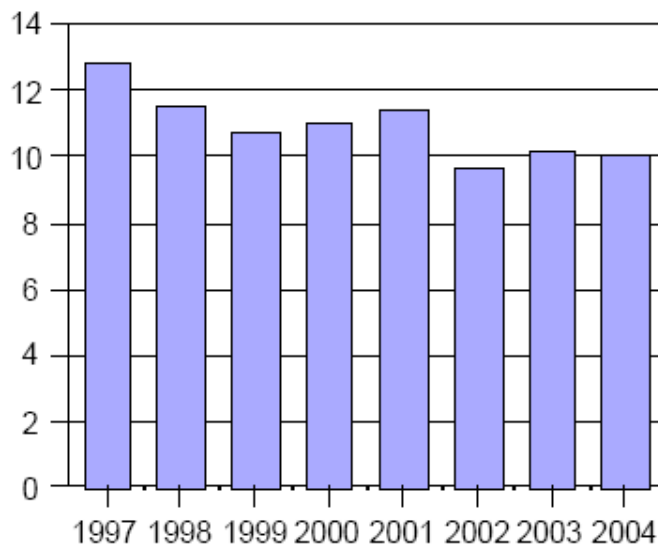


¹⁷ U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection website: www.cbp.gov

¹⁸ See http://www.rcmp.ca/security/ibets_e.htm.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center, Fall 2002. Available at <http://www.nlectc.org/techbeat/fall2002/IBETFall02.pdf>.

Figure 2: Northern Border Apprehensions
 CRS Representation of USBP Data
 Fiscal Years; in Thousands of Apprehensions



Historically, the northern border has been accountable for reasonably less apprehensions than the southern border. Accordingly, the northern border's strategy is divided into three areas of emphasis: the first phase focuses on liaison and intelligence; the second phase emphasizes technology and equipment; and the last phase concentrates on personnel. How effective this strategy has proved to be is still questionable though. Since 9/11, manpower on the northern border has tripled: pre-9/11, there was only one agent to patrol every 11 miles of the border; now that figure has improved to one agent every 4 miles, but the northern border still remains severely understaffed. Even though the northern border has made drastic improvements in expanding technological resources and supplying agents with additional equipment, high-tech gadgets are no substitute for boots on the ground. Despite the additional bodies on the ground and increased aircraft patrolling the skies, the enormity of the U.S.-Canada border leaves vast portions of land undefended. In a 1999 statement by Eugene R. Davis, then the Deputy Chief Patrol Agent for the Blaine Border Patrol Sector in Washington, Davis testified concerning his area of operations:

The majority of illegal smuggling activity takes place within 35-miles between Blaine and Ross Lake, Washington . . . [this area] is diverse and is very challenging to patrol. Much of this land consists of open berry fields on both sides of the Border and roads in Canada and the United States that parallel each other. It is very easy to simply jump or drive across the small ditch, which separates the two countries. This is the most common modus operandi for the smugglers operating along both sides of the border.²⁰

At that time, only 42 agents patrolled this 102-mile long border the United States shares with Canada. Today, 133 agents man the Blaine Sector, but the raspberry fields are still

²⁰ Testimony of Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Eugene R. Davis, in U.S. Congress, Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, *Northern Border Enforcement Issues*, 105th Cong. 14 April 1999. Available at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/aboutus/congress/testimonies/1999/990414a.pdf>

exploited for their easy accessibility to cross the border. Now retired, Davis warns that we still are not secure.²¹

Drug Smuggling

In 2003, United States Border Patrol confiscated a record high of over 1.3 million pounds in narcotics between points of entry.²² The National Drug Intelligence Center has identified Primary Market Areas (PMAs) for cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, and MDMA (also known as Ecstasy) as cities that lead the nation in both consumption and distribution of these narcotics; the results are based on a review of public health information. **Figure 3** displays these PMAs. According to a report by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, marijuana represented the bulk of the total amount of drugs confiscated by USBP agents.²³

Since 2001, marijuana seizures on the northern border have increased by 259 percent; factors contributing to the rise in drug apprehensions include enhanced cooperation between Canada and United States law enforcement agencies and enhanced security along the border.²⁴ Both U.S. and Canadian officials remained concerned, though, because law enforcement agencies seize only a portion of the marijuana that crosses the border. Increases in the size of marijuana shipments smuggled into the U.S. from Canada is due mostly to the profitable nature of marijuana production in Canada, which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) reports is now dominated by organized crime, most notably Hells Angels and Vietnamese criminal groups. According to seizure data, several metric tons of marijuana are smuggled from Canada into the United States annually; British Columbia has traditionally been known for its large-scale production of marijuana; however, production in Ontario and Quebec has climbed to similar levels as those reported in British Columbia (see **Table 1**)²⁵.

Table 1: Canadian Marijuana Seizures, 2003

	Plants Eradicated	Processed Marijuana Seized (lb)
British Columbia	460,971	8,345
Ontario	232,060	16,555
Quebec	579,381	11,327
Canada Total	1,400,026	47,442

Source: Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Canadian distributors market a strain of marijuana that is higher in tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content, such as sinsemilla, making it have a much higher street value. In

²¹ See the article “U.S.-Canada Border Continues to be a Weak Link in Security” by Beth Duff-Brown at http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050704/news_1n4canborder.html

²² Testimony of CBP Commissioner Robert Bonner, in U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Infrastructure and Border Security, “Joint Hearing on Homeland Security Counternarcotics Mission, hearings,” 108th Cong. 2nd Sess., 22 July 2004.

²³ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “Performance and Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2003.”

²⁴ U.S.-Canada Border Drug Threat Assessment, October 2004. Available at http://www.psepc.gc.ca/publications/policing/drug_threat_e.asp.

²⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center, “National Drug Threat Assessment 2005.” Available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs11/12620/12620p.pdf>.

selected market areas, the cost of sinsemilla was 2-3 times higher than commercial marijuana.²⁶

Figure 3



Source: National Drug Intelligence Center

Marijuana is commonly smuggled across the Washington-British Columbia border (see **Table 2**), but drug trafficking has quickly spread east, affecting Michigan, New York, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, and Vermont. An evaluation by the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area raised concerns that Washington federal lands are a potential threat to national security because these drug smuggling routes can easily be used to smuggle other contraband, such as weapons and currency.²⁷

Table 2: Principal Ports of Entry/Counties for Marijuana Seizures Along Northern Border, 2003

POE	Kilograms Seized at POE
Blaine (WA)	3,210
Sumas (WA)	1,579
County	Kilograms Seized Between POEs
Whatcom (WA)	704
Okanogan (WA)	545

Source: El Paso Intelligence Center

²⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center, "National Drug Threat Assessment 2005." Available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs11/12620/12620p.pdf>

²⁷ Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, "Washington State Public Lands Drug Threat Assessment 2003."

While terrorist groups and DTOs have traditionally been considered separate threats, these two distinct networks are now increasingly working together. While there is no firm evidence linking Asian criminal organizations to terrorist activities, there is a “consensus among various experts that both groups at times use the same methods and activities to achieve their revenue goals. However, specific details on these activities remain relatively elusive in open-source materials.”²⁸

According to the General Accounting Office, federal lands along the northern border have not posed a threat as serious as the southern border, but law management officials employed on federal lands are still fearful that illegal activity, especially drug trafficking, will increase on remote federal lands.²⁹ Indian tribal lands along the border have become very susceptible areas for illegal activities. Drug smuggling has become quite common on Indian lands, frequently with the aid of tribe members bribed by drug traffickers. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration notes the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Montana as one of the primary locations for the consumption of cocaine.³⁰

Three years ago, a federal probe discovered that multiple tribal members had collaborated with drug smugglers on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation; more than 30 convictions for cocaine trafficking resulted.³¹ In 1999, Mohawk tribe members in New York were charged with “smuggling drugs, guns, and illegal aliens—including associates of Osama bin Laden – for as much as \$47,000 a head.”³²

Southern Border

No reliable estimates are available for how many immigrants have successfully entered the United States illegally, but estimates range as high as 10-15 million. Crossing our U.S. borders has been a challenge that is quite feasible. Rather than becoming more secure in the aftermath of 9/11, our borders continue to remain wide open. Spanning the four states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, the 1,952 mile-long southern border serves as the brunt of the massive influx of illegal entry into the United States. Since 1992, the southern border has been responsible for apprehending 97% of all undocumented aliens. While many of these illegal immigrants have been categorized as “economic migrants,” there is an ever increasing threat that would-be terrorists will begin to utilize these same methods to infiltrate the country.³³

The growing number of illegal immigrants classified as Other Than Mexican (OTM) being apprehended at the border has also posed a serious threat. While Mexicans represent the vast amount of illegal aliens apprehended at the border, the steady flow of immigrants from other countries, most notably Guatemala, Honduras, and Brazil, are exploiting the border, and the numbers keep increasing. For the first time, more OTMs are being apprehended in the Rio Grande Valley than illegal immigrants from Mexico;

²⁸ Federal Research Division, The Library of Congress, “Asian Organized Crime and Terrorist Activity in Canada,” July 2003.

²⁹ GAO Report, GAO-04-590, “Border Security: Agencies Need to Better Coordinate Their Strategies and Operations on Federal Lands,” June 2004.

³⁰ U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, “DEA 2004 Briefs and Background, Drugs and Drug Abuse, State Factsheets: Montana.” Available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/states/montana2004.html>

³¹ See the article “Drugs Invade via Indian Land” by Kevin Johnson at http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2003-08-06-indian-drugs-usat_x.htm.

³² Jan Golab, “The Festering Problem of Indian ‘Sovereignty’”, The American Enterprise, September 2004.

³³ CRS Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

out of the 21,578 Brazilians arrested nationally by May 2005, 15,905 – 73% – were detained in the Rio Grande Valley.³⁴ In the Tri-Border Region of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, al-Qaeda has become profoundly involved in cocaine and heroine trafficking, weapon and uranium smuggling, counterfeiting CDs and DVDs and money-laundering activities; this Tri-Border Region is known as an area of growing Islamic extremism.³⁵

With airports enforcing tighter security measures, many fear the movement of illegal aliens, ranging from countries such as Afghanistan to Egypt, across the country's land borders and offering the perfect cover for potential terrorists seeking entrance into the United States. David Aguilar, Chief of Border Patrol, said that Border Patrol agents detained 644 people from "countries of concern" last year and have already apprehended about 500 this year.³⁶ As mentioned earlier in this report, apprehensions of OTMs from Special Interest Countries require mandatory detention, but OTMs of other nationalities are released on their own recognizance. It has become a concern that terrorist operatives will take advantage of the habitual release of OTMs into the United States pending their removal proceedings; coached with rehearsed stories to claim citizenship from a non-Special Interest Country, potential terrorists can successfully gain entry into the country.

Although, none of the terrorists involved in the 9/11 events entered the country illegally through either border, al-Qaeda's interest in the vulnerability of the southwest border was noted on their website:

*In 1996, 254 million persons, 75 million automobiles, and 3.5 million trucks entered America from Mexico. At the 38 official border crossings, only five percent of this huge total is inspected. . . These are figures that really call for contemplation.*³⁷

There have already been two recent apprehensions of two terrorist suspects who entered the United States through Mexico:

- July 19, 2004 – Border Patrol agents at McAllen Miller Airport arrested Farida Goolam Mahomed Ahmed, a South African citizen, after establishing that Ahmed did not have a valid U.S. visa. Further investigation revealed that Ahmed had torn several pages from her passport, indicating travel to Pakistan. Ahmed was also found with a pair of wet, muddy pants in her bag. Ahmed had flown from London to Mexico City on July 14, 2004; she had apparently crossed the Rio Grande and entered the U.S. illegally. Ahmed was waiting to board a flight to New York City.³⁸
- July 20, 2004 – Kamran Shaikh, also known as Kamran Ahktar, a Pakistani citizen, was arrested in Charlotte, North Carolina for violating immigration

³⁴ "OTMs Spell Trouble for Border Patrol," by Hernán Rozemberg and Macarena Hernández, Express-News, 25 June 2005. Available at

<http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/metro/stories/MYSA062505.1A.OTMs.5b9f454.html>.

³⁵ See the article "Al-Qaida south of the border" at

http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=37133.

³⁶ See the article "Non-Mexicans (OTMs) Arrested at U.S. Border Nearly Doubled" at

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1441661/posts>.

³⁷ House Select Committee on Homeland Security, "Transforming the Southern Border: Providing Security and Prosperity in the Post 9/11 World," September 2004.

³⁸ U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas, "Farida Ahmed Convicted." Available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/txs/releases/September2004/040927-Ahmed.htm>.

policies. He was charged on six counts – four for making false statements to police officers and two for immigration violations. Shaikh was videotaping skyscrapers in Charlotte. Other footage in North Carolina that he videotaped included the Bank of America Building and the Wachovia Building where the local FBI is located. Shaikh claimed the videos were for his scrapbook. Shaikh, also had footage of public transportation systems in large metropolitan cities and a Texas dam. No terrorist ties were confirmed, but Shaikh admitted to illegally entering the U.S. through Tijuana, Mexico.³⁹

Southern Apprehensions

Today, 90% of the USBP agents are deployed along the United States-Mexico Border. The main goal along the southwest border is to detain illegal immigration. Following the new Border Patrol National Strategy, the southern border continues to employ the Prevention Through Deterrence strategy; the majority of USBP agents are deployed to areas where illegal traffic is high. The goal of this strategy is to deflect the mass movement of illegal immigrants from long-established routes to less traditional and harsher paths, giving agents an advantage over the illegal traffic. Despite the fact that “Prevention Through Deterrence” made border crossing much more dangerous and challenging for aliens, the total number of illegal immigrants apprehended from 1994 to 2000 had increased steadily (see **Figure 5**)⁴⁰; numbers increased even though resources and manpower more than doubled. From 2001 to 2003, USBP apprehensions decreased.

While some credit this reduction to the deployment of enough border patrol agents to effectively implement the “Prevention Through Deterrence” strategy, others claim that it was the dip in the economy that slowed down the flow of illegal traffic. During the 2004 fiscal year, apprehensions increased by 26 percent.⁴¹

Many have questioned the success of the Prevention Through Deterrence strategy. While apprehensions have decreased dramatically in urban areas, notably the San Diego area, illegal immigration has simply shifted to less protected areas. In 2004, 580,000 aliens were arrested in Arizona, a total that accounted for 50% of the national total; in 2003, apprehensions in Arizona only accounted for 9% of the national total.⁴² Not only has the number of apprehensions continued to rise, but the number of migrant deaths has also risen. Stated previously in the report, the goal of “Prevention Through Deterrence” was to steer illegal traffic away from urban regions into more remote areas. The results have unintentionally increased the number of fatalities along the border, as illegal immigrants attempt to cross dangerous regions, such as the Arizona desert.

³⁹ See the article “Pakistani Man Arrested While Videotaping Buildings May Stand Trial” by Ron Chepesuik at http://newstandardnews.net/content/?action=show_item&itemid=1043.

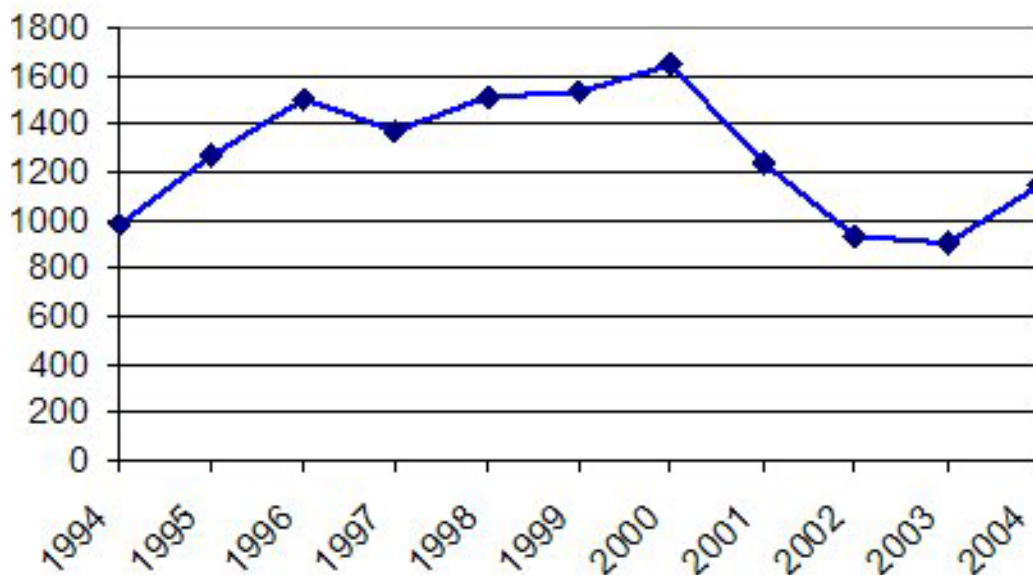
⁴⁰ Jason Ackleson, “Fencing in Failure: Effective Border Control is Not Achieved by Building More Fences”, Immigration Policy in Focus, Volume 4, Issue 2. April 2005.

⁴¹ Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

⁴² Jason Ackleson, “Fencing in Failure: Effective Border Control is Not Achieved by Building More Fences”, Immigration Policy in Focus, Volume 4, Issue 2. April 2005.

Figure 5: Southwest Border Apprehensions

Fiscal Years; in Thousands of Apprehensions



Fifty percent of the southwest border is comprised of federal lands (see **Figure 6**)⁴³, and more and more illegal aliens and drug smugglers have been entering the United States from Mexico through federal lands along the Arizona border. According to a GAO report, an estimated 1,500 illegal aliens cross the Tohono O’odham Indian Reservation each day.⁴⁴ See **Figure 7** for the location of the Tohono O’odham reservation along the Arizona border. Another 200,000 illegal aliens were estimated to have crossed the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in 2001, and the Fish and Wildlife Service estimate that 1,000 aliens cross the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge weekly. Both national parks also lie along the southern border of Arizona (see **Figure 7**).⁴⁵ Illegal activity on federal borderlands has also endangered law enforcement officers, employees, visitors, and residents. Occurrences described on federal lands in Arizona consist of visitor carjacking, assaults on officers, and robberies and break-ins on personal property.

On the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument Park, a park ranger was shot and killed as he helped Border Patrol agents track down two suspects in a drug-related quadruple homicide who had illegally entered the United States.⁴⁶ Law enforcement officers have been attacked on federal lands, and employees and visitors have been run off roads by smugglers driving at dangerous speeds. Some federal lands have been closed off to both visitors and employees because the area has been flooded by illegal alien smuggling. Land management agencies blame the Border Patrol strategy for the volume

⁴³ Department of the Interior, U.S.-Mexico Border, Field Coordinating Committee. Available at <http://www.cerc.usgs.gov/fcc/resources.htm>

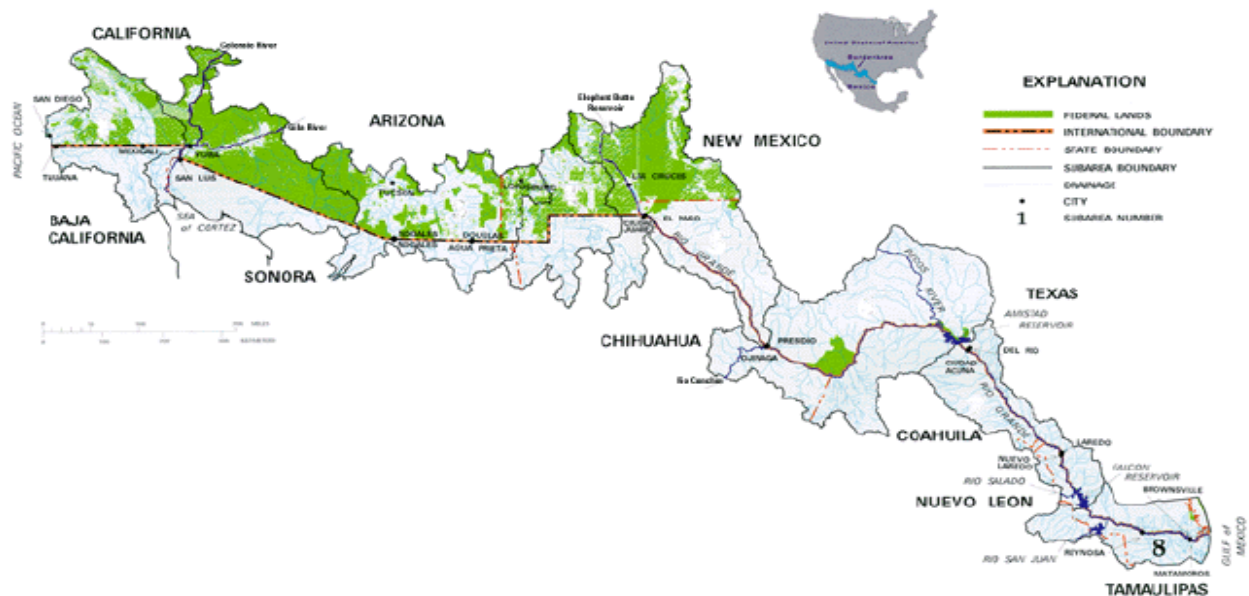
⁴⁴ GAO Report, GAO-04-590, “Border Security: Agencies Need to Better Coordinate Their Strategies and Operations on Federal Lands,” June 2004.

⁴⁵ GAO Report, GAO-04-590, “Border Security: Agencies Need to Better Coordinate Their Strategies and Operations on Federal Lands,” June 2004.

⁴⁶ GAO Report, GAO-04-590, “Border Security: Agencies Need to Better Coordinate Their Strategies and Operations on Federal Lands,” June 2004.

of illegal activities experienced along federal borderlands. Following the Prevention Through Deterrence strategy, USBP deployed manpower and resources to areas more densely populated and with a history of illegal activity. In the Tucson Sector of Arizona, resources were first concentrated to the city of Nogales and then to the surrounding areas of Douglas and Naco. Though illegal cross-border activity did decrease in these areas, it only shifted traffic to more remote, less protected federal lands, and the Tucson Sector still remains the area that receives the highest level of illegal traffic of any sector in the United States.

Figure 6: Federal Lands Along Southwest Border



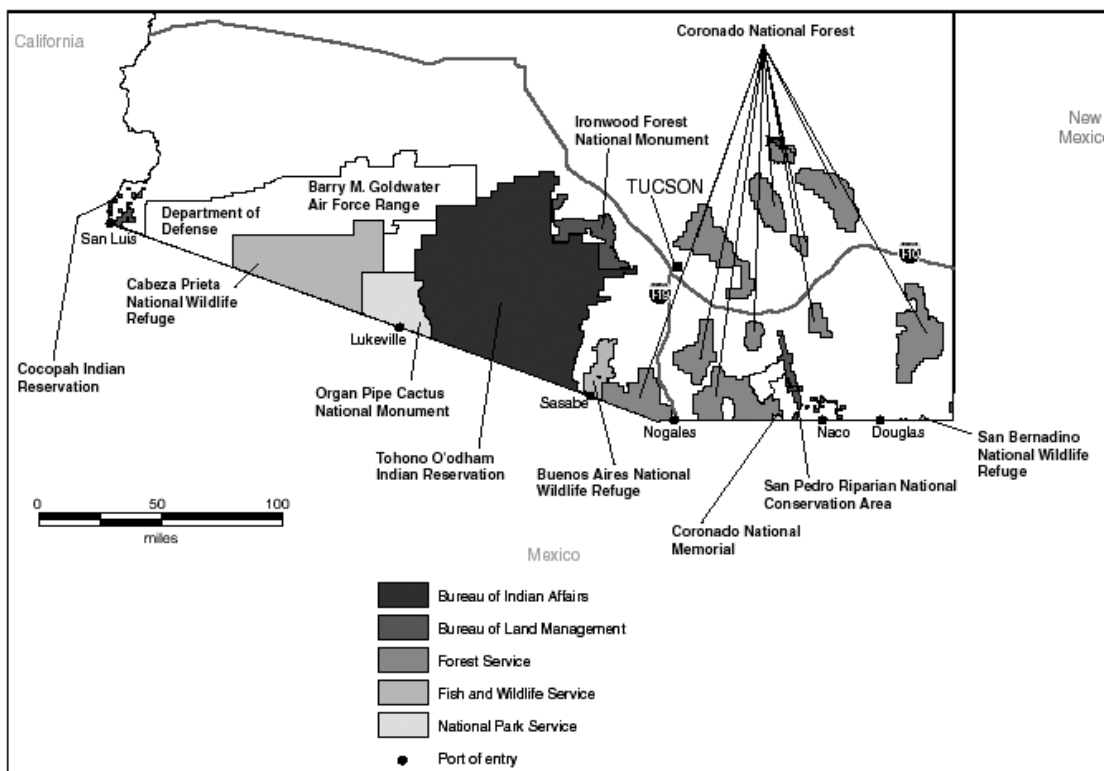
Ever since the implementation of "Prevention Through Deterrence," illegal immigrants and drug traffickers have increasingly been crossing the United States-Mexico border through federal borderlands. The 1994 Border Patrol strategy, which concentrated most of its resources to heavily populated areas, redirected much of the illegal traffic to less protected federal lands. The Border Patrol and officials from the land management agencies reported that illegal cross border traffic on Arizona federal lands has been increasing since the mid 1990s.⁴⁷ As mentioned previously in the report, illegal activity has forced land management officials to close off areas to the public due to safety reasons, but illegal traffic also affects the endangered species inhabiting these federal lands. Illegal smugglers have established paths and roads while traveling through federal lands harming vegetation and the habitats of species (see **Figure 11**). These trails affect wildlife, cause soil compaction and erosion, and can affect stream bank stability.⁴⁸ The trash and waste left behind illegal aliens and smugglers also impacts wildlife and vegetation. The Tohono O'odham reservation estimates that approximately

⁴⁷ GAO Report, GAO-04-590, "Border Security: Agencies Need to Better Coordinate Their Strategies and Operations on Federal Lands," June 2004.

⁴⁸ Report to the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, "Impacts Caused by Undocumented Aliens Crossing Federal Lands in Southeast Arizona," April 2002.

four million pounds of trash is left behind each year as a result of illegal traffic (see **Figure 12**).

Figure 7: Arizona Federal Borderlands



Source: GAO

The intent of “Prevention Through Deterrence” was to reroute traffic to areas more difficult to cross; the harsh climate and terrain alone would deter many illegal immigrants. As a result, Border Patrol did not expect the large numbers of illegal border crossers attempting to gain entry into the United States through these more difficult and remote environments. Land enforcement officers were unprepared for the increase in illegal traffic; they expressed that they were not informed when Border Patrol began to execute the strategy in Arizona, and land management officials were never warned of the possible consequences affecting federal lands.

While not as severe as the southern border, illegal cross border traffic on federal lands on the northern border presents its own unique problems. With the lack of personnel patrolling the northern border, there is a growing concern that terrorists could easily infiltrate the United States. Federal lands in Washington pose a national security threat because they are frequently used to smuggle contraband, drugs, and weapons.⁴⁹ Land management agencies reported to GAO that they would like to be involved in the development of the threat assessments covering their lands so that they can be both better informed and prepared for potential risks. Border Patrol stated that they would

⁴⁹ Office of National Drug Control Policy, The National High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Program, Annual Report 2004. Available at <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/policy/hidta04/index.html>.

ultimately include in their strategy factors that concentrate on enhancing communication between agents and law enforcement officers.⁵⁰

Figure 11: Trails Created by Illegal Traffic Crossing Federal Lands in Arizona



Source: GAO

Figure 12: Trash Left by Illegal Traffic on Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona



Source: GAO

⁵⁰ GAO Report, GAO-04-590, "Border Security: Agencies Need to Better Coordinate Their Strategies and Operations on Federal Lands," June 2004.

Drug Smuggling

According to the National Drug Intelligence Center, Mexican criminal groups wield more influence than any other criminal group over drug trafficking in the United States.⁵¹ Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) transport and distribute the majority of cocaine and methamphetamine in most regions of the United States; Mexican DTOs control most of the flow of heroin in the western regions of the U.S., and they are prominent transporters and distributors of marijuana throughout the entire nation. For decades, Mexico has been the predominant supplier of foreign marijuana entering the United States.

The U.S.-Mexico border is the chief area in which most illicit drugs are smuggled into the United States. The El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) reports that the majority of the cocaine and a large amount of the heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine smuggled into the U.S. come through the southwest border. Not only does the amount of illicit substances seized at or between ports of entry (POEs) along the southwest border continue to exceed the amount confiscated at or between POEs on the northern border (see **Table 2**), but drug shipments apprehended in the four southwest border states greatly surpass shipments seized in any other region of the United States (see **Table 3**).⁵²

Table 2: Seizures of Drugs at Ports of Entry, Southwest Border vs. Northern Border, in Kilograms, 2003

Drug	Southwest Border	Northern Border
Cocaine	15,927.0	154.0
Heroin	291.5	0.0
Marijuana	1,173,128.0	11,183.0
Methamphetamine	1,733.0	0.2

Source: El Paso Intelligence Center

Table 3: Seizures of Drugs, Southwest Border States vs. All Other States, in Kilograms, 2003

Drug	Southwest Border States	All Other States
Cocaine	4,391	1,564
Heroin	82	96
Marijuana	91,270	6,066
Methamphetamine	1,080	101

Source: El Paso Intelligence Center

Texas seems to now be the primary state through which most cocaine is funneled into the country, and as a result, Houston has surfaced as the leading cocaine distribution

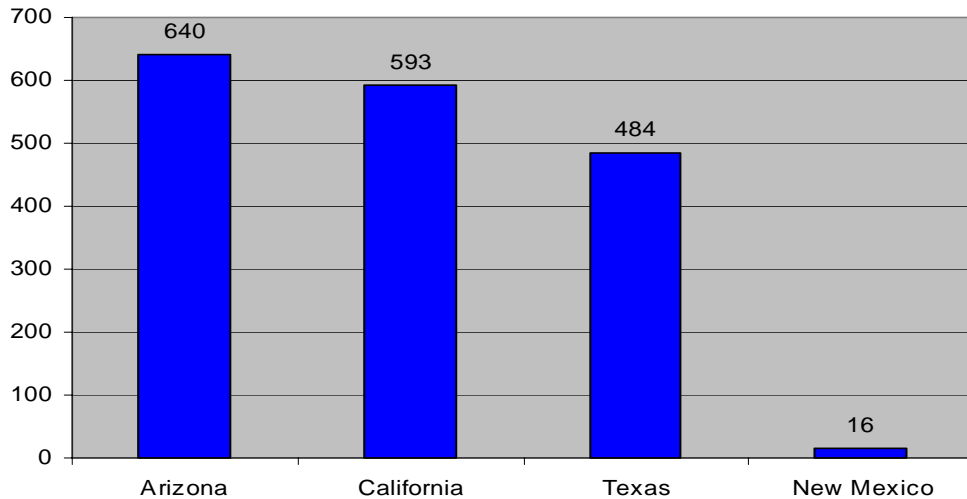
⁵¹ U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center, "National Drug Threat Assessment 2005." Available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs11/12620/12620p.pdf>.

⁵² U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center, "National Drug Threat Assessment 2005." Available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs11/12620/12620p.pdf>.

center in the United States. The southwest border of Texas has also become a primary area for trafficking South American heroin into the country. The smuggling of methamphetamine from Mexico into the United States via the Arizona border has increased sharply since 2001. Surprisingly, in 2003, methamphetamine seizures at or between POEs in Arizona surpassed the amount seized at or between POEs in California, Texas, and New Mexico (see **Figure 8**).⁵³

There has been heightened concern that “the same groups, methods, and routes used to smuggle migrants and drugs across the border can now be utilized to smuggle terrorists and weapons of mass destruction,” says Brown University political scientist Peter Andreas.⁵⁴ In August 2004, a key al-Qaeda operative, Sharif al-Masri, was captured near Pakistan’s borders. Masri revealed that al-Qaeda has considered plans to “smuggle nuclear materials to Mexico, then operatives would carry material into the U.S.”⁵⁵ Though Masri’s report was unproven, it raised already heightened concerns regarding U.S.-Mexico border security. Rafael Fernández de Castro, head of the international relations department at ITAM, a leading private university in Mexico City, says the “Mexican government is cooperating at the very highest level, but there is a terrible lack of coordination, and the country’s institutions are disorganized and immature.”⁵⁶

Figure 8: Methamphetamine Seizures At or Between Ports Of Entry, in Kilograms, 2003



⁵³ U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center, “National Drug Threat Assessment 2005.” Available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs11/12620/12620p.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Geri Smith, “Where Security Trumps Trade,” BusinessWeek, 10 February 2005.

⁵⁵ Adam Zagorin, “Bordering on Nukes?” Time, 22 November 2004.

⁵⁶ Geri Smith, “Where Security Trumps Trade,” BusinessWeek, 10 February 2005.

III. Border Patrol Operations

Introduction

Established in 1924, the United States Border Patrol has assumed the role as the nation's first line of defense. Historically, the mission of USBP has been to inhibit the entry of illegal aliens into the country. Prior to September 11, 2001, border security operations fell under several departments, including the Department of Justice (Immigration and Naturalization Service), the Department of Treasury (Customs Service), the Department of Agriculture (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service), and the Department of Transportation (Coast Guard). After the events of 9/11, though, the U.S. Congress saw the need to drastically enhance the security of our nation's borders. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-296) resulted in the largest reorganization of the federal government in more than half a century. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the third largest Cabinet agency, was established with the basic mission to protect the U.S. from another terrorist attack. Today, there are four key federal agencies that are responsible for securing the nation's borders:

- Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP)– responsible for managing commercial operations, inspections, and land border patrol tasks
- Bureau of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) – manages investigations, alien custody and deportations, air/marine drug interdiction procedures, and federal protective services
- Transportation Security Administration (TSA) – responsible for defending the country's air, land, and rail transportation systems against any form of attack
- United States Coast Guard – patrols the nation's territorial and contiguous international waters to protect against any form of threat

All of these agencies, with the exception of the U.S. Coast Guard, are located in the Directorate of Border and Transportation Security, all within DHS. The U.S. Coast Guard is located in a separate division within DHS. The creation of CBP merged all previous border law enforcement agencies under one bureau. Consequently, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) dissolved, and employees from Border Patrol, the Customs Service, and the Department of Agriculture fell under the umbrella of CBP.

Today, the United States Border Patrol's primary mission is to prevent the entry of terrorists and terrorist weapons into the country; they are also responsible for deterring illegal immigrants from entering the United States and for prohibiting the trafficking of illegal substances across the nation's borders between ports of entry. The USBP does not have authority at points of entry; CBP inspectors are stationed at points of entry and are charged with handling customs, immigrations, and agricultural inspections.

Pre 9/11

The primary focus of the USBP pre-9/11 was illegal immigrants, alien smuggling, and drug trafficking. In response to issues concerning the flow of illegal aliens and illicit substances crossing the border, the USBP put into action its first National Strategic Plan (NSP) in 1994. The NSP was known as "Prevention Through Deterrence." A multi-phase approach, the goal of the Prevention Through Deterrence strategy was to deploy manpower and resources directly on the border to deter illegal immigrants from entering the country, as opposed to trying to arrest them after they had already crossed the border. The strategy was divided into four phases:

- Phase I – “Hold the Line” in El Paso, Texas and Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego, California.
- Phase II – Operation Safeguard in Tucson, Arizona and the Del Rio, Laredo, and McAllen sectors in Texas.
- Phase III – the remaining three sectors along the southwest border.
- Phase IV – the northern border, gulf coast, and coastal waters around Florida and Puerto Rico.

Post 9/11

After the events of September 11, 2001, though, the USBP began to prioritize on safeguarding the nation against terrorism. After the establishment of DHS in 2003, the USBP was given instructions to develop a new strategy. In March 2005, the U.S. Border Patrol began implementing the new NSP, which focused on five strategic objectives:

- Determine the possibility of apprehending terrorists and terrorist weapons who attempt to gain illegal entrance at or between ports of entry
- Continue to prevent illegal entries through enhanced enforcement
- Continue to locate and apprehend those involved in the trafficking of drugs, humans, and contraband
- Employ “Smart Border” technology to increase the capabilities of BP agents
- Decrease the level of crime in border communities thereby enhancing the quality of life.⁵⁷

USBP has a central goal of attaining operational control over the border. Operational control is defined as “the ability to detect, respond, and interdict border penetrations in areas deemed as high priority for threat potential or other national security objectives.”⁵⁸ The new strategy will continue to expand “Prevention Through Deterrence;” different strategies are employed at the two borders, and therefore, a different mix of resources – personnel, equipment, technology, and border infrastructure – are deployed, respectively, to the northern and southwest borders.

USBP Sectors and Resources

The U.S. Border Patrol has its headquarters stationed in Washington, DC; Border Patrol has the nation divided into 21 different sectors (see **Figure 9**).⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, “National Border Patrol Strategy,” 1 March 2005. Available at http://www.customs.gov/linkhandler/cgov/border_security/border_patrol/national_bp_strategy.ctt/national_bp_strategy.pdf

⁵⁸ Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, “National Border Patrol Strategy,” 1 March 2005.

⁵⁹ Available at: <http://www.honorfirst.com/stationlist.htm>.

Figure 9: U.S. Border Patrol Sector Map



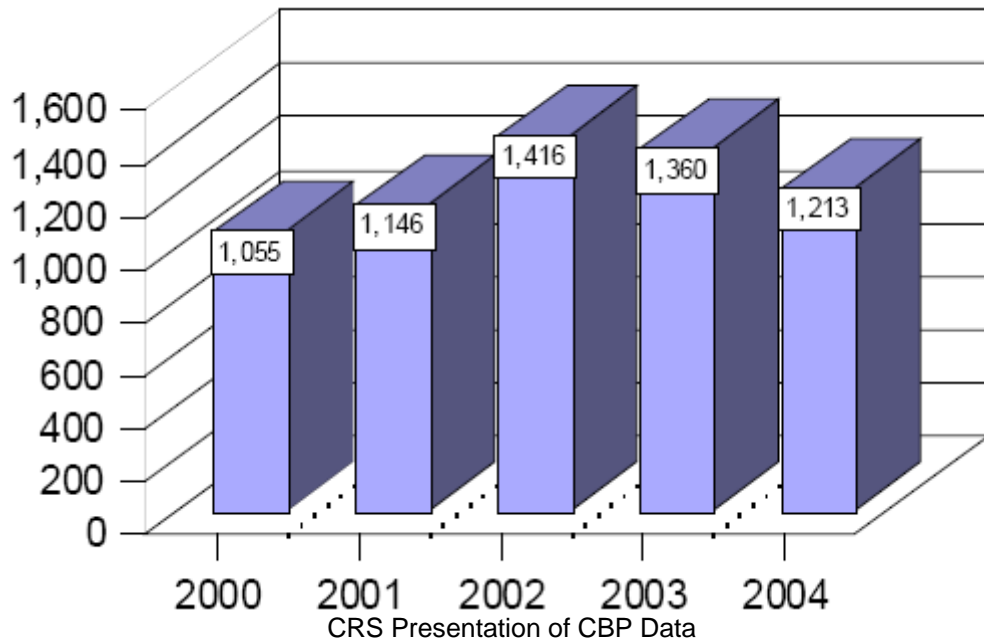
With the rising concern over drug and human smuggling, border patrol has been a top priority for decades. With the implementation of the 1994 “Prevention Through Deterrence” strategy, border enforcement has seen its budget increase sevenfold between 1980 and 1995 and then triple between the years of 1995 and 2001.⁶⁰ In the aftermath of 9/11, border security has only increased. **Figure 10** displays the Border Patrol’s obligated budget between the fiscal years of 2000 and 2004.⁶¹ Despite a decline in the budget during the 2003 and 2004 fiscal years, the budget still remains higher than the pre-9/11 era. As the budget has increased, so has the manpower. As of April 30, 2005, the USBP had 10, 664 border patrol agents on staff.⁶² The USBP has also updated their technology to enhance their performance along the border. Equipment employed by the Border Patrol include sensors, light towers, mobile night vision scopes, remote video surveillance (RVS) systems, directional listening devices, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and several database systems. These resources enable fewer Border Patrol agents to be deployed to a certain site while maintaining the same capabilities of detecting illegal cross border activity.

⁶⁰ “Holding the Line? The Effect of the Recent Border Build-up on Unauthorized Immigration,” by Belinda I. Reyes, Hans P. Johnson, and Richard Van Swearingen, Public Policy Institute of California, 2002. Available at http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/R_702BRR.pdf.

⁶¹ Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

⁶² U.S. House of Representatives, Minority Staff of the Committee on Homeland Security, “The U.S. Border Patrol: Failure of the Administration to Deliver a Comprehensive Land Border Strategy Leaves Our Nation’s Borders Vulnerable.” May 2005.

Figure 10: USBP Budget Obligations
 Budget Figures in Millions of U.S. Dollars
 Fiscal Years



The Border Patrol is a critical component to our national security. They are charged with patrolling the United States border between ports of entry; they secure the nation by deterring illegal aliens, drug traffickers, terrorists, and weapons from crossing our borders. Despite their significance to homeland security, though, our borders are still inadequately staffed. With only 1,031 agents deployed to the northern border, huge gaps along the border leave the United States vulnerable to terrorist infiltration; the southwest border, although equipped with 9,633 agents, cannot handle the volume of traffic that comes across the Mexican border. Exacerbating the problem is the lack of support staff along the borders. Low levels of personnel leave Border Patrol agents with multiple tasks that take them away from their primary duty of patrolling the border. Technology that is scarce and dysfunctional also plagues the Border Patrol. Equipment continuously breaks down in the rigid climate along the northern border. Attrition rates and low morale among Border Patrol agents affect operations. Dilution in experience has almost tripled, raising national security concerns about placing young, inexperienced agents on the field.

Inadequate Staffing

During the last fiscal year, Border Patrol agents detained almost 1.2 million immigrants trying to illegally gain entry into the country; agents estimate that two to three times that many aliens manage to avoid apprehension.⁶³ The lack of manpower is especially evident on the northern border. There are approximately 1,031 Border Patrol agents deployed along the U.S.-Canada border. With a northern border that is 3,987 miles long, that translates to one agent every four miles. In October 2003, the USBP employed

⁶³ Bonner, T.J., National President of the National Border Patrol Council of the AFL-CIO, before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims, Committee of the Judiciary, U.S. House of Representatives, 3 March 2005.

about 10,650 Border Patrol agents; by March 2004, that number increased to over 11,175 agents. Then, without explanation, Border Patrol ceased hiring agents. The number of agents declined to approximately 10,800 by the end of September. By April 30, 2005, the figure dropped even further to 10,664. T.J. Bonner, President of National Border Patrol Council of the AFL-CIO, expressed grave concern that the Border Patrol lacked the manpower to sufficiently secure the borders.⁶⁴

Not only is there a deficit in the number of Border Patrol agents securing our borders, but support personnel are currently understaffed as well. As a result, agents are required to complete tasks outside their critical duties of defending the border: An agent in the San Diego sector conveyed that agents have to repair and construct equipment used for patrolling.⁶⁵ Support staff, such as dispatchers, are required to monitor cameras and sensors, work with local officers, and dispatch and direct agents. In various sectors, the technologies employed by support staff are responsible for up to 60% of apprehensions. In the last ten years the support staff for the USBP has increased by only four positions.⁶⁶ A support employee on the southwest border reported that he is responsible for monitoring 26 cameras to detect illegal traffic, informing agents of buried sensor activations that report up to 150 alerts an hour, running computer checks on detainees, and operating as dispatcher for agents – all at the same time. He admitted that he is unable to run all of the computer checks requested – a problem that could mistakenly result in having an immigrant either released or deported to Mexico.⁶⁷

The Data Management Improvement Act (DMIA) Task Force, a panel comprised of experts managed by Congress, stated that inadequate staffing on the border was universally recognized as one of the most crucial issues that needed to be addressed.⁶⁸ For over a year, the Border Patrol has been under a hiring freeze; nearly two-thirds of the Border Patrol agents felt that the hiring freeze had a detrimental impact on the ability of DHS to achieve its vital mission.⁶⁹ Though the optimal number of Border Patrol agents is difficult to establish, even before 9/11, there was a consensus among experts and politicians that considerably more agents were necessary.

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, written to implement the core recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, mandated the hiring of 2,000 new Border Patrol agents each year for the next five years.⁷⁰ However, President Bush's fiscal year 2006 budget proposal only funds 210 additional border patrol agents. While Homeland Security officials remarked that borders are safer now due to advanced technology, Robert C. Bonner, Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection,

⁶⁴ Bonner, T.J., National President of the National Border Patrol Council of the AFL-CIO, before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims, Committee of the Judiciary, U.S. House of Representatives, 3 March 2005.

⁶⁵ U.S. House of Representatives, Minority Staff of the Committee on Homeland Security, "The U.S. Border Patrol: Failure of the Administration to Deliver a Comprehensive Land Border Strategy Leaves Our Nation's Borders Vulnerable." May 2005.

⁶⁶ House Select Committee on Homeland Security, "Transforming the Southern Border: Providing Security and Prosperity in the Post 9/11 World," September 2004.

⁶⁷ House Select Committee on Homeland Security, "Transforming the Southern Border: Providing Security and Prosperity in the Post 9/11 World," September 2004.

⁶⁸ Data Management Improvement Act (DMIA) Task Force, Second Report to Congress, December 2003. Available at <http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/lawenfor/bmgmt/inspect/DMIAConReport2.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Statement of T.J. Bonner, President of the National Border Patrol Council, "How Secure are America's Borders? Front-line Border Protection Personnel Speak Out," 23 August 2004.

⁷⁰ Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-458), 17 December 2004.

stated that technology "cannot substitute for well-trained and dedicated border patrol agents."⁷¹ T.J. Bonner echoed the sentiment, responding that technology cannot "catch a single violator;" he added that "we need a lot of help, and we need a lot of help now."⁷²

Insufficient Technology

Advanced technology has been seen as "force-multipliers" that will reduce the need for Border Patrol agents. Force-multipliers provide security by monitoring in areas that would be dangerous or impractical for Border Patrol agents to patrol. However, sufficient technology has not been installed to help Border Patrol agents apprehend the millions of undocumented aliens that attempt to cross the borders. Experts have expressed concerns that insufficient preparation and deficient funding have resulted in scarce technological advancements on the borders. Much of the technology found on the southern border can be dated a quarter of a century old.⁷³ There are currently monitoring technologies to detect threats coming across the border, but the Administration has failed to develop a strategy that would set up a comprehensive monitoring system to cover the borders around the clock.

Border Patrol employs seismic, magnetic, and thermal sensors. These sensors are buried in the ground and detect movement and heat sources within a 50-foot radius, and metal sensors within 250 feet. These sensors respond to a variety of signals, including foot traffic, vehicles, animals, or anything that may land or fall near them. Each sensor costs between \$1,000 and \$1,200 and have to be dug up monthly to replace the batteries. When activated, sensors relay information to a central monitoring system. Since the Border Patrol does not have an adequate supply of sensors to cover the whole southwest border, sensors have to be continuously moved according to smuggling patterns; this means that sensors have to be dug up, moved to the appropriate location, and reburied. Because the border lacks support staff, agents have to take over this laborious and time-consuming task. However, this technology is not fail-safe. Sensors have a tendency to malfunction in the harsh and cold winters of the northern border.⁷⁴

Over the past eight years, the Border Patrol began deploying a network of cameras and sensors called Integrated Surveillance Intelligence Systems (ISIS). Each system contains a central command center, ground sensors, and four cameras that are mounted on a pole to offer a three to five-mile, 360-degree viewing range. ISIS allows agents at computer consoles to identify why a sensor was activated. The cameras save field agents from responding to false alarms that are frequently set off by wandering animals. However, the inspector general of the General Services Administration (GSA) is currently investigating the \$239 million program that has been crippled for years by defective equipment brought on by poor oversight. According to the GSA report, "the most troubled part of ISIS was in Washington State, where the more than 64 cameras fogged up in cold and rain and sometimes broke down completely."⁷⁵

⁷¹ "Lawmakers Rip Border Patrol Plan," by Deborah B. Berry, Washington Bureau, 4 March 2005.

⁷² "Lawmakers Rip Border Patrol Plan," by Deborah B. Berry, Washington Bureau, 4 March 2005.

⁷³ House Select Committee on Homeland Security, "Transforming the Southern Border: Providing Security and Prosperity in the Post 9/11 World," September 2004.

⁷⁴ U.S. House of Representatives, Minority Staff of the Committee on Homeland Security, "The U.S. Border Patrol: Failure of the Administration to Deliver a Comprehensive Land Border Strategy Leaves Our Nation's Borders Vulnerable." May 2005.

⁷⁵ "Probe Faults System for Monitoring U.S. Borders," by John Mintz, The Washington Post, 11 April 2005.

The contractor, International Microwave Corp (IMC), performed careless work, wiring fire-optic cable at junction boxes so poorly that Border Patrol operators could not control the cameras; agents also reported that electrical wires were found corroding under water in allegedly sealed concrete vaults.⁷⁶ Many of the cameras paid for were never even installed: In the Buffalo sector, 59 cameras were purchased by the government, but IMC only installed four; in Naco, Arizona, equipment was delivered but never assembled by IMC personnel.⁷⁷ DHS officials acknowledged that the ISIS program had serious technical and oversight problems. While the network aids Border Patrol agents in protecting the nation against terrorist infiltrators, ISIS only covers a fraction of the Canadian and Mexican borders.

In response to the failures of the ISIS network, a small group of Border Patrol officials drew up plans for a far more ambitious multibillion-dollar project called America's Shield Initiative (ASI). ASI incorporates remote video surveillance (RVS) systems and the Integrated Computer Assisted Detection (ICAD) database. RVS systems employ multiple color, thermal, and infrared cameras combined under one remote controlled system. When a sensor is activated, USBP staff in a central monitoring room use the ICAD database to reposition RVS cameras to detect the cause of the alarm. Personnel can then coordinate with field agents. Possibly the most important technology utilized by Border Patrol, future plans for ASI include enhancing electronic surveillance capabilities along the land borders by improving the sensor and video surveillance equipment used to guard against illegal cross border traffic.⁷⁸ ASI was strongly supported by both Congress and the Bush administration. The new project will cost \$51.1 million.

Low Morale & Attrition Rates

In reference to Border Patrol agents, T.J. Bonner stated to the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims that

*These men and women work long hours under dangerous and difficult conditions, and in return only ask that they be allowed to do their jobs in the manner dictated by their experience, and they be treated fairly. Unfortunately, neither of these relatively modest needs are currently being met.*⁷⁹

In 2003, CBP director Robert Bonner acknowledged that “there are four major reasons that employees are abandoning careers in federal law enforcement: lack of job satisfaction, low pay compared to that other law enforcement officers performing similar tasks, lack of upward and lateral mobility, and poor working conditions.”⁸⁰

On behalf of the National Border Patrol Council and the National Homeland Security Council of AFGE, Hart Research performed a telephone survey among 500 front-line border protection personnel and conducted 250 interviews each with Border Patrol agents and CBP inspectors. The purpose of the survey was to look at the attitudes among border security personnel regarding career-related issues. The survey was

⁷⁶ “Probe Faults System for Monitoring U.S. Borders,” by John Mintz, The Washington Post, 11 April 2005.

⁷⁷ See Footnote 68.

⁷⁸ See http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/systems/amer_shield.htm.

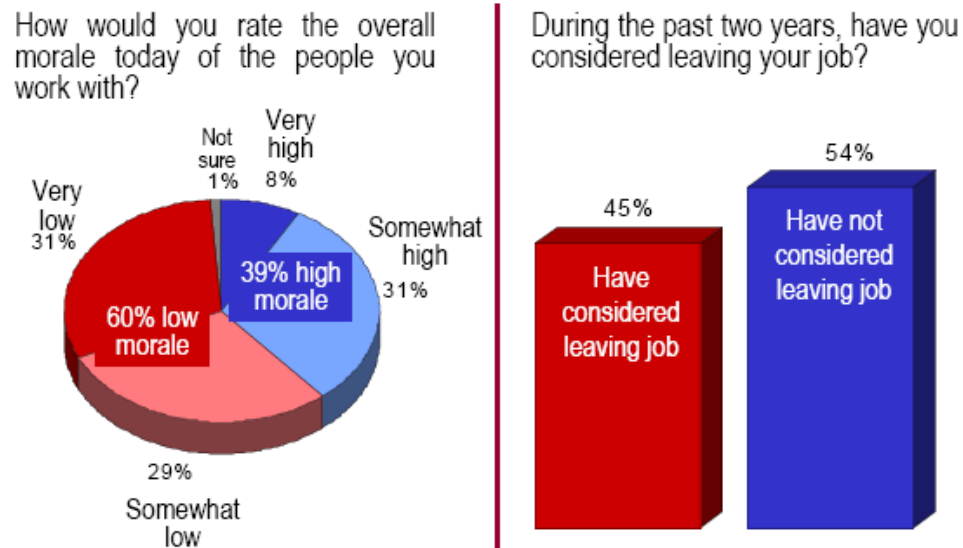
⁷⁹ Bonner, T.J., National President of the National Border Patrol Council of the AFL-CIO, before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims, Committee of the Judiciary, U.S. House of Representatives, 3 March 2005.

⁸⁰ CRS Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

conducted between July 30 and August 7, 2004. When questioned about job satisfaction, almost half of the respondents have considered leaving their job in the past couple of years (See **Figure 13**)⁸¹. Reasons for leaving expressed dissatisfaction with working conditions as opposed to a desire for a career change:

- 33% considered leaving due to poor management
- 21% stated the lack of opportunities for promotion or relocation
- 19% indicated an overall lack of job satisfaction as the main reason for leaving job

Figure 13: Low Satisfaction → Low Morale



While politicians concerning homeland security have sought after public opinion, the opinions of those who defend our nation’s borders have been neglected. Hart Research revealed that CBP inspectors and Border Patrol agents have doubts concerning the strategies implemented by DHS (See **Figure 14**).⁸² When asked about the “One Face At the Border” Initiative, one CBP inspector stated, “They want us to be meeters and greeters instead of enforcement officers. After 9/11 they are trying to mesh three jobs into one, whereas [before] each person would specialize in their respective areas. . .”⁸³ Indeed, the initiative has led to the dilution of expertise among inspectors; experienced personnel expressed concern that new CBP inspectors would simply be generalists.⁸⁴

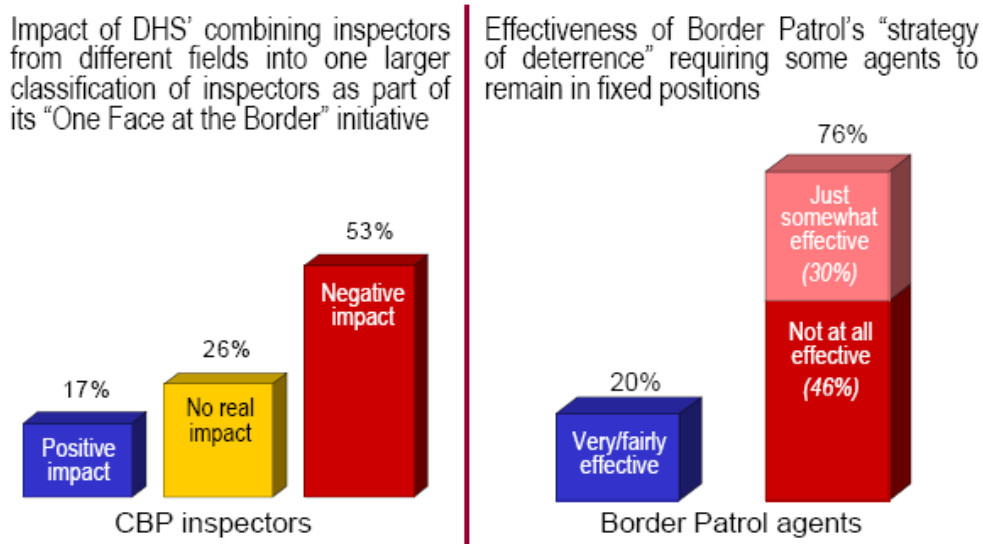
⁸¹ Peter D. Hart Research, “Attitudes Among Front-Line Border Protection Personnel,” 20 August 2004. Available at http://www.afge.org/Documents/HartSurveyDHS_BP.pdf.

⁸² Peter D. Hart Research, “Attitudes Among Front-Line Border Protection Personnel,” 20 August 2004. Available at http://www.afge.org/Documents/HartSurveyDHS_BP.pdf.

⁸³ Peter D. Hart Research, “Attitudes Among Front-Line Border Protection Personnel,” 20 August 2004. Available at http://www.afge.org/Documents/HartSurveyDHS_BP.pdf.

⁸⁴ ⁸⁴ House Select Committee on Homeland Security, “Transforming the Southern Border: Providing Security and Prosperity in the Post 9/11 World,” September 2004.

Figure 14: DHS Strategies Lack Support of Front-Line Personnel



Border Patrol agents do not believe that the “strategy of deterrence” to have been very effective either (See **Figure 14**). Since 9/11, Border Patrol agents have reprioritized their responsibilities; this shift in strategy has made the traditional migrant-deterrence mission much harder to accomplish. An agent in the Rio Grande Valley, who wished to remain anonymous, stated that agents are “selling [them]selves like prostitutes.”⁸⁵ Front-line border protection personnel say that DHS has to accomplish more to protect the nation’s borders. Too many undocumented aliens are crossing our borders with ease. Forty four percent of border personnel say that the United States is no safer than it was prior to 9/11.⁸⁶ Bonner admits that morale is at an all-time low, but it should come at no surprise. He further states that “employees are routinely hamstrung in the performance of their duties by policies that make no sense from any perspective. . . no one wants to work in an agency. . . where they have no say in the decisions that affect their working conditions.”⁸⁷

An upward trend in the rate of agent attrition within the USBP began in 1995. Between the years 1990 and 1994, the attrition rate was at an average of 5%. It doubled from 1995 to 2001, reaching a rate a little above 10%. In 2002, attrition among Border Patrol agents skyrocketed to 18%; this has widely been accredited to the formation of the Transportation Security Agency (TSA). During the next two years, the attrition rate declined back to 5%. However, some claim the decline in the rate is due to the many agents who left the Border Patrol to join the Air Marshal program at TSA but later returned to the USBP. High rates of attrition, though, made it very difficult for Border

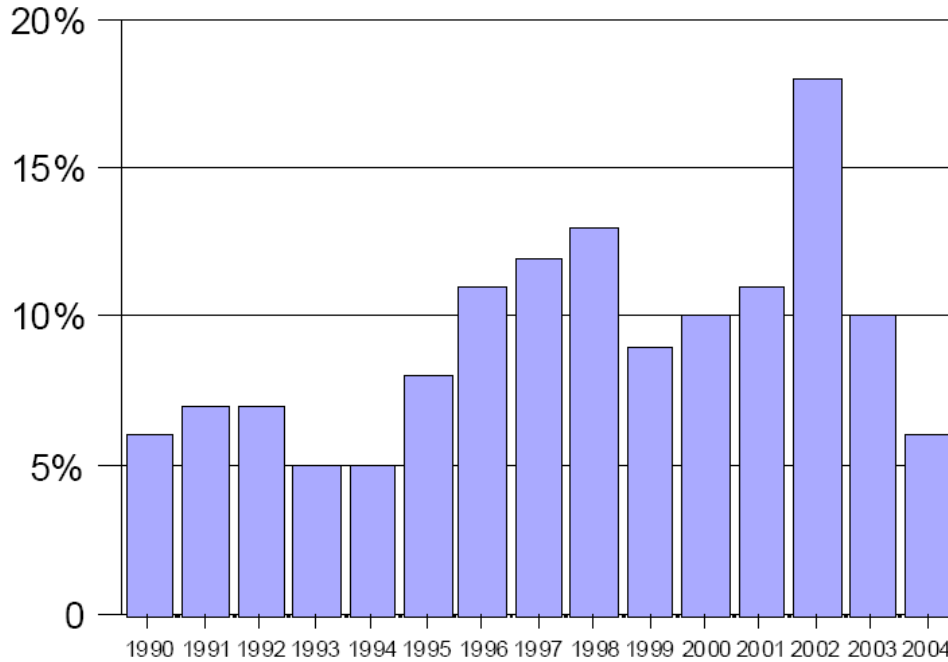
⁸⁵ “OTMs Spell Trouble for Border Patrol,” by Hernán Rozemberg and Macarena Hernández, Express-News, 25 June 2005. Available at http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/metro/stories/MYSA062505.1A_OTMs.5b9f454.html.

⁸⁶ Peter D. Hart Research, “Attitudes Among Front-Line Border Protection Personnel,” 20 August 2004. Available at http://www.afge.org/Documents/HartSurveyDHS_BP.pdf.

⁸⁷ Bonner, T.J., National President of the National Border Patrol Council of the AFL-CIO, before the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims, Committee of the Judiciary, U.S. House of Representatives, 3 March 2005.

Patrol to meet its staffing goals during the years of 2000 to 2003. **Figure 15** shows the pattern of USBP attrition.⁸⁸ In a 2003 testimony given by Robert Bonner, he stated, “attrition rates for these positions are reaching crisis proportions.”⁸⁹

Figure 15: USBP Agent Attrition Rate
CRS Presentation of USBP Data
Fiscal Years



Whether attrition rates continue to be a problem, USBP faces another problem. Since the implementation of “Prevention Through Deterrence,” Border Patrol manpower almost tripled between 1990 and 2002 (See **Figure 16**)⁹⁰. While USBP accomplished deploying more agents to the borders, the level of experience among Border Patrol agents has declined rapidly. In 1999, the GAO reported that the average experience level of field agents has decreased throughout the entire agency; between 1994 and 1998 the percentage of Border Patrol agents with less than two years of experience rose from 14% to 39%.⁹¹

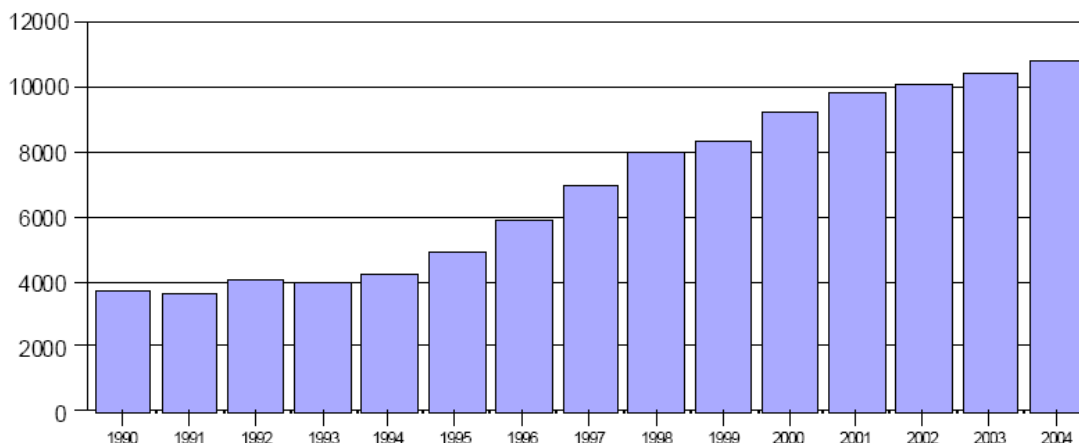
⁸⁸ CRS Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

⁸⁹ CRS Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

⁹⁰ CRS Report to Congress, “Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol”, 10 May 2005.

⁹¹ GAO Report, GGD-00-39, “Border Patrol Hiring: Despite Recent Initiatives, Fiscal Year 1999 Hiring Goal Was Not Met,” December 1999.

Figure 16: USBP Agent and Pilot Manpower
 CRS Presentation of USBP Data
 Fiscal Years



The dilution in experience among field agents raises concerns about placing these individuals along the U.S.-Mexico border. NPR's John Burnett says, "The drug cartels are constantly testing for weak U.S. agents and finding them."⁹² NPR also points out that "the potential for corruption is obvious: Along the southwest border, U.S. federal employees guard the gateways into the richest illegal drug market and the biggest undocumented labor pool in the world."⁹³ Federal investigators know that corruption among Border Patrol agents is a constant and universal issue. One agent stationed along the border states, "the temptations are so great in the border environment — whether it's in Texas, Arizona or Minnesota — the border itself creates a unique opportunity and unique temptations, and it's true in the U.S., Europe, Africa and Asia."⁹⁴ A Border Patrol agent from the San Diego sector noted that twelve cases have already occurred this year with border patrol agents involved in illegal cross border activity.⁹⁵ Corruption among Border Patrol agents can occur for several reasons. Easy money is an obvious one. Government employees do not make a lot of money. An inexperienced Border Patrol agent starts off at \$34,500. Compare that to drug traffickers who earn hundreds of thousands and offer handsome bribes for those agents who will let them pass through. "It's the money and weakness," admits a veteran U.S. border agent.⁹⁶ The Arizona Daily Star reports that a minimum of 55 government employees in southern Arizona were either arrested, indicted, or plead guilty for corruption cases during this past year.⁹⁷ Raymond L. Vinsik, director of the Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, a federal anti-drug analysis intelligence center, says, "corrupt government

⁹² John Burnett, "Corruption at the Gates," a special NPR report, 13 September 2002.

⁹³ John Burnett, "Corruption at the Gates," a special NPR report, 13 September 2002.

⁹⁴ James Pinkerton, "Corruption crosses the border with agent bribes - U.S. officers have been charged with taking money to let traffickers cross checkpoints," The Houston Chronicle, 29 May 2005.

⁹⁵ Interview of USBP agent stationed in the San Diego Sector.

⁹⁶ James Pinkerton, "Corruption crosses the border with agent bribes - U.S. officers have been charged with taking money to let traffickers cross checkpoints," The Houston Chronicle, 29 May 2005.

⁹⁷ Michael Marizco, "Corrupt Public Workers a Thorn in Side of S. Arizona," Arizona Daily Star, 29 May 2005.

employees using their positions for illegal gains in this key smuggling region has become a rampant problem.”⁹⁸ Most cases involved drug smuggling.

Due to the hiring boom in the 1990s, inadequate background checks were performed on incoming agents. While drug money has caused widespread corruption among government officials, family blood ties is another. Dr. Howard Campbell, a cultural anthropologist at the University of Texas-El Paso, explains that “there are these dense social networks of people who may have half their families living in Juarez, half their families living in El Paso. And that doesn’t change when they take on a job with the Border Patrol or Immigration or Customs. . . This creates a situation of tremendous pressure and temptation.”⁹⁹ Several Border Patrol agents have been indicted this year alone with charges of harboring undocumented aliens who were their girlfriends or wives.¹⁰⁰ Other examples of Border Patrol agents involved in illegal cross border activity include:

- A former supervisor stationed in Douglas was sentenced to seven years in prison for sexual assault and five years for kidnapping in an incident that occurred on September 28, 2000. He has resigned from Border Patrol.¹⁰¹
- In November 2002, a veteran agent in Tucson was arrested for selling classified information to a drug organization. The agent worked in the intelligence unit.¹⁰²
- On August 4, 2005, a Border Patrol agent of San Diego, CA was arrested on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant who was smuggling other illegal immigrants across the border. A records check revealed that the agent submitted a doctored birth certificate to USBP. The agent was receiving \$300 per person he waived across the border.¹⁰³
- A Border Patrol agent stationed in El Centro was accused of smuggling marijuana in an official vehicle. Arrested on January 4, 2005, the agent was found armed and in uniform with a Mexican man in the backseat and ten duffel bags with 750 pounds of marijuana.¹⁰⁴
- A senior Border Patrol agent stationed in Hebbronville, Texas plead guilty to bribery and drug conspiracy charges on May 10, 2005. Drug traffickers paid the former agent \$1.5 million in exchange for letting them pass illicit substances safely across the border. According to the indictment, the DTO crossed at least one load of marijuana per month with each load consisting of one to two tons of marijuana.¹⁰⁵
- On May 18, 2005, a Border Patrol agent stationed in Nogales, Arizona was charged with 17 counts of bribery and drug trafficking offenses. The agent

⁹⁸ Michael Marizco, “Corrupt Public Workers a Thorn in Side of S. Arizona,” Arizona Daily Star, 29 May 2005.

⁹⁹ John Burnett, “Corruption at the Gates,” a special NPR report, 13 September 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Claudine LoMonaco, “Douglas Border Agent Accused of 5 Charges,” Tucson Citizen, 9 July 2005.

¹⁰¹ See the article “Border Patrol Agent Arrested for Sexually Assaulting Migrant” at <http://www.visalaw.com/00oct1/15oct100.html>.

¹⁰² Jennifer Allen, “Justice on the Line: The Unequal Impacts of Border Enforcement in Arizona Border Communities,” October 2003.

¹⁰³ See the article “Border Patrol Arrested in Smuggling Case,” by Jo Moreland at http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2005/08/05/news/inland/21_17_498_4_05.txt.

¹⁰⁴ Onell R. Soto, “Agent Accused in Pot Smuggling Denied Bail,” San Diego Union-Tribune, 12 January 2005.

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the United States Attorney, Southern District of Texas, “United States Border Patrol Agent Pleads Guilty to Bribery and Drug Conspiracy,” 12 May 2005.

has been accused of smuggling almost two tons of marijuana through Nogales over a two-year period.¹⁰⁶

Due to the hiring boom in the 1990s, inadequate background checks were performed on incoming agents, and applicants with questionable pasts, even criminal records, were hired by the USBP. In 1998, Hector Soto was convicted of drug trafficking and the murder of his cocaine supplier in 1994. Soto was hired by Border Patrol and stationed in Nogales, Arizona in 1996.¹⁰⁷ Concerns have been raised questioning the extent to which investigators screen applicants. Kevin Gilmartin, a Tucson-based consultant to law enforcement agencies, commented, "If anything, the Border Patrol should have higher standards. Given the potential abuse of power, a Border Patrol agent should be among the most heavily screened;" Gilmartin adds that Soto would have never been hired as a Tucson police officer due to the agency's thorough background checks.¹⁰⁸

While many veteran field investigators believe the majority of federal employees are honest and hard-working, one investigator points out that you only need one corrupt agent to do a great deal of damage.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the United States Attorney, District of Arizona, "Border Patrol Agent Indicted on Bribery, Drug Trafficking, and other Charges," 1 June 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Susan Carroll, "Screening of Job-seekers Minimal," Tucson Citizen, 2 February 2002.

¹⁰⁸ Susan Carroll, "Screening of Job-seekers Minimal," Tucson Citizen, 2 February 2002.

¹⁰⁹ John Burnett, "Corruption at the Gates," a special NPR report, 13 September 2002.

V. Conclusion

Waiting for the federal government to accomplish this goal, though, has been too long a wait for many. As a result, a group of volunteers, ranging from war veterans to everyday folk, decided to do something about it. They refer to themselves as the Minutemen, and they have initiated what is called the Minuteman Project. They set out their lawn chairs along a 23-mile stretch of the Arizona-Mexico borderland, from Douglas to Naco, for the month of April. Their goal is to draw “national attention to the fact that the United States federal government is not fulfilling its mission to protect American citizens from the economic and physical danger of porous borders.”¹¹⁰ Their mission is achieved through nonviolent means, and the Minutemen hope to prove that with enough manpower, the borders can be secured.

Local 2544, the USBP’s largest union representing agents in the Tucson Sector, gave credit to the Minutemen for “shifting the bulk of the illegal traffic out of the Naco corridor.”¹¹¹ While as an agency, Border Patrol has taken a negative stance regarding the Minuteman Project, individually, agents are grateful for the much-needed help and acknowledge that the volunteers had a significant impact on deterring illegal traffic.¹¹²

On the other hand, officials in Washington, D.C. do not share the same sentiment. President Bush referred to them as vigilantes, and many fear that the Minutemen will just exacerbate present problems along the border. According to the figures, the borders are both threatening and dangerous: Border Patrol agents have reported 132 assaults, including 15 shootings within the first six months of the 2005 fiscal year. Minutemen have also set off sensors and cameras that require responses from Border Patrol staff.¹¹³

In a controversial story reported in the Washington Times, U.S. Border Patrol agents were ordered to keep the arrests of illegal aliens to a minimum along the Arizona border where the Minuteman Project patrolled to disprove the effectiveness of the project.¹¹⁴ Over a dozen agents claimed that they received similar orders from Border Patrol supervisors in Naco, Arizona. “Based on these kinds of orders, we could spend the equivalent of the national debt and never have secure borders,” says Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO), “This is another example of decisions being made at the highest levels of the Border Patrol that are hurting morale and helping to rot the agency from within.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Ryan Slattery, “The View from Tombstone,” HS Today: Insight and Analysis for Homeland Security Policymakers, June 2005.

¹¹¹ Ryan Slattery, “The View from Tombstone,” HS Today: Insight and Analysis for Homeland Security Policymakers, June 2005.

¹¹² “The Minuteman Project: Protecting the Arizona Border,” by Steve Stibbens, Homeland Defense Journal, June 2005.

¹¹³ “The View from Tombstone,” by Ryan Slattery, HS Today: Insight and Analysis for Homeland Security Policymakers, June 2005.

¹¹⁴ Jerry Seper, “Border Patrol Told to Stand Down in Arizona,” Washington Times, 26 June 2005.

¹¹⁵ Jerry Seper, “Border Patrol Told to Stand Down in Arizona,” Washington Times, 26 June 2005.



It has been nearly four years since the 9/11 terrorist events, yet our land borders still remain wide open for terrorist infiltration. In light of the relative ease in which illegal immigrants and contraband enter the country, our inability to hold those who have crossed our borders illegally detained, and the failure to keep track of those who have overstayed their visas, our current border strategy and immigration policies need serious reform. The challenge of protecting our country's land borders continues to grow, and we still lack the skilled and dedicated men and women needed to protect the nation.

While there is no question whether more manpower is needed, what remains unknown is how many agents are required to effectively patrol the border. This ambiguity has led to improper staffing requirements and deployment. Failure to develop and implement a strategy to deploy technology efficiently along the northern and southwest borders has left vast areas of ground uncovered. To better defend our nation against potential terrorist attacks, DHS needs to develop a comprehensive border patrol strategy to effectively deploy its personnel and equipment based on a national threat and vulnerability assessment.