



# **WITHOUT STRATEGY: AMERICA'S BORDER SECURITY BLUNDERS FACILITATE AND EMPOWER MEXICO'S DRUG CARTELS**

**JANUARY 12, 2012**

The United States government spent about \$90 billion over the past decade to secure the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>1</sup> The results are mixed, with apprehension rates up to 90 percent for undocumented persons seeking to cross the frontier between designated U.S.-Mexico border crossings, yet the Mexican drug cartels continue to enjoy commercial success smuggling more drugs than ever into the country through the legal border crossings.<sup>2</sup>

A significant part of the \$90 billion government expense has been the

*"America's border security effort lacks strategic direction and operates on an ad hoc basis."*

deployment of U.S. military forces, including the National Guard, to supplement Border Patrol and Customs and Border Protection forces on the Mexican border. A recent Government Accountability Office briefing on the costs and benefits of the Department of Defense role in securing the Southwest land border reported that DOD officials "are concerned that there is no comprehensive southwest border security strategy" and the National Guard's role has been "ad hoc."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "\$90 billion spent on border security, with mixed results," Boston Globe, June 26, 2011, Martha Mendoza, Associated Press

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Observations on the Costs and Benefits of an Increased Department of Defense Role in Helping to Secure the Southwest Land Border, GAO-11-856R September 12, 2011

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As the U.S. spent \$90 billion seeking to secure the Southwest border, the Mexican cartels have continued to smuggle cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine through the legal border crossings in California and South Texas, and marijuana between border crossings in remote areas of Arizona.<sup>4</sup> They generally smuggle smaller loads of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine in non-commercial vehicles (cars, SUVs, and pickup trucks) to blend in with cross-border traffic.<sup>5</sup>

As the Mexican drug cartels flourish in the face of \$90 billion spent to secure the border through which they conduct their trade, the U.S. continues to focus on border security tactics grounded in operation that began in the 1990s when an anti-immigration backlash fueled crackdowns code-named “Operation Gatekeeper” and “Operation Hold-the-Line.” Debates in Congress focus on building more fences and walls and whether to snuff environmental protections for public lands on the Southwest and Northern borders.

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*“The legal border crossings on the U.S. southwestern border have become America’s weakest border security link.”*

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As reported by the Department of Defense and the Government Accountability Office, America’s border security

effort lacks strategic direction and operates on an ad hoc basis. Without a strategy, America will continue to lose the border security war to the better financed, equipped, more mobile and agile drug cartels. Our national success depends on defining and executing a strategy to defeat the cartels attacking our nation.

The legal border crossings on the U.S. southwestern border have become America’s weakest border security link. Since the cartels choose to smuggle most of their products through the border crossings, a sensible strategy would be to attack their trade where it occurs and anticipate where their smuggling operations might move in response. Yet, the Department of Homeland Security has chosen to ignore these developments and refused to develop a strategy to confront them.

Budget forecasts by Department of Homeland Security officials suggest no new funding for border security infrastructure at the official border crossings for

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice National Drug Intelligence Center “National Drug Threat Assessment 2011” August 2011

<sup>5</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy, the White House, “National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy”, June 2009

many years and personnel accounts will essentially remain static during that time.<sup>6</sup> While new equipment may become available, some cannot be utilized because the electrical facilities at the border crossings are outdated and inadequate to support the expensive new tools.

Congress and the Administration confront a choice when considering strategic directions for securing the U.S-Mexican border. At a minimum, the Texas Border Coalition recommends that Congress and the President have a strategy rather than addressing this challenge *ad hoc*.

The strategic paths forward offer a choice between closing the gaps between the border crossings, where criminals face a 90 percent likelihood

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***“Spending additional billions of dollars on more fencing-walls or exempting the Border Patrol from the rule of law should be lower priorities until the border crossings can be made functional in securing our borders.”***

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of apprehension, or addressing the inadequate infrastructure, technology and law enforcement personnel at the southwest border crossings where criminals are less challenged by an apprehension rate of merely 28 percent.

The Texas Border Coalition suggests that the only reasonable path forward is to refocus our border security priorities where our nation is most vulnerable: at the legal border crossings. Spending additional billions of dollars on more Border Patrol agents, fencing-walls or exempting the Border Patrol from the rule of law should be lower priorities compared to making the official border crossings functional in securing our borders.

To choose the other path and continue to fight the border security war where it has been won (between the border crossings) and to continue to surrender the war where we are losing (at the border crossings) is to threaten our national and border security and resign our nation to defeat.

This document is focused on the security aspects of border strategy, especially as they related to Mexican drug cartels. There are additional benefits to improving the security at America’s border crossings, including facilitation of legitimate trade and travel with Mexico, providing a major benefit to the American economy and jobs.

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<sup>6</sup> “Meeting Land Port of Entry Modernization Needs in Constrained Budgetary Environment,” presentation by Mikhail Pavlov to the Joint Working Committee, October 2011

U.S. manufacturers and consumers depend on ready access to Mexican markets and goods. U.S. exporters serve the Mexican market and profit from foreign sales. Border region businesses in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas tie their livelihoods to trade and create jobs for American workers. Mexico is America's third largest trading partner behind only Canada and China.

U.S.-Mexico trade totals \$400 billion, a nearly fivefold increase since the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with most goods crossing via commercial truck. More than 13,000 trucks bring over \$630 million worth of goods into the U.S. from Mexico every day. U.S. exports to Mexico total \$163 billion.<sup>7</sup>

As a matter of general strategy, America cannot solve our budgetary problems solely by cutting expenses. We must increase our revenues. Making our border crossings more efficient in conducting legal trade with both Canada and Mexico will increase our national revenues and give us the resources to fight the other problems we face in our borders.

### **Border Security Background**

The U.S. government divides its effort to enforce the land border with Mexico into two parts: one at the border crossings and the other between them. Along the nearly 2,000-mile border with Mexico, 42 official border crossings -- located on bridges in Texas and on highways in California, Arizona and New Mexico --

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connect the two nations, under the command of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The CBP has multiple responsibilities, including facilitation of legal

travel across the borders as well as defending against terrorist intrusions. Within CBP, the U.S. Border Patrol has responsibility for policing the vast areas that separate the border crossings. CBP Officers handle traffic through the official border crossings.

Since 1993, the U.S. has engaged in a long-term effort to increase enforcement on

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Foreign Trade Division annual report, 2010, Washington, D.C.

the southwest land border with Mexico. It has invested heavily in manpower, technology, transportation and infrastructure to arrange a multi-layered defense against illegal activities, but that investment has lacked balance.

The investment in deterrence has been greatest between the border crossings; in contrast, the investment at the border crossings themselves has been relatively small. This imbalance has produced a substantial differential of risk to those who seek to penetrate the border to cause harm to U.S. security. While there is admitted weakness in some of the data, the probability of an illegal crosser being apprehended by law enforcement *between the border crossings* is about 90 percent; the probability of an illegal crosser being apprehended attempting to enter the U.S. *at the border crossings* is less than 30 percent.

This imbalanced deterrence contributes to America's vulnerability to the Mexican drug cartels, terrorists and traffic in people and contraband at the designated border crossings.

### **Between the Border Crossings**

Since 1993, the number of agents deployed to secure the borders between the border crossings has more than sextupled from 4,000 to a projected total of 24,285 in 2012.<sup>8</sup> The Border Patrol budget has increased nine fold over the same period from \$400 million to \$3.6 billion.<sup>9</sup>

The vastly expanded effort between the border crossings accelerated in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks and the 2003

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incorporation of the Border Patrol into the new Department of Homeland Security. Prior to September 11, 2001, the Border Patrol's priority was to prevent the illegal entry of people and contraband into the U.S. between the border crossings. After the September 11 attacks, fighting terrorism was established as one of the agency's prime responsibilities.

In addition, Congress funded construction of 670 miles of border fence, now

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<sup>8</sup> Congressional Budget Justification, Fiscal 2012, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC, February 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

completed at a cost to taxpayers of over \$2.4 billion<sup>10</sup>, and an electronic detection system that has been canceled and restarted at a cost exceeding \$1 billion.<sup>11</sup>

### **At the Border Crossings**

Despite expanded responsibility and an exponential increase in legitimate trade and tourism across the southwestern border as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement's ratification in 1993, the enforcement budget for Customs inspection personnel has seen a paltry boost when compared to the sharp increase in funding for the Border Patrol. Funding for inspectors increased from \$1.6 billion in 1993 to \$2.9 billion in 2012.<sup>12</sup> Of that 80 percent increase over 19 years, nearly three-quarters was consumed by rising inflation.

The U.S. has 163 official border crossings. The General Services Administration (GSA) owns 96.5 and leases 22.5. The National Park Service owns one. CBP owns the remaining 43, of which 39 are located on the northern border. The CBP border crossings are relatively low-volume entry points, such as those on the Canadian border that handle fewer than 100 vehicles a day, while the GSA border crossings tend to be larger and have higher traffic volumes, such as at Laredo, Texas, which sees several hundred every minute.<sup>13</sup>

On the U.S.-Mexico border, there are 52 border crossings in all, of which 8 are rail lines, 43 are roadways (24 bridges, 2 dams, and 17 roads), and 1 is a ferry. For record-keeping purposes, the government divides the crossings into 26 crossing groups, with data from a set of neighboring crossings aggregated under the name of a master port.<sup>14</sup>

U.S. and Mexico facilitate 240 million legal crossings a year, nearly 30,000 per hour. The United

*"The emphasis on Border Patrol enforcement between the border crossings has shifted factors of risk associated with illegal crossings."*

<sup>10</sup> GAO-09-896 Secure Border Initiative: Technology Deployment Delays Persist and the Impact of Border Fencing Has Not Been Assessed, Washington, DC, September 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Congressional Budget Justification, Fiscal 2012, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC, February 2009.

<sup>13</sup> OIG-10-05, Review of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Expenditure Plans for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General, Washington, DC, October 22, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Atlas of the Land Entry Ports on the U.S. – Mexico Border, Border Policy Research Institute, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington, Fall 2010

States' two largest export markets are Canada and Mexico. In 2010, the value of cross-border travel at the U.S. border crossings and exports with Mexico and Canada totaled more than \$791 billion.<sup>15</sup> Three out of four of all legal entries into the U.S. occur at an official border crossing.<sup>16</sup>

### **Roles Not Interchangeable**

The operational roles of the Border Patrol and CBP inspection officers are not interchangeable. Few recommend attempting to solve the imbalance between the two forces by reassigning Border Patrol agents to the border crossings. Besides weakening security between the border crossings, the training and outlook of the two forces does not qualify Border Patrol agents to substitute for CBP officers.

The primary activity of a Border Patrol agent is to Line Watch: to detect, prevent, and apprehend terrorists, undocumented aliens and smugglers. The Border Patrol does not recognize any legitimate activity in crossing the border between the border crossings.

*“Apprehensions of persons seeking to enter the United States between the border crossings – where all entries are illegal – has fallen to levels not seen since 1970s, as the enhanced manpower, mobility, communications, technology and infrastructure have been brought to bear on the traffic.”*

While CBP officers also defend against terrorist intrusion by identifying high-risk individuals who are attempting to enter into the U.S.

at the border crossings and stopping criminal activities, they have additional responsibilities that are quite different from the function of Border Patrol agents. CBP officers are responsible for regulating and facilitating legitimate international trade and travel, collecting import duties, and enforcing hundreds of U.S. regulations, including trade, drug and immigration laws. CBP officers must be able to distinguish between legitimate activities and those that violate our laws as they interact with the public in a polite and respectful manner.

### **Multi-layered Strategy**

The multi-layered strategic deterrence built by the Border Patrol between the

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Trans-Border Freight Data, <http://www.bts.gov/programs/international/transborder>

<sup>16</sup> GAO-08-329T: Despite Progress, Weaknesses in Traveler Inspections Exist at Our Nation's Border crossings: Statement of Richard M. Stana, Director Homeland Security and Justice Issues, Washington, DC, January 3, 2008.

border crossings has increased the difficulty of illegal crossings, although controversy remains about the deterrence associated with individual layers or whether the effort actually deters migrants who are determined to enter the U.S. to improve the economic state of their families.<sup>17</sup>

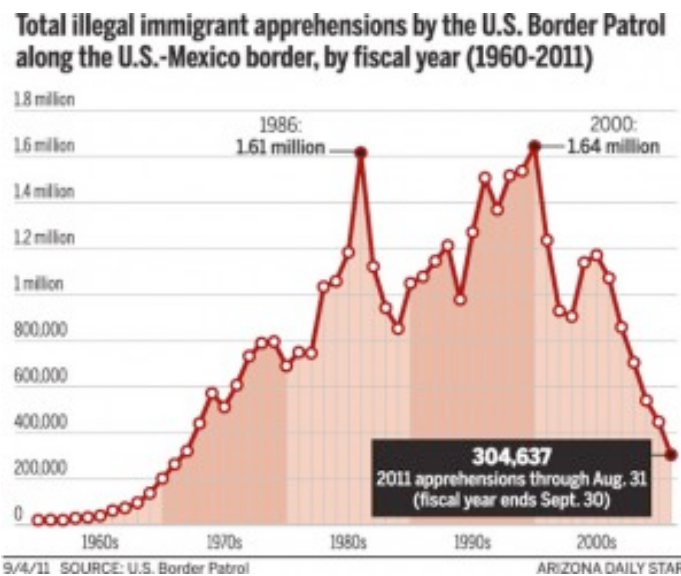
The emphasis on Border Patrol enforcement between the border crossings has shifted factors of risk associated with illegal crossings. Interviews with migrants show that the use of “coyotes”<sup>18</sup> for illegal crossings has increased markedly, which boosts the probability of successful illegal entry. This demand has also increased the cost of services.<sup>19</sup>

### Weakness of Data

The lack of statistically reliable data related to the number of undocumented aliens residing in or entering the U.S. year-over-year hampers effective analysis related to border security. In addition, in spite of the data’s inherent weakness, Department of Homeland Security agencies consider some volumes of related data to be “law enforcement sensitive” and restrict public and academic access to it.

For instance, estimating the flow of undocumented migrants is often an approximation based on apprehension data reported by DHS. The estimated probability of apprehension is often based on factors that include the number of Line Patrol hours of Border Patrol staff and the relative strengths and weaknesses of U.S. and Central American economies. More recently, this data has

been supplemented by classified data compiled by DHS based on observation



<sup>17</sup> Evaluating U.S. Immigration Control Policy: What Mexican Migrants Can Tell Us Wayne Cornelius, Director, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego, CA, April 14, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> A coyote or *pollero* is a professional criminal specializing in smuggling humans across the United States border from Mexico for a fee paid in advance.

<sup>19</sup> Evaluating U.S. Immigration Control Policy: What Mexican Migrants Can Tell Us, Wayne Cornelius, Director, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego, CA, April 14, 2009.



from unmanned aerial vehicles patrolling the border. While the comparison of apprehensions at and between the border crossings is not as precise as would be optimal, the estimates included in this report are based on the best available existing information, some of which has been publicly supplied by Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Alan Bersin.

### **Between the Border crossings – 90 Percent Probability of Apprehension**

Apprehensions of persons seeking to enter the United States between the border crossings – where all entries are illegal – has fallen to levels not seen since 1970s, as the enhanced manpower, mobility, communications, technology and infrastructure have been brought to bear on the traffic.

In addition, increased apprehension rates in most Border Patrol sectors, up to 90 percent according to Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Alan Bersin, vastly impedes the trafficking of persons from Mexico to the United States between the border crossings.<sup>20</sup>

Two notes of caution: the data remains weak, and 90 percent apprehension rates do not mean only 10 percent of persons seeking illegal entry gain it. In fact, most of those who attempt to enter the U.S. illegally try more than one time, and eventually nearly all make it through.

Another point: the old belief that for every apprehension, three more gain entry (the getaway rate) is being proven untrue. Commissioner Bersin says that as a result of more reliable data provided by airborne surveillance vehicles deployed in the past several years by the Border Patrol, the Border Patrol detects far more illegal entries and catches a greater percentage of them.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, as the Border Patrol improvements in manpower, mobility, communications, technology and infrastructure have made illegal crossings more

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difficult and hazardous, the criminal cartels operating in Mexico have moved into the human smuggling

market, forcing mom-and-pop smuggling operations out of business and increasing the cost of cross-border transport to would-be immigrants.

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<sup>20</sup> Border commissioner touts greater enforcement, San Diego Union Tribune, January 5, 2011 by Elizabeth Aguilera and The Border is Safe, Federal Officials Say, Texas Tribune, August 17, 2011 by Julian Aguilar

<sup>21</sup> “Immigrant arrests nearing 40-year low” The Arizona Daily Star, September 4, 2011 by Brady McCombs

Without the infusion of many billions dollars more, the U.S. has achieved about as much control of illegal entries between the border crossings as possible without solving the core problem: our immigration system must be modernized to accommodate immigration needs and provide adequate channels for people to legally enter the U.S. so they do not try to go around a broken system. We must have comprehensive immigration reform in order to achieve continued improvement in the effective control of our borders between the border crossings.

### **At the Border crossings – 28 Percent Probability of Apprehension**

According to the most recent data released by the DHS, only 28 percent of “major violators” attempting to enter the U.S. at the official border crossings are detected and apprehended.<sup>22</sup> In addition, CBP reports only 50 to 74 percent success in improving the targeting, screening, and apprehension of high-risk international cargo and travelers to prevent terrorist attacks, while providing processes to facilitate the flow of safe and legitimate trade and travel.<sup>23</sup> The Department, under the claim that the statistics are “law enforcement sensitive,” has not released more recent data.

### **Strategic Response of the Enemy**

U.S. border security strategy should not operate in a vacuum. The smuggling of drugs and humans into the U.S. and the smuggling of money and firearms into Mexico fuel the criminal cartels operating from the Mexican side of the border. The cartels are mature organizations, possessing sophisticated communications, transportation and intelligence systems. They are richly informed about the environment in which they

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conduct their criminal operations and highly skilled at evaluating risk and executing strategic and tactical operations based on risk judgments. One cartel, the Zeta organization, “looks very much like any global business organization that can quickly, flexibly, and effectively respond to virtually any opportunity,

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<sup>22</sup> A major violation involves serious criminal activity, including possession of narcotics, smuggling of prohibited products, human smuggling, weapons possession, fraudulent U.S. documents, and other offenses serious enough to result in arrest.

<sup>23</sup> Department of Homeland Security Annual Performance Report for Fiscal Years 2008 – 2010, Department of Homeland Security Office of the Chief Financial Officer Program Analysis and Evaluation, Washington, D.C., May 7, 2009.

challenge, or changing situation.”<sup>24</sup>

These criminal organizations are capable of discovering and exploiting weaknesses between the border crossings, but the Border Patrol has developed tactical mobility and agility to identify and respond to such threats. When presented with a choice between one path that presents a less than 30 percent risk of failure and another that presents an up to 90 percent risk of capture, the cartels naturally choose the less risky path. In the present environment, the cartels are choosing to conduct their trade across the bridges and highways, through the sanctioned border crossings and are rejecting the risk of crossing the Rio Grande and open desert between the border crossings.

As reported by Los Angeles Times writer Richard Marosi, “One of the Sinaloa cartel’s main pipelines runs through the antiquated U.S. port of entry at Calexico, a favorite of smugglers. The inspection station sits almost directly on the border, without the usual buffer zone of several hundred feet, so inspectors have difficulty examining cars in the approach lanes. Drug-sniffing dogs wilt in summer heat that can reach 115 degrees... Drugs were brought from Sinaloa state to Mexicali, Mexico, in bus tires. (The smuggler’s) job was to move the goods across the border and deliver them to distributors in the Los Angeles area, about 200 miles away.

“The flow was unceasing, and he employed about 40 drivers, lookouts and coordinators to keep pace.”<sup>25</sup>

According to the U.S. Department of Justice National Drug Threat Assessment 2010, nearly 90 percent of cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, heroin, and MDMA smuggled into the U.S. enters through the border crossings. A joint project on U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation coordinated by the Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego indicates that bulk cash to fuel the Mexican drug cartels’ illicit and violent activities transits through the border crossings. And while data on the smuggling of firearms is incomplete, available information points to border crossings as the overwhelming point of entry into Mexico.

The conclusion is irrefutable that nearly all of the drugs smuggled into the U.S., and the guns and bulk cash smuggled into Mexico, transits via the border

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<sup>24</sup> A” New” Dynamic in the Western Hemisphere Security Environment: The Mexican Zetas and Other Private Armies, Dr. Max G. Manwaring. U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, September 25, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> “Inside the Cartel: Unraveling Mexico’s Sinaloa drug cartel” The Los Angeles Times, July 24, 2011 by Richard Marosi

crossings, a strategic choice made by the Mexican cartels because the likelihood of being detected or apprehended is three times more likely between the border crossings than at them.

### **Strategic Choices for the U.S.**

Those who mean our nation harm have adjusted their strategies and tactics to reflect situational changes faster than DHS and Congress can adjust. Because of the U.S. government's relative lack of nimbleness, DHS and Congress continue to pour billions of dollars of our national resources into defending the vast expanses of land between the border crossings, a path that the enemy has abandoned, while denying resources needed to defend the border crossings that the enemy has chosen to directly assault.

The choice for U.S. policymakers appears clear: between 1) continue on the strategic path that wastes resources and produces fewer results by continuing to emphasize border protection between the border crossings and 2) changing our strategy to defend against an adroit, responsive enemy that is attacking us at the border crossings (while preparing for the enemy's next logical move, most likely aimed back to the water and the skies).

As Doris Meissner, former commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, put the choice: "The more [money] that you pour into the Border Patrol and into enforcement between land ports of entry (border crossings) . . . the more pressure there is for people to misuse the system that gets them through land ports. It's important to have a balance of resources between both."<sup>26</sup>

The scenario envisioned by former Commissioner Meissner has already been in place for years: A field study

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conducted in the first quarter of 2009 by the Mexican Migration Field Research and Training Program, based at the University of California-San Diego, found that more than one out of four (28 percent) of unauthorized Mexican migrants interviewed for the study had entered the U.S. on their most recent trip to the border through a legal border crossing, either concealed in vehicles or using false

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<sup>26</sup> Border Security Falls Short In Audit, GAO Criticizes Staffing, Training By Spencer S. Hsu, Washington Post, November 6, 2007.

or borrowed documents. The authors noted that “while crossing the border through a POE costs significantly more than crossing in remote areas (people-smugglers can charge \$5,000 or more for POE crossings), that mode of entry is much more likely to yield success.”<sup>27</sup>

Reports from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have described the situation at the border crossings as inadequate to the task of protecting the nation. GAO found that managers at 19 of 21 border crossing offices cited examples of anti-terrorism activities not being carried out, new or expanded facilities that were not fully operational, and radiation monitors and other inspection technologies not being fully used because of staff shortages. At seven of the eight major border crossings GAO visited, officers and managers told of not having sufficient staff, which contributes to morale problems, fatigue, lack of backup support, and safety issues when officers inspect travelers – “increasing the potential that terrorists, inadmissible travelers, and illicit goods could enter the country.”<sup>28</sup>

Although they refused to make the data publicly available for years because they classified it as law enforcement sensitive, DHS officials recently acknowledged publicly that for the border crossings to successfully complete their mission, the agency needs 6,000 additional personnel and \$6 billion in funding for infrastructure and technology.<sup>29</sup>

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In response, Congress has allocated zero dollars to border crossing infrastructure in fiscal 2011 and is likely to refuse to add funds in fiscal

2012. House and Senate appropriators have both approved adding 350 new CBP inspectors in fiscal 2012, but acknowledge that declining customs revenues will force a reduction of an equal number available to the agency, making the added

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<sup>27</sup> Wayne A. Cornelius, David Fitzgerald, Pedro Lewin-Fischer, and Leah Muse-Orlinoff, *Mexican Migration and the U.S. Economic Crisis: A Transnational Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), pp. 61-62.

<sup>28</sup> GAO-08-329T: Despite Progress, Weaknesses in Traveler Inspections Exist at Our Nation's Border Crossings: Statement of Richard M. Stana, Director Homeland Security and Justice Issues, Washington, DC, January 3, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> “Meeting Land Port of Entry Modernization Needs in Constrained Budgetary Environment,” presentation by Mikhail Pavlov to the Joint Working Committee, October 2011.

personnel a net of zero. While technology is in the pipeline for delivery to the border crossings, a lack of adequate electric infrastructure often makes new equipment useless.

Instead of dealing with the strategic threat to the U.S., Congress has chosen to focus legislation to deploy more Border Patrol, build additional walls and fences and exempt the Border Patrol from regulations that protect communities' air and water, safeguard our public lands and honor our cultural and historic heritage.

### **Texas Border Coalition Recommendations**

The Texas Border Coalition suggests that mandating more Border Patrol, fencing and waiving environmental law reflects an ineffective, anachronistic strategy that has not kept pace with developments at the border or with the risk assessments made by the criminal cartels. TBC urges Congress and the Obama Administration to restore balance to border security at and between the border crossings by engaging in an emergency program to provide the border crossings with \$6 billion in funding for infrastructure and technology and to employ 6,000 new inspectors on America's front line over the next four years.

It is important that the new inspectors must be assigned to the front lines of the border crossings where they are needed, not to supervisory roles. According to GAO, prior personnel buildups at the border crossings have resulted in a 17 percent increase in CBP managers and only a 2 percent increase in the number of frontline CBP officers.<sup>30</sup> Anecdotally, there is evidence of this pattern over a period of many years. The nation's security cannot afford to see an intended increase in front line inspectors siphoned off to the management level of CBP.

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In addition, the TBC commends the leadership of many border Representatives in Congress for their attention to developing a real strategy for confronting the criminal cartels and security on

the U.S.-Mexico border. We especially wish to salute Michigan Representative

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<sup>30</sup> GAO-06-751R, Information on Immigration Enforcement and Supervisory Promotions in the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection, Washington, DC, June 13, 2006.

Candice Miller, chair of the House Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security, and Texas Representative Henry Cuellar, ranking Democrat on the subcommittee, for advancing legislation requiring the Department of Homeland Security to develop strategy for securing borders within five years.

Finally, TBC agrees with CBP Commissioner Alan Bersin that public-private partnerships (PPPs) are vital to fund the projects necessary to handle the ever-increasing trade between the U.S. and Mexico. Since CBP officials have announced that any PPP relationship would require a new law, we propose legislation be enacted to authorize public-private partnerships for expenses at border crossings.

### **Summary**

In a world of asymmetrical threats to U.S. security, the U.S. cannot rely on outmoded tactics rooted in the past to defend the homeland today. It is vital that Congress and the Obama Administration take immediate action to strengthen our nation's weakest link in border security: American southwestern border crossings must be strengthened with a crash program of \$6 billion to bring our infrastructure up to requirements and the hiring of 6,000 additional Customs inspectors.

### **About the Texas Border Coalition**

*The Texas Border Coalition (TBC) is a collective voice of border mayors, county judges, economic development commissions focused on issues that affect more than 2.1 million people along the Texas-Mexico border region and economically disadvantaged counties from El Paso to Brownsville. TBC is working closely with the state and federal government to educate, advocate, and secure funding for transportation, immigration and border crossings, workforce and education and health care. For more information, visit the coalition Web site at [www.texasbordercoalition.org](http://www.texasbordercoalition.org).*