

Attachment 3.
Southern Border Safety and Security Threats

**PNRCD et al. Comments on Dec 20, 2016 Draft Jaguar Recovery Plan
Attachment #3: Southern Border Safety and Security Threats**

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Texas Public Safety Threat Overview

A State Intelligence Estimate

Produced by the Texas Department of Public Safety

In collaboration with other law enforcement and homeland security agencies

January 2017

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Executive Summary

(U) Texas faces the full spectrum of threats, and the state's vast size, geography, and large population present unique challenges to public safety and homeland security. Texas employs a systematic approach to detect, assess, and prioritize public safety threats within seven categories: terrorism, crime, motor vehicle crashes, natural disasters, public health threats, industrial accidents, and cyber threats.

(U) Due to the recent actions of lone offenders or small groups affiliated with or inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other foreign terrorist organizations, we assess that the current terrorism threat to Texas is elevated. We recognize that ISIS has had considerable success in inspiring and inciting lone offenders to attack targets in the United States and other Western countries using simple yet effective tactics that are difficult to detect and disrupt. We expect this heightened threat to persist over at least the next year, due in part to the relatively high number of recent terrorism-related arrests and thwarted plots inside the US, and the prevalence and effectiveness of ISIS's online recruitment and incitement messaging, as the organization is slowly defeated on the battlefield. We are especially concerned about the potential for terrorist infiltration across the US-Mexico border, particularly as foreign terrorist fighters depart Syria and Iraq and enter global migration flows. We are concerned about the challenges associated with the security vetting of Syrian war refugees or asylum seekers who are resettled in Texas – namely, that derogatory security information about individuals is inaccessible or nonexistent. We see a potential that these challenges may leave the state exposed to extremist actors who pose as authentic refugees, and who are determined to later commit violent acts.

(U) Other threats, such as those from violent domestic antigovernment extremists, remain concerning in light of standoffs with federal law enforcement in Oregon in 2014 and Nevada in early 2016, as well as a series of ambush murders of police officers.

(U) Crime threatens the public safety and liberty of all Texans in some way. The Texas Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program data for 2015 shows a 4.7 percent decrease of the major crime rate in Texas from 2014. This is positive for the safety and welfare of our citizens. Conversely, violent crimes in particular increased for the second year in a row. Texas' UCR program includes seven index crimes: homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. What the index crime data does not currently account for are other crimes typically committed by criminal organizations that impact the security of Texas communities, such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, kidnapping, extortion, money laundering, and public corruption. Mexican cartels, human traffickers, street and transnational gangs, human smugglers, and high-threat criminals are all major criminal threats to Texas.

(U) Criminal organizations – including Mexican cartels and transnational gangs – and individual criminals engage in a wide range of illicit activities in Texas. Among the vilest crimes these organizations and other criminals engage in is the exploitation and trafficking of children and other vulnerable victims. Human trafficking is highly profitable, and is the fastest growing organized crime business in Texas. It involves the recruitment, harboring, transporting, or procurement of a person for labor or services involving involuntary servitude, slavery, or forced commercial sex acts. These crimes are also carried out and enabled by human smugglers, prostitution rings, manufacturers and consumers of child pornography, and sexual predators.

(U) All eight of the major Mexican cartels operate in Texas, and they have enlisted transnational and statewide gangs to support their drug and human smuggling and human trafficking operations on both sides of the border.

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(U) Gangs continue to pose a significant public safety threat to Texas, and their propensity for violence and many kinds of criminal activity is persistent. While the greatest concentrations of gang activity tend to be in the larger metropolitan areas, gang members are also present in the surrounding suburbs, and in rural areas. Gang activity is especially prevalent in some of the counties adjacent to Mexico and along key smuggling corridors, since many Texas-based gangs are involved in cross-border trafficking.

(U) Motor vehicle crashes killed 3,520 people in Texas in 2015. In addition, the high volume of commercial motor vehicles on Texas' roadways, including those that operate unsafely and violate the law, is a particular concern because of the increased potential for loss of life when large-mass commercial vehicles are involved in crashes.

(U) Texas faces an array of natural threats, including floods, hurricanes, wildfires, tornados, and drought, with more major disaster declarations than any other state in the nation. These disasters result in loss of life, damage to infrastructure, and billions of dollars in personal property damage and economic losses.

(U) Public health threats to Texas remain a significant concern, with emerging infectious diseases and other illnesses such as influenza and enteroviruses. In September 2014, a Texas hospital patient tested positive for the Ebola virus following his recent travel to West Africa, making him the first case diagnosed in the United States. Texas worked with public health professionals across the state to contain Ebola cases and prepare for other potential infections, but the virus's emergence served as a reminder that foreign-borne diseases can be brought to Texas.

(U) Major industrial accidents constitute another potential threat to public safety, especially because of the large industrial base in Texas. The state's vast size and economic importance contribute to the potential for severe consequences if any significant accidents occur.

(U) Since technology has become a target, a vulnerability, and a tool used by criminals and foreign governments, cyber threats continue to be a significant area of concern, and we are especially concerned about the potential consequences of a successful cyberattack on the state's critical infrastructure.

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Acknowledgments

(U) The Texas Department of Public Safety collaborated with law enforcement, homeland security, and other government agencies across Texas and the United States in the production of this State Intelligence Estimate to serve as a high-level overview of the public safety threats to Texas. Their contributions were invaluable to developing an assessment of the main threats in Texas. This collaboration underscores the commitment among agencies across the state to share information, intelligence and capabilities to effectively address public safety threats across all jurisdictions and disciplines at all levels. We are grateful to the numerous agencies that contributed to this assessment.

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State Intelligence Estimates

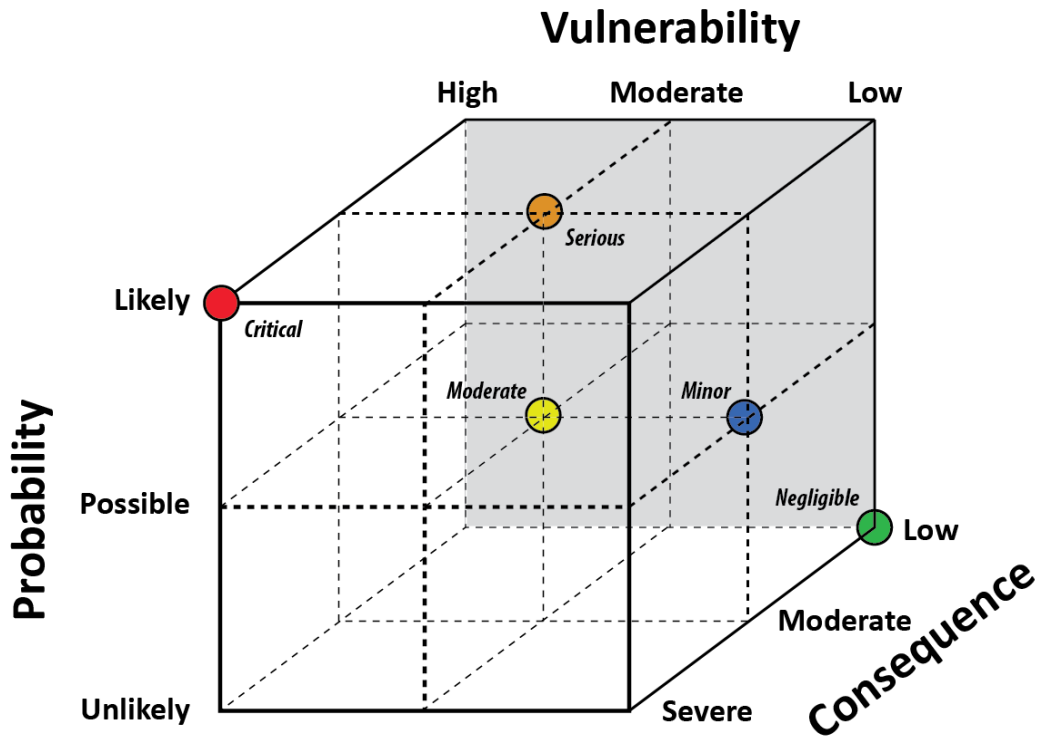
(U) To enhance the state's ability to detect, assess, and prioritize threats to the safety and security of its citizens, the Texas Department of Public Safety implemented a State Intelligence Estimate process after consultation with the National Intelligence Council, based in part on the model of the National Intelligence Estimate.

(U) State Intelligence Estimates are multi-agency assessments on issues relating to homeland security and public safety in Texas. They serve as the most authoritative and comprehensive analyses of these issues, and they are designed to provide law enforcement and government officials with the most accurate evaluation of current information on a given topic. State Intelligence Estimates are intended to provide an assessment on the current status of an issue, but they may also include estimative conclusions that make forecasts about future developments and identify the implications for Texas.

(U) Unlike reports and assessments produced by an individual agency or center, State Intelligence Estimates draw on the information and expertise of multiple law enforcement and homeland security agencies across Texas. Such an approach is essential to developing a comprehensive assessment of issues that affect the state as a whole. By incorporating the perspectives and information from multiple agencies, the Texas Department of Public Safety is better able to produce assessments that support the development of proactive strategies and policies needed to address current and evolving threats to the state.

Introduction

(U) Proactive and preventive strategies require sufficient data and analysis to support tactical and strategic decision making at all levels in today's rapidly evolving threat environment. Texas employs a systematic approach to detect, assess, and prioritize public safety threats within seven categories: terrorism, crime, natural disasters, motor vehicle crashes, public health, industrial accidents and cyber threats. Aligning threats within categories facilitates threat analysis and prioritization. Texas employs three risk variables that are commonly used in risk models: Probability, Vulnerability, and Consequence. These are used to assess the current or likely threat, in a formula that is expressed as $\text{Threat} = \text{Probability} \times \text{Vulnerability} \times \text{Consequence}$.



(U) In this standard model, Probability takes into account the frequency or likelihood that a harmful event or condition will occur. Vulnerability considers the extent to which the state is susceptible to a harmful event or condition. Consequence represents the impact that the harmful event or condition is likely to have on the state if it does occur. This threat assessment framework is particularly useful in delineating those threats that are high consequence and low probability from those that are more likely and that have comparatively moderate consequences. For example, the vulnerability of the Houston Ship Channel to a Category 4 or 5 hurricane is high and the consequences substantial, and even though the probability of it occurring is low based on historical trends, a comprehensive and well-rehearsed regional response plan is essential to minimizing the danger. This matrix represents the threat assessment process, though the report does not maintain scores for individual threats and threat categories.

Threat Overview

(U) Texas faces the full spectrum of threats and hazards. The globalization and convergence of crime and terrorism; an unsecure border with Mexico, powerful and ruthless Mexican cartels, violent transnational and statewide gangs, and serial criminals; worldwide terrorist organizations and lone-offenders; cyber intrusions and threats; the unpredictability of catastrophic natural disasters and pandemic diseases; the high loss of life from vehicle crashes; the large amount of nationally significant critical infrastructure in Texas, and the dramatic and continued increases in the state's population – all of these factors have resulted in an asymmetric threat environment in our state that requires constant vigilance to minimize the danger to our citizens and their families.



Overlay Map of Texas on the Northeastern United States

(U) Texas has 29 ports of entry, 1,254 miles of international border with Mexico, 367 miles of coastline and over 267,000 square miles of landmass, making it larger than France and twice the size of Germany. It is larger than many US states combined. El Paso is closer to San Diego, California and Houston is closer to Tallahassee, Florida than El Paso and Houston are to one another.

(U) Texas is also demographically diverse, with a large population that is quickly growing. The state's near 27.5 million residents are concentrated in large urban and suburban areas, but are also spread across vast rural areas. More than 7.1 million people live in the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington metropolitan area, and 6.6 million in the Houston-Woodlands-Sugarland metropolitan area. At the other end of the spectrum, several Texas counties have small populations with fewer than 1,000 people. Texas' vast distances create challenges with regard to communications and capabilities.

(U) Finally, Texas has a large and diversified economy, with a gross domestic product of more than \$1.4 trillion. Texas accounts for significant volumes of international trade with Mexico and other nations. The state also plays a vital role in the nation's agriculture, defense, and energy industrial activity. Some of these industries and associated facilities have been designated as nationally important critical infrastructure. Appendix 1 provides an overview of critical infrastructure sectors and their importance.

1. Terrorism

(U) We assess that the current terrorism threat to Texas is elevated in light of the relative frequency of recent attacks and thwarted plots in Europe and in the US, organized, supported, or inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other foreign terrorist organizations. At issue is that ISIS and other terrorist groups, from afar, have succeeded in using various methods, including online propaganda and incitement messaging through social media, to inspire lone offenders and small groups to attack targets in the United States and in Europe. These inspired offenders, sometimes using the simple yet effective tactics laid out for them, are highly difficult to detect and disrupt. The incitement capability for such attacks was indicated, for instance, when two Arizona extremists, already considering various targets, noticed social media reporting about a “Draw the Prophet Mohammed” contest in Garland, Texas. In May 2015, two extremists drove to the Garland event and launched an attack at the contest location – as extremists abroad had been vigorously urging American ISIS loyalists to do.^{1 2 3} A few months later, in San Bernardino, California, two local attackers killed 14 people after reportedly pledging allegiance to ISIS.⁴ In June 2016, a lone offender in Florida, also likely inspired in part by the group, killed 49 people and wounded 53 others inside an Orlando nightclub.⁵

(U) To assess the threat most accurately, we also consider the number of attacks that were attempted but thwarted, rather than merely the relative few that succeeded or the number of their victims. In the past two years, federal authorities have arrested more than 90 ISIS supporters inside the United States, and have broken up dozens of plots among them to commit violent acts inside the country.⁶

(U) The group’s deployment of trained operatives for attacks outside of its territory in Syria and Iraq, particularly in Europe, is relatively new. The strategy appears to have intensified amid ISIS territorial losses in those countries due to oppositional military pressure. The group’s external multi-location attack strategy as it loses territory is of particular concern to the US by the continuing volume of ISIS-inspired or supported attacks and plots, have been attempted or carried out in France, France, Belgium, Germany, Turkey, at a café in Bangladesh frequented by international customers, in The Philippines, and elsewhere where loyalist affiliates have arisen. Additional terrorist attack plots have been foiled in Europe since July 2016, when another ISIS operative in France, supported by a cell, murdered 86 people, including two Texans, by driving a truck through crowds of people celebrating Bastille Day in Nice.

(U) The many attacks and thwarted plots in France, Belgium and in Germany underscore the persistent threat posed by returning foreign fighters in general. But those high-casualty European attacks also relied, seemingly for the first time, on the use of illegal migration and human smuggling tactics by which ISIS infiltrated the returning fighters into Europe-bound migration flows, which may hold implications for the US-Mexico border.^{7 8}

(U) Some of the operatives who carried out the 2015-2016 France and Belgium attacks reportedly were returning foreign terrorist fighters of French and Belgian citizenship who posed as illegal immigrant asylum seekers as they arrived at land borders. Also, a number of non-citizen migrant asylum seekers, rather than returning citizens, were involved in later attacks and plots.^{9 10 11 12 13 14} For example, European counterterrorism authorities arrested a Syrian refugee planning a bombing attack in Germany,¹⁵ three Iraqi migrants in Switzerland,¹⁶ and several Afghan migrants in Italy in the midst of attack planning.¹⁷ A Syrian asylum-seeking migrant ISIS sympathizer was shot dead after he attacked a Paris police station.¹⁸ Among many other such cases of extremist migrants, a recent immigrant attacked people on a commuter train in Germany, where counterterrorism police reportedly identified at least 40 other migrant, border-crossing asylum seekers suspected of terrorism.¹⁹

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(U) Given how ISIS deployed operatives to their targets in European capitals via long-distance and illegal immigration methods, we recognize the potential that ISIS and other groups have noted the successful use of this tactic and would contemplate infiltrating operatives in the same manner across the Texas-Mexico border, possibly also posing as asylum seekers. We recognize that millions of migrants not associated with terrorism had overwhelmed European border controls in comparison. However, we note that human smugglers, working along established Latin American routes, have long transported Syrians, Iraqis, and other immigrants from countries where terrorist groups operate to our land border with Mexico, where they often seek asylum too.²⁰ As well, migrants from countries with a known terrorism presence – known as “special interest aliens” (SIAs) – have included travelers from Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt and many other “countries of interest” in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia where terrorist groups are active. These immigrants sometimes seek asylum fraudulently at the Texas-Mexico border, as did the terrorist-immigrants upon reaching Europe.^{21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29}

(U) Our concern extends also to the issue of refugee resettlement and the thoroughness of vetting, given some past instances in which refugees from the Middle East region have been prosecuted inside the United States for terrorism. For example, in January 2016, Houston resident and Iraqi-born refugee Omar Faraj Saeed Al-Hardan was indicted on three felony offenses related to plans both to join ISIS overseas and also to bomb two Houston malls. Al-Hardan entered the US as a legal resettled refugee in November 2009 and was granted legal permanent resident status in August 2011.³⁰

(U) We expect the threat from ISIS-inspired homegrown violent extremists, returning foreign fighters, and external attack plots to persist over at least the next year as the terrorist organization suffers ongoing military defeats in Iraq. We reach this judgment due in part to the group’s ongoing external attack campaign, continuing online incitement messaging capability, and the movement of foreign fighters from ISIS-influenced terrorist redoubts outside of Iraq and Syria.³¹

(U) We also recognize the persistent threat posed by al-Qaeda, its affiliates, and other foreign terrorist organizations, such as the Pakistani Taliban, which continue to articulate their aspirations to attack the US, particularly as al-Qaeda tries to strengthen its global networks as ISIS loses territory.

(U) Other threats, such as violent domestic extremists, also remain a concern, as evidenced by the July 2016 shootings of 20 Dallas and Baton Rouge law enforcement officers, as well as the November 2014 shooting attack on multiple targets in downtown Austin by a man who identified with a white supremacist ideology known as the “Phineas Priesthood.”

1.1 ISIS Contributing to Current Heightened Global Terrorism Threat

(U) We judge that the global threat of terrorism in Texas and the US has increased substantially over the past two years— attributable, in part, to ISIS’s June 2014 seizure of northern Iraq. This territory seizure afforded the terrorist organization protected human resources and revenue, a safe haven from which to plot attacks, and the narrative of an expanding caliphate. Despite the significant progress of various military efforts to shrink ISIS territory in Iraq, we judge that the group’s capacity to operate as a terrorist organization with global capabilities can continue for some time from other regional hubs in the Middle East, Africa, Afghanistan, and South Asia. This assessment is based on currently available data, intelligence and statements of heightened concern by senior leadership within the US Intelligence Community, including the following reporting:^{32 33 34 35 36}

- (U) Between October 2014 and July 2016, attacks attributed to ISIS outside of Syria and Iraq killed more than 1,200 people in approximately 17 countries.^{37 38 39}

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- (U) Since 2014, there have been at least seven attacks attributed to ISIS-inspired terrorists in North America, with five in the US, including one in Texas. Attacks actually carried out include the June 2016 Orlando nightclub massacre and the January 2016 shooting of a Philadelphia police officer, both by men claiming to have acted on behalf of ISIS.⁴⁰
- (U) The number of successful attacks stands in contrast to historically elevated numbers of US terrorism attack plots that were thwarted before they could be carried out, which indicates a more complete picture of the persistence of effort. In just the first half of 2016, law enforcement investigations have resulted in the arrests or indictments of at least 48 individuals in the United States in ISIS-related cases.⁴¹ The cases involve individuals plotting attacks; attempting to travel to join ISIS overseas; sending money, equipment and weapons to terrorists; falsifying statements to federal authorities; and failing to report a felony. Also, as of mid-2016, the FBI had nearly 1,000 open investigations across most of the US states.⁴²
- (U) In July 2016, FBI Director James Comey and CIA Director John Brennan warned that hundreds of terrorists will fan out to infiltrate Western Europe and the US to carry out attacks on a wider scale as ISIS is defeated in Syria and Iraq, and that efforts to that date had not reduced the group's capability and global reach.⁴³

1.1.2 ISIS Inciting Lone Offender Attacks Through Social Media

(U) Some terrorist organizations have been particularly effective at using social media and online messaging to communicate with and inspire sympathizers around the world to attack Western targets. We assess that ISIS incitement propaganda— which includes videos, social media posts, and online magazines – likely has inspired sympathizers to engage in violent attacks on their own. ISIS's ability to generate timely new propaganda has grown, resulting in the online publishing of hundreds of official ISIS products.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ Lone offender or small group attacks, often inspired at least in part by ISIS, pose substantial challenges for law enforcement to detect indicators of a pending attack. Many such attacks have involved limited visible pre-operational planning and communication and used simple tactics with readily available weapons – such as firearms, edged weapons and vehicles. Examples of apparently externally inspired attacks that went undetected over the past two years include:

- (U) The June 12, 2016 small-arms attack by a lone offender on an Orlando nightclub in which 49 people were killed and others were held hostage for hours before police killed the gunman.⁴⁶ Officials said the gunman had been inspired in part by ISIS messaging.⁴⁷
- (U) The May 3, 2015 small arms attack by two radicalized individuals on a Garland, Texas Muhammad Art Exhibit & Contest event, amid social media calls for an attack on the event. Police killed the two gunmen as they began a firearms attack just outside the event.⁴⁸
- (U) The December 2, 2015 attack on county government personnel by a radicalized husband-wife team at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California, who killed 14 and wounded dozens before they were killed after a running gun battle. The attack occurred amid an extended ISIS social media incitement campaign for attacks on government workers of all kinds.⁴⁹
- (U) The January 14, 2015 arrest of an Ohio man for conspiring to kill a federal officer and attacking the US Capitol, following the suspect's reposting of online statements supporting ISIS and video propaganda sympathizing with violent "jihad" on a social media account.⁵⁰

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- (U) The October 22, 2014 attack by an Algerian-Canadian man at the National War Memorial in Ottawa, Canada, in which he shot and killed a Canadian soldier after ISIS propagandists called for retaliation in response to new Western airstrikes. The suspect was described as having converted to Islam and self-radicalized.⁵¹ This attack followed an incident two days earlier when a different radicalized Canadian national struck two Canadian soldiers with an automobile outside a military facility in Quebec, killing one soldier and wounding the other, a method expressly called for in ISIS social media incitement.⁵²

(U) In addition, sympathizers of these groups also regularly use social media and online forums to promote recent attacks and encourage new ones.⁵³ Following the November 2015 Paris attacks, for instance, terrorist sympathizers used Twitter accounts to urge similar attacks on American cities.⁵⁴ Further examples of post-attack messaging include:

- (U) An incitement campaign, including al-Qaeda's *Inspire* magazine and many extremist social media forums, based on the September 2014 beheading of a co-worker in Moore, Oklahoma by a suspect who believed non-Muslim co-workers had religiously oppressed him. His Facebook page featured photos of a beheading in Syria, rebel fighters, and Quran verses justifying attacks.
- (U) *Inspire* magazine quoted and praised Mohammed Ali Brown, the Seattle suspect in the murder of four people in New Jersey and Washington State over several months in 2014. According to media reporting, the suspect shot random men at close range late at night in quiet locations, in retaliation for US foreign actions in which Muslims had been killed.^{55 56}
- (U) An issue of ISIS's *DABIQ* magazine praised an October 2014 hatchet attack on a group of New York City police officers that left two officers wounded.⁵⁷ The suspect reportedly was a self-radicalized convert to Islam who had posted comments on Facebook and YouTube supporting violent attacks inspired by terrorist groups like ISIS.⁵⁸
- (U) *Inspire* magazine commended the October 2014 hatchet attack on a Washington, D.C. police officer that took place one week after the New York City attack. In this case, the unidentified suspect swung a hatchet at a police officer and fled after a brief struggle.⁵⁹

1.1.3 Calls for "Assassination" Attacks Targeting Law Enforcement, Government, and Military Personnel, Religious Leaders, and High-Profile Civilians

(U) ISIS, other foreign terrorist organizations, and their sympathizers have singled out groups and individuals as desirable assassination targets. In the United States and other Western countries, these targets most often include news media, law enforcement, and military personnel, as well as government facilities and public places such as shopping centers. Given successful ISIS assassination operations abroad and the disrupted May 2015 attack in Garland, we are concerned about the influence of these messages and the potential for successful lone offender attacks on targets in Texas. Recently, propagandists have mentioned Texas and have released "kill lists" identifying Texas residents in their messaging, including:

- (U) In May 2016 via the messaging app Telegram, the pro-Islamic State hacking group United Cyber Caliphate posted a list of 1,543 names, personal addresses, and IP addresses belonging to Texas residents described as "most important crusaders in Texas" who are "wanted to be killed." The message encouraged would-be attackers to "crush the cross" and "shoot them down."⁶⁰ Later "kill lists" containing the names of hundreds of Texas residents have been released as well.

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- (U) In December 2014, *Inspire* magazine referenced Texas in a call for the state's Muslim residents to conduct lone offender attacks. The publication identified Texas and eight other states for their significant Muslim populations, noting that "9000+ 'Muslims' are on active duty in the US Army." Other states listed were California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Michigan, Virginia, Ohio, and Maryland.

(U) More generally, terrorist propagandists urge US-based sympathizers to attack targets of opportunity anywhere in the US, including in Texas. For example:

- (U) In January 2015, a pro-ISIS media group in an Islamist extremist forum that promoted attacks listed Dallas, Texas, among locations where "Cesium-131 poison spreads on your streets and train stations..." Other locations that were named included Boston, Virginia, Russia, and Amsterdam.
- (U) The Spring 2014 issue of *Inspire* magazine listed Houston and Dallas among desirable US cities to target.
- On February 21, 2015, the Somali-based al-Shabaab released a predominately English-language video highlighting the September 2013 terrorist attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. The video encouraged similar attacks on "American or Jewish-owned" shopping centers and districts.
- (U) On January 10, 2015, ISIS released a video via social networking sites reiterating the group's encouragement of lone offender attacks in Western countries. The video highlighted excerpts from a September 2014 audio message attributed to an ISIS spokesman advocating for attacks against "soldiers, patrons, and troops...their police, security, and intelligence members."
- (U) On January 14, 2015, a video released on the official Twitter account of an ISIS division praised the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* magazine offices in Paris, France. The video showed three French-speaking fighters calling for additional attacks in Europe and the US. One fighter advised those unable to travel to ISIS territory, "If you see a police officer, kill him. Kill them all. Kill all of the infidels who persecute you."

1.1.4 Travel of Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Sympathizers Poses an Additional Threat

(U) Mass-casualty attacks in Europe demonstrate that individuals who travel to battlefields in Syria, Iraq, or elsewhere in support of ISIS or other terrorist groups, and eventually return, present a threat to their countries of origin. These individuals are also a potential threat to other countries. On January 7, 2015, for instance, one of the two gunmen who killed 12 journalists at *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris claimed to have acted on behalf of al-Qaeda in Yemen after returning to Europe.⁶¹

(U) Many of the estimated three dozen suspected ISIS extremists recently arrested in Europe, including at least seven involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks, reportedly had European citizenship when they joined ISIS and then returned as asylum seeking migrants to plot terrorist acts.^{62 63 64 65 66 67}

(U) These developments raise concerns about ISIS fighters from the United States, Europe, or visa-waiver countries who could face relatively few obstacles to legal or illegal travel to the US. Methods of entering the US would include legal resettlement in Texas as poorly backgrounded refugees or, as a separate issue, the illegal exploitation by special interest alien migrants (SIAs) of established smuggling networks to travel through Latin America to the US-Mexico border.

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(U) Texas Residents Traveling to Join Foreign Terrorist Groups

(U) Five Texas cases illustrate the prospect that still more Texas residents have joined or will try to join terrorist groups abroad, raising concerns that some will return with plans to cause harm.^{68 69}

(U) In January 2016, Houston resident and Iraqi-born refugee Omar Faraj Saeed Al-Hardan was indicted for planning to join ISIS and to bomb two Houston malls when his travel plans stalled. Al-Hardan, a legally resettled refugee who was granted legal permanent resident status in August 2011,⁷⁰ reportedly began planning to join ISIL in May 2014 and made false statements to federal investigators regarding automatic weapons training he received overseas with ISIS. In addition, Al-Hardan maintained ties to al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate.⁷¹ In October, he pleaded guilty to providing material support to ISIS.⁷²

(U) Mesquite resident Bilal Hamed Abood, an Iraqi-born naturalized US citizen, succeeded in traveling to a rebel group in Syria and returning to the state. The FBI arrested Abood in May 2015 for lying about initial plans to travel to Syria in 2013 to join rebel fighters. At D/FW International Airport, homeland security authorities refused to let Abood board his overseas flight. But a short time later, in April 2013, Abood found his way there by departing through Mexico.⁷³

(U) After his September 2013 return, Abood told the FBI that he spent time in Syria with a rebel group not banned under US law, and that he did not support the banned terrorist group ISIS.⁷⁴ However, the FBI later learned from a search warrant on Abood's computer that he wanted to "help build the Islamic State of Iraq" and that he had pledged an oath to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The FBI finally arrested Abood for the original lie he told in 2013 at the D/FW airport.

(U) In May 2015, the FBI arrested Spring, Texas, resident Asher Abid Khan after a lengthy investigation during which he traveled as far as Turkey on his way to join ISIS. Khan allegedly was hoping to die a martyr fighting with ISIS but was arrested after he was tricked into returning to Texas by reports that his mother was gravely ill.⁷⁵ A Texas associate of Khan's, described as a "Mexican convert," succeeded in joining ISIS in fighting.⁷⁶

(U) The Abood, Khan, and Al-Hardan cases are on the most recent examples involving Texans wanting to join extremists in fighting abroad. Back in June 2014, the FBI arrested Austin-area resident Michael Todd Wolfe for planning to join ISIS and Rahatul Ashikim Khan, who at one point hoped to join al-Shabaab in Somalia.

(U) Of those who succeeded in traveling overseas, several have died in operations, including Moner Abu-Salha, a resident of Florida who was reportedly radicalized and funded in Texas.⁷⁷

(U) We assess that the threat of legal or illegal returns will remain elevated, given the high rate of foreign fighter travel to Syria, which exceeds the rate of travelers who went to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, or Somalia at any point in the last 20 years⁷⁸ and the fact that:

- (U) The current conflict in Syria has drawn nearly 40,000 foreign fighters from more than 120 countries, many of whom have joined ISIS.⁷⁹ As of April 2016, these included at least 6,900 fighters from Western countries, of whom more than 1,000 have returned to the UK, France, Germany, and Belgium.⁸⁰
- (U) Approximately 250 Americans, including numerous Texas residents, have been involved in various stages of travel to Syria, including those who attempted but did not go, those who went and fought, those who died, and a small number who returned to the US.⁸¹

(U) *US-based Aspiring Foreign Terrorist Fighters Exiting Through Mexico*

(U) In recent years, US and Canadian law enforcement have greatly expanded a campaign to detect and interdict Americans seeking to join ISIS and other US-designated terrorist groups abroad. One key tool is the use of the US No-Fly List, which prevents airline travel to or from US territory. Adapting to defeat the No-Fly List, however, at least 13 known aspiring foreign terrorist fighters since 2012 have crossed or planned to cross the US-Mexico border in transit to join foreign terrorist organizations in Iraq, Syria, Somalia and Pakistan. Most of the aspiring fighters knew they were on the No-Fly List and under FBI investigation when they sought to reach conflict zones through Mexico, four of them successfully. Mexico does not collaborate with No-Fly List enforcement to the extent that Canada does. The instances^{82 83} in which aspiring foreign terrorist fighters planned transit through Mexico, as well as analysis of the circumstances surrounding their travel, suggests that use of this tactic presents an opportunity for increasing numbers of aspiring foreign terrorist fighters to evade US interdiction efforts such as the No-Fly List. Among the cases:

- (U) On October 4, 2016, two Milwaukee, Wisconsin men were arrested near San Angelo, Texas on their way to Mexico as part of an alleged plan to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an FBI criminal complaint alleged.⁸⁴ Texas DPS troopers, local officers and FBI agents, who had been tracking the two as they traveled, arrested Islamic converts Jason Michael Ludke and Yosvany Pedilla-Conde, a Cuban national, on US Highway 87 in Tom Green County.⁸⁵ The arrests occurred on the final leg of a car journey from Milwaukee to El Paso, where the men allegedly hoped to cross to Juarez, Mexico, and acquire fraudulent passports, possibly to fly from Brazil to reach ISIS in Raqqa, Syria, before traveling to Mosul, Iraq.^{86 87}
- (U) In April 2015, seven Minnesota men of Somali descent were arrested in San Diego and Minnesota for conspiring to go to fight with ISIS in Syria, by crossing the California-Mexico border. The men were arrested prior to carrying out the plan.⁸⁸ According to a May 2015 federal indictment, the group discussed obtaining false Mexican passports from another friend already in Syria. The plan was to fly from Mexico to Turkey, and then travel into Syria.⁸⁹
- (U) In April 2015, after returning from Syria, Iraqi-born Mesquite, Texas resident Bilal Hamed Abood was arrested for lying to the FBI by claiming that he had not pledged allegiance to ISIS.⁹⁰ Two years earlier, in April 2013, Abood crossed the Mexico land border, boarded a Mexican airline to Bogota, Colombia, and made his way to Syria, where he claims to have fought with the Free Syrian Army.⁹¹
- (U) In October 2013, the US-born extremist Sinh Vinh Ngo Nguyen was arrested while attempting to cross into Mexico from California with airline tickets to Peshawar, Pakistan, where he was to train al-Qaeda fighters.⁹² Nguyen, who also went by the name Hasan Abu Omar Ghannoum, had previously traveled to Syria and fought for five months with the al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front against the Syrian government.⁹³
- (U) In July 2012, Somali-born US citizen Liban Haji Mohamed drove from his home state of Virginia to the Texas-Mexico border, slipping past his FBI surveillance team along the way, and then crossing the border.⁹⁴ He flew to Somalia from Mexico to join the terrorist group al-Shabaab, and was later placed on the FBI's Most Wanted terrorist list.^{95 96} The transitional Somali government arrested him in March 2015.

from Mexico

Govt. Audit: "Elevated" Terrorism Threat to U.S. from Mexico

JANUARY 31, 2017

Print Text Size

A new government [audit](#) confirms what Judicial Watch has been reporting for years, that Islamic terrorists are operating in Mexican border towns and infiltrating the United States to carry out attacks. In a report issued this month by the Texas Department of Public Safety, the agency notes that the state faces a full spectrum of threats and "due to the recent actions of lone offenders or small groups affiliated with or inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other foreign terrorist organizations, we assess that the current terrorism threat to Texas is elevated."

Safety officials in the Lone Star State also write in the 86-page document that they are "especially concerned about the potential for terrorist infiltration across the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly as foreign terrorist fighters depart Syria and Iraq and enter global migration flows." They also express worries about Syrian refugees that have been sent to Texas under President Obama's settlement program because the government doesn't have a system to properly vet them. Judicial Watch has also reported extensively on that national security crisis. Read the latest stories [here](#) and [here](#). "We see a potential that these challenges may leave the state exposed to extremist actors who pose as authentic refugees, and who are determined to later commit violent acts," the Texas report states.

In the same manner that ISIS deployed operatives to their targets in European capitals, the terrorist group could implement the same tactics to infiltrate operatives across the Texas-Mexico border, the new report points out. "Human smugglers, working along established Latin American routes, have long transported Syrians, Iraqis and other immigrations from countries where terrorist groups operate to our land border with Mexico," Texas safety officials write in the report. The U.S. government calls them Special Interest Aliens (SIA) and in past few years they have come from Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Egypt and many other "countries of interest" in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia where terrorist groups are active.

The southern border has become a hotbed of Islamic terrorism in recent years and Judicial Watch has exposed the national security disaster as part of an ongoing investigation into the dangerously porous region. In 2015 Judicial Watch [reported](#) that Mexican drug cartels are smuggling SIAs from countries with terrorist links into a small Texas rural town near El Paso. Sources on both sides of the border confirmed to Judicial Watch that the smugglers use remote farm roads—rather than interstates—to elude the Border Patrol and other law enforcement barriers. Once they clear the border, the SIAs are transported to stash areas in Acala, a rural crossroads located around 54 miles from El Paso on a state road – Highway 20. Then the SIAs wait for pick-up in the area's sand hills just across Highway 20.

Also in 2015 Judicial Watch broke a [story](#) about ISIS operating a camp just a few miles from El Paso, Texas

in an area known as "Anapra" situated just west of Ciudad Juárez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Judicial Watch's sources include a Mexican Army field grade officer and a Mexican Federal Police Inspector who also revealed that another ISIS cell is located to the west of Ciudad Juárez, in Puerto Palomas. A year earlier Ft. Bliss, the U.S. Army post in El Paso, implemented increased security measures following a Judicial Watch [report](#) about an Islamic terrorist plot in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juárez to attack the United States with car bombs or other vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED).

« « [Toward The Past: Feds Still in Cover-up Mode: Ft. Lauderdale Airport Shooter Indictment Omits Terrorism](#)
[Toward The Future: Al Qaeda Chief: Use of Female Guard Denies Him Justice, Violates Muslim Rights](#) » »

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[Border State of Nuevo León](#)

[Jihadists Train, Plan U.S. Attack from Mexican Border State of Nuevo León](#)

JANUARY 04, 2017

Print Text Size

A Jihadi-cartel alliance in the Mexican state of Nuevo León is collaborating to carry out attacks in American cities and ports of entry along the southern border, according to intelligence obtained by Judicial Watch from confidential U.S. and Mexican law enforcement sources. As part of the plan, militant Islamists have arrived recently at the Monterrey International Airport situated in Apodaca, Nuevo León, about 130 miles south of the Texas border.

An internal Mexican law enforcement report obtained by Judicial Watch confirms that Islamic terrorists have “people along the border, principally in Tijuana, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas.” Cartel informants tell law enforcement contacts that “they are only waiting for the order and the times to carry out a simultaneous attack in the different ports of entry or cities of the United States of America.” Drug cartels have a working “agreement” with Islamic terrorists, according to a high-ranking Mexican police administrator, who said that men from the Middle East arrive regularly into the country to “train” jihadists.

Judicial Watch sources include veteran law enforcement officials in the U.S. and Mexico as well as longtime undercover informants who have worked for intelligence agencies in both countries, mainly in the crime-infested southern border region. They can't be identified out of fear for their safety. One seasoned Mexican law enforcement official told Judicial Watch that a key cartel informant verified picking up various Middle Eastern individuals from “evil groups” at the Monterrey Airport in the last few days alone. The informant is extremely credible and has also worked for several U.S. government agencies, Judicial Watch has verified through various federal, state and local sources.

The relationship between Islamic jihadists and Mexican drug operations is nothing new and Judicial Watch has been reporting it for years as part of an ongoing investigation into [cartels, corruption and terrorism](#). The partnership has ignited a major security threat for the U.S. with Islamic terrorists training in southern border towns near American cities. This includes an [ISIS training camp](#) just a few miles from El Paso, Texas, in an area known as “Anapra” situated just west of Ciudad Juárez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Back in 2014 Judicial Watch broke a story about a Mexican-based ISIS operation to attack the U.S. with car bombs or other vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED). The threat was so imminent that Ft. Bliss, the U.S. Army post in El Paso, implemented increased security measures even though authorities publicly denied the plot.

Earlier this year Judicial Watch obtained [State Department documents](#) showing that for more than a decade the U.S. government has known that “Arab extremists” are entering the country through Mexico with the assistance of smuggling network “cells.” In 2015 Judicial Watch [reported](#) exclusively that Mexican drug

cartels are smuggling foreigners from countries with terrorist links into a small Texas rural town near El Paso and they're using remote farm roads—rather than interstates—to elude the Border Patrol and other law enforcement barriers. The foreigners are classified as Special Interest Aliens (SIA) and they are being transported to stash areas in Acala, a rural crossroads located around 54 miles from El Paso on a state road – Highway 20. Once in the U.S., the SIAs wait for pick-up in the area's sand hills just across Highway 20.

« « [Toward The Past: DHS Agents Bribed to Let Drugs, Illegal Aliens into U.S., El Paso Major Corridor for Mexican Drugs](#)
[Toward The Future: Food-Stamp Recipients Can Order from Amazon, Other Online Retailers](#) » »

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Arrested in New Mexico Border County

“Islamic Refugee” With Gas Pipeline Plans Arrested in New Mexico Border County

JUNE 15, 2016

Print Text Size

UPDATE 7/1/16—Despite official denials from authorities Judicial Watch stands by its reporting, which was subsequently corroborated by National Association of Former Border Patrol Officers Chairman Zack Taylor.

Police in a U.S. town bordering Mexico have apprehended an undocumented, Middle Eastern woman in possession of the region’s gas pipeline plans, law enforcement sources tell Judicial Watch. Authorities describe the woman as an “Islamic refugee” pulled over during a traffic stop by a deputy sheriff in Luna County, New Mexico which shares a 54-mile border with Mexico. County authorities alerted the U.S. Border Patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF) has been deployed to the area to investigate, sources with firsthand knowledge of the probe confirm.

The gas pipeline plans in the woman’s possession include the Deming region, law enforcement sources say. Deming is a Luna County city situated about 35 miles north of the Mexican border and 60 miles west of Las Cruces. It has a population of about 15,000. Last year one local publication listed Deming No. 1 on a list of the [“ten worst places”](#) to live in New Mexico due to high unemployment, poverty, crime and a horrible public education system. The entire region is a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), according to the Justice Department’s National Drug Intelligence Center due to the large amounts of methamphetamines, heroin, cocaine and marijuana smuggled through the state by Mexican traffickers. Specifically, the renowned Juárez and Sinaloa cartels operate in the area, the feds affirm in a [report](#).

Judicial Watch has broken a number of stories in the last few years about Mexican drug traffickers smuggling Islamic terrorists into the United States through the porous southern border. Last summer high-level sources on both sides of the Mexico-U.S. border offered alarming details about an operation in which [cartels smuggle foreigners](#) from countries with terrorist links into a small Texas rural town near El Paso. Classified as Special Interest Aliens (SIA) by the U.S. government, the foreigners get transported to stash areas in Acala, a rural crossroads located around 54 miles from El Paso on a state road – Highway 20. Once in the U.S., the SIAs wait for pick-up in the area’s sand hills just across Highway 20.

A few months ago Judicial Watch [reported](#) that members of a cell of Islamic terrorists stationed in Mexico cross into the U.S. to explore targets for future attacks with the help of Mexican drug traffickers. Among the jihadists that travel back and forth through the porous southern border is a Kuwaiti named Shaykh Mahmood Omar Khabir, an ISIS operative who lives in the Mexican state of Chihuahua not far from El Paso, Texas. Khabir trained hundreds of Al Qaeda fighters in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen and has lived in Mexico for more than a year, according to Judicial Watch’s high-level Homeland Security sources. Now Khabir trains thousands of men—mostly Syrians and Yemenis—to fight in an ISIS base situated in the Mexico-U.S. border

region near Ciudad Juárez. Khabir actually brags in a European newspaper article about how easy it is to stake out American targets because the border region is wide open. In the same story Foreign Affairs Secretary Claudia Ruiz, Mexico’s top diplomat, says she doesn’t understand why the Obama administration and the U.S. media are “culpably neglecting this phenomenon,” adding that “this new wave of fundamentalism could have nasty surprises in store for the United States.”

This recent New Mexico incident brings to mind a [story](#) Judicial Watch broke less than a year ago involving five young Middle Eastern men apprehended by Border Patrol in an Arizona town (Amado) situated about 30 miles from the Mexican border. Two of the Middle Eastern men were carrying stainless steel cylinders in backpacks, alarming Border Patrol officials enough to call the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for backup. A multitude of federal agents descended on the property and the two men carrying the cylinders were believed to be taken into custody by the FBI. Only three of the men’s names were entered in the Border Patrol’s E3 reporting system, which is used by the agency to track apprehensions, detention hearings and removals of illegal immigrants. E3 also collects and transmits biographic and biometric data including fingerprints for identification and verification of individuals encountered at the border. The other two men were listed as “unknown subjects,” which is unheard of. “In all my years I’ve never seen that before,” a veteran federal law enforcement agent told Judicial Watch.

« « [Toward The Past: Orlando Terrorist Worked at Security Co. Hired by DHS to Transport, Release Illegal Aliens](#)
[Toward The Future: U.S. Spends More on Medical Care for Inmates than Seniors, Veterans, Military Personnel](#) » »

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[Authorities Confirm](#)

[ISIS Camp a Few Miles from Texas, Mexican Authorities Confirm](#)

APRIL 14, 2015

[Print Text Size](#)



ISIS is operating a camp just a few miles from El Paso, Texas, according to Judicial Watch sources that include a Mexican Army field grade officer and a Mexican Federal Police Inspector.

The exact location where the terrorist group has established its base is around eight miles from the U.S. border in an area known as “Anapra” situated just west of Ciudad Juárez in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Another ISIS cell to the west of Ciudad Juárez, in Puerto Palomas, targets the New Mexico towns of Columbus and Deming for easy access to the United States, the same knowledgeable sources confirm.

During the course of a joint operation last week, Mexican Army and federal law enforcement officials discovered documents in Arabic and Urdu, as well as “plans” of Fort Bliss – the sprawling military installation that houses the US Army’s 1st Armored Division. Muslim prayer rugs were recovered with the documents during the operation.

Law enforcement and intelligence sources report the area around Anapra is dominated by the Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Cartel (“Juárez Cartel”), La Línea (the enforcement arm of the cartel) and the Barrio Azteca (a gang originally formed in the jails of El Paso). Cartel control of the Anapra area make it an extremely dangerous and hostile operating environment for Mexican Army and Federal Police operations.

According to these same sources, “coyotes” engaged in human smuggling – and working for Juárez Cartel – help move ISIS terrorists through the desert and across the border between Santa Teresa and Sunland Park, New Mexico. To the east of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, cartel-backed “coyotes” are also smuggling ISIS terrorists through the porous border between Acala and Fort Hancock, Texas. These specific areas were targeted for exploitation by ISIS because of their understaffed municipal and county police forces, and the relative safe-havens the areas provide for the unchecked large-scale drug smuggling that was already ongoing.

Mexican intelligence sources report that ISIS intends to exploit the railways and airport facilities in the vicinity of Santa Teresa, NM (a US port-of-entry). The sources also say that ISIS has “spotters” located in the

East Potrillo Mountains of New Mexico (largely managed by the Bureau of Land Management) to assist with terrorist border crossing operations. ISIS is conducting reconnaissance of regional universities; the White Sands Missile Range; government facilities in Alamogordo, NM; Ft. Bliss; and the electrical power facilities near Anapra and Chaparral, NM.

« [« Toward The Past: Army Ordered to Pay Damages for Discrimination; Trans Man Kept from Women’s Bathroom](#)
[Toward The Future: FBI Holds “Special” Meeting in Juárez to Address ISIS, DHS Not Invited](#) » »

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SACPA Resolutions-6-25-13-

Securing the International Boundary

Whereas, the current Border Patrol strategy is to attempt to apprehend border crossers 5, 10, 20 and over 100 miles inside the United States rather than at the international boundary;

Whereas, Mexican Cartel scouts are on Arizona mountain tops as much as 100 miles north of the international border and are successfully guiding "human mules" carrying drugs and are managing passage of cartel-led crossers across Pima, Pinal and Santa Cruz Counties;

Whereas, the Government Accountability Office estimates that the Border Patrol apprehends only about 64% of the undocumented border crossers and a *Los Angeles Times* report reveals that an analysis of Predator Drone Vader surveillance data showed "Border Patrol Agents apprehended fewer than half of the foreign migrants and smugglers;"

Whereas, it is reported that approximately 2,238 border crossers have died in Pima County between 1990 and 2012; and an untold number of crossers have died in both Pinal and Santa Cruz Counties;

Whereas, there is an unacceptable human cost exacted from many crossers including rapes perpetrated by cartel smugglers, other severe abuses, high frequency of extreme life-threatening thirst and heat prostration and other serious injury;

Whereas, there is significant environmental and soil damage resulting from years of hundreds of thousands of undocumented border crossers leaving a reported average of 8.5 pounds of trash apiece while tromping across ranches and farms;

Whereas, ranchers living in the Pima, Pinal and Santa Cruz Counties are subject to daily trespass by illegal border crossers, to violence and burglaries, to thousands of dollars additional annual expense in constant fence and water line repair, and to daily concern for their safety;

Whereas, Arizona borderlands have suffered millions of dollars in property damage and personal loss due to major forest fires set

intentionally or accidentally by illegal crossers;

Be it therefore resolved that the current Border Patrol strategy, which effectively allows drug packers and undocumented crossers to enter Southern Arizona five to one hundred miles prior to attempted apprehension, must be changed to a specific objective of securing the border at the international boundary;

Be it therefore further resolved that Southern Arizona Cattlemen's Protective Association petition the Border Patrol to construct new international boundary fences closing the gaps between existing walls, to construct roads adjacent to the new fences, to establish communications facilities and security towers and to build forward operation bases near the international boundary with Mexico.

Need to delist the jaguar, the lesser long-nosed bat and the southwestern willow flycatcher

Whereas the jaguar, the lesser long-nosed bat and southwestern willow flycatcher species have been listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act, and

Whereas none of these three listings appear to be supported by the best available science,

Therefore be it resolved that the Southern Arizona Cattlemen's Protective Association support efforts to delist the jaguar, the lesser long-nosed bat and the southwestern willow flycatcher.



Arizona Cattlemen's Association

MEDIA RELEASE

GAO Validates Claims that Illegal Border Crossers Cause Wild Fires

November 22, 2011, Phoenix, AZ – Today the Government Accountability Office released their final report *“Arizona Border Region: Federal Agencies Could Better Utilize Law Enforcement Resources in Support of Wildland Fire Management Activities.”* The GAO was asked to examine, (1) number, cause, size, and location of wildland fires from 2006 through 2010; (2) economic and environmental effects of human-caused wildland fires burning 10 or more acres; (3) extent to which illegal border crossers were the ignition source of wildland fires on federal lands; and (4) ways in which the presence of illegal border crossers has affected fire suppression activities.

Thirty out of seventy-seven wildfires investigated by federal agencies lead them to believe that illegal border crossings were a suspected cause. “What is more alarming than the actual fires is that firefighters are not only threatened by the fire but also have to take serious precautions to protect themselves from drug smugglers,” says Dan Bell, southern Arizona rancher. The GAO report indicates that firefighters face the same dangers ranchers do every day from drug smugglers crossing the southern border. In fact, fire investigators report that drug smugglers continued business as usual while firefighters worked to contain the 2011 Horseshoe Two Fire.

“Wildfires caused by warming fires or fires used to signal help are common along the border especially when the night temperatures begin to drop,” stated Dan Bell. Federal Investigations found that 15 wildfires were caused by illegals to warm themselves, to cook or to signal for help. Federal agency policy only mandates them to list fires as “human caused.” The lack of direction and fire investigators leaves a majority of wildfires un-investigated.

Federal agencies are spending more resources in law enforcement in these remote areas to make sure firefighters are kept safe from drug smugglers. A Forest Service official told the GAO that on the first day of the 2009 Hog Fire, firefighters were unable to set up an overnight camp at the scene of the fire because no law enforcement support was available to provide security. According to this official, this allowed the fire, which had burned 200 to 300 acres at the time, to grow to more than 3,000 acres by the next morning. The fire ultimately burned nearly 17,000 acres and cost more than \$700,000 to suppress.

It is clear that other federal agencies understand the threat their employees face along the border and take necessary action to protect their employees. However, this Administration continues to claim that the border is safer than it has ever been while U.S. citizens, including ranchers, face the same threats on their own daily.

For more information contact: Patrick Bray, 602-762-0671 pbray@arizonabeef.org