

August 2001

INS' SOUTHWEST BORDER STRATEGY

Resource and Impact Issues Remain After Seven Years



G A O

Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

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Abbreviations

GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
IDENT	INS' automated biometric identification system
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service



United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

August 2, 2001

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chairman
The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman
The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on the Judiciary
House of Representatives

With the illegal alien population in the United States estimated to be between 5 and a reported 11 million people, the issue of illegal immigration continues to attract the attention of policymakers, the media, and the public. In 1994, the Attorney General announced a five-part strategy to strengthen enforcement of the nation's immigration laws, including a strategy to deter illegal entry along the Southwest border. To deter illegal entry between the nation's ports of entry, the strategy called for the Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) Border Patrol to incrementally increase control of the border in four phases to make it so difficult and costly for aliens to attempt illegal entry that fewer individuals would try. The four-phased approach involved adding resources along the Southwest border, starting with the areas that had the highest known levels of illegal alien activity.

Seven years later, INS continues to make record numbers of arrests for illegal entry along the Southwest border—over 1.6 million in fiscal year 2000. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 requires us to track, monitor, and evaluate the Attorney General's strategy and to report annually for 6 years.¹ We have issued two previous

¹P.L. 104-208, sec. 107.

reports on INS' Southwest border strategy and two others dealing with other parts of the Attorney General's strategy.²

As agreed with your Committees, this report focuses on the component of the Attorney General's strategy that deals with INS' efforts to deter illegal entry between the ports of entry along the Southwest border. Specifically, this report addresses (1) INS' progress in implementing the strategy, (2) the strategy's effects to date, and (3) experience gained as the strategy has unfolded over the past 7 years.

Results in Brief

Since fiscal year 1998, INS has been implementing phase II of its four-phased strategy. In phase II, INS has added almost 1,200 Border Patrol agents and other resources primarily to Arizona and South Texas, reaching an onboard strength of nearly 8,500 agents along the Southwest border. To fully implement the Southwest border strategy, INS' preliminary estimates show it may need an additional 3,200 to 5,500 Border Patrol agents, additional support personnel, and hundreds of millions of dollars in additional technology and infrastructure, such as new roads and facilities. It would take at least 5 more years to add the minimum number of agents INS believes it needs along the Southwest border if the administration's current agent hiring goals are maintained and met.

The primary discernable effect of the strategy, based on INS' apprehension statistics, appears to be a shifting of the illegal alien traffic. Between 1998 and 2000, apprehensions declined in three Border Patrol sectors, San Diego, CA, and El Paso and McAllen TX, but increased in five of the other six Southwest border sectors. The extent to which INS' border control efforts may have affected overall illegal entry along the Southwest border remains unclear, however. Although INS maintains data on apprehended aliens in its automated fingerprint system, it has not analyzed the data to determine how many aliens have been arrested, how many times they have been arrested, where they have been arrested, and how these numbers have changed over time in response to border enforcement efforts. Such information would provide a better understanding of the relationship

²*Illegal Immigration: Southwest Border Strategy Results Inconclusive; More Evaluation Needed* (GAO/GGD-98-21, Dec. 11, 1997); *Illegal Aliens: Significant Obstacles to Reducing Unauthorized Alien Employment Exist* (GAO/GGD-99-33, Apr. 2, 1999); *Illegal Immigration: Status of Southwest Border Strategy Implementation* (GAO/GGD-99-44, May 19, 1999); and *Alien Smuggling: Management and Operational Improvements Needed to Address Growing Problem* (GAO/GGD-00-103, May 1, 2000).

between INS' strategy and overall illegal entry along the Southwest border. We are recommending that INS use the data in its automated fingerprint system to help it measure the results of its border control efforts and enable it to refine its border enforcement strategy. In commenting on a draft of this report, INS' Executive Associate Commissioner for Field Operations concurred with our recommendation and stated that INS will begin developing specific performance indicators using data from its automated fingerprint system.

At the community level, implementation of the strategy and the resulting changes in the level of illegal alien apprehensions, a proxy for the level of illegal alien traffic, have reportedly had both positive and negative effects. When increased INS enforcement resulted in apprehensions declining in certain border communities, some of the communities reported experiencing lower crime levels, civic and economic improvements, and an improved quality of life. When apprehensions surged in communities in which the illegal alien traffic was reportedly pushed, officials and residents in one community reported experiencing loss of business, destruction of private property, and environmental degradation.

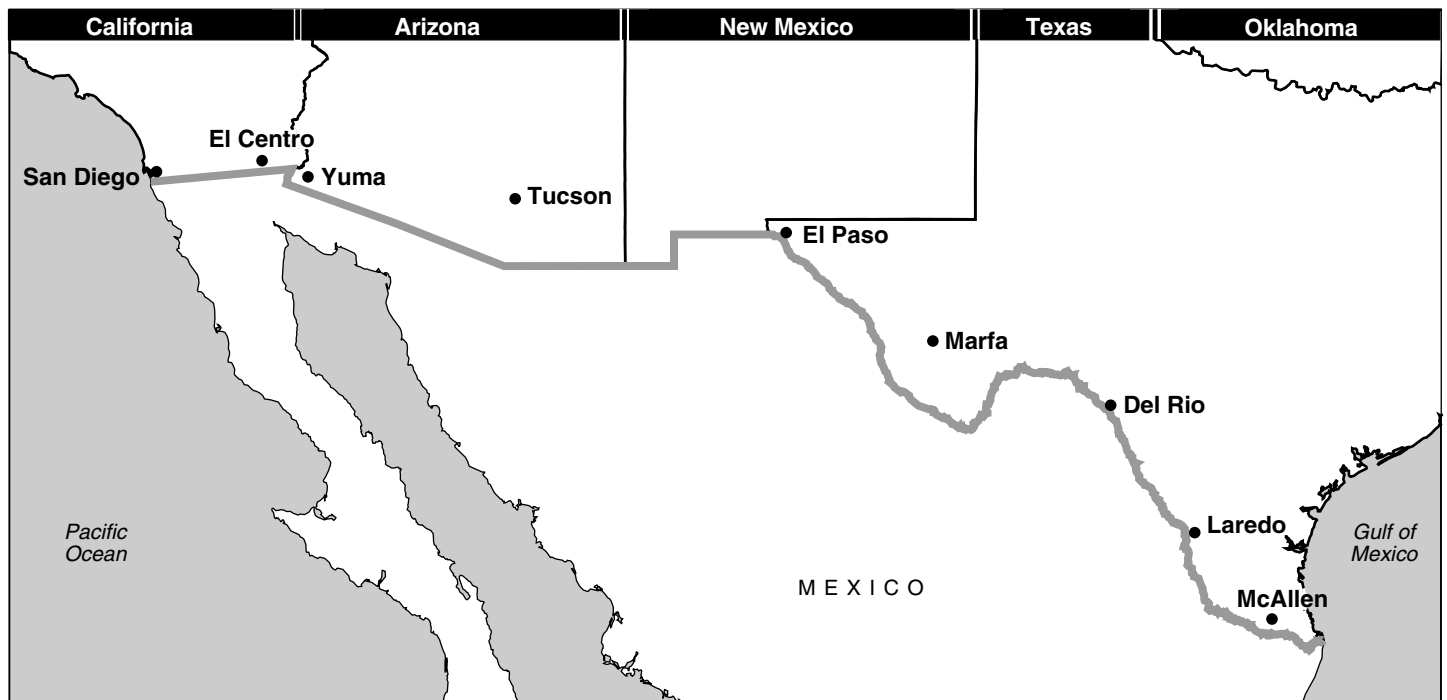
As the strategy has unfolded, there has been an accumulation of knowledge and experience regarding factors that could impede INS' ability to implement the strategy; the importance of communications between INS and border communities; and aliens' determination to cross the border. First, it has taken INS longer to implement the strategy than originally planned because, among other things, INS experienced difficulties hiring Border Patrol agents and delays in obtaining approvals needed to deploy technology and build fences. Second, INS has recognized that it needs to make outreach efforts to communities because its initial failure to warn some communities about anticipated increases in illegal alien traffic caught community officials by surprise. Third, although INS has realized its goal of shifting illegal alien traffic away from urban areas, this has been achieved at a cost to both illegal aliens and INS. In particular, rather than being deterred from attempting illegal entry, many aliens have instead risked injury and death by trying to cross mountains, deserts, and rivers. This has prompted INS to create a media campaign to warn aliens about the dangers of crossing illegally, as well as to establish search-and-rescue units.

Background

In 1997 and 1999, we reported that INS was implementing its border strategy generally as planned. The strategy called for concentrating personnel and technology in a four-phased approach, starting first with the

sectors with the highest levels of illegal immigration activity (as measured by apprehensions) and moving to the areas with the least activity. The four phases of the strategy called for allocating additional Border Patrol resources to sectors along the border in the following order: (1) Phase I: San Diego, CA, and El Paso, TX, sectors; (2) Phase II: Tucson, AZ, sector and three sectors in south Texas—Del Rio, Laredo, and McAllen; (3) Phase III: the remaining three sectors along the Southwest border; (4) Phase IV: the Northern border, Gulf Coast, and coastal waterways. The Southwest border, which has been the focus of INS' buildup in Border Patrol resources to date, represents 9 of the Border Patrol's 21 sectors nationwide (see fig. 1).

Figure 1: Nine Southwest Border Patrol Sectors



Source: GAO.

The strategy's objectives are to (1) close off the routes most frequently used by smugglers and illegal aliens (generally through urban areas) and (2) shift traffic to ports of entry, where travelers are inspected, or to areas that are more remote and difficult to cross. With the traditional crossing routes disrupted, INS expected that illegal alien traffic would either be

deterred or forced over terrain less suited for crossing, where INS believed it would have the tactical advantage.

INS' Border Patrol is responsible for preventing and detecting illegal entry along the border between the nation's ports of entry. To carry out the strategy, the Border Patrol was to

- concentrate personnel and resources in a four-phased approach, starting with the areas of highest illegal alien activity;
- increase the time Border Patrol agents spend on border control activities;
- make maximum use of physical barriers; and
- identify the appropriate quantity and mix of personnel and technology needed to control the border.

The Border Patrol's fiscal year 2001 budget is about \$1.2 billion, a 9-percent increase over its fiscal year 2000 budget of about \$1.1 billion. As of September 30, 2000, there were 9,096 Border Patrol agents nationwide; 8,475, or 93 percent, were located in the nine sectors along the Southwest border.

INS' phased approach to implementing its strategy has included several operations in which INS allocated additional Border Patrol agents and other resources—such as fencing, lighting, night vision scopes, sensors, cameras, vehicles, and aircraft—to targeted locations along the Southwest border. In October 1994, the Border Patrol launched Operation Gatekeeper in its San Diego sector. Initially, the operation focused enforcement resources along the 5 miles that at that time accounted for nearly 25 percent of all illegal border crossings nationwide. Since then, the sector has expanded Gatekeeper to include the entire 66 miles of border under the sector's jurisdiction.³

In 1994, the Border Patrol began Operation Safeguard in the Tucson sector. Initially, the operation focused enforcement resources in the Nogales, AZ, area. Since then, the sector has expanded operations to the Douglas and Naco, AZ, area to respond to the increase in apprehensions in that area.

³In September 1993, before officially implementing of the strategy, the El Paso sector launched Operation Hold-the-Line. Initially, the sector assigned its agents directly to a 20-mile section of the border in the metropolitan area of El Paso. The high-profile presence was intended to deter illegal aliens from attempting to cross the border.

In August 1997, INS launched Operation Rio Grande in the Rio Grande Valley area in south Texas. The Border Patrol focused enhanced resources in the McAllen and Laredo, TX, sectors. In fiscal year 1998, the Border Patrol extended Operation Gatekeeper to the El Centro sector in California's Imperial Valley, east of San Diego. This was done to respond to the increase in illegal alien traffic in that area and to target the alien smuggling rings that moved there after the Border Patrol increased its presence in San Diego. INS has reported that each of these initiatives reduced the number of alien apprehensions in some of the targeted areas.

INS' apprehension statistics have been its primary quantitative indicator of the results of the strategy. INS anticipated that the following changes, among others, would provide evidence of the interim effectiveness of the strategy:

- Locations receiving an infusion of resources would experience an initial increase in the number of illegal alien apprehensions, followed by a decrease in apprehensions when a "decisive level of resources" had been achieved.
- Illegal alien traffic would shift from sectors that traditionally accounted for most illegal immigration activity toward other sectors.

One of the major technological initiatives deployed along the Southwest border has been IDENT, INS' automated biometric identification system, which captures apprehended aliens' fingerprints, photos, and biographical data, as well as information on the date and location of the apprehension. IDENT was developed to help INS determine whether an apprehended alien is an aggravated felon, smuggler, or repeat illegal crosser. Since fiscal year 1995, INS has deployed the system incrementally along the Southwest border, and it is now deployed in all Border Patrol stations within the nine Southwest border sectors. INS spent about \$34 million on IDENT development and deployment through fiscal year 2000.

Scope and Methodology

To address our three objectives, we (1) analyzed Border Patrol staffing and workload data; (2) reviewed INS' strategy, INS planning documents, and reviews of INS' Annual Performance Plans; (3) interviewed INS officials at Border Patrol headquarters in Washington, D.C., and in the San Diego, El Centro, Yuma, Tucson, and Del Rio sectors; (4) interviewed local officials in Calexico, CA; Yuma, Douglas, Santa Cruz County, and Pima County, AZ; and Cameron County and Eagle Pass, TX; (5) interviewed the Mexican Consuls General in Nogales and Douglas, AZ; and (6) held a group discussion with members of the Citizens Advisory Group to the

local Border Patrol station in Douglas, AZ. We chose these locations because, except for San Diego, Border Patrol apprehensions in these areas increased as INS implemented its strategy. We also reviewed statistics on migrant deaths and studies on Operations Gatekeeper and Rio Grande that were prepared by an INS contractor. Finally, we observed border enforcement activities in the El Centro, Yuma, and Tucson sectors.

We conducted our work between October 2000 and June 2001 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

INS Continues to Implement Its Southwest Border Strategy and Estimates Significantly More Resources Are Needed to Fully Implement It

As INS continues to implement the second phase of its four-phased strategy, its preliminary estimates show that it may need 3,200 to 5,500 more agents, additional support personnel, and hundreds of millions of dollars in additional technology and infrastructure to fully implement the Southwest border strategy.

Implementation of the Strategy

Since fiscal year 1998, INS has been implementing the second phase of its four-phased approach, which called for primarily increasing resources in the Tucson sector and the three sectors in south Texas—Del Rio, Laredo, and McAllen. In accordance with the strategy, INS allocated 1,140 (80 percent) of the additional 1,430 agent positions authorized in fiscal years 1999 and 2000 to these sectors. The strategy noted that Border Patrol needed to be flexible in responding to changing patterns in illegal traffic. Consequently, INS added some of the additional enhancements in fiscal years 1999 and 2000 to the Yuma and El Centro sectors, scheduled for phase III, in order to respond to the shifts in illegal alien traffic to those sectors.

Onboard strength in all nine sectors along the Southwest border increased by 1,183 agents (16 percent) to almost 8,500 between fiscal years 1998 and 2000. As shown in table 1, INS has added over 5,000 agents to sectors along the Southwest border since fiscal year 1993, the year preceding the initial implementation of the strategy. This represents a 150-percent

increase between fiscal years 1993 and 2000 in the total number of onboard agents in the nine sectors along the Southwest border. (App. I, table 3, provides additional information on Border Patrol agent enhancements along the Southwest border.)

Table 1: Onboard Border Patrol Agents by Southwest Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 1993 Through 2000

Sector	Fiscal year							
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Phase I								
San Diego, CA	980	1,272	1,422	1,955	2,268	2,257	2,117	2,039
El Paso, TX	602	641	739	835	913	962	951	1,023
Phase II								
Tucson, AZ	281	276	400	695	868	1,010	1,325	1,513
Del Rio, TX	290	283	394	398	464	580	632	750
Laredo, TX	347	332	416	411	446	623	680	790
McAllen, TX	386	385	467	501	754	1,100	1,159	1,370
Phase III								
El Centro, CA	194	185	187	185	246	378	420	499
Yuma, AZ	178	172	182	170	171	224	222	307
Marfa, TX	131	124	130	131	131	158	139	184
Total	3,389	3,670	4,337	5,281	6,261	7,292	7,645	8,475

Source: INS data.

As a result of the increased number of agents along the Southwest border, the amount of time spent on border enforcement activities in these sectors increased by 27 percent, from about 8.5 million hours in fiscal year 1998 to almost 11 million hours in fiscal year 2000. The proportion of time Border Patrol agents spent on border enforcement increased from 66 percent to 69 percent during this time.

INS has continued to erect barriers as called for in its strategy. Since fiscal year 1999, INS has completed about 12 miles of fencing and other types of barriers, bringing the total to about 76 miles along the Southwest border as of May 2001.⁴ INS had plans to erect an additional 32 miles, some of which was under construction as of May 2001. In addition, in fiscal years 1999

⁴The San Diego sector has an additional 9 miles of secondary fencing just north of the fencing that is along the border.

and 2000, INS installed 107 remote video surveillance systems along the Southwest border bringing the total to 130.⁵

Plans for Additional Personnel

According to INS' year-end review of its fiscal year 2000 Annual Performance Plan, INS estimated it may need between 11,700 and 14,000 agents to fully implement the Southwest border strategy. This is between 3,200 and 5,500 more agents than the roughly 8,500 agents INS had on board along the Southwest border at the end of fiscal year 2000.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 mandated that the Attorney General increase the number of agents on board by no less than 1,000 agents per year during each of fiscal years 1997 through 2001.⁶ INS was able to meet this goal in fiscal years 1997 and 1998, but not in the following 3 years. We reported that in fiscal year 1999, INS was only able to achieve a net increase of 369 agents out of the goal of 1,000 because INS was unable to recruit enough qualified applicants and retain them through the hiring process.⁷ In fiscal year 2000, INS stated that it requested no additional agents because of its concern that the ratio of inexperienced-to-experienced agents was getting too high and law enforcement experts said this was risky. Congress, however, funded 430 additional agents. In fiscal year 2001, INS requested 430 agents. In her March 2000 testimony, the former INS Commissioner stated that the 430 agents represented the level that was achievable in the existing tight labor market. It also allowed INS to have sufficient funds to increase the journeyman level from a GS-9 to a GS-11 and for signing bonuses for those who successfully completed the Border Patrol Academy training program.⁸

It would take between 5 and 9 years and congressional approval for INS to obtain the additional Border Patrol agents it believes it needs to control the Southwest border. As noted above, INS estimates it needs between 3,200 and 5,500 more agents than the roughly 8,500 agents it had on board

⁵Remote video surveillance cameras include daylight and low-light cameras mounted on poles that allow Border Patrol personnel to monitor the border from a central station area.

⁶P.L. 104-208, sec. 101.

⁷*Border Patrol Hiring: Despite Recent Initiatives, Fiscal Year 1999 Hiring Goal Was Not Met* (GAO/GGD-00-39, Dec. 17, 1999).

⁸Testimony of INS Commissioner Doris Meissner before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary, Senate Committee on Appropriations, President's FY 2001 Budget Request, March 7, 2000.

along the Southwest border at the end of fiscal year 2000. INS plans to hire 430 agents and reach an onboard agent strength of about 8,900 agents by the end of fiscal year 2001. The President's fiscal year 2002 budget requests 570 Border Patrol agents per year in 2002 and 2003. If the growth rate of the Border Patrol continued to be 570 agents per year beyond 2003, INS would reach the lower limit of the number of agents it believes it needs in 2006 and the upper limit in 2010, assuming that all of the new agents would be assigned to the Southwest border.

Plans for Additional Technology

INS' April 2000 Border Patrol Technology Plan outlines a 5-year plan for adding new technology along both the Northern and Southern borders. According to an INS official, Southwest border sectors have requested new technology estimated to cost roughly between \$450 million and \$560 million, nearly all of it for about 1,100 remote video surveillance systems. INS is also developing sector-level, integrated border infrastructure plans (e.g. barriers, roads, and lighting) for each Southwest border sector. The plan also states that INS will need additional support personnel, such as Law Enforcement Communications Assistants to monitor the cameras and technicians to repair cameras and other equipment. INS will need to construct additional space to house both the additional equipment and personnel. In May 2001, INS budget officials told us that they estimated it might take between 7 and 10 years to deploy the additional staff and equipment INS believes it needs for the Southwest border.

In commenting on our draft report, INS' Executive Associate Commissioner for Field Operations stated that the long-term resource requirements we discuss above are preliminary and subject to change.

Strategy's Effect on Reducing Overall Illegal Entry Unclear, but Border Control Initiatives Have Had Positive and Negative Community Impacts

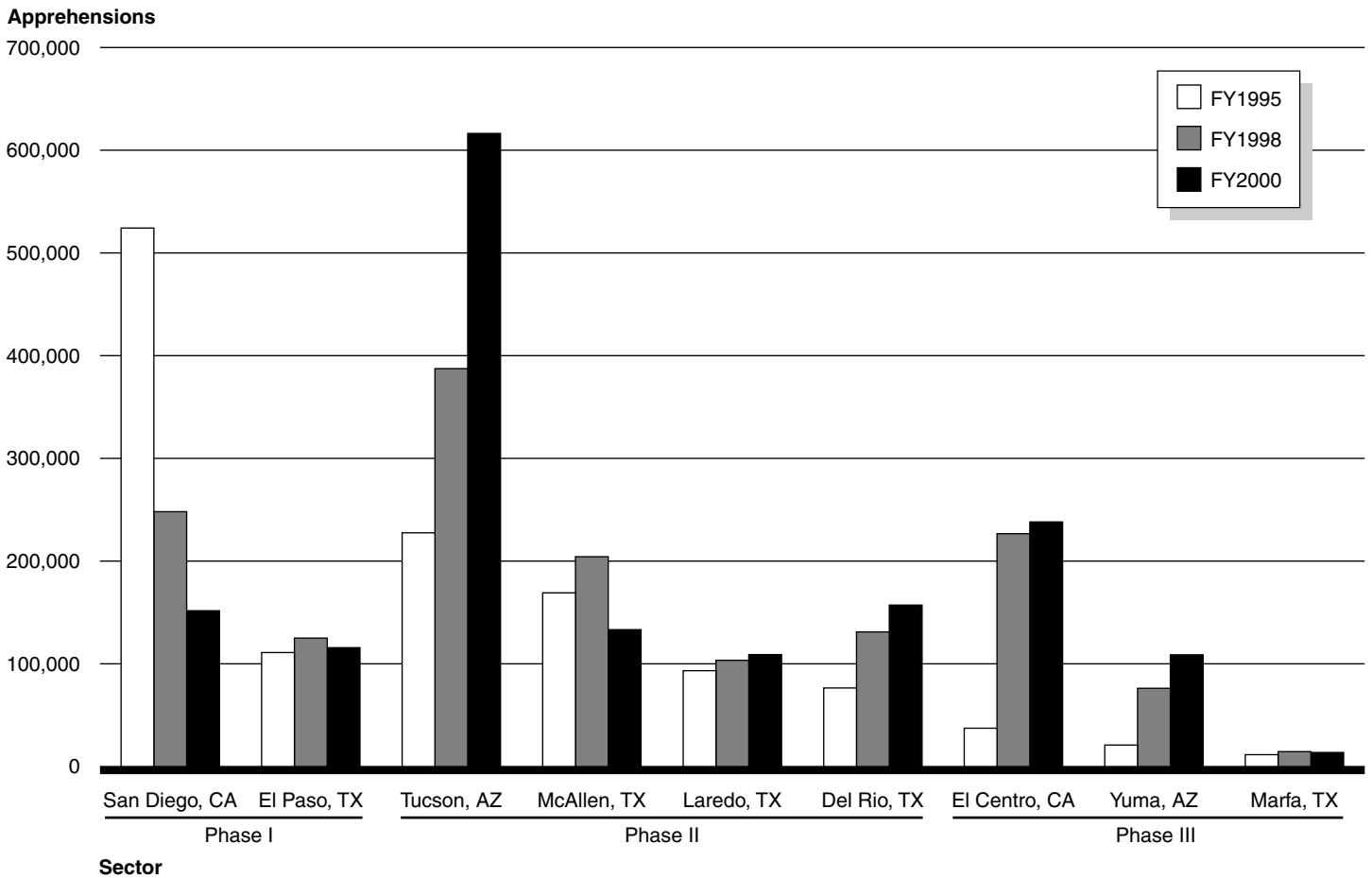
As the Border Patrol has increased enforcement in certain locations, illegal alien apprehensions have shifted to other locations, as the Border Patrol predicted would result from its strategy. However, until very recently, apprehensions borderwide continued to increase. The Border Patrol is attempting to supplement its apprehension data with additional indicators to measure the effectiveness of its border control efforts, but it could learn more about the results of its border control efforts if it capitalized on using the automated fingerprint data that it collects on apprehended illegal aliens. The shift in illegal alien apprehensions has had both positive and negative effects on local border communities.

Illegal Alien Apprehensions Have Continued to Shift, but Have Increased Overall

We reported in 1997 and 1999 that illegal alien apprehensions shifted as expected after INS allocated additional resources to targeted border sectors, such as El Paso and San Diego. This continued to occur, especially in San Diego. As shown in figure 2, apprehensions were notably lower in San Diego in fiscal year 2000 compared with fiscal year 1998. Apprehensions in El Paso were slightly lower in fiscal year 2000 than in fiscal year 1998.⁹ In the McAllen sector, as resources were applied in 1997, there was an initial increase in apprehensions in 1998, followed by a decline in apprehensions in fiscal year 2000. However, illegal alien apprehensions shifted to other sectors in fiscal year 1998, as indicated by the increased apprehension levels in the El Centro, Yuma, Tucson, Laredo, and Del Rio sectors.

⁹The greatest decline in apprehensions occurred in El Paso in fiscal year 1994, the year after Operation Hold-the-Line began. Apprehension levels in El Paso increased in the years after fiscal year 1994, although the total number of apprehensions in each of fiscal years 1998 through 2000 was still less than half that in fiscal year 1993.

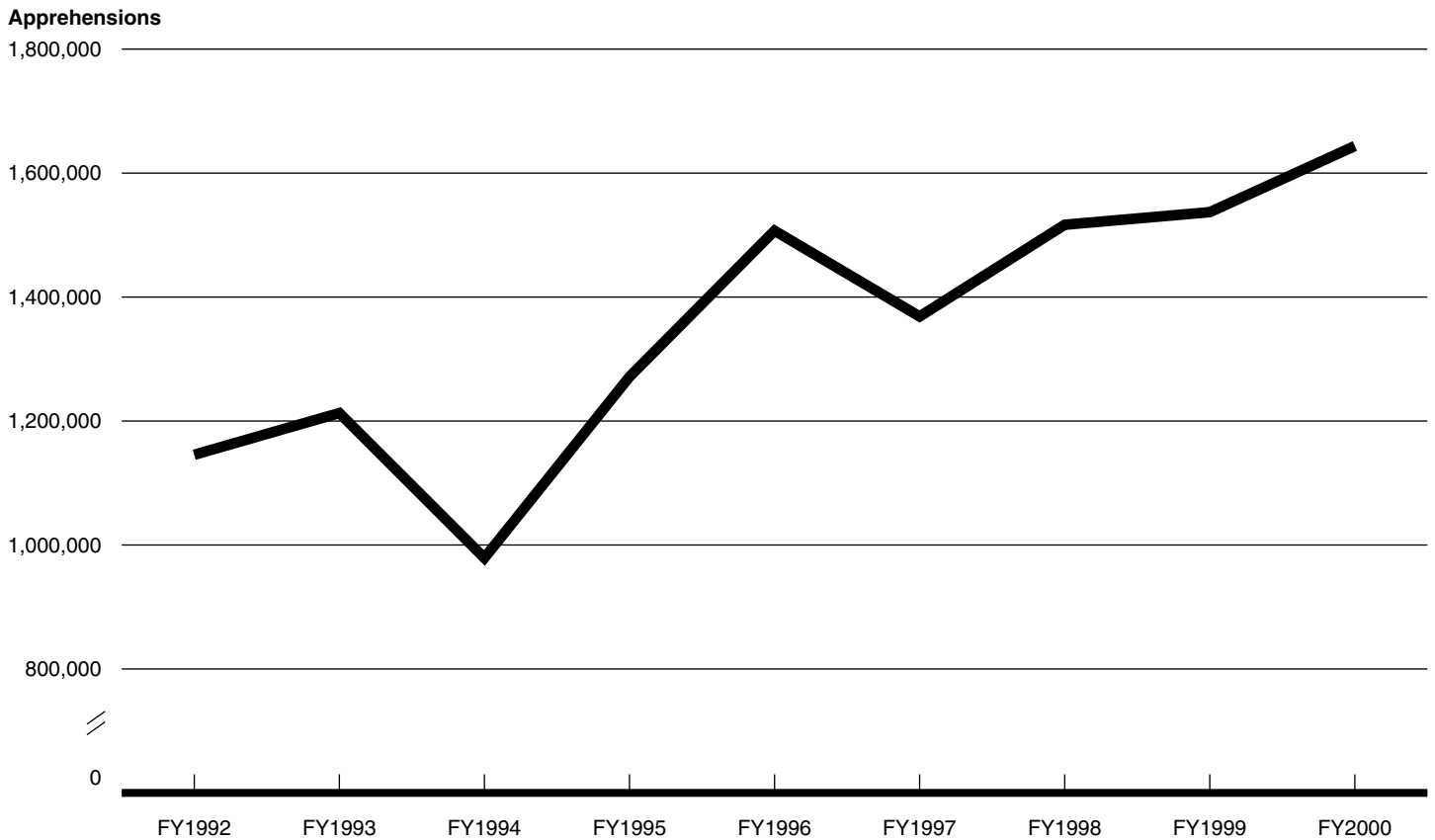
Figure 2: Apprehensions in Southwest Border Patrol Sectors in Fiscal Years 1995, 1998, and 2000



Source: INS data.

Although implementation of the strategy has shifted the areas in which illegal aliens are apprehended, total Border Patrol apprehensions along the Southwest border have increased overall since the strategy was implemented in 1994. Figure 3 shows the total number of apprehensions along the Southwest border, and table 4 in appendix I shows the apprehension numbers for each of the nine Southwest border sectors.

Figure 3: Southwest Border Apprehensions in Fiscal Years 1992-2000



Source: INS data.

Very recently, apprehensions have been declining. For the period January through April 2001, Border Patrol apprehensions along the Southwest border declined by 26 percent compared with the same period in fiscal year 2000. Although the reasons for the decline are unclear and it is too early to tell whether the decline will persist, INS and Mexican Consulate officials we spoke with as well as some researchers offered various theories, including the following:

- INS' strategy is effectively deterring illegal entry.
- Substantially fewer Mexican illegal aliens went home for the holidays in December 2000 as a result of (1) legislation that enabled them to apply for permanent residency or (2) their believing that it would be too difficult to get back into the United States.

-
- Mexicans are more optimistic about the future in Mexico and less likely to migrate because of improvements in the Mexican economy and a change in the Mexican government.
 - Prospects for finding employment in the United States have diminished with the slowing economy, so fewer aliens have attempted to enter illegally.

INS Has Not Evaluated the Strategy's Overall Effects on Illegal Entry and Has Not Analyzed Key Performance Data

Whether INS' strategy has deterred illegal entry overall or whether it has merely shifted the traffic to different locations is unclear. INS has taken some steps to design an overall evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness, and it has issued reports on the effects of Operations Gatekeeper and Rio Grande. Both these reports stated that the operations were successful in reducing illegal entry in the locations where INS had concentrated its enforcement resources. However, INS has not conducted a comprehensive, systematic evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness in detecting and deterring aliens from entering illegally, as we recommended in our 1997 report. With no baseline data to compare results against and with the passage of 7 years since INS began implementing its Southwest border strategy, undertaking such an evaluation becomes increasingly difficult. By necessity, the evaluation would be a retrospective study that relied on available data rather than systematically gathered evaluation data (1) based on clearly defined indicators of the range of effects the strategy might have and (2) collected expressly to answer the research questions. As a result, what effect the strategy has had on overall illegal immigration along the Southwest border may never be fully known.

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)¹⁰ requires agencies to establish performance indicators to measure or assess the desired outcomes of their program activities. As a way of gauging the effectiveness of its strategy in deterring illegal entry, the Border Patrol is attempting to measure its effectiveness in apprehending aliens. For example, in certain locations, called corridors, the Border Patrol attempts to estimate the number of aliens who entered or attempted to enter illegally in a given time period. Border Patrol officials told us that agents count the number of (1) aliens they have physically observed crossing and those that have turned back and (2) aliens detected by video cameras and sensors. In addition, agents examine footprints along the border to estimate the number that may have crossed, a technique the Border Patrol calls sign-cut. The Border Patrol measures its effectiveness as the ratio of aliens

¹⁰P.L. 103-62 (1993).

arrested plus those that have turned back to the estimated number of illegal entries. INS officials told us that the effectiveness ratios only apply to areas where INS can monitor the border either electronically or by using agents. Because it is difficult to determine the accuracy or completeness of INS' estimates of the number of aliens turned back and those entering illegally, we do not know how valid or generalizable INS' effectiveness measures are.

The Border Patrol began reporting the corridor effectiveness ratios through its annual performance plan review process in fiscal year 2001. For example, from October 2000 through March 2001, the effectiveness ratios in the 12 corridors in California and Arizona ranged from 37 percent in the west desert area in Tucson to 92 percent in west desert area of El Centro. We did not independently assess INS' methodology for calculating this performance information.

Department of Justice guidance on GPRA states that agencies should use a variety of indicators to evaluate program performance. In 1997, we reported that immigration researchers and INS officials stated that IDENT data, when more fully available, could be quite useful for examining the flow of illegal aliens across the border. For example, using IDENT data, INS could conduct a borderwide analysis of the number of individuals arrested attempting illegal entry; the number of times they have been arrested; and how these numbers have changed over time and by location. The results of such analyses could supplement the effectiveness ratios that INS currently calculates for GPRA reporting, and it could lead to a better understanding of the apprehension statistics that INS routinely reports. This is because the number of apprehensions—although frequently used as a proxy indicator for the magnitude of illegal alien traffic—provides information on INS arrests rather than on the number of different individuals arrested or the number of illegal aliens who eluded arrest by the Border Patrol.¹¹ Analysis of the IDENT data offers the potential for better understanding the effects of INS' enforcement operations on shifts in illegal alien traffic and for statistically modeling the flow of illegal aliens across the border and their probability of apprehension.

¹¹An individual might be arrested more than one time and, therefore, the number of different individuals arrested would be lower than the number of arrests.

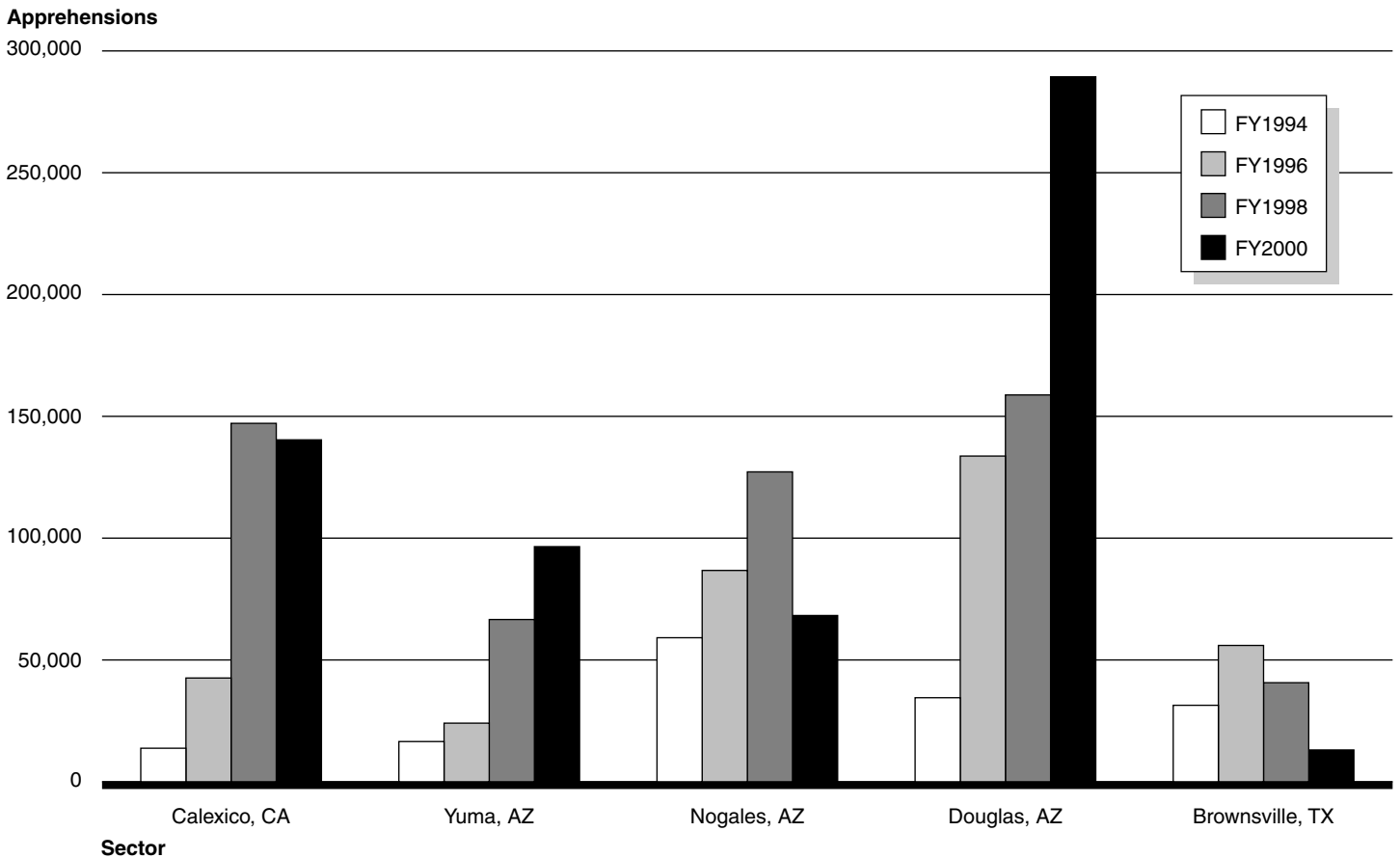
According to the Director of INS' Statistics Branch, the IDENT system is now at a point where meaningful analyses can be done for the period January 1998 to the present.¹²

INS' Border Control Efforts Had Positive and Negative Community Impacts

INS' border control efforts have resulted in some communities experiencing an unprecedented surge in illegal alien traffic. As shown in figure 4, apprehensions from fiscal year 1994 to 1998 increased over 10-fold in Calexico more than doubled in Nogales. In fiscal year 2000, apprehensions in these locations declined even with the addition of new Border Patrol agents, although apprehensions were still higher than in fiscal year 1994. In Douglas and Yuma, apprehensions continued to increase in fiscal year 2000 compared to fiscal year 1994, with Douglas experiencing an eightfold increase and Yuma experiencing a nearly sixfold increase. Apprehensions in Brownsville, TX, peaked in fiscal year 1996 and since then have been declining as border enforcement has increased there.

¹²INS began collecting IDENT data in fiscal year 1995. According to the Director, INS Statistics Branch data from the early years of IDENT usage would not yield meaningful performance information because there were hardware and software changes to IDENT and because the system was not fully implemented. IDENT data from January 1998 forward can be meaningfully analyzed because IDENT has been deployed to enough stations along the Southwest border and contains data on a sufficiently large percentage of apprehended aliens.

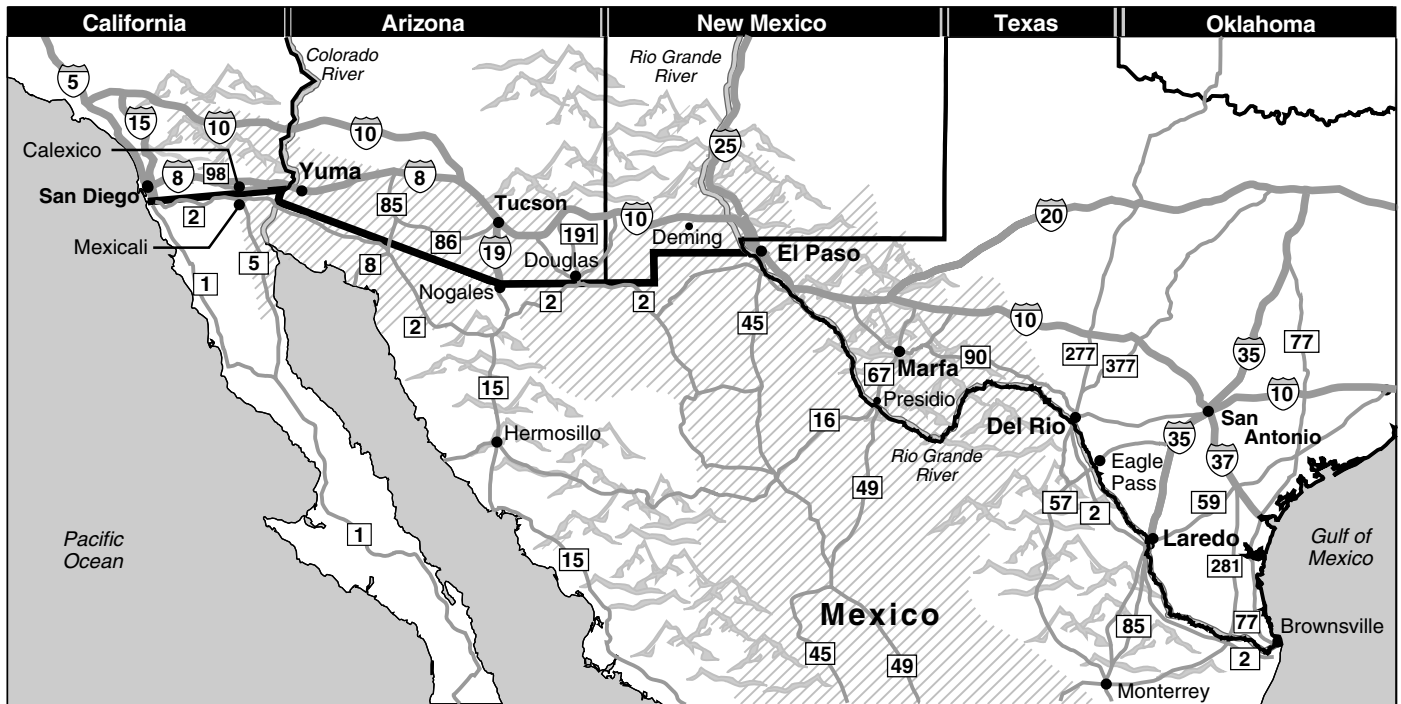
Figure 4: Apprehensions in Selected Southwest Border Sector Stations







Source: INS data.

According to INS officials, an increase in illegal alien traffic is more likely to occur in border communities that have the infrastructure—for example roads and housing—that facilitate aliens transiting through them. This is because aliens and alien smugglers use the network of roads leading to the border from Mexico as well roads leading away from the border once in the United States (see fig. 5). Also, smugglers need towns that have sufficient housing available to hide aliens from authorities, as well as access to vehicles to transport the aliens out of the area.

Figure 5: Road Infrastructure in the Southwest Border Region



-  Major interstate road
-  State road
-  Desert areas
-  Mountain ranges

The shift in illegal alien traffic to certain small, border communities has had varied effects on the communities, depending on such factors as the routes illegal aliens used to transit through them; the level of Border Patrol presence in specific locations; how much barrier fencing was in place; and how the community perceived the situation. For example, in Calexico, a border town approximately 125 miles east of San Diego with approximately 27,000 residents, local police officials told us they noted a significant increase in prowler calls and vehicle thefts as illegal alien traffic shifted from San Diego to Calexico. However, according to police officials, there was a drop in reported prowler incidents and auto thefts after INS added resources and completed erecting a fence in downtown Calexico in 1999.

An official in Nogales, a border community of about 20,000 residents, told us that illegal immigration contributed to the city's crime rate. According to the Santa Cruz county attorney, before the Border Patrol increased its presence in the downtown area, thieves would frequently cross illegally into the United States and steal items they could carry back into Mexico. When the Border Patrol increased resources and enforcement operations and built a larger and less penetrable fence in the downtown area, thefts along the border dropped. The county attorney attributed a 64-percent decline in the number of felony filings against Mexican illegal aliens between 1998 and 2000 to INS' increased border control efforts. The county attorney also attributed improved business conditions in Nogales to the Border Patrol's efforts to deter illegal aliens from entering in the downtown area. As apprehensions in downtown Nogales dropped, many small shops that benefited from the illegal alien trade closed. With these small, locally-owned shops going out of business, large national retailers began to locate in Nogales. Community residents and legal entrants from Mexico could now shop locally instead of having to travel to Tucson.

However, the county attorney also stated that crimes against illegal aliens have increased because the migrants are forced to attempt entry into the United States through remote areas outside town, where criminal activity is less likely to be detected and more difficult to respond to. These crimes are difficult to prosecute because they typically involve Mexican nationals harming other Mexican nationals. Cases are difficult to make and prove because assailants are seldom captured, crime scenes in remote areas are rarely located, and victims disappear. The Mexican Consul General in Nogales told us that there is strong evidence that some alien smugglers work in collusion with border bandits who prey on the illegal aliens.

Officials in Douglas, a small border community with about 14,000 residents about 125 miles east of Nogales, also told us about both positive and negative effects of the strategy. According to a city official, the additional Border Patrol agents assigned to the Douglas area have had a positive effect on the local economy; many agents live and shop in the community, and tax revenues are increasing. Illegal immigration in the downtown area has decreased with the Border Patrol's increased presence and additional fencing. Residents stopped encountering agents chasing groups of 30 to 40 illegal aliens through town. A key reported negative effect was that illegal aliens were diverted to the rural area on the city's outskirts and began to cross over private ranchland as the Border Patrol increased enforcement in the downtown area. Ranchers living in these areas told us that they have incurred economic losses because illegal aliens transiting their property have torn their fences and stolen fencing material, which has allowed their

livestock to get loose. The ranchers also said that their livestock have been killed, personal belongings stolen, and ranches littered with trash. The large number of illegal crossers has reportedly ruined some grazing fields.

According to Border Patrol officials, the increase in illegal alien traffic has increased tensions in the Douglas community. Some residents have grown frustrated with the large influx of illegal aliens and begun making citizen's arrests of illegal aliens while patrolling their property with loaded weapons; at least two aliens have been shot. According to the city manager, the negative national publicity Douglas has received as a result of the increase in illegal alien traffic may have long-term detrimental effects on economic development. He expressed concern that tourists might no longer want to visit; businesses might not want to locate there; and it might be more difficult recruiting professionals, such as teachers and physicians. City officials believe that negative publicity about illegal immigration—the perception that the town was unsafe—might have been a factor in a company's decision not to relocate to Douglas. The business would have employed 250 people.

According to one Tucson sector official, Border Patrol officials had anticipated that the illegal alien traffic would shift to Douglas as the sector began increasing enforcement in Nogales. However, the sector did not have enough agents to simultaneously build up its agent resources in both Nogales and Douglas.

In Yuma, a city of about 77,000 in western Arizona, city officials told us that unlike other border communities, the increase in apprehensions have not had negative effects on their community. They said that this was because illegal aliens use the town as a transit route to other parts of the United States and generally do not cross in populated areas. According to Border Patrol officials, most of the illegal alien apprehensions are made in the outskirts of the city on uninhabited public lands.

Brownsville is the largest city in the lower Rio Grande Valley, with a population of about 140,000. According to an evaluation,¹³ before Operation Rio Grande began in August 1997, illegal immigration was having a significant, negative impact on Brownsville. According to the study, citizens reported routinely watching 100 to 200 illegal aliens enter

¹³*Border Management Evaluation of Operation Rio Grande* (Lawton, OK: Advancia Corp., June 27, 2000).

the United States by crossing the Rio Grande River from Mexico and passing through a local golf course. Citizens also reported being harassed by Mexican youths who crossed the border and posed as street performers while panhandling, hustling, or causing trouble in downtown Brownsville. Shopkeepers reported two or three shoplifting incidents a day and complained that certain illegal aliens harassed them and their customers. The evaluation also quoted a police official as saying that there were nearly daily occurrences in which citizens at a local park near the Rio Grande River were accosted and frequently robbed by illegal aliens.

As the Border Patrol increased its presence in the downtown area, the situation reportedly improved. According to the evaluation, as of January 2000, fewer illegal aliens attempted to enter the United States in Brownsville. Citizens reported that they were seeing about one alien a week crossing the river and passing through the golf course. Brownsville police and Border Patrol agents now take immediate action against illegal aliens posing as street performers. The study reported that, according to a police official, shoplifting incidents dropped to about one per year, and the park near the river was again a safe recreational area for adults and children.

Experience Gained With Strategy Implementation; the Importance of Communication; and Aliens' Determination to Enter Illegally

As the strategy has unfolded, there has been an accumulation of knowledge and experience concerning (1) factors that can impede INS' implementation of the strategy, (2) the importance of communications between INS and border communities, and (3) aliens' determination to cross the border.

Experience has indicated to INS that it cannot implement its border strategy at the pace that it originally anticipated. In March 1997, INS submitted a 5-year staffing plan to Congress covering fiscal years 1996 through 2000. According to the plan, INS was to bolster border control efforts along the Northern U.S. border and Gulf Coast beginning in fiscal year 1998 and continuing into fiscal year 2000. INS had planned to deploy between 245 and about 400 agents to sectors in these areas, but during these 3 years, INS added 47 agents to the Northern border and none to the Gulf Coast sectors.

INS officials identified various factors as having impeded their ability to implement the strategy faster. According to a sector chief, a shortage of support personnel has required him to use Border Patrol agents for jobs that should be performed by support staff. In this sector, agents who would otherwise be patrolling the border are used instead to monitor remote video surveillance cameras because the sector does not have

enough Law Enforcement Communications Assistants. According to a Western Region Border Patrol official, this is a problem in many sectors. Agents are doing work, such as building fences, monitoring sensors, and performing dispatching duties, that could be done by support personnel. This has detracted from INS' goal of increasing the amount of time Border Patrol agents spend on their core activity of patrolling the border. According to INS budget officials, INS has requested funds for additional support personnel, but these positions have not been fully funded.

Border Patrol officials also identified a lack of technology, fencing, and lights as having impeded their ability to implement the strategy faster. According to officials in one sector, additional remote video surveillance systems, lighting, and fencing would allow them to monitor a greater portion of their border area than is now possible. According to a Border Patrol headquarters official, the deployment of technology, fencing, and lights has been slower than anticipated because it has taken longer than planned to prepare environmental impact assessments and coordinate with other federal, state, and local agencies. Also, the Border Patrol has had to build new stations to house the increased number of agents. According to a Border Patrol official, construction funding for fencing has been limited by the competing need to build new stations.

Importance of INS Communicating With Border Communities

After several instances in which border communities expressed dismay at having been caught unaware by the sudden increase in illegal alien traffic, INS recognized the need to establish channels of communication to discuss the potential implications of its strategy with local communities. Officials from border communities, such as Nogales and Douglas, AZ, told us that they were unaware that INS even had a strategy until they saw a dramatic increase in illegal alien traffic in their towns. A Douglas city official told us he first became aware that something was going on when the Border Patrol began building a fence in the downtown area. Local officials became increasingly concerned when they learned that the Border Patrol was transporting aliens apprehended in Nogales to Douglas and returning them to Mexico through the port of entry there. Many would then try to reenter at Douglas.

According to local officials, had they known about the strategy and its potential impact, they might have been able to do some things to mitigate its impact on the community. For example, a Douglas police official said that the department could have rearranged shift schedules to have more police on duty to respond to the increase in prowler calls and provide more support to Border Patrol agents needing assistance. He also said that the city could have strengthened city taxicab ordinances to prevent alien

smugglers from establishing “taxi companies” to shuttle illegal aliens to Phoenix and other locations. They said the number of taxicabs in Douglas increased from 2 or 3 cabs to between 20 and 40 taxi companies almost overnight.

Pima County, AZ, officials told us that the Border Patrol should have put local jurisdictions “on notice” regarding their strategy. They said this would have helped local officials respond to constituent questions and concerns. It would also have allowed time for local governments to try to obtain additional funding to deal with the expected influx or, for example, to add more law enforcement. The officials added that if they had been forewarned, they might have requested the Border Patrol to deploy additional agents to certain areas to mitigate the destruction of the pristine areas in the wildlife refuge.

INS has recognized the need to increase communications with the public regarding the strategy and its potential implications. According to INS’ fiscal year 2000 Annual Performance Plan, one of INS’ major goals was to improve INS’ involvement with communities in the development and implementation of INS operations. To improve communications with the community, the Tucson sector appointed a full-time community relations officer in November 2000. The sector also has a community advisory group made up of local citizens in each of three cities, Nogales, Douglas, and Naco, AZ. Members of the Douglas group told us they find these meetings helpful and that the Border Patrol has been responsive to their concerns. Since 1999, the sector has had a toll-free number to improve communications with local residents. Agents assigned to the sector’s “ranch patrol” monitor the private ranchland surrounding the city of Douglas, where many aliens now cross.

According to Border Patrol officials, the Del Rio sector, and in particular the Eagle Pass, TX, area may be the next location to experience a significant increase in illegal alien traffic. They believe this because, like the other areas that have experienced significant increases in illegal alien traffic, it has the infrastructure of roads leading to and from the border area that alien smugglers need to transport the illegal aliens.

The Del Rio sector chief believes the sector is better prepared than were other sectors, such as Tucson and El Centro, when they experienced significant increases in alien traffic. In February 2001, the Del Rio sector had slightly over 1,000 agents, of whom about 300 were assigned to the Eagle Pass station. The sector recently received airboats to patrol the Rio Grande River and additional lights and remote video surveillance systems

to better monitor the border. The sector chief told us that he has been conducting community outreach efforts for several years to inform the community about INS' strategy. He said the sector has a Rancher Liaison Program that informs and educates the community about Border Patrol activities and operations. This program has, according to the chief, opened channels of communication between the community and the Border Patrol that have helped the sector gain access to private lands. He believes working with ranchers and the public helps reduce the potential for violence between the citizens and illegal aliens as well as the negative publicity that can befall a community because of significant increases in illegal immigration.

According to the Police Chief of Eagle Pass, the Del Rio sector began its outreach efforts several years ago. For example, after Operation Rio Grande began in the summer of 1997, Border Patrol sector officials gave a briefing to the Eagle Pass City Council on INS' Southwest border strategy. They explained that increased enforcement in locations south of Eagle Pass and the ongoing enforcement in El Paso to the north might increase the illegal alien traffic in Eagle Pass. The police chief stated that since then, the Del Rio Border Patrol sector chief has given numerous presentations before community organizations, such as the local Rotary Club. He stated that such outreach efforts have kept the lines of communication open, and the city has not experienced any instances of citizens detaining illegal aliens as has occurred in other locations along the border.

INS Taking Steps to Reduce Migrant Deaths

The strategy assumed that as the urban areas were controlled, the traffic would shift to more remote areas where the Border Patrol would be able to more easily detect and apprehend aliens entering illegally. The strategy also assumed that natural barriers such as rivers, mountains, and the harsh terrain of the desert would act as deterrents to illegal entry. However, INS officials told us that as the traffic shifted, they did not anticipate the sizable number that would still attempt to enter through these harsh environments. A study of migrant deaths along the Southwest border concluded that while migrants have always faced danger crossing the border and many died before INS began its strategy, the strategy has resulted in an increase in deaths from exposure to either heat or cold.

Border Patrol data indicated that 1,013 migrants died trying to cross the Southwest border illegally between October 1997 and June 1, 2001 (see table 2).¹⁴ Nearly 60 percent died from either heat exposure or drowning.

Table 2: Migrant Deaths by Cause of Death

Cause of death	Fiscal year				Total	Percent
	1998	1999	2000	2001 ^a		
Exposure to heat	87	57	135	27	306	30
Drowning	89	72	92	40	293	29
Unknown	29	38	43	45	155	15
Motor vehicle accident	16	21	48	22	107	11
Other	16	15	27	10	68	7
Exposure to cold	16	18	17	4	55	5
Train	8	14	5	1	28	3
Confined space	0	1	0	0	1	<1
Total	261	236	367	149	1,013	100

^aThrough June 1, 2001.

Source: Border Patrol data.

To reduce the number of illegal aliens who die or are injured trying to cross the border illegally, INS began a Border Safety Initiative in June 1998. The initiative focuses on (1) educating those who may be contemplating crossing illegally on the dangers of crossing and (2) searching for and rescuing those who may become abandoned or lost. Working in conjunction with the Mexican government, INS has produced public service announcements that are shown on television in Mexico to warn people of the dangers of crossing—for example, exposure to heat and cold, dehydration, snakes, and bandits that rob and assault those who cross in remote areas. Border Patrol sectors show detained aliens a similar video announcement. Signs have been posted on both sides of border fences in various locations that also warn about the dangers of crossing. Toll-free numbers in both Mexico and the United States can be used to report migrants in trouble.

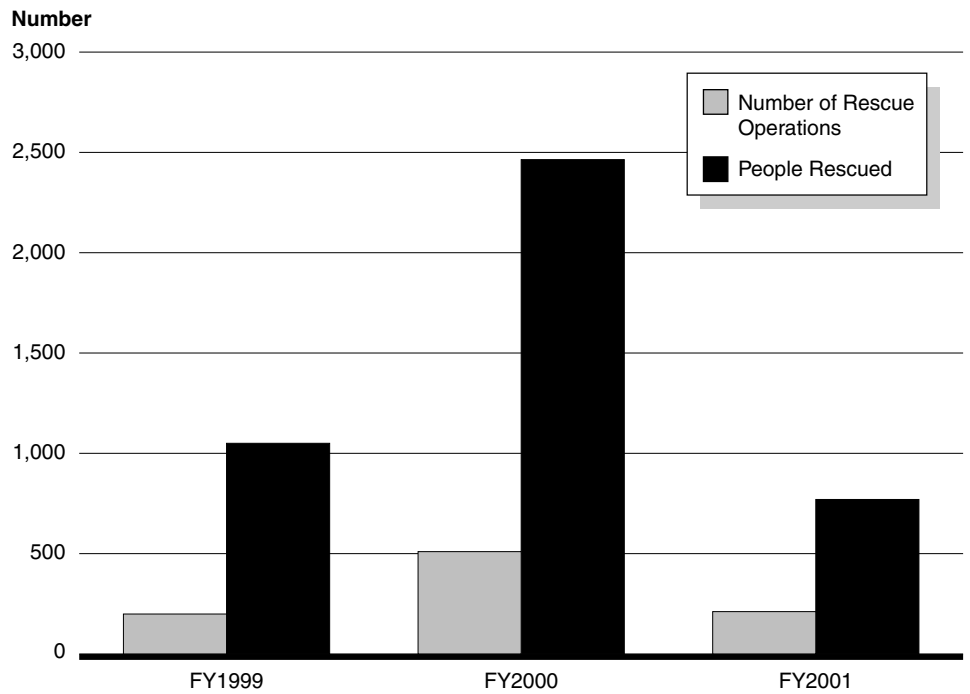
¹⁴Although the Border Patrol reports these numbers as the number of migrant deaths per year, the data actually reflect the number of migrants who were found dead by INS during the year. Therefore, migrants who died attempting to cross the border during one year but were not found until the following year would be included in the migrant death statistics for the year in which they were found. Because the bodies of some migrants may never be found and others may have died while still in Mexico, the actual number of deaths may be higher.

The Border Patrol has created special search-and-rescue units in areas where it is becoming more dangerous to cross. For example, the El Centro sector has a desert rescue team whose members have been trained in emergency medical procedures or first aid. The team uses a desert rescue ambulance equipped with water and lifesaving equipment. To deter crossings, El Centro agents are positioned, and high-powered lights have been installed, at dangerous crossings along the All American Canal, which runs along the border. The sector's air unit flies along the canal and in desert areas to search for those who may be in danger.

According to the Border Patrol's Border Safety Initiative coordinator, most of the border safety-related expenses, such as agent time and acquisition and maintenance of equipment, have been funded out of Border Patrol general operations funds. Therefore, detailed cost data for all safety-related costs were not readily available. According to the coordinator, in fiscal years 1998 through 2001, INS will have spent about \$1 million primarily for public service announcements, signs, mapping potential danger areas, and liaison with Mexican counterparts. For fiscal year 2002, INS' proposed border safety budget is \$1.5 million.

As shown in figure 6, there was a significant increase in Border Patrol rescues of migrants from 1999 to 2000.

Figure 6: Border Patrol Migrant Rescues in Fiscal Years 1999 Through June 1, 2001



Source: INS data.

The Border Patrol has also given search-and-rescue training to Mexican law enforcement officials. In June 2001, a joint U.S.-Mexico safety conference was held in San Antonio, TX.

Another aspect of the initiative is to identify and prosecute alien smugglers who use dangerous smuggling practices. The Border Patrol has established procedures for identifying such smugglers to facilitate coordinated efforts to target them for arrest and prosecution. According to INS' year-end review of its fiscal year 2000 Annual Performance Plan, apprehending and prosecuting the smugglers will require full cooperation from Mexico.

The Border Patrol has incorporated the issue of border safety into its overall strategy. In November 2000, the Border Patrol issued a Border Safety addendum to the strategy that emphasizes the need to incorporate safety issues into any future operations.

On June 22, 2001, the United States and Mexico announced plans to enhance border safety in the wake of the death of 14 undocumented aliens

in the Arizona desert in May 2001. The plans call for the United States and Mexico to

- strengthen the public safety campaign to alert potential migrants of the dangers of crossing the border in high-risk areas;
- reinforce plans for the protection and search and rescue of migrants, including increased aerial surveillance of the U.S. side and increased presence of Mexican law enforcement on the Mexican side; and
- implement a cooperative, comprehensive, and aggressive plan to combat and dismantle alien smuggling organizations.

Conclusions

INS has spent 7 years implementing its Southwest border strategy, but it may take INS up to a decade longer to fully implement the strategy. This assumes that INS obtains the level of staff, technology, equipment, and fencing it believes it needs to control the Southwest border. Although illegal alien apprehensions have shifted, there is no clear indication that overall illegal entry into the United States along the Southwest border has declined. INS' current efforts to measure the effectiveness of its border control efforts could be enhanced by analyzing data in its IDENT system. These data offer INS an opportunity to develop additional performance indicators that could be incorporated into its Annual Performance Plan review process and could help INS assess whether its border control efforts are associated with an overall reduction in the flow of illegal aliens across the border. Borderwide analysis of the IDENT data could be used to address several important questions related to illegal entry.

The strategy's impact on local communities has been affected by the timing of INS' infusion of agent and other resources intended to protect the local community from a surge in illegal alien traffic; what routes the illegal aliens have used in crossing the border; and INS' involvement with the community. INS has learned the importance of outreach efforts in attempting to mitigate the potential negative effects the strategy can cause a community and the harm that can befall illegal aliens who risk injury and death to cross the border.

Recommendation for Executive Action

To better gauge the effects of its border control efforts, we recommend that the INS Commissioner develop specific performance indicators using the IDENT data and incorporate these indicators into INS' Annual Performance Plan.

Agency Comments

We requested comments on a draft of this report from the Attorney General. In a letter dated July 24, 2001, which we have reprinted in appendix II, INS' Executive Associate Commissioner for Field Operations concurred with our recommendation and said that INS will begin developing specific performance indicators using IDENT data. However, he also stated that "INS will continue to evaluate the use of IDENT data for analyzing shifts in illegal alien traffic," and a "Congressional moratorium on the deployment of new IDENT sites, as well as efforts to integrate IDENT [with the automated fingerprint system used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation], have an operational impact that delays comprehensive data collection along the southwest border."

We believe that IDENT, which has been incrementally deployed to all Border Patrol stations along the Southwest border since 1995, already contains data that could be used to determine the number of aliens Border Patrol agents have arrested between ports of entry, how many times they have been arrested trying to enter illegally, and what shifts in illegal entry attempts between ports of entry have occurred over time along the Southwest border. Therefore, while future improvements to the collection of fingerprint data will be useful, we believe that the IDENT data currently available puts INS in the position to develop the types of performance measures discussed in our report and to use the measures to gain a better understanding of the results of its enforcement efforts.

INS' Executive Associate Commissioner also stated that the long-term resource requirements we refer to in our report are based on preliminary information and are subject to change. He indicated that further discussions among INS, the Department of Justice, and the administration are needed to finalize the requirements. We have added wording to our report to clarify that INS' estimates of its long-term resource requirements are preliminary and subject to change.

We are sending copies of this report to the Attorney General; Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested parties. Copies of this report will also be made available to others upon request.

If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact me or Evi Rezmovic on (202) 512-8777. Michael P. Dino, James R. Bancroft, and Brian J. Lipman made key contributions to this report.

Richard M. Stana

Richard M. Stana
Director, Justice Issues

Appendix I: INS Border Patrol Authorized Staffing and Alien Apprehensions in Southwest Sectors

Table 3: Authorized Border Patrol Agent Positions in Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years 1993 Through 2000

Sector	1993 authorized agents	Authorized increases each fiscal year								Total
		1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000		
San Diego, CA	980	300	229	428	278	0	0	0	2,215	
El Centro, CA	194	0	0	0	50	134	78	45	501	
Yuma, AZ	178	0	0	0	0	56	50	10	294	
Tucson, AZ	281	0	128	246	228	140	350	100	1,473	
El Paso, TX	602	50	93	101	107	45	25	10	1,033	
Marfa, TX	131	0	0	0	0	25	25	0	181	
Del Rio, TX	290	0	100	0	52	135	80	95	752	
Laredo, TX	347	0	75	0	49	205	120	45	841	
McAllen, TX	386	0	75	25	228	260	250	100	1,324	
Total	3,389	350	700	800	992^a	1,000	978^b	405^c	8,614	

^a8 additional agents allocated to Puerto Rico.

^b22 additional agents allocated to northern border sectors.

^c25 additional agents allocated to northern border sectors.

Source: INS data.

Table 4: Apprehensions by Southwest Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 1993 Through 2000

Sector	Fiscal year							
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
San Diego, CA	531,689	450,152	524,231	483,815	283,889	248,092	182,267	151,681
El Centro, CA	30,058	27,654	37,317	66,873	146,210	226,695	225,279	238,126
Yuma, AZ	23,548	21,211	20,894	28,310	30,177	76,195	93,388	108,747
Tucson, AZ	92,639	139,473	227,529	305,348	272,397	387,406	470,449	616,346
El Paso, TX	285,781	79,688	110,971	145,929	124,376	125,035	110,857	115,696
Marfa, TX	15,486	13,494	11,552	13,214	12,692	14,509	14,952	13,689
Del Rio, TX	42,289	50,036	76,490	121,137	113,280	131,058	156,653	157,178
Laredo, TX	82,348	73,142	93,305	131,841	141,893	103,433	114,004	108,973
McAllen, TX	109,048	124,251	169,101	210,553	243,793	204,257	169,151	133,243
Total	1,212,886	979,101	1,271,390	1,507,020	1,368,707	1,516,680	1,537,000	1,643,679

Source: INS.

Appendix II: Comments From the Department of Justice



U.S. Department of Justice
Immigration and Naturalization Service

HQBOR 110/8.1-C

Office of the Executive Associate Commissioner

425 I Street NW
Washington, DC 20536

JUL 24 2001

Mr. Richard Stana
Associate Director
Administration of Justice Issues
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Stana:

In reference to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft audit report entitled "INS' Southwest Border Strategy: Resource and Impact Issues Remain After Seven Years" GAO-01-842 (183645), the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) concurs with the recommendation.

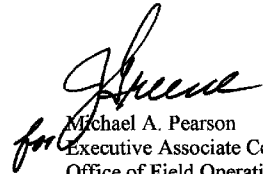
The INS will continue to evaluate the use of IDENT data for analyzing shifts in illegal alien traffic, determining the number and frequency of successive apprehensions and individuals apprehended, and measuring the effectiveness of border control efforts. The Congressional moratorium on the deployment of new IDENT sites, as well as the efforts to integrate IDENT and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System, have an operational impact that delays comprehensive data collection along the southwest border. While considering the impact, the INS will begin development of specific performance indicators using IDENT data.

The GAO report refers to INS long-term resource requirements that are based on preliminary information and are subject to change. Further discussion within the INS, the Department of Justice, and the Administration are needed to finalize the requirements. Timeframes can then be determined in concert with the budget process.

Mr. Richard Stana
Page 2

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Hess, Headquarters Border Patrol, at
202-514-2698. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,


Michael A. Pearson
Executive Associate Commissioner
Office of Field Operations

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