

December 2012

BORDER PATROL

Key Elements of New Strategic Plan Not Yet in Place to Inform Border Security Status and Resource Needs



G A O

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Why GAO Did This Study

Within DHS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Border Patrol has primary responsibility for securing the border between ports of entry, and reported that with its 18,500 agents it apprehended over 327,000 illegal entrants at the southwest border in fiscal year 2011. Across Border Patrol's nine southwest border sectors, most apprehensions occurred in the Tucson sector in Arizona. GAO was asked to review how Border Patrol manages resources at the southwest border. This report examines (1) apprehension and other data Border Patrol collects to inform changes in border security for the southwest border and the Tucson sector, in particular; (2) how the Tucson sector compares with other sectors in scheduling agent deployment and to what extent data show that deployments have been effective; and (3) the extent to which Border Patrol has identified mechanisms to assess resource needs under its new strategic plan. GAO analyzed DHS documents and data from fiscal years 2006 to 2011, and interviewed officials in headquarters and five southwest border sectors selected based on cross-border illegal activity, among other things. Results cannot be generalized across the southwest border, but provided insights into Border Patrol operations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that CBP ensure Border Patrol develops milestones and time frames for developing border security goals and measures to assess progress made and resource needs. DHS concurred with these recommendations.

View [GAO-13-25](#). For more information, contact Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-8777 or gambler@gao.gov.

BORDER PATROL

Key Elements of New Strategic Plan Not Yet in Place to Inform Border Security Status and Resource Needs

What GAO Found

In fiscal year 2011, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reported data meeting its goal to secure the land border with a decrease in apprehensions; our data analysis showed that apprehensions decreased within each southwest border sector and by 68 percent in the Tucson sector from fiscal years 2006 to 2011, due in part to changes in the U.S. economy and achievement of Border Patrol strategic objectives. These data generally mirrored the decrease in estimated known illegal entries across locations. Other data are used by Border Patrol sector management to assess efforts in securing the border against the threat of illegal migration, drug smuggling, and terrorism; and Border Patrol may use these data to assess border security at the national level as the agency transitions to a new strategic plan. Our analysis of these data indicated that in the Tucson sector, there was little change in the percentage of estimated known illegal entrants apprehended by Border Patrol over the past 5 fiscal years, and the percentage of individuals apprehended who repeatedly crossed the border illegally declined across the southwest border by 6 percent from fiscal years 2008 to 2011. Additionally, the number of drug seizures increased from 10,321 in fiscal year 2006 to 18,898 in fiscal year 2011, and apprehensions of aliens from countries determined to be at an increased risk of sponsoring terrorism increased from 239 in fiscal year 2006 to 309 in fiscal year 2010, but decreased to 253 in fiscal year 2011.

The Tucson sector scheduled more agent workdays in fiscal year 2011 for enforcement activities related to patrolling the border than other sectors; however, data limitations preclude comparison of overall effectiveness in how each sector has deployed resources to secure the border. In fiscal year 2011 the Tucson sector scheduled 73 percent of agent workdays for enforcement activities, and of these activities, 71 percent were scheduled for patrolling within 25 miles of the border. Other sectors scheduled from 44 to 70 percent of agent enforcement workdays for patrolling the border. Border Patrol sectors assess how effectively they use resources to secure the border, but differences in how sectors collect and report the data preclude comparing results. Border Patrol issued guidance in September 2012 to improve the consistency of sector data collection and reporting, which may allow future comparison of performance.

Border Patrol is developing key elements of its 2012-2016 Strategic Plan needed to define border security and the resources necessary to achieve it, but has not identified milestones and time frames for developing and implementing performance goals and measures in accordance with standard practices in program management. Border Patrol officials stated that performance goals and measures are in development for assessing the progress of agency efforts to secure the border between the ports of entry, and since fiscal year 2011, DHS has used the number of apprehensions on the southwest border as an interim goal and measure. However, as GAO previously testified, this interim measure does not inform program results and therefore limits DHS and congressional oversight and accountability. Milestones and time frames could assist Border Patrol in monitoring progress in developing goals and measures necessary to assess the status of border security and the extent to which existing resources and capabilities are appropriate and sufficient. Border Patrol expects to implement other key elements of its strategic plan over the next 2 fiscal years.

Contents

Letter		1
	Background	6
	Apprehensions Have Decreased across the Southwest Border; However, Other Data on Illegal Migration, Drug Seizures, and Terrorism Also Provide Insights into Border Security	11
	Southwest Border Sectors Scheduled Agents Differently across Border Zones and Enforcement Activities; Data Limitations Preclude Comparison of Overall Effectiveness	24
	Border Patrol Has Not Yet Developed Goals and Measures for Assessing Efforts and Identifying Resource Needs under the New Strategic Plan	31
	Conclusions	39
	Recommendations for Executive Action	40
	Agency Comments and Our Evaluation	40
Appendix I	Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	42
Appendix II	General Information about Border Patrol Sectors along the Southwest Border	50
Appendix III	General Information about Border Patrol Stations and Zones in the Tucson Sector	54
Appendix IV	Comparison of Border Patrol's 2004 Strategy and 2012-2016 Strategic Plan	59
Appendix V	Border Patrol Estimated Known Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	60

Appendix VI	Apprehensions by Southwest Border Patrol Sectors and Distance from the Border, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011	70
Appendix VII	Border Patrol Nonenforcement Activities by Southwest Border Sector, Fiscal Year 2011	72
Appendix VIII	Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	74
Appendix IX	Identification Sources for Turn Backs and Got Aways by Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011	83
Appendix X	Comments from the Department of Homeland Security	85
Appendix XI	GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	87

Tables

Table 1: Southwest Border Patrol Sectors and Stations Visited by GAO, by Border Patrol Sector	44
Table 2: Description of Border Patrol Sectors along the Southwest Border, Including Border Miles and Size, Terrain, and Stations	50
Table 3: Descriptions of Border Patrol Stations and Zones in the Tucson Sector, including Border Mileage and Size, Terrain, and Number of Zones by Distance from the Border	54

Figures

Figure 1: Border Patrol Sectors along the Southwest Border	7
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Figure 2: Border Patrol Stations and Zones in Tucson Sector, as of April 2012	9
Figure 3: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in Tucson Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	12
Figure 4: Number and Percentage of Border Patrol Apprehensions by Distance from the Border in the Tucson Sector, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011	15
Figure 5: Recidivism Numbers and Percentages for Border Patrol Apprehensions across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011	17
Figure 6: Number and Percentage of Seizures of Drugs and Other Contraband across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011	19
Figure 7: Number and Percentage of Seizures across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Distance from the Border, Fiscal Year 2011	20
Figure 8: Number of Aliens from Special Interest Countries Apprehended across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011	21
Figure 9: Number and Percentage of Aliens from Special Interest Countries Apprehended across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Distance from the Border, Fiscal Year 2011	23
Figure 10: Border Patrol Agent Workdays Deployed to Border Zones and Interior Zones across Southwest Border Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011	26
Figure 11: Border Patrol Agent Workdays Scheduled across Enforcement Activities across Southwest Border Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011	27
Figure 12: Number of Tucson Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	29
Figure 13: Example of Terrain in the Yuma Sector	52
Figure 14: Example of Terrain in the Tucson Sector	52
Figure 15: Example of Terrain in the El Paso Sector, with the United States on the Left of the Border Fence and Mexico on the Right	53
Figure 16: Example of Terrain in the Rio Grande Valley Sector	53
Figure 17: Example of Terrain in the Ajo Station Area of Responsibility	55

Figure 18: Example of Terrain in the Casa Grande Station Area of Responsibility, with the United States on the Right Side of the Border Fence and Mexico on the Left	56
Figure 19: Example of Terrain in the Tucson Station Area of Responsibility	56
Figure 20: Example of Terrain within the Nogales Station Area of Responsibility, with the United States on the Left Side of the Border Fence and Mexico on the Right	57
Figure 21: Example of Terrain in the Sonoita Station Area of Responsibility near the U.S. Border with Mexico	57
Figure 22: Example of Terrain in the Naco Station Area of Responsibility near the U.S. Border with Mexico	58
Figure 23: Example of Terrain in the Douglas Station Area of Responsibility with the United States on the Left Side of the Border Fence and Mexico on the Right	58
Figure 24: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the San Diego Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	61
Figure 25: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the El Centro Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	62
Figure 26: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Yuma Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	63
Figure 27: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Tucson Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	64
Figure 28: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the El Paso Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	65
Figure 29: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Big Bend Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	66
Figure 30: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Del Rio Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	67
Figure 31: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Laredo Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	68
Figure 32: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Rio Grande Valley Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	69

Figure 33: Number and Percentage of Apprehensions across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Distance from the Border, Fiscal Year 2010	70
Figure 34: Number and Percentage of Apprehensions across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Distance from the Border, Fiscal Year 2011	71
Figure 35: Percentage of Border Patrol Agent Nonenforcement Workdays Scheduled for Nonenforcement Activities across Southwest Border Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011	73
Figure 36: Number of San Diego Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	74
Figure 37: Number of El Centro Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	75
Figure 38: Number of Yuma Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	76
Figure 39: Number of Tucson Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	77
Figure 40: Number of El Paso Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	78
Figure 41: Number of Big Bend Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	79
Figure 42: Number of Del Rio Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	80
Figure 43: Number of Laredo Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	81
Figure 44: Number of Rio Grande Valley Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011	82

Figure 45: Source of Data Collection for Turn Back and Got Away
Data across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year
2011

Abbreviations

ASIC	aliens from special interest countries
BPETS	Border Patrol Enforcement Tracking System
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
EID	Enforcement Integrated Database
IMAT	Integrated Mission Analysis Tool
OIP	Operational Implementation Plan
POE	port of entry
SBI	Secure Border Initiative

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

December 10, 2012

The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives

The Honorable Ron Barber
House of Representatives

In fiscal year 2011, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported spending over \$4 billion to secure the U.S. border with Mexico.¹ Border Patrol, within CBP, is the federal agency with primary responsibility for securing the national borders between the designated U.S. land border ports of entry (POE).² In fiscal year 2011, Border Patrol reported apprehending over 327,000 illegal entrants and making over 17,150 seizures of drugs along the southwest border, with Border Patrol's Tucson sector accounting for the greatest percentage of apprehensions and drug seizures.³ The Tucson sector, which has primary responsibility for addressing cross-border illegal activity in Arizona, reported making over 38 percent of apprehensions and more than 28 percent of all drug seizures reported across Border Patrol's nine southwest border sectors in fiscal year 2011.

Border Patrol is moving to implement a new strategy for securing the border. Border Patrol's 2004 National Border Patrol Strategy (2004 Strategy) focused on improving border security by increasing resources—

¹This figure represents the estimated percentage of net costs applied to the southwest border for CBP's Border Security and Control Between the Ports of Entry and Border Security Fencing, Infrastructure, and Technology programs.

²Ports of entry are officially designated places that provide for the arrival at, or departure from, the United States.

³CBP has divided geographic responsibility for border security operations along the southwest border among nine sectors, each of which has a headquarters with management personnel; these sectors are further divided geographically into varying numbers of stations, with agents assigned to patrol defined geographic areas. Border Patrol's Yuma sector is also responsible for patrolling portions of Arizona and California; however, the majority of enforcement statistics for Arizona are reported by the Tucson sector, which reported apprehending over 124,000 illegal entries and making over 4,800 seizures of drugs in fiscal year 2011.

including personnel, infrastructure, and technology—and deploying these resources using an approach that provided for several layers of Border Patrol agents at the immediate border and in other areas up to 100 miles (referred to as defense in depth).⁴ In May 2012 the Border Patrol issued the 2012-2016 Border Patrol Strategic Plan (2012-2016 Strategic Plan). Citing the buildup in border resources and the need to use these enhanced capabilities most effectively, this new strategic plan emphasizes using intelligence information to inform risk relative to threats of cross-border terrorism, drug smuggling, and illegal migration across locations; integrating border security operations with other law enforcement partners to address threats; and developing rapid response capabilities to deploy the resources appropriate to changes in threat.

You asked us to review the approach used by Border Patrol to deploy and manage resources along the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona compared with approaches used at other southwest border locations. This report addresses the following questions: (1) What do data show about apprehensions across the southwest border, and in the Tucson sector in particular, and what other types of data, if any, does Border Patrol collect that inform changes in the status of border security? (2) How does the Tucson sector schedule agent deployment compared with deployment in other southwest border sectors and to what extent do the data show these deployments have been effective in securing the border? (3) To what extent has Border Patrol developed mechanisms to identify resources needed to secure the border under its new strategic plan?

In conducting our work, we analyzed agency data related to Border Patrol performance and cross-border threats, planning documents, sector operational assessments, reports, guidance, and agency strategic plans, and held discussions with relevant headquarters and field officials concerning border strategy, border enforcement operations, the deployment of resources—personnel, technology, and infrastructure—

⁴Border Patrol operates under several statutes and regulations that set forth the powers of immigration and customs officers. For example, Border Patrol agents have the authority, without a warrant, to enter private lands (but not dwellings) within 25 miles of the border to prevent the illegal entry of aliens into the United States and to search a railway car, aircraft, or vehicle for aliens within 100 miles of the border. See 8 U.S.C. § 1357(a)(3), 8 C.F.R. § 287.1(a)(2); for additional authorities, including those not specifically limited by distance from the border, see 8 U.S.C. §§ 1225, 1357; 19 U.S.C. §§ 482, 1581, 1589a, 1595(b); 8 C.F.R. § 287.1.

and data used to assess the status of border security.⁵ We obtained relevant data from DHS and Border Patrol databases for fiscal years 2006 through 2011. We chose this time period because fiscal year 2006 was the first full year for which data were available following Border Patrol's implementation of its 2004 Strategy. To assess the reliability of these data, we spoke with Border Patrol headquarters officials who oversee the maintenance and analyses of the data and with selected sector and station officials regarding guidance and processes for collecting and reporting data in regard to apprehensions of illegal entrants, seizures of drugs and other contraband, and scheduling the deployment of agents tracked in Border Patrol databases. We determined that these data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report. We conducted visits and observed station and checkpoint operations within five Border Patrol sectors on the southwest border: San Diego sector, California; Yuma sector, Arizona; Tucson sector, Arizona; El Paso sector, Texas; and Rio Grande Valley sector, Texas. We selected these sectors based on a range of factors, including (1) threat level, (2) agency priorities for resource deployment, (3) the use of enforcement strategies deemed successful by Border Patrol in reducing cross-border illegal activity, and (4) varied terrain and operational conditions. Among these five sectors, we selected 21 Border Patrol stations to visit based on factors such as the level of cross-border illegal activity as defined by Border Patrol data and unique characteristics, such as terrain. While the results from our visits are not representative of operations and conditions across the southwest border, they provided us with an overall understanding of Border Patrol operations.

To assess trends in apprehensions and other types of data used by Border Patrol to inform changes in the status of border security across the southwest border, and Tucson sector in particular, we obtained relevant data from DHS and Border Patrol databases for fiscal years 2006 through 2011. We analyzed data on apprehensions, seizures, apprehensions of repeat offenders (recidivist rates), and apprehensions of aliens from special interest countries (ASIC) by sector to obtain an overall view of

⁵Border Patrol sectors biannually develop operational assessments that identify and justify requests for additional resources to maintain or increase security in their areas of responsibility. These assessments are part of Border Patrol's Operational Requirements Based Budget Process, a standardized national planning process that links sector- and station-level planning, operations, and budgets.

changes in cross-border illegal activity.⁶ For fiscal years 2010 and 2011, we also analyzed data for apprehensions, seizures, and apprehensions of ASICs by location, in terms of distance from the border.⁷ Further, we analyzed data used by Border Patrol to estimate the number of known illegal entries by sector.⁸ Although estimated known illegal entry data can be compared within a sector over time, these data cannot be compared or combined across sectors, as discussed later in this report. We also spoke or corresponded with 13 ranchers who operated in the Tucson sector at the time of our review to discuss border security issues. We selected these ranchers based on input from various entities, including Border Patrol and select organizations that are knowledgeable about border security issues. While the views of these individuals are not representative of those of all ranchers within the Tucson sector, they provided us with insights on ranchers' perspectives.

To determine how the Tucson sector scheduled agent deployment compared with deployment in other southwest border sectors and the extent to which the data showed these deployments had been effective in

⁶For the purposes of this report, apprehensions data include only individuals arrested and identified as deportable aliens, in keeping with Border Patrol's definition. The data do not include individuals arrested for illegally crossing the border but determined to be nondeportable. Special interest countries are countries determined to represent a potential terrorist threat to the United States. While people from these countries may not have ties to terrorist activities, Border Patrol agents detain aliens from special interest countries if they are in the United States illegally and report these encounters to the local sector intelligence agent and the Federal Bureau of Investigation Joint Terrorism Task Force, among others, for further questioning and screening. Apprehension and seizure data for fiscal years 2006 through 2009 were queried (i.e., obtained from relevant databases) as of April 2012, and data for fiscal years 2010 and 2011 were queried as of March 2012. Border Patrol officials stated that any differences in our apprehension and seizure numbers and those of Border Patrol are due to variances in when the data were reported—i.e., Border Patrol reports apprehension and other data on an "end-of-year" basis, and therefore agency data do not reflect adjustments or corrections made after that reporting date.

⁷Fiscal year 2010 was the first full year Border Patrol mandated that the latitude and longitude of each apprehension and seizure be recorded.

⁸Border Patrol defines estimated illegal entries as the total number of deportable aliens who were apprehended, in addition to the number of entrants who illegally crossed the border but were not apprehended either because they crossed back to Mexico—"turn backs"—or continued traveling to the U.S. interior and Border Patrol was no longer actively pursuing them—"got aways." We defined these illegal entries as estimated "known" illegal entries to clarify that the estimates do not include illegal entrants for which Border Patrol does not have reasonable indications of cross-border illegal activity. Turn back and got away data for fiscal years 2006 through 2011 were queried as of April 2012.

securing the border, we analyzed data on Border Patrol's scheduled deployment of agents, by sector, from fiscal years 2006 through 2011, including the scheduling of agents near the border and the percentage of workdays scheduled for enforcement-related activities.⁹ We interviewed Border Patrol headquarters officials regarding agency guidance and practices for deploying resources and conducted interviews with Border Patrol sector and station officials regarding the processes used and factors considered when determining the deployment and redeployment of resources. We also analyzed data Border Patrol uses to calculate overall effectiveness within sectors to determine if the appropriate mix of assets is being deployed and used effectively and efficiently.¹⁰

To assess to what extent Border Patrol had developed mechanisms to identify resources needed to secure the border under its new 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, we interviewed Border Patrol headquarters officials from the Planning, Analysis, and Enforcement Systems Branches, and analyzed relevant documents, such as Border Patrol planning and policy documents, necessary to gain an understanding of Border Patrol's processes for developing and implementing key elements of the strategic plan necessary to inform resource requirements for securing the border. We compared these processes with standard practices in program management for documenting the scope of a project, including the need for milestones or time frames for project completion and implementation.¹¹ To assess to what extent Border Patrol sectors and stations had identified the need for additional resources, we analyzed southwest border sector operational assessments for fiscal years 2010 and 2012 and interviewed sector and station officials.

We conducted this performance audit from June 2011 to December 2012 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain

⁹Border Patrol has a database to track the scheduling of agent deployment in the field, which is to be updated to reflect the most recent deployment changes. Scheduled deployment data for fiscal year 2011 were queried as of March 2012, and data for fiscal years 2006 through 2010 were queried as of April 2012.

¹⁰Border Patrol's formula for calculating overall effectiveness adds the number of apprehensions and turns backs in a specific sector and divides this total by the total number of estimated known illegal entries.

¹¹For example, see the Project Management Institute, *The Standard for Program Management* © (Newtown Square, Penn., 2006).

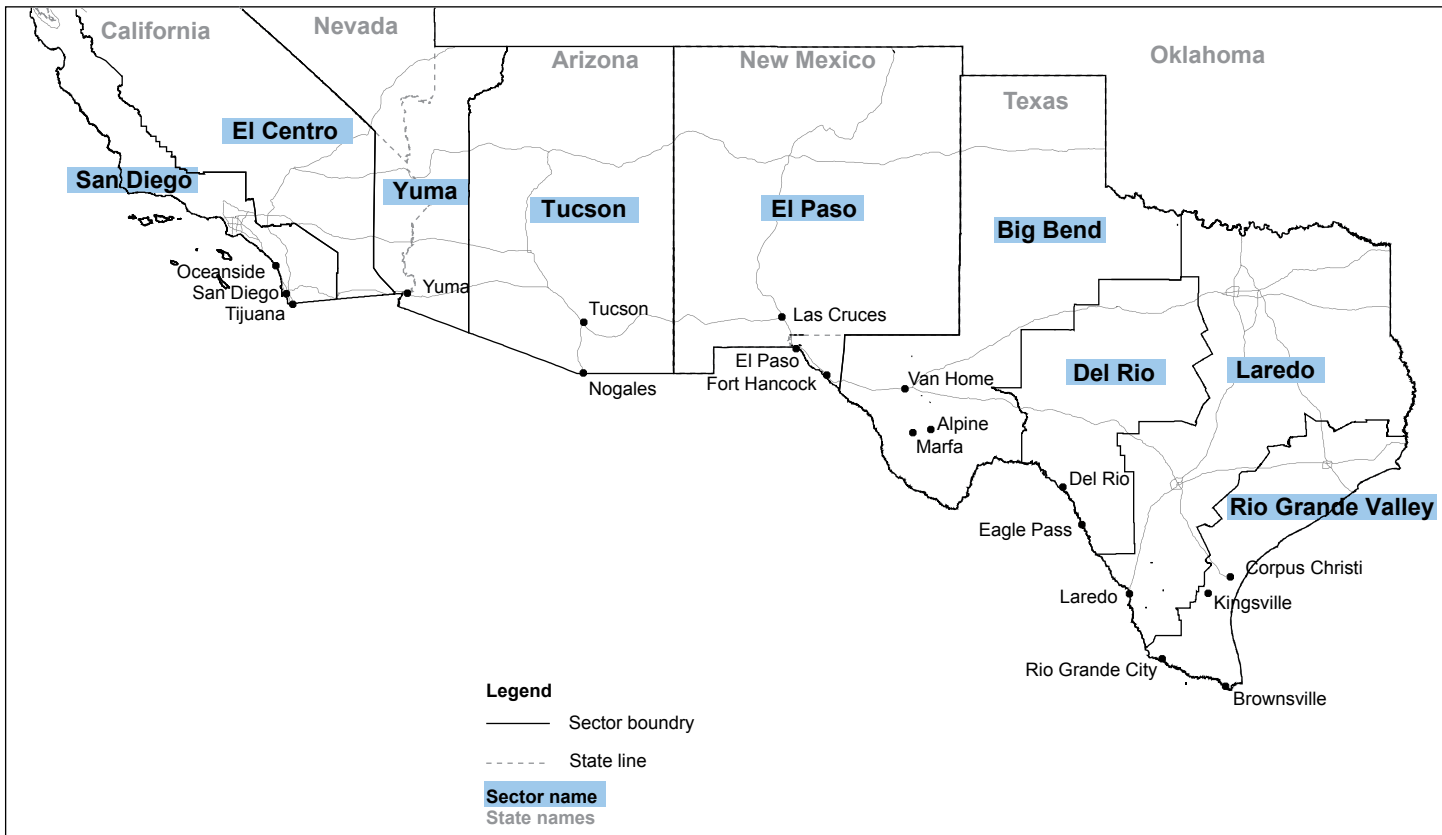
sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Appendix I provides further details on our scope and methodology.

Background

CBP has divided geographic responsibility for the southwest border among nine Border Patrol sectors, as shown in figure 1 (see app. II for general information about Border Patrol sectors). Each sector has a varying number of stations, with agents responsible for patrolling within defined geographic areas. Within these areas, Border Patrol has reported that its primary mission is to prevent terrorists and weapons of terrorism from entering the United States and also to detect, interdict, and apprehend those who attempt to illegally enter or smuggle any person or contraband across the nation's borders.

Interactive graphic Figure 1: Border Patrol Sectors along the Southwest Border

Move mouse over the sector name to learn more about the sector.

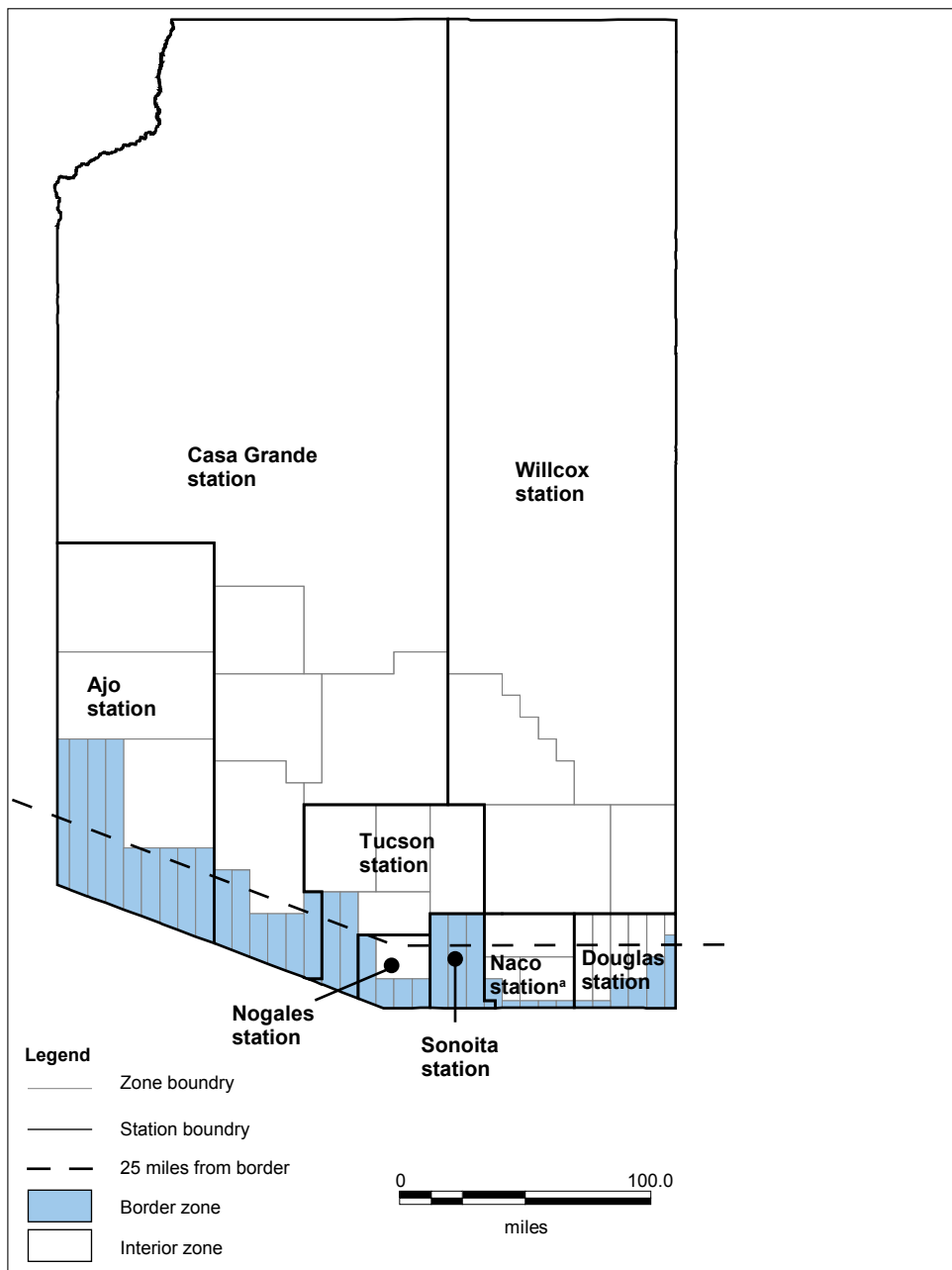


Source: GAO (analysis and photos), Mapinfo (map), Border Patrol (data).

Each Border Patrol sector is further divided into stations. For example, the Tucson sector has divided geographic responsibility across eight stations, seven of which have responsibility for miles of land directly on the U.S.-Mexico border. Within the station areas Border Patrol refers to “border zones”—those having international border miles—and “interior zones”—those without international border miles. According to Border Patrol officials, zones allow sectors to more effectively analyze border conditions, including terrain, when planning how to deploy agents. Zone dimensions are largely determined by geography and topographical features, and zone size can vary significantly. See figure 2 for Tucson sector station and zone boundaries (see app. III for general information about the Tucson sector stations).

Interactive graphic Figure 2: Border Patrol Stations and Zones in Tucson Sector, as of April 2012

Move mouse over the station name to learn more about the station.



Source: GAO (analysis and photos), Border Patrol (data and photo), Mapinfo (map).

^aIn May 2012 Naco Station was renamed the “Brian A. Terry Border Patrol Station” (Brian A. Terry Memorial Act, Pub. L. No 112-113, 126 Stat. 334 (2012)).

Border Patrol collects and analyzes various data on the number and types of entrants who illegally cross the southwest border between the land border POEs, including collecting estimates on the total number of identified—or “known”—illegal entries.¹² Border Patrol collects these data composed of the total number of apprehensions, turn backs, and got aways as an indicator of the potential border threat across locations.

Border Patrol developed its 2004 Strategy following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as a framework for the agency’s new priority mission of preventing terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States and to support its traditional mission of preventing aliens, smugglers, narcotics, and other contraband from crossing U.S. borders illegally. The 2004 Strategy was designed to facilitate the buildup and deployment of agency and border resources with a focus on ensuring the agency had the right mix of personnel, technology, and infrastructure across locations to secure the border. From fiscal years 2004 through 2011, the number of Border Patrol agents on the southwest border nearly doubled, from about 9,500 to about 18,500; and DHS reported that since fiscal year 2006, about \$4.4 billion has been invested in southwest border technology and infrastructure. Through fiscal year 2010, these resources were used to support DHS’s goal to achieve “operational control” of the nation’s borders by reducing cross-border illegal activity. The extent of operational control—also referred to as effective control—was defined as the number of border miles where Border Patrol had the capability to detect, respond to, and interdict cross-border illegal activity. At the end of fiscal year 2010, Border Patrol reported that across the nearly 2,000 southwest border miles, resources were in place to apprehend illegal activity at the immediate border for 129 southwest border miles, or at some distance from the border for an additional 744 southwest border miles.¹³ At the beginning of fiscal year 2011, DHS transitioned from using operational control as its goal and outcome measure for border security in

¹²Indications of illegal crossings are obtained through various sources such as direct agent observation, referrals from credible sources (such as residents), camera monitoring, and detection of physical evidence left on the environment from animal or human crossings.

¹³Border Patrol reported that for nearly two-thirds of the remaining 1,120 southwest border miles, resources were in place to achieve a high probability to detect illegal activity, but the ability to respond may be compromised by insufficient resources or inaccessible terrain; while for the remaining border miles, insufficient resources or infrastructure inhibited detection or apprehension of illegal activity.

its *Fiscal Year 2010-2012 Annual Performance Report*. DHS established an interim performance measure until a new border control goal and measure could be developed.

Border Patrol issued its new 2012-2016 Strategic Plan in May 2012, stating that the buildup of its resource base and the operations conducted over the past two decades would enable the Border Patrol to focus on mitigating risk rather than increasing resources to secure the border. In contrast to the 2004 Strategy, which also recognized the importance of rapid mobility, the leveraging of partnerships, and accurate and useful intelligence, the new strategic plan places a greater emphasis on the integration of partner resources into operational planning and enforcement efforts, particularly partners external to DHS. (See app. IV for strategic goals and objectives presented in Border Patrol's 2004 Strategy and 2012-2016 Strategic Plan.)

Apprehensions Have Decreased across the Southwest Border; However, Other Data on Illegal Migration, Drug Seizures, and Terrorism Also Provide Insights into Border Security

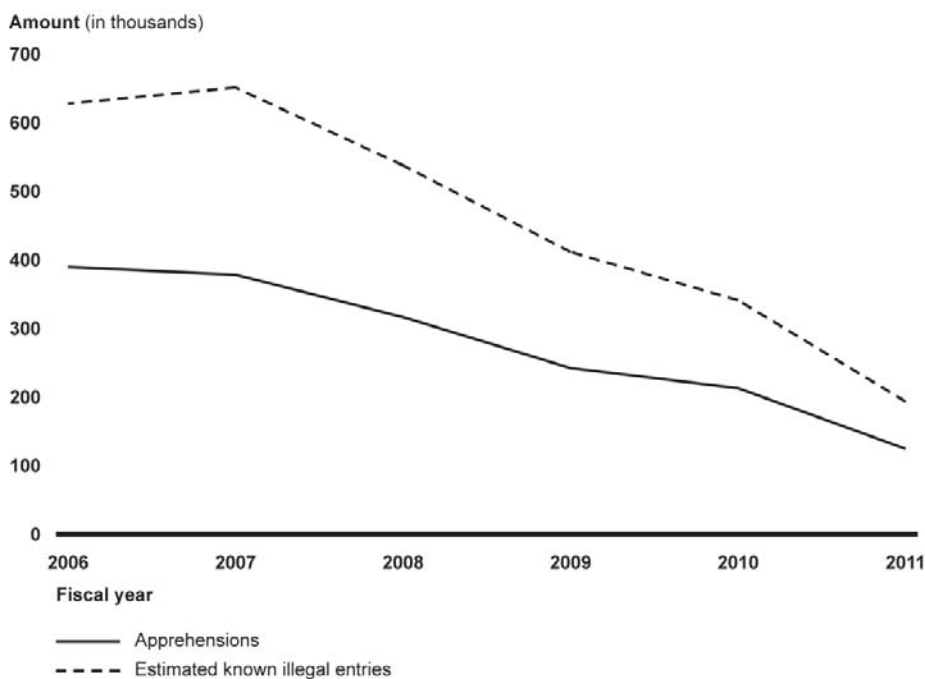
Border Patrol apprehensions have decreased in the Tucson sector and across the southwest border, and DHS has reported data meeting its goal to secure the land border with a decrease in apprehensions. The decrease in apprehensions mirrored the decrease in estimated known illegal entries within each southwest border sector. Border Patrol officials attributed the decrease in apprehensions and estimated known illegal entries within southwest border sectors to multiple factors, including changes in the U.S. economy. While changes in apprehension levels provide useful insight on activity levels, other types of data may also inform changes in the status of border security, including changes in the percentage of estimated known illegal entries who are apprehended and who repeatedly cross the border illegally (recidivist rate), increases in seizures of drugs and other contraband, and increases in apprehensions of aliens from special interest countries (ASIC) that have been determined to be at a potential increased risk of sponsoring terrorism.

Apprehensions Decreased at about the Same Rate as Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Tucson Sector and across the Southwest Border

Since fiscal year 2011, DHS has used changes in the number of apprehensions on the southwest border between POEs as an interim measure for border security as reported in its *Annual Performance Report*. In fiscal year 2011, DHS reported data meeting its goal to secure the land border with a decrease in apprehensions. These data show that Border Patrol apprehensions within each southwest Border Patrol sector decreased from fiscal years 2006 to 2011, generally mirroring the decrease in estimated known illegal entries within each sector. In the Tucson sector, our analysis of Border Patrol data showed that

apprehensions decreased by 68 percent from fiscal years 2006 to 2011, compared with a 69 percent decrease in estimated known illegal entries, as shown in figure 3. (See app. V for additional information.)

Figure 3: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in Tucson Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Border Patrol officials attributed the decrease in apprehensions and estimated known illegal entries within southwest border sectors to multiple factors, including changes in the U.S. economy and successful achievement of its strategic objectives.¹⁴ Border Patrol’s ability to address objectives laid out in the 2004 Strategy was strengthened by increases in

¹⁴Specifically, objectives to (1) deter illegal entries through improved enforcement—defined as increasing the certainty of apprehensions through the proper mix of assets and implementing prosecution strategies that establish a deterrent effect in targeted locations—and (2) leverage “smart border” technology to multiply the effect of enforcement personnel. Border Patrol defines “smart border” technology to include camera systems for day/night/infrared operations, sensors, aerial platforms, and other systems.

personnel and technology, and infrastructure enhancements, according to Border Patrol officials. For example, Tucson sector Border Patrol officials said that the sector increased manpower over the past 5 years through an increase in Border Patrol agents that was augmented by National Guard personnel, and that CBP's Secure Border Initiative (SBI) provided border fencing and other infrastructure, as well as technology enhancements.¹⁵ Border Patrol officials also attributed decreases in estimated known illegal entries and apprehensions to the deterrence effect of CBP consequence programs—programs intended to deter repeated illegal border crossings by ensuring the most efficient consequence or penalty for individuals who illegally enter the United States. One such multiagency initiative, Streamline, is a criminal prosecutions program targeting aliens who illegally enter the United States through designated geographic locations.¹⁶

**Other Border Patrol Data
Provide a Broader
Perspective on Changes in
Border Security Related to
Illegal Migration,
Smuggling of Drugs and
Other Contraband, and
Terrorism**

Border Patrol collects other types of data that are used by sector management to help inform assessment of its efforts to secure the border against the threats of illegal migration, smuggling of drugs and other contraband, and terrorism. These data show changes in the (1) percentage of estimated known illegal entrants who are apprehended, (2) percentage of estimated known illegal entrants who are apprehended more than once (repeat offenders), (3) number of seizures of drugs and other contraband, and (4) number of apprehensions of persons from countries at an increased risk of sponsoring terrorism. In addition, apprehension and seizure data can be analyzed in terms of where they occurred relative to distance from the border as an indicator of progress in Border Patrol enforcement efforts. Border Patrol officials at sectors we visited, and our review of fiscal years 2010 and 2012 sector operational assessments, indicated that sectors have historically used these types of

¹⁵The number of Border Patrol agents in Tucson sector increased from nearly 2,600 in fiscal year 2006 to about 4,200 in fiscal year 2011, augmented by 9,000 National Guard personnel deployed periodically from June 2006 through July 2008 under Operation Jump Start. Under SBI, CBP expended approximately \$850 million on technology in Arizona such as wide-area and mobile surveillance systems, to augment Tucson sector operations. Other infrastructure as of March 2012 included installation of 352 miles of pedestrian fencing and 299 miles of vehicle fencing along the southwest border, for a combined total of 651 miles of fencing.

¹⁶Federal entities participating in Streamline are CBP, the U.S. Attorneys' Office, the U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Department of Justice Executive Office of Immigration Review.

Apprehensions Compared with
Estimated Known Illegal
Entries

data to inform tactical deployment of personnel and technology to address cross-border threats; however, the agency has not analyzed these data at the national level to inform strategic decision making, according to Border Patrol headquarters officials. These officials stated that greater use of these data in assessing border security at the national level may occur as the agency transitions to the new strategic plan.

The 2004 Strategy recognized that factors in addition to apprehensions can be used to assess changes in Border Patrol's enforcement efforts to secure the border, including changes in the percentage of estimated known illegal entrants who are apprehended (apprehensions as a percentage of estimated known illegal entrants), and changes in the number and percentage of apprehensions made closer to the border.¹⁷ Border Patrol headquarters officials said that the percentage of estimated known illegal entrants who are apprehended is primarily used to determine the effectiveness of border security operations at the tactical—or zone—level but can also affect strategic decision making. The data are also used to inform overall situational awareness at the border, which directly supports field planning and redeployment of resources.

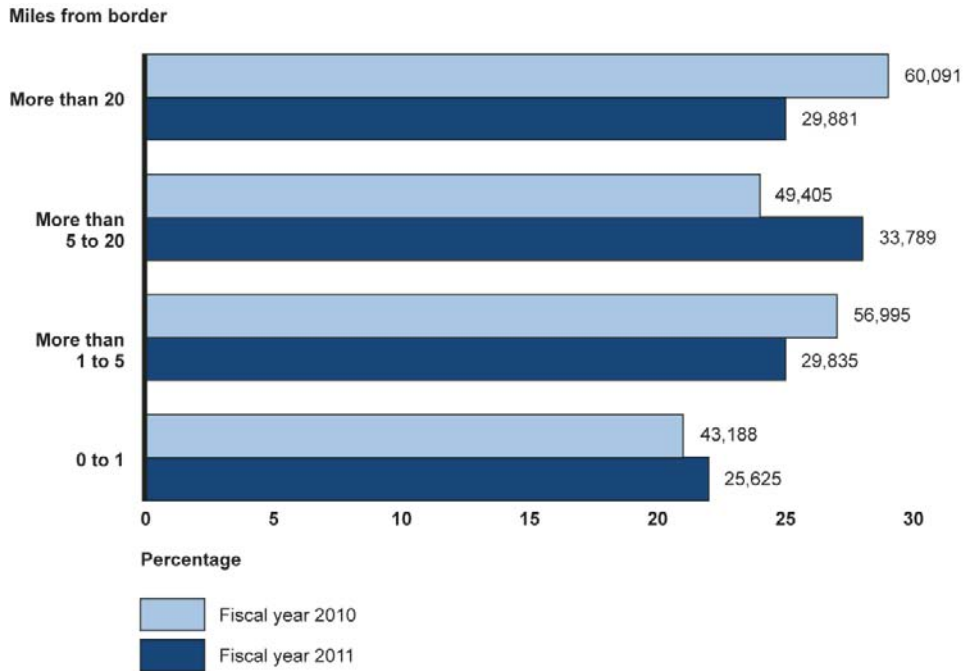
Our analysis of Border Patrol data for the Tucson sector showed little change in the percentage of estimated known illegal entrants who were apprehended by the Border Patrol over the past 5 fiscal years. Specifically, our analysis showed that of the total number of estimated known aliens who illegally crossed the Tucson sector border from Mexico each year, Border Patrol apprehended 62 percent in fiscal year 2006 compared with 64 percent in fiscal year 2011, an increase of about 2 percentage points. Results varied across other southwest border sectors, as shown in appendix V.

Over the last fiscal year, however, Border Patrol apprehensions across the southwest border and in the Tucson sector have occurred closer to the border. In the Tucson sector, for example, the percentage of apprehensions occurring more than 20 miles from the border was smaller in fiscal year 2011 than in fiscal year 2010, while a greater percentage of

¹⁷In February 2011 we testified that “number of apprehensions” is an output measure and as such is a useful indicator of activity levels but does not necessarily reflect an improvement in enforcement effectiveness. See GAO, *Border Security: Preliminary Observations on Border Control Measures for the Southwest Border*, [GAO-11-374T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 15, 2011).

apprehensions in fiscal year 2011 occurred more than 5 to 20 miles from the border, as shown in figure 4. There was little change in the percentage of apprehensions within 1 mile of the border. Similarly, apprehensions across the southwest border have also moved closer to the border over time, with the greatest percentage of apprehensions occurring more than 5 to 20 miles from the border in fiscal year 2011. (See app. VI for additional information.)

Figure 4: Number and Percentage of Border Patrol Apprehensions by Distance from the Border in the Tucson Sector, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Of the 13 ranchers we spoke or corresponded with in the Tucson sector, 6 said they would like to see Border Patrol enforce closer to the border to prevent illegal entry and trespass on their properties. Generally, these ranchers indicated that the level of illegal migrants coming across their properties had declined, but said the level of drug smuggling had remained constant. They were most concerned about safety, but cited considerable property damage and concerns that illegal trafficking had affected land values and driven up costs in the ranching industry. Border Patrol officials in the Tucson sector said that some factors precluding greater border presence included terrain that was inaccessible or created

a tactical disadvantage, the distance from Border Patrol stations to the border, and access to ranches and lands that were federally protected and environmentally sensitive. Border Patrol officials also said they have taken steps to address factors that prevent closer access to the border, such as establishing forward operating bases—permanent facilities in remote locations near the border—and substations closer to the border, and working with ranchers and the federal government to ensure access to protected lands.

Repeat Offenders

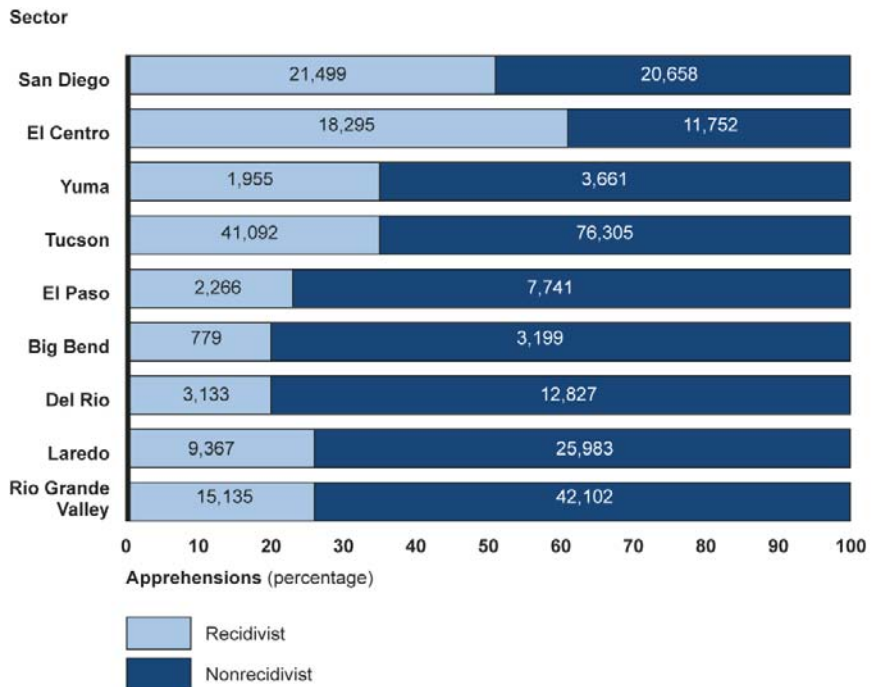
The 2004 Strategy stated that changes in the percentage of persons apprehended who have repeatedly crossed the border illegally (referred to as the recidivism rate) is a factor that Border Patrol considers in assessing its ability to deter individuals from attempting to illegally cross the border. Our analysis of Border Patrol apprehension data showed that the recidivism rate has declined across the southwest border by about 6 percentage points from fiscal year 2008 to 2011 in regard to the number of apprehended aliens who had repeatedly crossed the border in the prior 3 years.¹⁸ Specifically, our analysis showed that the recidivism rate across the overall southwest border was about 42 percent in fiscal year 2008 compared with about 36 percent in fiscal year 2011.¹⁹ The Tucson sector had the third highest recidivism rate across the southwest border in fiscal year 2011, while the highest rate of recidivism occurred in El Centro sector, as shown in figure 5. According to Border Patrol headquarters officials, the agency has implemented various initiatives designed to

¹⁸We used a rolling 3-fiscal year time period to determine the percentage of apprehensions of deportable aliens in a given year who had previously been apprehended for illegally crossing the border in any of the previous 3 years, at any southwest border location. We used four rolling 3-fiscal year time periods because our analysis covered a 5-year period and required comparable time periods to assess recidivism in each fiscal year. Using a single time period would result in a bias given that some apprehensions in earlier years would be incorrectly classified as nonrecidivist.

¹⁹Changes in the recidivism rate could be due to factors other than the deterrent effect of Border Patrol's enforcement activities, such as changes in the U.S. economy.

address recidivism through increased prosecution of individuals apprehended for crossing the border illegally.²⁰

Figure 5: Recidivism Numbers and Percentages for Border Patrol Apprehensions across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Seizures of Drugs and Other Contraband

The 2004 Strategy identifies the detection, apprehension, and deterrence of smugglers of drugs, humans, and other contraband as a primary objective. Border Patrol headquarters officials said that data regarding seizures of drugs and other contraband are good indicators of the effectiveness of targeted enforcement operations, and are used to identify trends in the smuggling threat and as indicators of overall cross-border

²⁰Border Patrol's 2012-2016 Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance of the application of appropriate consequences to illegal entrants. As previously discussed, Border Patrol has developed a new Consequence Delivery System that guides management and agents in evaluating each individual apprehended and identifying the ideal consequence to break the smuggling cycle. Consequences delivered under the system include administrative, criminal prosecution, and programmatic elements that are designed to stem the flow of illegal activity.

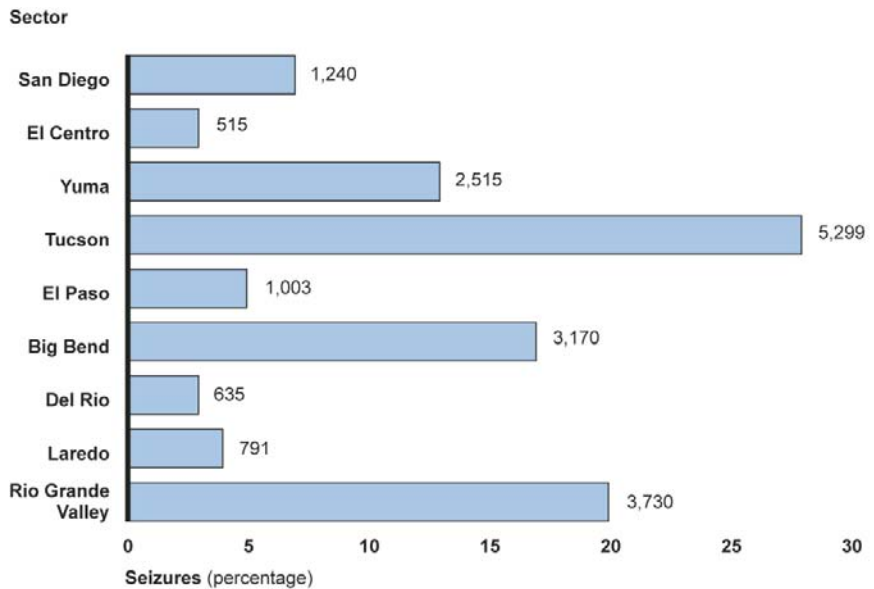
illegal activity, in addition to potential gaps in border coverage, risk, and enforcement operations. However, these officials stated that these data are not used as a performance measure for overall border security because while the agency has a mission to secure the border against the smuggling threat, most smuggling is related to illegal drugs, and that drug smuggling is the primary responsibility of other federal agencies, such as the Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations.²¹

Our analysis of Border Patrol data indicated that across southwest border sectors, seizures of drugs and other contraband increased 83 percent over the past 5 fiscal years, with drug seizures accounting for the vast majority of all contraband seizures. Specifically, the number of drug and contraband seizures increased from 10,321 in fiscal year 2006 to 18,898 in fiscal year 2011. Most seizures of drugs and other contraband occurred in the Tucson sector, with about 28 percent, or 5,299, of the 18,898 southwest border seizures occurring in the sector in fiscal year 2011, as shown in figure 6.²²

²¹According to Border Patrol headquarters officials, increasing and sustaining certainty of arrest is critical to the success of Border Patrol's 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, as it places emphasis on applying capabilities against the greatest risk. By managing risk, the agency can better respond to transnational criminal organizations and their efforts. A key objective is to increase and sustain certainty of arrest of illegal border crossers regardless of their intent or cargo.

²²Drugs accounted for the vast majority of all contraband seizures. Although drug seizures increased 81 percent from fiscal years 2006 through 2011, the percentage of all contraband seizures that were drug seizures compared with the percentage of all contraband seizures remained nearly constant, averaging about 93 percent over this time period.

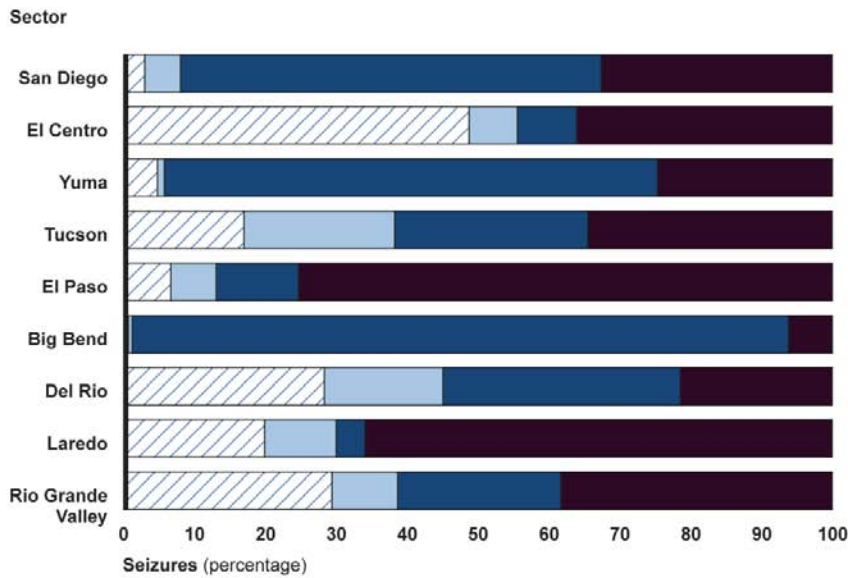
Figure 6: Number and Percentage of Seizures of Drugs and Other Contraband across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Further analysis of these data in the Tucson sector showed that the percentage of drugs and other contraband seized closer to the border—5 miles or less—decreased slightly from fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2011. Specifically, the Tucson sector made 42 percent of drug and other contraband seizures within 5 miles of the border in fiscal year 2010, and 38 percent within 5 miles of the border in fiscal year 2011. Across other southwest border sectors, the distance from the border where seizures occurred varied, as shown in figure 7. For example, about 49 percent of the seizures in the El Centro sector occurred within 1 mile of the border in fiscal year 2011 compared with less than 7 percent of seizures within 1 mile of the border in the El Paso sector. Border Patrol headquarters officials stated that variances in data across sectors reflect geographical and structural differences among Border Patrol sectors—each sector is characterized by varying topography, unique ingress and egress routes, land access issues, and differing technology and infrastructure deployments, all of which affect how a sector operates and therefore the ability to make seizures at or near the border.

Figure 7: Number and Percentage of Seizures across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Distance from the Border, Fiscal Year 2011



Seizure totals

	San Diego	El Centro	Yuma	Tucson	El Paso	Big Bend	Del Rio	Laredo	Rio Grande Valley
0-1 mile	36	250	117	892	66	19	179	157	1,091
More than 1-5 miles	62	35	24	1,121	64	18	106	80	344
More than 5-20 miles	729	43	1,727	1,437	116	2,936	212	32	857
More than 20 miles	400	185	612	1,818	753	195	136	522	1,423

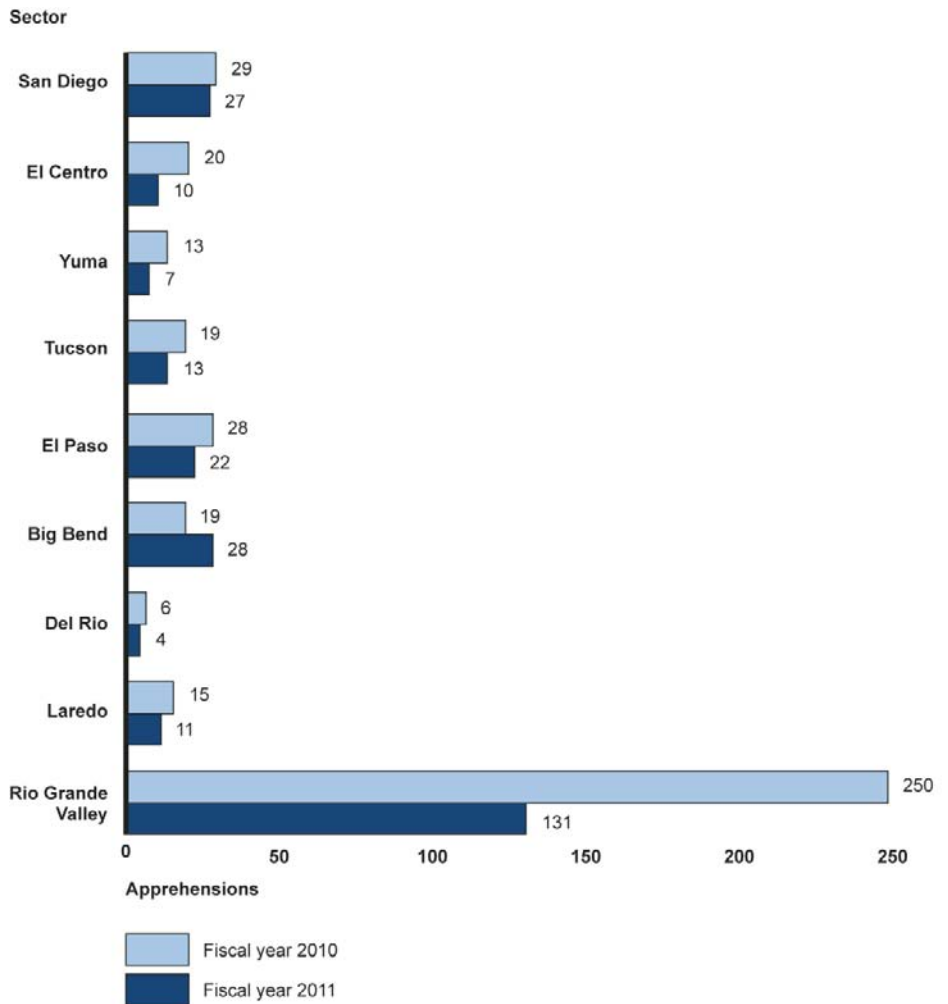
Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Apprehensions of Aliens Posing a Potential Increased Risk for Terrorism

The 2004 Strategy identified the detection and prevention of terrorists and their weapons from entering the United States between the ports of entry as a primary objective. ASICs are considered to pose a greater potential risk for terrorism than other aliens, and Border Patrol headquarters officials said that they collect data on the number of ASIC apprehensions in accordance with the reporting and documentation procedures outlined in policy and guidance. However, Border Patrol headquarters officials stated that they did not consider changes in the number of ASICs apprehended in their assessment of border security because until recently, they had been primarily focused on reducing the overall number of illegal entries, and that terrorism was addressed by multiple agencies besides the Border Patrol, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation within the Department of Justice.

Our analysis of Border Patrol data showed that apprehensions of ASICs across the southwest border increased each fiscal year from 239 in fiscal 2006 to 399 in fiscal year 2010, but dropped to 253 in fiscal year 2011. The Rio Grande Valley sector had more than half of all ASIC apprehensions across the southwest border in both fiscal years 2010 and 2011, as shown in figure 8.

Figure 8: Number of Aliens from Special Interest Countries Apprehended across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011

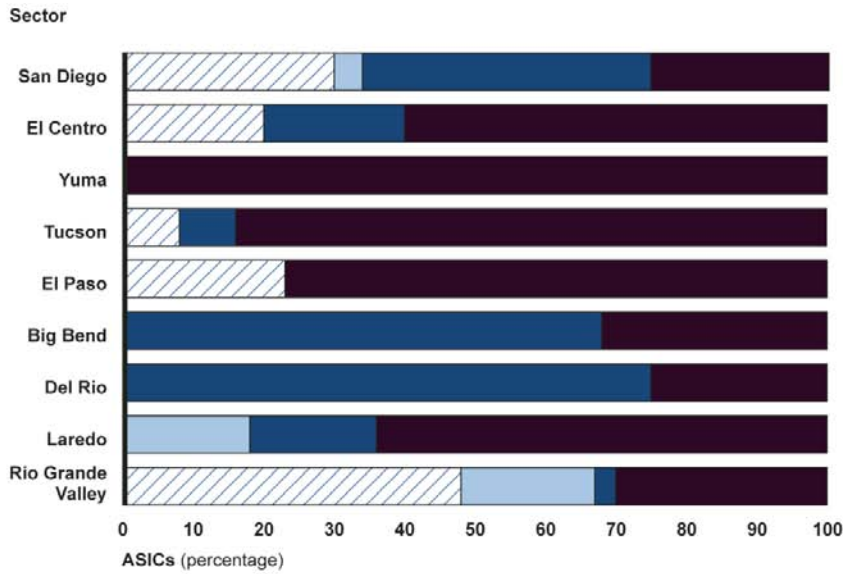


Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Further analysis of these data showed differences in progress to apprehend ASICs closer to the border in support of Border Patrol's overall intention to prevent potential terrorist threats from crossing U.S. borders. For example, Rio Grande Valley sector nearly doubled the percentage of ASICs apprehended within 1 mile of the border from the preceding fiscal year, from 26 percent in fiscal year 2010 to 48 percent in fiscal year 2011. In contrast, ASIC apprehensions within 1 mile of the border in Tucson sector decreased from 26 percent in fiscal 2010 to 8 percent in fiscal year 2011.²³ Across the southwest border, the greatest percentage of ASICs was apprehended more than 20 miles from the border in fiscal year 2011, as shown in figure 9. Border Patrol headquarters officials said they are transitioning to a new methodology to identify the potential terrorist risk in fiscal year 2013. This new methodology will replace the use of a country-specific list with a range of other factors to identify persons posing an increased risk for terrorism when processing deportable aliens.

²³Most—85 percent—of Tucson sector ASIC apprehensions occurred more than 20 miles from the border.

Figure 9: Number and Percentage of Aliens from Special Interest Countries Apprehended across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Distance from the Border, Fiscal Year 2011



Aliens from Special Interest Countries (ASIC) totals

	San Diego	El Centro	Yuma	Tucson	El Paso	Big Bend	Del Rio	Laredo	Rio Grande Valley
0-1 mile	8	2	0	1	5	0	0	0	63
More than 1-5 miles	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	25
More than 5-20 miles	11	2	0	1	0	19	3	2	4
More than 20 miles	7	6	7	11	17	9	1	7	39

Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Southwest Border Sectors Scheduled Agents Differently across Border Zones and Enforcement Activities; Data Limitations Preclude Comparison of Overall Effectiveness

The Tucson sector scheduled a higher percentage of agent workdays to enforcement activities related to patrolling the border than other southwest border sectors in fiscal year 2011.²⁴ However, until recently sectors have differed in how they collect and report data that Border Patrol used to assess its overall effectiveness in using resources to secure the border, precluding comparison across sectors. In September 2012, Border Patrol issued new guidance on standardizing data collection and reporting practices that could increase data reliability and allow comparison across locations.

Factors Affecting Agent Deployment in Border Zones Include Local Terrain, Infrastructure, and Technology, but Most Sectors Schedule Agents to Patrol the Border

Border Patrol's 2004 Strategy provided for increasing resources and deploying these resources using an approach that provided for several layers of Border Patrol agents at the immediate border and in other areas 100 miles or more away from the border (referred to as defense in depth). According to CBP officials, as resources increased, Border Patrol sought to move enforcement closer to the border over time to better position the agency to ensure the arrest of those trying to enter the country illegally.²⁵ Headquarters and field officials said station supervisors determine (1) whether to deploy agents in border zones or interior zones, and (2) the types of enforcement or nonenforcement activities agents are to perform. Border Patrol officials from the five sectors we visited stated that they used similar factors in making deployment decisions, such as intelligence showing the presence of threat across locations, the nature of the threat, and environmental factors including terrain and weather.

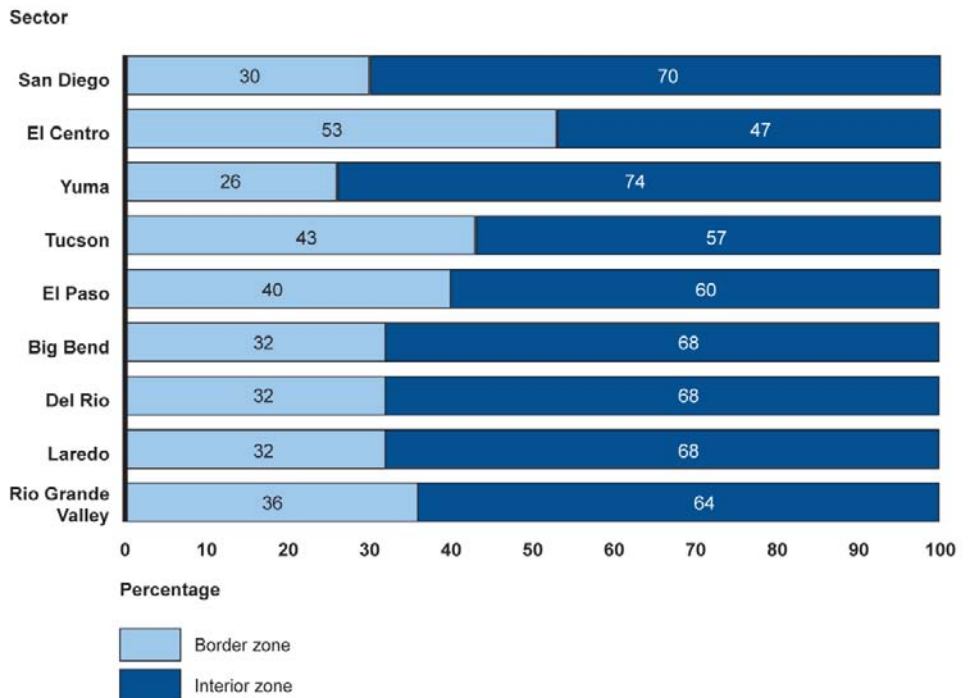
²⁴Although the Border Patrol deployment database uses the term "manday" when referring to the scheduled deployment of agents, for the purposes of this report we use the term "agent workday." Both refer to the measure of staff hours equal to those of an agent who works a shift of 8 hours per day. Border Patrol has a database to track the scheduling of agent deployment in the field, which is to be updated to reflect the most recent deployment changes. Deployment figures referred to in this report therefore may be for scheduled, not actual, agent deployment.

²⁵According to Border Patrol officials, enforcement includes efforts of Border Patrol agents to deter cross-border illegal activity, apprehend aliens who illegally cross the border, and seize drugs and other contraband.

Our analysis of Border Patrol data showed differences across sectors in the percentage of agent workdays scheduled for border zones and interior zones in fiscal year 2011. Specifically, our analysis showed that while Tucson sector scheduled 43 percent of agent workdays to border zones in fiscal year 2011, agent workdays scheduled for border zones by other southwest border sectors ranged from 26 percent in the Yuma sector to 53 percent in the El Centro sector, as shown in figure 10.²⁶ Border Patrol officials attributed the variation in border zone deployment to differences in geographical factors among the southwest border sectors—such as varying topography, ingress and egress routes, and land access issues, and structural factors such as technology and infrastructure deployments—and stated that these factors affect how sectors operate and may preclude closer deployment to the border. Additionally, many southwest border sectors have interior stations that are responsible for operations at some distance from the border, such as at interior checkpoints generally located 25 miles or more from the border, which could also affect their percentage of agent workdays scheduled for border zones.

²⁶For the Tucson sector specifically, our analysis of Border Patrol data showed that there had been a slight increase in the percentage of agent workdays scheduled for border zones compared to interior zones in the last 5 fiscal years. Specifically, our analysis showed that 43 percent of Tucson sector agent workdays were scheduled for deployment in border zones in fiscal year 2011 compared with 39 percent in fiscal year 2006.

Figure 10: Border Patrol Agent Workdays Deployed to Border Zones and Interior Zones across Southwest Border Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011



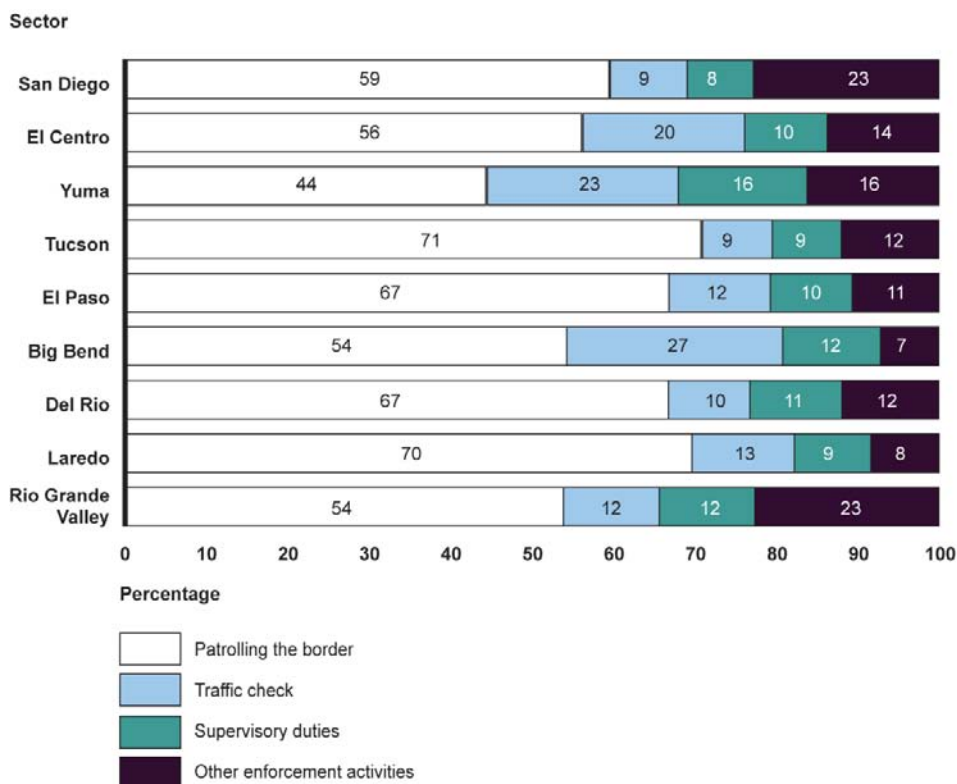
Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Southwest border sectors scheduled most agent workdays for enforcement activities during fiscal years 2006 to 2011 and the activity related to patrolling the border accounted for a greater proportion of enforcement activity workdays than any of the other activities. Sectors schedule agent workdays across various activities categorized as enforcement or nonenforcement.²⁷ Across enforcement activities, our analysis of Border Patrol data showed that all sectors scheduled more agent workdays for “patrolling the border”—activities defined to occur within 25 miles of the border—than any other enforcement activity, as

²⁷The percentage of total agent workdays scheduled for deployment across enforcement activities compared to nonenforcement activities in fiscal year 2011 ranged from a low of 66 percent in the Yuma sector to a high of 81 percent in the Big Bend sector. The Tucson sector scheduled 73 percent of agent workdays across enforcement activities in fiscal year 2011.

shown in figure 11.²⁸ Border Patrol duties under this activity include patrolling by vehicle, horse, and bike; patrolling with canines; performing sign cutting; and performing special activities such as mobile search and rescue. Other enforcement activities to which Border Patrol scheduled agent workdays included conducting checkpoint duties, developing intelligence, and performing aircraft operations. (See app. VII for a listing of nonenforcement activities.)

Figure 11: Border Patrol Agent Workdays Scheduled across Enforcement Activities across Southwest Border Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

²⁸Data on the extent to which these activities occurred at the immediate border were not available.

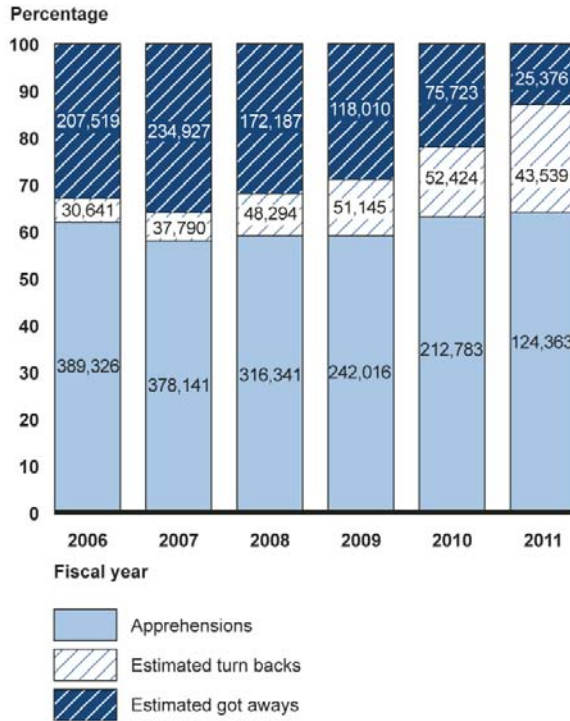
Data Limitations Preclude Comparing Effectiveness of Resource Deployment across Locations

Border Patrol sectors and stations track changes in their overall effectiveness as a tool to determine if the appropriate mix and placement of personnel and assets are being deployed and used effectively and efficiently, according to officials from Border Patrol headquarters. Border Patrol calculates an overall effectiveness rate using a formula in which it adds the number of apprehensions and turn backs in a specific sector and divides this total by the total estimated known illegal entries—determined by adding the number of apprehensions, turn backs, and got aways for the sector.²⁹ Border Patrol sectors and stations report this overall effectiveness rate to headquarters. Border Patrol views its border security efforts as increasing in effectiveness if the number of turn backs as a percentage of estimated known illegal entries has increased and the number of got aways as a percentage of estimated known illegal entries has decreased.

Our analysis of Tucson sector apprehension, turn back, and got away data from fiscal years 2006 through 2011 showed that while Tucson sector apprehensions remained fairly constant at about 60 percent of estimated known illegal entries, the percentage of reported turn backs increased from about 5 percent to about 23 percent, while the percentage of reported got aways decreased from about 33 percent to about 13 percent, as shown in figure 12. As a result of these changes in the mix of turn backs and got aways, Border Patrol data showed that enforcement effort, or the overall effectiveness rate for Tucson sector, improved 20 percentage points from fiscal year 2006 to fiscal year 2011, from 67 percent to 87 percent. (See app. VIII for additional information.)

²⁹Border Patrol officials stated that only entrants who can be traced back to a cross-border entry point in a border zone are to be reported as got aways. These officials also noted that while the agency strives to minimize variance in the collection of these data by using standard terminology and consistent collection and reporting methods, in many cases the determination of a turn back or got away depends on agent judgment. Patrol agents-in-charge are responsible for ensuring that Border Patrol agents are aware of the integrity of data collection at their respective stations and field commanders must ensure the accurate counting of got away data for reconciling possible inconsistencies in data between operational boundaries.

Figure 12: Number of Tucson Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Border Patrol data showed that the effectiveness rate for eight of the nine sectors on the southwest border improved from fiscal years 2006 through 2011. The exception was the Big Bend sector, which showed a decrease in the overall effectiveness rate, from 86 percent to 68 percent, during this time period. Border Patrol headquarters officials said that differences in how sectors define, collect, and report turn back and got away data used to calculate the overall effectiveness rate preclude comparing performance results across sectors. Border Patrol headquarters officials stated that until recently, each Border Patrol sector decided how it would collect and report turn back and got away data, and as a result, practices for collecting and reporting the data varied across sectors and stations based on differences in agent experience and judgment, resources, and terrain. In terms of defining and reporting turn back data, for example, Border Patrol headquarters officials said that a turn back was to be recorded only if it is perceived to be an “intended entry”—that is, the reporting agent believed the entrant intended to stay in the United States,

but Border Patrol activities caused the individual to return to Mexico.³⁰ According to Border Patrol officials, it can be difficult to tell if an illegal crossing should be recorded as a turn back, and sectors have different procedures for reporting and classifying incidents. In terms of collecting data, Border Patrol officials reported that sectors rely on a different mix of cameras, sign cutting, credible sources, and visual observation to identify and report the number of turn backs and got aways.³¹ (See app. IX for additional information.)

According to Border Patrol officials, the ability to obtain accurate or consistent data using these identification sources depends on various factors, such as terrain and weather. For example, data on turn backs and got aways may be understated in areas with rugged mountains and steep canyons that can hinder detection of illegal entries. In other cases, data may be overstated—for example, in cases where the same turn back identified by a camera is also identified by sign cutting. Double counting may also occur when agents in one zone record as a got away an individual who is apprehended and then reported as an apprehension in another zone. As a result of these data limitations, Border Patrol headquarters officials said that while they consider turn back and got away data sufficiently reliable to assess each sector’s progress toward border security and to inform sector decisions regarding resource deployment, they do not consider the data sufficiently reliable to compare—or externally report—results across sectors.

Border Patrol headquarters officials issued guidance in September 2012 to provide a more consistent, standardized approach for the collection and reporting of turn back and got away data by Border Patrol sectors. Each sector is to be individually responsible for monitoring adherence to the guidance. According to Border Patrol officials, it is expected that once the guidance is implemented, data reliability will improve. This new

³⁰Officials said that sometimes illegal entrants can be “drop offs” or “decoys” to lure agents away from a specific area so others can cross, such as smugglers returning to Mexico to pick up another load, or an individual crossing the border to steal an item and take it back to Mexico.

³¹“Camera” indicates that one of the remote cameras caught sight of an individual; “sign cut” indicates that an agent encountered foot prints that led him/her to believe that an unauthorized crossing took place; “credible source” indicates a report by a non-Border Patrol witness, who could be a local law enforcement agent, a citizen, or a ground sensor; “visual” indicates an agent actually witnessed an unauthorized crossing.

guidance may allow for comparison of sector performance and inform decisions regarding resource deployment for securing the southwest border.

Border Patrol Has Not Yet Developed Goals and Measures for Assessing Efforts and Identifying Resource Needs under the New Strategic Plan

Border Patrol does not yet have performance goals and measures in place necessary to define border security and determine the resources necessary to achieve it. Border Patrol officials said that they had planned to establish such goals and measures by fiscal year 2012, but these efforts have been delayed, and are contingent on developing and implementing key elements of its strategic plan. Further, Border Patrol is in the process of developing a plan for implementing key elements of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan that may be used to inform resource needs across locations, and expects to begin developing a process for assessing resource needs and informing deployment decisions across the southwest border once key elements of its strategic plan have been implemented in fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

Border Patrol Has Not Established Milestones and Time Frames for Developing Performance Goals and Measures

Border Patrol officials stated that the agency is in the process of developing performance goals and measures for assessing the progress of its efforts to secure the border between POEs and for informing the identification and allocation of resources needed to secure the border, but has not identified milestones and time frames for developing and implementing them. Since fiscal year 2011, DHS has used the number of apprehensions on the southwest border between POEs as an interim performance goal and measure for border security as reported in its *Annual Performance Report*. In February 2011, we testified that DHS intended to use this indicator as an interim performance goal and measure until it completed development of new border control performance goals and measures, which DHS officials expected to be in place by fiscal year 2012.³² However, as of September 2012, DHS had not yet issued new performance goals and measures for assessing border security or identified revised milestones and time frames for developing and implementing them.

³²See GAO, *Border Security: Preliminary Observations on Border Control Measures for the Southwest Border*, [GAO-11-374T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 15, 2011).

We previously testified that the interim goal and measure of number of apprehensions on the southwest border between POEs provides information on activity levels, but it does not inform program results or resource identification and allocation decisions, and therefore until new goals and measures are developed, DHS and Congress could experience reduced oversight and DHS accountability.³³ Further, studies commissioned by CBP have documented that the number of apprehensions bears little relationship to effectiveness because agency officials do not compare these numbers with the amount of cross-border illegal activity.³⁴

According to Border Patrol officials, establishing milestones and time frames for the development of performance goals and measures is contingent on the development of key elements of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, such as a risk assessment tool, and the agency's time frames for implementing these key elements—targeted for fiscal years 2013 and 2014—are subject to change. Specifically, under the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, the Border Patrol plans to continuously evaluate border security—and resource needs—by comparing changes in risk levels against available resources across border locations. Border Patrol officials stated the agency is in the process of identifying performance goals and measures that can be linked to these new risk assessment tools that will show progress and status in securing the border between POEs, and determine needed resources, but has not established milestones and time frames for developing and implementing goals and measures because the agency's time frames for implementing key elements of the plan are subject to change.³⁵ Standard practices in program management call for documenting the scope of a project as well as milestones and time frames for timely completion and implementation

³³See GAO, *Border Patrol Strategy: Progress and Challenges in Implementation and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-12-688T](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 8, 2012).

³⁴For example, see Homeland Security Institute, *Measuring the Effect of the Arizona Border Control Initiative* (Arlington, Va.: Oct. 18, 2005).

³⁵Border Patrol officials stated that DHS and Border Patrol have established a performance goal—linked to relevant measures—addressing border security that, as of October 2012, was being used as an internal management indicator. However, a DHS official said it has not been decided whether this goal and the associated measures will be publicly reported or used as an overall performance goal and measures for border security.

to ensure results are achieved.³⁶ These standard practices also call for project planning—such as identifying time frames—to be performed in the early phases of a program and recognize that plans may need to be adjusted along the way in response to unexpected circumstances. Time frames for implementing key elements of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan can change; however, milestones and time frames for the development of performance goals and measures could help ensure that goals and measures are completed in a timely manner. Moreover, milestones and time frames could better position CBP to monitor progress in developing and implementing goals and measures, which would provide DHS and Congress with information on the results of CBP efforts to secure the border between POEs and the extent to which existing resources and capabilities are appropriate and sufficient.

Border Patrol Is in the Process of Implementing Key Elements of the Strategic Plan and a Process for Assessing Resource Needs

Border Patrol headquarters officials stated that they were in the process of developing a plan for implementing key elements of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan that may be used to inform resource needs across locations, and expect to begin developing a process for assessing resource needs and informing deployment decisions across the southwest border once those key elements have been implemented. Border Patrol officials said that they planned to develop and implement key elements of the new strategic plan in fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

Implementation of the New Strategic Plan

According to Border Patrol officials, the Border Patrol 2012-2016 Strategic Plan identifies several key elements that are to inform agency resource needs and deployment decisions. Border Patrol officials reported in September 2012 that they were in the process of developing an implementation plan that is to lay out how key elements of the new strategic plan are to be implemented. Border Patrol officials reported that, in general, key elements of the strategic plan are to be developed and implemented during fiscal years 2013 and 2014. According to agency officials, key strategic plan elements to be addressed by the implementation plan that are to inform agency resource needs and deployment decisions include (1) a process for identifying risk that is to inform resource decisions, (2) the enhancement of mobile response capabilities to redeploy resources to address the shifts in threat, and (3)

³⁶The Project Management Institute, *The Standard for Program Management*© (Newtown Square, Penn., 2006).

an approach to integrate partner resources and contributions to enhance Border Patrol capabilities (“whole-of-government” approach).³⁷ Border Patrol officials told us that these elements are interdependent and must be developed, refined, and disseminated to the field to strengthen the effectiveness of the new strategic plan. According to these officials, delays in the development of one element would likely affect the development of others. For example, delays in implementing the new risk assessment tools could affect sectors’ ability to identify appropriate responses to changing levels of risk.

- **Risk assessment tools.** In September 2012, Border Patrol officials said they were in the process of developing two tools that are to be used in the field to identify and manage risk under the agency’s new risk management approach. The first tool for assessing risk is the Operational Implementation Plan (OIP), a qualitative process that prioritizes sector evaluations of border security threats and identifies potential responses. Border Patrol is developing a second tool—a quantitative model called the Integrated Mission Analysis Tool (IMAT)—that is to, among other things, assess risk and capability by predicting and identifying the need for various courses of action, such as the rapid response of resources to the highest risks. Actions are to be assessed based on a comparison of agency capability with risk. In contrast to the OIP, the IMAT is to be completed at the zone level by stations; consolidated station outputs may then be used by sectors to inform the OIP process. The IMAT is to use data from various sources to develop a “Border Assessment of Threat” of known or potential threats by zone and compare that assessment with a point-in-time operational assessment of each sector’s capability to determine to what extent current capability—including resources—matches the

³⁷Other key elements of the new strategic plan that might inform resource decision making are “Change Detection Capability” (a tactical strategy to evaluate low-threat areas for changes in threat levels and increase situational awareness), “Leverage Technology” (the process whereby Border Patrol manages requirements for existing and emerging technology based on mission and capability gaps), and “Targeted Enforcement” (the use of intelligence and analysis to focus deployment of capabilities to prevent and disrupt terrorist and transnational threats). According to Border Patrol officials, these elements are to be developed through the application of multiple processes, such as the agency’s new risk model and its overall process for assessing resource needs.

perceived risk.³⁸ On the basis of the outcome, the station can then choose from various predetermined courses of action to address the perceived level of risk, such as reallocating resources or leveraging external—law enforcement partner—resources.³⁹ Once the IMAT is fully implemented, Border Patrol plans for the resulting outputs to be used to reassess and inform OIP decision making; information from both systems is to be used to inform resource needs and deployment decisions after the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan has been implemented.

According to Border Patrol officials, both the OIP and the IMAT are to identify risk and potential responses at the sector level. However, these tools will not allow Border Patrol to assess and prioritize risks and response options across sectors.⁴⁰ Moreover, agency officials said that when the IMAT is fully deployed, in fiscal year 2014, it will not have the capacity to differentiate among threats related to terrorists and their weapons, drugs and other illegal contraband, and illegal migration (such as recidivism, in which individuals repeatedly cross the border illegally). Border Patrol officials said the agency plans to explore mechanisms for developing these capabilities—assessing risk across sectors and differentiating threat—once OIP and IMAT have been developed and implemented in fiscal year 2014. According to Border Patrol headquarters officials, as of August 2012, the agency was in the process of pilot testing the OIP and the IMAT in the field and expected to begin to initially implement the OIP and populate the IMAT through a web-based program that will record baseline data on threat and operational conditions throughout fiscal year 2013.

³⁸According to Border Patrol officials, the IMAT is to be developed by surveying stations to assess capabilities and assets. Once it is implemented, the field surveys are to be updated once every quarter, or as needed, with threat intelligence and other data to assess risk levels. CBP components and law enforcement partners are to be identified in “partnership” assessments, and their resources and capabilities are to be considered but not specifically assessed.

³⁹For example, if risk is greater than sector capability, Border Patrol could choose to deploy urgent solutions or develop new capabilities based on the nature of the risk.

⁴⁰According to Border Patrol officials, the IMAT can aggregate risks and capabilities at the station, sector, and agency levels, but zones, stations, and sectors must be adjacent to one another to allow comparison.

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- **Rapid deployment of resources.** A second key element of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan is to increase mobility and rapid deployment of personnel and resources to quickly counter and interdict threats based on shifts in smuggling routes and tactical intelligence. As we testified in May 2012, CBP reported expanding the training and response capabilities of the Border Patrol's specialized response teams to support domestic and international intelligence-driven and antiterrorism efforts as well as other special operations.⁴¹ Additionally, Border Patrol officials stated that in fiscal year 2011, Border Patrol allocated 500 agent positions to provide a national group of organized, trained, and equipped Border Patrol agents who are capable of rapid movement to regional and national incidents in support of high-priority CBP missions. However, we testified in May 2012 that Border Patrol officials had not fully assessed to what extent the redeployment of existing resources would be sufficient to meet security needs, or when additional resources would need to be requested.⁴² In September 2012, Border Patrol officials said they had not yet developed a process for assessing the need for, or implementation of, rapid deployment of existing resources to mitigate changing risk levels along the border, but expected to do so after programs and processes—key elements—identified in the strategic plan have been more fully developed. In the interim, deployment decisions—such as the redeployment of agents and mobile technology to border areas identified as having greater, or unacceptable, levels of risk—are to be made at the sector level.
 - **Integrated partner resources.** A third key element of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan is the capability of Border Patrol and federal, state, local, and international partners working together to quickly and appropriately respond to changing threats through the timely and effective use of personnel and other resources.⁴³ According to the

⁴¹[GAO-12-688T](#).

⁴²Our review of Border Patrol operational assessments showed that Border Patrol reported difficulty maintaining border control in areas from which resources had been redeployed. Border Patrol stations within six of the nine southwest border sectors reported that agent deployment to other stations have affected their own deployment and enforcement activities. See [GAO-12-688T](#).

⁴³Border Patrol officials stated that the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan is predicated on Border Patrol and federal, state, local, tribal, and international partners working together to use a risk-based approach to secure the border, and therefore an assessment of capability is to include the leveraging of all partner resources, including CBP component resources.

new strategic plan, this “whole of government” approach will be achieved through various efforts, including the expansion of operational integration (the combining of best practices, capabilities and strategies among partners) and jointly planned targeted operations (the leveraging of combined partner assets to address risks), the development and fusion of intelligence, and the creation of integrated partnerships (the sharing of resources, plans, and operations among partners). In December 2010, we recommended that CBP develop policy and guidance necessary to identify, assess, and integrate available partner resources in its operational assessments and resource planning documents.⁴⁴ CBP concurred with this recommendation, but as of June 2012, Border Patrol had not yet required partner resources to be incorporated into operational assessments or into documents that inform the resource planning process.⁴⁵ Border Patrol headquarters officials said that the agency has yet to finalize interim milestones for integrating partner resources into Border Patrol operational assessments and resource planning documents because it is still in the process of determining how partner resources are to be integrated; however, Border Patrol plans to have a process in place for that purpose in fiscal year 2014.

Process for Assessing Resource Needs

According to Border Patrol officials, since the beginning of fiscal year 2011, as the agency began transitioning from the 2004 resource-based strategy to the 2012-2016 risk-based strategic plan, the Border Patrol has been using an interim process for assessing the need for additional personnel, infrastructure, and technology in agency sectors. Border Patrol officials said that resource needs using this interim process are intended to maintain the current status of border security, and will be used until key elements of the strategic plan—such as the OIP and the IMAT—that are necessary to develop a new process have been implemented in fiscal years 2013 and 2014. Under this interim process, Border Patrol has maintained, with some exceptions, personnel and resource levels

⁴⁴GAO, *Border Security: Enhanced DHS Oversight and Assessment of Interagency Coordination Is Needed for the Northern Border*, [GAO-11-97](#) (Washington, D.C.: Dec. 17, 2010).

⁴⁵According to Border Patrol officials, CBP components and law enforcement partners are identified in “partnership assessments”; partner resources and capabilities are taken into account, but not specifically assessed.

established in fiscal year 2010, the last year in which operational control was used as a performance goal and measure for border security.⁴⁶

According to Border Patrol officials, under the new risk management approach, the need for additional resources will be determined in terms of unacceptable levels of risk caused by illegal activity across border locations. Moreover, in considering ways to mitigate elevated risk levels, Border Patrol will look to mechanisms other than resource enhancement for expanding capacity, such as the rapid redeployment of resources from locations with lower risk levels and the leveraging of partner resources (i.e., a “whole of government” approach). Border Patrol officials said that use of the new risk assessment tools—the OIP and the IMAT—in making decisions for resource requests will be made at the sector level. Until a new process for identifying resource needs has been developed, sectors will continue to use annual operational assessments to reflect specific objectives and measures for accomplishing annual sector priorities, as well as identifying minimum budgetary requirements necessary to maintain the current status of border security in each sector.

Border Patrol headquarters officials said that the resource levels established at the end of fiscal year 2012 are to serve as a baseline against which future needs are assessed, and that the personnel and infrastructure in place across the southwest border by the end of fiscal year 2012 should be sufficient to support the agency’s transition to a risk-based strategy for securing the border. Key elements—such as the OIP and the IMAT—of the strategic plan are necessary to evaluate the need for resources; until these elements are in place, Border Patrol sectors are to continue to request resources they have identified as necessary to maintain the current status of border security. However, our review of Border Patrol’s fiscal year 2012 operational assessments showed that sectors have continued to show concerns about resource availability. For example, all nine southwest border sectors reported a need for new or replacement technology to detect and track illegal activity, six southwest border sectors reported a need for additional infrastructure (such as all-

⁴⁶According to Border Patrol officials, in fiscal year 2011, some sectors received additional resources that were allocated in prior years as part of Border Patrol’s plans to attain operational control at the southwest border. Of these, Tucson sector was the largest recipient, receiving an additional 500 agent positions and additional technology and border infrastructure. Border Patrol officials said that beginning in fiscal year 2010, Tucson sector was designated as a high-priority area, with an emphasis on reducing the high levels of estimated known illegal entries, apprehensions, and seizures.

weather roads), and eight southwest border sectors reported a need for additional agents to maintain or attain an acceptable level of border security.⁴⁷ Border Patrol officials stated that at the time these operational assessments were developed—in fiscal year 2011—the agency had yet to transition to the new risk-management approach under the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan and sectors were continuing to assess resource needs according to the 2004 resource-based model.⁴⁸ According to these officials, Border Patrol has determined that for fiscal year 2013 resource levels for most of the southwest border will remain constant, with the exception of the Tucson and Rio Grande Valley sectors, because of budget constraints. Border Patrol officials stated that the agency recognizes the need to develop a new process for assessing resource needs under the new risk management focus of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan and that this process will be different from the prior system, which focused on increasing resources and activities at the border rather than using existing resources to manage risk. As Border Patrol is in the initial stages of developing and implementing the key elements of its 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, it is too early to assess how Border Patrol will identify the level of resources needed to secure the border under the new plan.

Conclusions

Securing the nation's borders against the evolving threat of terrorism and transnational crime is essential to the protection of the nation. Recognizing the importance of establishing secure national borders, DHS has dramatically increased resources and activities at the southwest border over the past several years to deter illegal border crossings and secure the border.

With increased levels of resources and activities now in place, Border Patrol intends to transition from a resource-based approach to securing the nation's borders to a risk management approach that seeks to leverage existing resources to manage risk. Given the nation's ongoing need to identify and balance competing demands for limited resources, linking necessary resource levels to desired outcomes is critical to

⁴⁷For example, one southwest border station reported a need for fixed and movable technology to secure the remote and rugged terrain, reporting that without this technology, rapid response was often impossible.

⁴⁸According to Border Patrol officials, under the operational control performance goal and measure, sector operational assessments were used to identify resources needed in the following fiscal year to attain operational control at the border.

informed decision making. Accordingly, milestones and time frames—established as soon as possible—for the development of performance goals that define the levels of security—or risk—to be achieved at the border could help ensure that goals are developed in a timely manner. The establishment of such goals could help guide future border investment and resources decisions. Similarly, milestones and time frames for developing and implementing performance measures under the new strategic plan that are linked to the Border Patrol’s goal for securing the border could better ensure accountability and oversight of the agency’s programs by better positioning it to show progress in completing its efforts. Once established, border security performance goals and measures would also support Border Patrol’s efforts to assess whether the key elements—programs and processes—of its new strategic plan have brought the agency closer to its strategic goal of securing the border.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To support the implementation of Border Patrol’s 2012-2016 Strategic Plan and identify the resources needed to achieve the nation’s strategic goal for securing the border, we recommend that the Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection ensure that the Chief of the Office of Border Patrol establish milestones and time frames for developing

- a performance goal, or goals, for border security between the POEs that defines how border security is to be measured and
- a performance measure, or measures—linked to a performance goal or goals—for assessing progress made in securing the border between POEs and informing resource identification and allocation efforts.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to DHS for review and comment. DHS provided written comments, which are reproduced in full in appendix X, and technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. DHS concurred with our recommendations for the agency to establish milestones and time frames for developing performance goals and measures for border security between the POEs, and stated that it plans to establish such milestones and time frames by November 30, 2013. Establishing these milestones and time frames would meet the intent of our recommendations, but doing so as soon as possible, as we reported, would better position CBP to monitor progress in developing and implementing goals and measures, which would provide DHS and

Congress with information on the results of CBP efforts to secure the border between POEs and the extent to which existing resources and capabilities are appropriate and sufficient. Further, DHS indicated that Border Patrol cannot unilaterally develop a performance goal for border security and define how it is to be measured, but can develop performance goals that will likely become key components of an overarching goal for border security. Since our recommendations were directed at Border Patrol establishing milestones and time frames for developing such goals and measures focused on border security between the POEs, we believe that DHS's proposed actions for Border Patrol in this area would meet the intent of our recommendations, as Border Patrol has primary responsibility for securing the border between POEs. Such actions would help provide oversight and accountability for border security between the POEs, support the implementation of Border Patrol's 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, and help identify the resources needed to achieve the goal for securing the border.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days after its issue date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to the Secretary of Homeland Security and interested congressional committees, as appropriate. The report will also be available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8777 or gablerr@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix XI.



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Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The report addresses the following three questions:

- What do data show about apprehensions across the southwest border, and in the Tucson sector in particular, and what other types of data, if any, does Border Patrol collect that inform changes in the status of border security?
- How does the Tucson sector schedule agent deployment compared with deployment in other southwest border sectors and to what extent do the data show these deployments have been effective in securing the border?
- To what extent has Border Patrol developed mechanisms to identify resources needed to secure the border under its new strategic plan?

In conducting our work, we gathered information and interviewed officials from the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Office of Border Patrol. Specifically, we analyzed agency data related to Border Patrol performance and cross-border threats; policy, planning, and budget documents; sector operational assessments; border security reports; operations manuals; and strategic plans provided by Border Patrol.¹ We interviewed Border Patrol headquarters officials regarding data collection and analysis procedures, strategic planning, operational assessments, and border security programs and activities. We obtained relevant data from DHS and Border Patrol databases for fiscal years 2006 through 2011. We chose this time period because fiscal year 2006 was the first full year for which data were available following Border Patrol's implementation of its 2004 National Border Patrol Strategy (2004 Strategy). To assess the reliability of these data, we spoke with Border Patrol headquarters officials who oversee the maintenance and analyses of the data and with select sector and station officials regarding guidance and processes for

¹According to Border Patrol officials, Border Patrol sectors biannually develop operational assessments that identify and justify requests for additional resources to maintain or increase security in their areas of responsibility. These assessments are part of Border Patrol's Operational Requirements Based Budget Process, a standardized national planning process that links sector- and station-level planning, operations, and budgets. These assessments are developed by Border Patrol sectors; CBP has divided geographic responsibility for the southwest border—between land ports of entry (POE)—among nine Border Patrol sectors. Each sector has a headquarters staffed with management personnel and each includes a varying number of stations, with agents responsible for patrolling within defined geographic areas.

collecting and reporting data in regard to apprehensions of illegal entrants, seizures of drugs and other contraband, and scheduling the deployment of agents tracked in a Border Patrol database. We determined that these data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

We conducted visits to five of the nine Border Patrol sectors on the southwest border—San Diego sector, California; Yuma sector, Arizona; Tucson sector, Arizona; El Paso sector, Texas; and Rio Grande Valley sector, Texas. We selected these sectors based on differences in (1) the level of threat as defined by Border Patrol data, (2) agency priorities for resource deployment, (3) the level of operational control achieved in fiscal year 2010, (4) the use of enforcement strategies deemed successful by the Border Patrol in reducing cross-border illegal activity, and (5) varied terrain.² Within these sectors we selected 21 Border Patrol stations to visit based on factors such as the level of cross-border illegal activity as defined by Border Patrol data and unique characteristics such as terrain and topography. We visited both “border stations”—those having international border miles—and “interior stations”—those without international border miles. Because Border Patrol officials identified the Tucson sector as the highest-priority sector for resource deployment in fiscal year 2011 and it had the highest level of cross-border illegal activity, we conducted site visits to each of the eight stations. (See table 1 for the Border Patrol sectors and stations we visited and the location of each station relative to the border.) While we cannot generalize the conditions we found at these Border Patrol sectors and stations to all southwest border locations, they provided us with an overall understanding of the range of operating conditions across the southwest border, as well as differences in how sectors and stations assess border security and deploy resources.

²From fiscal years 2005 through 2010, DHS used operational control as its performance goal and outcome measure for assessing security of the border between the ports of entry. The extent of operational control—also referred to as effective control—was defined as the number of border miles where Border Patrol had the capability to detect, respond to, and interdict cross-border illegal activity. We analyzed the operational control status for each of the southwest border sectors as of the end of fiscal year 2010, the last year for which DHS used operational control as a measure of border security.

Table 1: Southwest Border Patrol Sectors and Stations Visited by GAO, by Border Patrol Sector

Sector	Stations
San Diego	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chula Vista (border station) • Brown Field (border station) • San Clemente (interior station)
Yuma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yuma (border station) • Wellton (border station)
Tucson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ajo (border station) • Casa Grande (border station) • Tucson (border station) • Nogales (border station) • Sonoita (border station) • Naco (border station)^a • Douglas (border station) • Willcox (interior station)
El Paso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lordsburg (border station) • El Paso (border station) • Fabens (border station) • Fort Hancock (border station)
Rio Grande Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rio Grande City (border station) • McAllen (border station) • Harlingen (border station) • Brownsville (border station)

Source: GAO.

^aIn May 2012 the Naco station was renamed the Brian A. Terry Border Patrol Station (Brian A. Terry Memorial Act, Pub. L. No 112-113, 126 Stat. 334 (2012)).

In each location we observed conditions, including the use of personnel, technology, and infrastructure, and conducted semistructured interviews with Border Patrol sector and station officials.

To assess trends in apprehensions,³ seizures, and other types of data Border Patrol uses to inform changes in the status of border security across the southwest border and in the Tucson sector, we obtained Border Patrol data for fiscal years 2006 through 2011 from DHS and Border Patrol databases—apprehensions and seizure data from the Enforcement Integrated Database (EID) and estimated cross-border illegal activity data from the Border Patrol Enforcement Tracking System (BPETS).⁴ Because of the complexity and amount of the data sets we requested, Border Patrol queried apprehension and seizure data in two groups, with different run dates.⁵ We analyzed Border Patrol apprehension and seizure data by sector for each fiscal year to obtain an overall view of cross-border illegal activity over time and the types of threats in each sector. In addition, we analyzed apprehension data to identify the number of repeat offenders (recidivism rate) and aliens from special interest countries (ASIC) apprehended across years by sector, as indicators of the extent to which deportable aliens with increased levels of

³Although Border Patrol arrests both deportable aliens and nondeportable individuals whom they encounter during patrol activities, for the purposes of this report we define “apprehensions” to include only deportable aliens, in keeping with Border Patrol’s definition. According to the Immigration and Nationalization Act, deportable aliens include those who are inadmissible to the United States or present in violation of U.S. law, who have failed to maintain their status or violated the terms of their admission, or who have committed certain criminal offenses or engaged in terrorist activities, among others. (See 8 U.S.C. § 1227 for a complete list of the classes of deportable aliens.) In some cases, Border Patrol apprehends a deportable alien but turns the individual over to another agency prior to initiating a removal. Aliens with lawful immigration status and U.S. citizens would be considered nondeportable.

⁴The EID is a DHS-shared common database repository for several DHS law enforcement and homeland security applications. Data on apprehensions and seizures are held in the EID; data on scheduled deployment of agents are held in BPETS.

⁵Fiscal years 2010 and 2011 apprehension and seizure data were queried as of March 2012; data for fiscal years 2006 through 2009 data were queried as of April 2012. Border Patrol officials stated that any differences in our apprehension and seizure numbers and those of Border Patrol are due to variances in when the data were “queried,” or reported—i.e., Border Patrol reports apprehension and other data on an “end-of-year” basis, and therefore agency data do not reflect adjustments or corrections made after that reporting date.

associated risk were apprehended.⁶ For fiscal years 2010 and 2011, we also analyzed data showing the location of apprehensions, seizures, and apprehensions of ASICs relative to their distance from the border.⁷

We also analyzed data Border Patrol uses to assess estimated known illegal entries (cross-border illegal activity) within each sector.⁸ Although estimated known illegal entry data can be compared within a sector over time, these data cannot be compared or combined across sectors as discussed in this report. Because of the complexity and amount of data we requested, Border Patrol provided these data in two queries, with different run dates.⁹ We also interviewed relevant Border Patrol

⁶Our measurement of recidivism, using a rolling 3-fiscal year time period, is the percentage of apprehensions of deportable individuals in a given year who had previously been apprehended for illegally crossing the border in any of the previous 3 years, at any southwest border location. In contrast, Border Patrol calculates recidivism by dividing the total number of recidivists (individuals who have two or more apprehensions during a specified time period) by the total number of unique subjects (individuals who may account for one or multiple apprehensions, but are counted only once within a specified time period and location). We used four rolling 3-fiscal year time periods rather than Border Patrol's methodology because our analysis covered a 5-year period and required comparable time periods to assess recidivism in each fiscal year. Using a single time period would result in a bias given that some apprehensions in earlier years would be incorrectly classified as nonrecidivist.

⁷Border Patrol began mandating the collection of longitude and latitude coordinates for all apprehensions and seizures in May 2009, therefore fiscal year 2010 was the first full year for which these data were available. We used these data to determine how far away from the border apprehensions and seizures occurred within each southwest border sector in fiscal years 2010 and 2011. To perform these analyses, we compared Border Patrol data on the longitude and latitude of apprehensions and seizures with agency mapping data, which allowed us to determine distance from the border. Although we determined that the latitude and longitude coordinates for some apprehensions and seizures were invalid—e.g., they were identified as occurring outside U.S. national boundaries—the numbers were not significant and we determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report. Location data that were determined to be invalid were not included in our analysis.

⁸Border Patrol's estimate includes the number of deportable aliens who were apprehended as well as the number of individuals who illegally crossed the border but were not apprehended (individuals who either crossed back to Mexico—"turn backs"—or continued traveling to the U.S. interior and Border Patrol was no longer actively pursuing them—"got away"). Border Patrol refers to these data as "estimated illegal entries"—it does not identify the data as "known" entries because the agency does not estimate illegal entries for which it does not have reasonable support ("unknown" entries). However, to clarify that these estimates are based on what Border Patrol deems to be reasonable indications of cross-border illegal activity, we refer to them as "estimated known illegal entries."

⁹Apprehensions, turn back, and got away data for fiscal years 2006-2010 were queried on April 9, 2012. These data for fiscal year 2011 were queried on April 20, 2012.

headquarters and field officials regarding the maintenance of these data, and how the agency analyzes the data to inform the status of border security. In addition, we spoke or corresponded with 13 ranchers who operated in the Tucson sector at the time of our review to discuss border security issues. We selected these ranchers based on input from various entities, including Border Patrol and select organizations that are knowledgeable about border security issues. Because this selection of ranchers was a nonprobability sample, the results from our discussions cannot be generalized to other ranchers; however, what we learned from the ranchers we contacted provided a useful perspective on the issues addressed in this report.

To determine how the Tucson sector scheduled agent deployment compared with other southwest border sectors and to what extent the data showed these deployments had been effective in securing the border, we analyzed Border Patrol BPETS data regarding the scheduled deployment of agents, by sector, from fiscal years 2006 through 2011. We also analyzed to what extent agents were scheduled for deployment in “border zones”—those having international border miles—and “interior zones”—those without international border miles.¹⁰ Because of the complexity and amount of the data sets we requested, Border Patrol queried deployment data in two groups, with different run dates.¹¹

We also interviewed Border Patrol headquarters officials in the Planning, Analysis, and Enforcement Systems Branches regarding agency guidance and practices for allocating and deploying resources—personnel, technology, and infrastructure. In addition, we conducted semistructured interviews with Border Patrol sector and station officials regarding the processes used and factors considered when determining the deployment and redeployment of resources. Further, we analyzed data from fiscal years 2006 through 2011 that Border Patrol uses to calculate overall effectiveness within sectors and to determine if the appropriate mix of

¹⁰Border Patrol stations are geographically divided into border and interior zones.

¹¹Border Patrol has a database to track the scheduling of agent deployment in the field, which is to be updated to reflect the most recent deployment changes. Scheduled deployment data for fiscal year 2011 were queried as of March 2012, and data for fiscal years 2006 through 2010 were queried as of April 2012.

assets is being deployed and used effectively and efficiently.¹² We also interviewed Border Patrol headquarters and station officials regarding agency practices for collecting and recording these data and how those practices may vary across sectors. As previously discussed, because of potential inconsistencies in how the data are collected, these data cannot be compared across sectors but can be compared within a sector over time as discussed in more detail in this report. In addition, we reviewed Border Patrol guidance issued in September 2012 regarding the collection and reporting of effectiveness data.

To assess to what extent Border Patrol has identified mechanisms for assessing resource needs under the 2012-2016 Border Patrol Strategic Plan (2012-2016 Strategic Plan), we analyzed key elements of the strategic plan defined by Border Patrol. To gain a better understanding of Border Patrol's plans for developing and implementing key elements of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, including processes for identifying resource needs and the extent to which officials have identified interim milestones and time frames, we interviewed Border Patrol headquarters officials from the Planning and Analysis Branches, and analyzed relevant documents, such as Border Patrol planning and policy documents. We also reviewed standard practices in program management for documenting the scope of a project, including milestones or time frames for project completion and implementation.¹³ To assess to what extent Border Patrol sectors and stations had identified the need for additional resources, we interviewed sector and station officials and analyzed southwest border sector operational assessments for fiscal years 2010 and 2012. We analyzed operational assessments for fiscal year 2010 because that was the last fiscal year in which DHS used operational control as a performance goal and measure, and for fiscal year 2012 because it was the most current fiscal year available at the time we conducted our analysis.

¹²Border Patrol's formula for calculating overall effectiveness adds the number of apprehensions and turns backs in a specific sector and divides this total by the total number of estimated known illegal entries, determined by adding total apprehensions, turns backs, and got aways for the sector.

¹³For example, The Project Management Institute, *The Standard for Program Management*© (Newtown Square, Penn., 2006).

We conducted this performance audit from June 2011 to December 2012 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix II: General Information about Border Patrol Sectors along the Southwest Border

Information in this appendix is also presented in figure 1. Table 2 describes, for each of the nine sectors on the southwest border, the (1) number of border miles and size, in square miles; (2) type of terrain; and (3) number and type (border or interior) of stations. Figures 13 through 16 illustrate the types of terrain that can be found in four of the nine sectors.

Table 2: Description of Border Patrol Sectors along the Southwest Border, Including Border Miles and Size, Terrain, and Stations

Sector	Border miles and size	Terrain	Stations
San Diego	About 60 land border miles and 114 coastal miles; approximately 56,830 square miles	The San Diego sector contains one of the most densely populated areas in the United States with more than 7 million people and includes the sixth largest city (San Diego) in the nation. Sector terrain includes beaches, estuaries, coastal plains, steep canyons and ravines, high desert, mountains over 6,000 feet in elevation, and sparsely populated remote and rural wilderness areas. The sector also includes environmentally sensitive and protected areas.	Eight Border Patrol stations (six border and two interior)
El Centro	About 70 land border miles; approximately 107,750 square miles	The El Centro sector contains many different environments from mountains on the west side to sand dunes on the east side of the sector. Terrain is largely composed of rugged mountains, agricultural areas, and low-lying desert areas. In addition, the geography of the sector also includes a designated wilderness area and several military reservations, as well as large areas of desert that have been designated as critical habitat for threatened species.	Four Border Patrol stations (two border and two interior)
Yuma	About 126 land border miles; approximately 181,670 square miles	The Yuma sector contains sandy desert terrain, mountains, and river valleys, as shown in figure 13. There are sand dunes and several mountain ranges with elevations over 4,000 feet. In addition, large portions of the Yuma sector fall within federal land and military reservations. The federal land and military ranges are highly sensitive areas, because of environmental issues and range safety concerns. During the monsoon season in late summer and early fall, rains and flash flooding normally occur.	Three Border Patrol stations (two border and one interior)
Tucson	About 260 land border miles; approximately 90,500 square miles	The Tucson sector contains many different environments, including mountain ranges and valleys, as shown in figure 14. Two major metropolitan areas exist within the sector's geography—Tucson and Phoenix. There are also several protected areas (federal lands) within the sector totaling approximately 12,080 square miles; some of these public lands are adjacent to the border (approximately 178 miles). The sector also contains two American Indian reservations, with one that includes 63 miles of border with Mexico.	Eight Border Patrol stations (seven border and one interior); one substation

**Appendix II: General Information about Border
Patrol Sectors along the Southwest Border**

Sector	Border miles and size	Terrain	Stations
El Paso	About 268 border miles (land and river border); approximately 125,000 square miles	The El Paso sector contains various types of terrain, including mountains and arid desert—with canyons, rocky hills, and mountains—rivers and deep, swift-moving irrigation canals and an urban metropolitan area, as shown in figure 15. The sector covers border miles in both New Mexico and Texas. The El Paso sector has responsibility for 88 miles of river border and 180 miles of land border. The washes and playas (dry lakebeds) in the sector are susceptible to flash flooding during the July-October monsoon season.	Eleven Border Patrol Stations (seven border and four interior)
Big Bend	About 510 land border miles; approximately 165,150 square miles	The Big Bend sector contains terrain that varies from dry sandy desert to cedar- and oak-covered hills and also includes remote and rugged mountainous terrain, ranging from elevations of 2,800 to 8,000 feet above sea level. The sector also contains a border river area, which includes areas of thick vegetation. The Big Bend sector contains the most border miles of all the Border Patrol sectors on the southwest border.	Ten Border Patrol stations (seven border and three interior); two substations (one border and one interior)
Del Rio	About 210 border miles (river border); approximately 59,540 square miles	The Del Rio sector contains terrain that varies from rugged canyons and steep hills to rolling hills and flatland. The Rio Grande cuts through deep canyons within the sector and the Rio Grande, which establishes the international boundary, is oriented predominantly north to south. The greater part of the Del Rio sector is sparsely populated and consists of mostly farms and ranches.	Nine Border Patrol stations (five border and four interior); one interior substation
Laredo	About 171 border miles (river border); approximately 88,460 square miles	The Laredo sector contains terrain that varies from rolling to steep hills, generally covered with brush. Elevations range from 400 feet at the international border to 900 feet in the northern part of the sector. Several deep arroyos, washouts, and creeks provide drainage into the Rio Grande, which runs along the international border. The area in the northern part of the sector—including the Dallas/Fort Worth area—is mostly an urban environment containing over 5 million inhabitants.	Nine Border Patrol stations (four border and five interior)
Rio Grande Valley	About 316 border miles (river and coastal border); approximately 18,580 square miles	The Rio Grande Valley sector contains terrain that varies from a mixture of rural farmland and ranchland to densely populated metropolitan areas, as shown in figure 16. The sector includes a large coastal shoreline, a large population base, and a well-established infrastructure on both sides of its international border. The Rio Grande Valley sector's easternmost boundary is composed entirely of Gulf of Mexico shoreline.	Nine Border Patrol stations (seven border and two interior)

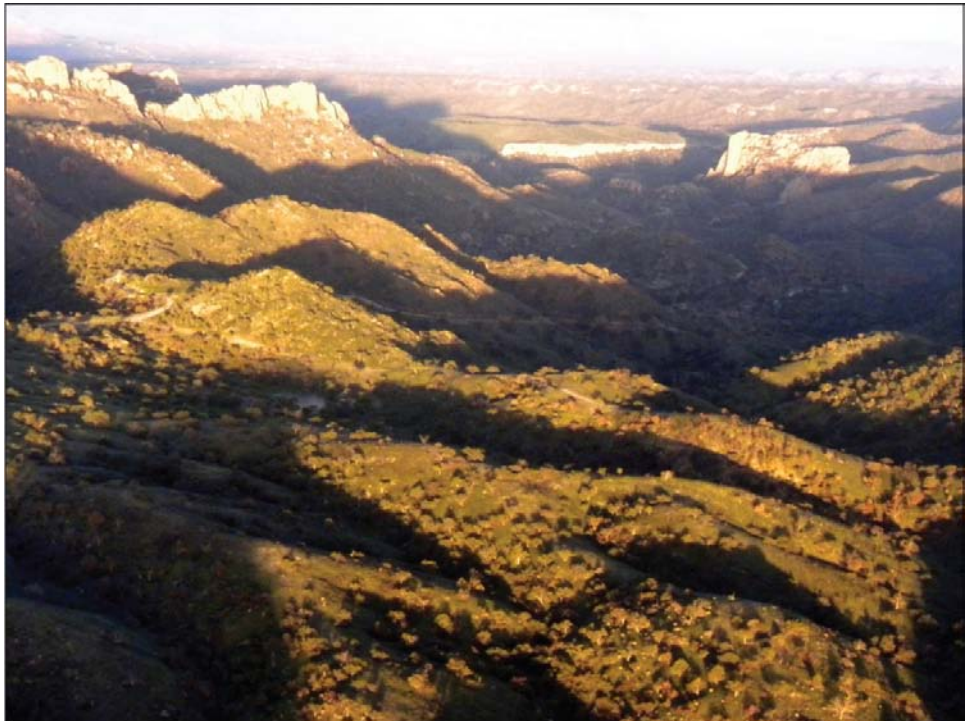
Source: GAO analysis of Border Patrol operational assessments.

Figure 13: Example of Terrain in the Yuma Sector



Source: GAO.

Figure 14: Example of Terrain in the Tucson Sector



Source: GAO.

Figure 15: Example of Terrain in the El Paso Sector, with the United States on the Left of the Border Fence and Mexico on the Right



Source: GAO.

Figure 16: Example of Terrain in the Rio Grande Valley Sector



Source: GAO.

Appendix III: General Information about Border Patrol Stations and Zones in the Tucson Sector

Information in this appendix is also presented in figure 2. Table 3 describes, for each of the eight stations in the Tucson sector, the (1) number of border miles and size, in square miles; (2) type of terrain; and (3) number and type (border or interior) of zones, and their distance from the border. Figures 17 through 23 illustrate the types of terrain that can be found in seven of the eight stations in the Tucson sector.

Table 3: Descriptions of Border Patrol Stations and Zones in the Tucson Sector, including Border Mileage and Size, Terrain, and Number of Zones by Distance from the Border

Station	Border miles and size	Terrain	Zones by distance from the border
Ajo	About 68 border miles; approximately 9,240 square miles	The Ajo station contains a vast desert with mountainous terrain with varying amounts of undergrowth, as shown in figure 17. The Ajo station terrain also includes environmentally sensitive and protected lands. Portions of the station area of responsibility also include an American Indian reservation.	Nine border zones; 0 to 68 miles from the border Three interior zones; 24 to 159 miles from the border
Casa Grande	About 40 border miles; approximately 41,500 square miles	The Casa Grande station contains terrain that varies from rocky terrain and mountainous regions to flat desert, as shown in figure 18. There are only a few small villages or ranches on both sides of the border. The majority of the Casa Grande station area of responsibility also includes an American Indian reservation.	Six border zones; 0 to 37 miles from the border Five interior zones; 17 to 392 miles from the border
Tucson	About 24 border miles; approximately 3,790 square miles	The Tucson station contains terrain that varies from open valleys to rugged mountains and is covered with various forms of desert shrubs, as shown in figure 19. The majority of the station area of responsibility also contains federal lands and portions of an American Indian reservation. A major metropolitan area exists within the station's geography—Tucson.	Three border zones; 0 to 42 miles from the border Four interior zones; 25 to 81 miles from the border
Nogales	About 30 border miles; approximately 1,800 square miles	The Nogales station contains terrain that varies from high desert terrain with rugged mountains to rolling hills with numerous deep canyons, as shown in figure 20. The station area of responsibility also includes small rural communities and individual ranch houses with a significant portion of the station's area of responsibility on federal lands.	Four border zones; 0 to 28 miles from the border One interior zone; 11 to 29 miles from the border
Sonoita	About 27 border miles; approximately 665 square miles	The Sonoita station contains terrain that varies from mountain ranges to hilly terrain, including a grassland valley with many arroyos and creeks, as shown in figure 21. The station's area of responsibility includes federal lands and the majority of the land in the Sonoita area of responsibility is under federal or private ownership.	Four border zones; 0 to 37 miles from the border No interior zones

Appendix III: General Information about Border Patrol Stations and Zones in the Tucson Sector

Station	Border miles and size	Terrain	Zones by distance from the border
Naco ^a	About 33 border miles; approximately 1,175 square miles	The Naco station contains terrain that varies from deep desert washes that form an extensive drainage network during monsoon season, to rugged mountains that consist of heavy brush and steep, rocky canyons, and a mixture of sparse vegetation and desert grasslands, as shown in figure 22. The elevation within the station area of responsibility ranges from 3,600 feet to 9,466 feet.	Five border zones; 0 to 12 miles from the border Three interior zones; 3 to 37 miles from the border
Douglas	About 41 border miles; approximately 1,385 square miles	The Douglas station contains terrain that includes rugged, steep, rocky, high-elevation desert terrain and low-lying valleys of moderate vegetation, as shown in figure 23. A large mountain range splits the Douglas station area of responsibility in half. The station area of responsibility also includes the city of Douglas and rural areas where houses and ranches are present.	Six border zones; 0 to 29 miles from the border Six interior zones; 3 to 37 miles from the border
Willcox	No border miles; approximately 33,600 square miles	The Willcox station contains terrain that varies from valleys to flat low-lying desert, to rugged and steep mountain ranges. The Willcox station area of responsibility is bordered on either side by mountain ranges.	No border zones Four interior zones; 37 to 392 miles from the border

Source: GAO analysis of Border Patrol operational assessments and data.

^aIn May 2012 Naco Station was renamed the "Brian A. Terry Border Patrol Station" (Brian A. Terry Memorial Act, Pub. L. No 112-113, 126 Stat. 334 (2012)).

Figure 17: Example of Terrain in the Ajo Station Area of Responsibility



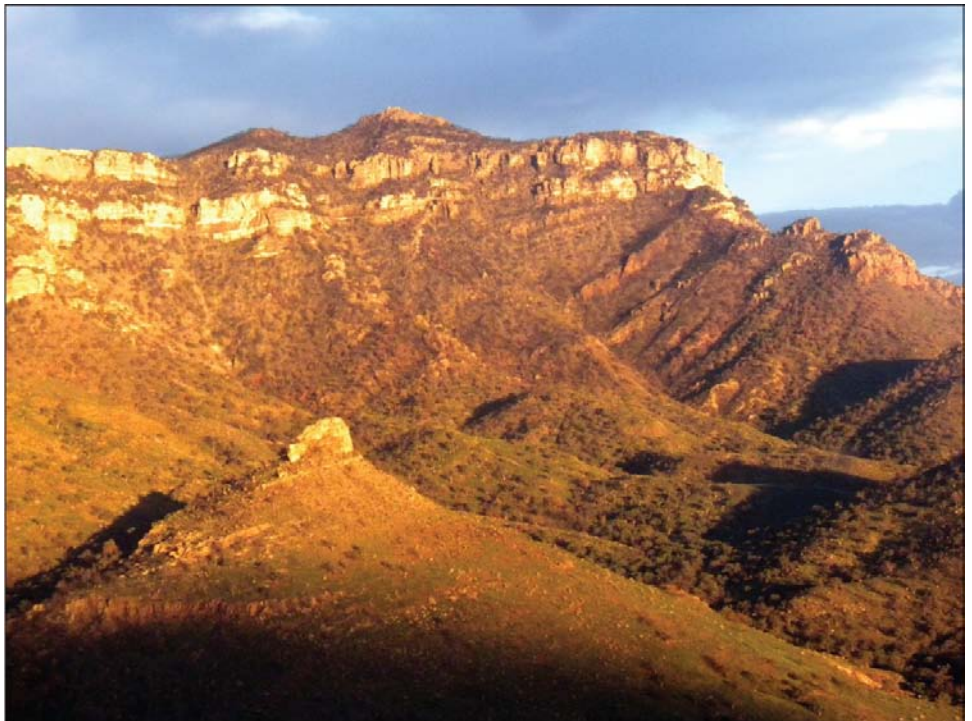
Source: GAO.

Figure 18: Example of Terrain in the Casa Grande Station Area of Responsibility, with the United States on the Right Side of the Border Fence and Mexico on the Left



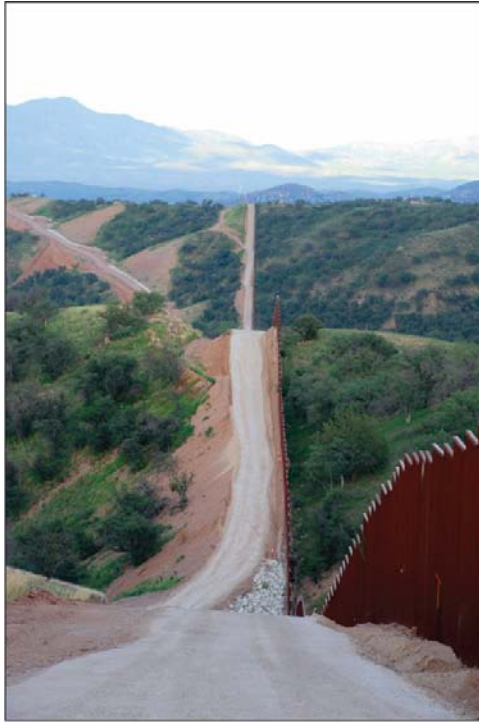
Source: GAO.

Figure 19: Example of Terrain in the Tucson Station Area of Responsibility



Source: GAO.

**Figure 20: Example of Terrain within the Nogales Station Area of Responsibility,
with the United States on the Left Side of the Border Fence and Mexico on the Right**



Source: GAO.

**Figure 21: Example of Terrain in the Sonoita Station Area of Responsibility near the
U.S. Border with Mexico**



Source: CBP.

Figure 22: Example of Terrain in the Naco Station Area of Responsibility near the U.S. Border with Mexico



Source: GAO.

Figure 23: Example of Terrain in the Douglas Station Area of Responsibility with the United States on the Left Side of the Border Fence and Mexico on the Right



Source: GAO.

Appendix IV: Comparison of Border Patrol's 2004 Strategy and 2012-2016 Strategic Plan

2004 National Border Patrol Strategy	2012-2016 Border Patrol Strategic Plan
<p>Strategic goal 1: Establish and maintain operational control of national borders</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish substantial probability of apprehending terrorists and their weapons • Deter illegal entries through improved enforcement with focus on priority areas identified by threat analysis • Detect, apprehend, deter smugglers • Leverage smart border technology as force multiplier • Reduce crime in border communities and improve quality of life and economic vitality through personnel deployment and community outreach 	<p>Strategic goal 1: Secure America's borders</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States between the ports of entry (POE) through improved and focused intelligence-driven operations, and operational integration, planning, and execution with law enforcement partners • Manage risk through the introduction and expansion of sophisticated tactics, techniques, and procedures, such as increased mobile response • Disrupt and degrade transnational criminal organizations by targeting enforcement efforts against highest-priority threats and expanding programs that reduce smuggling and smuggling-related crimes • Expand CBP's situational awareness at and between POEs and employ a "whole of government" approach • Increase community engagement by participating in community programs and engaging the public
<p>Strategic goal 2: Not applicable</p> <p>Objectives: Not applicable</p>	<p>Strategic goal 2: Strengthen the Border Patrol</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen investment in people and capabilities through improved education, training, and support of personnel • Reinforce employee support initiatives and programs that continue Border Patrol traditions • Address threats to organizational integrity and remain vigilant in training and promoting anticorruption initiatives • Improve organizational processes, systems, and doctrine by standardizing reporting and planning processes • Introduce improved tools to collect and analyze data to develop outcome measures • Enhance efficiency by improving planning, resource allocation, and acquisition processes

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Border Patrol documents.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

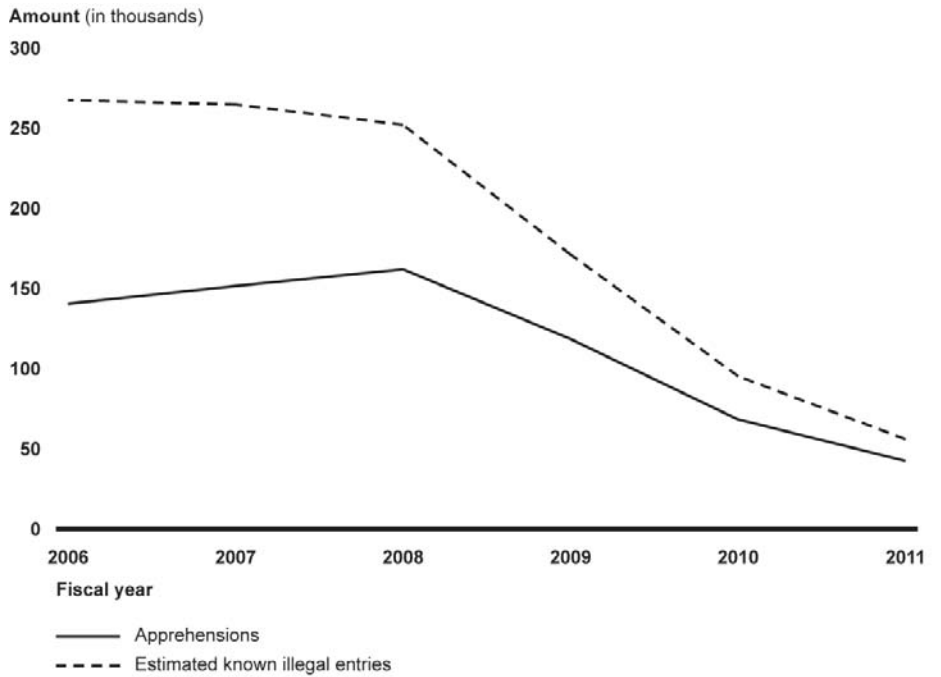
Border Patrol collects and analyzes various data on the number and types of entrants who illegally cross the southwest border between the land border ports of entry, including estimates on the total number of identified—or “known”—illegal entries. Border Patrol’s estimate of known illegal entries includes the number of illegal entrants who were apprehended as well as estimates of the number of entrants who illegally crossed the border but were not apprehended (individuals who either crossed back to Mexico—turn backs—or continued traveling to the U.S. interior and who Border Patrol ceased pursuing—got aways). These data are collectively referred to as known illegal entries because Border Patrol officials have what they deem to be a reasonable indication that the cross-border activity occurred.¹ Border Patrol uses the estimated known illegal entry data to inform tactical decision making within each of the nine southwest border sectors.

Border Patrol apprehensions and estimated known illegal entries decreased significantly across all nine southwest border sectors from fiscal years 2006 through 2011, as shown in figures 24 through 32. Apprehensions decreased by 46 percent or more across all the southwest border sectors. Over this same time period, the number of estimated known illegal entries also decreased by 28 percent or more across all southwest border sectors. Apprehensions as a percentage of estimated known illegal entries increased for six sectors over this time period.

¹Indications of illegal crossings are obtained through various sources such as direct agent observation, referrals from credible sources (such as residents), camera monitoring, and detection of physical evidence left on the environment from animal or human crossings. Border Patrol’s estimate of known illegal entries does not include estimates of illegal entries for which Border Patrol does not have reasonable support (collectively referred to as “unknown”), such as the number of illegal entries conducted through illicit cross-border tunnels. In such instances, no reasonable indication of an illegal crossing is identified.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

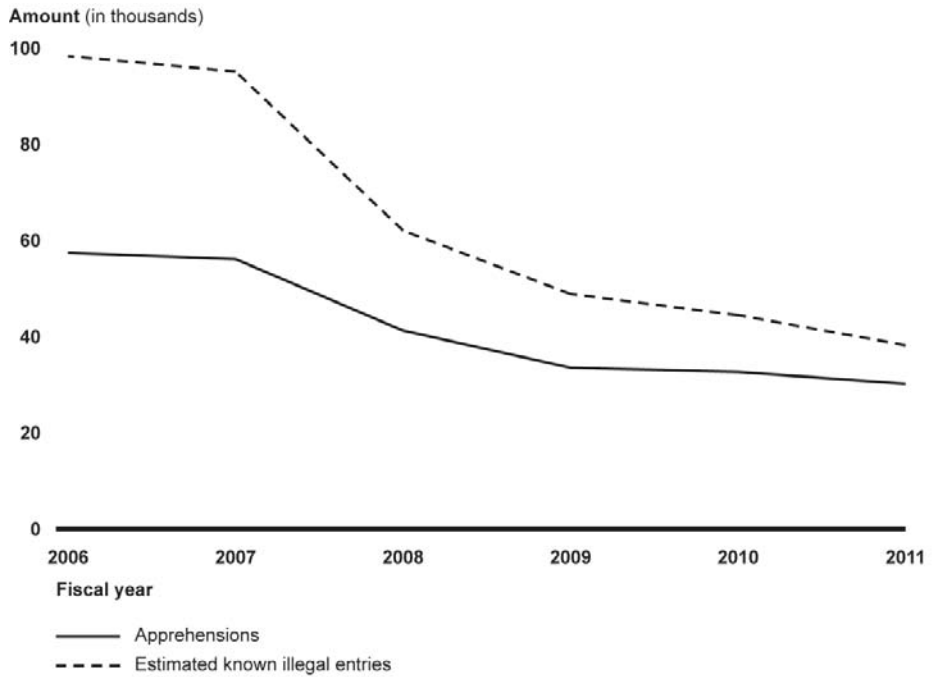
Figure 24: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the San Diego Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

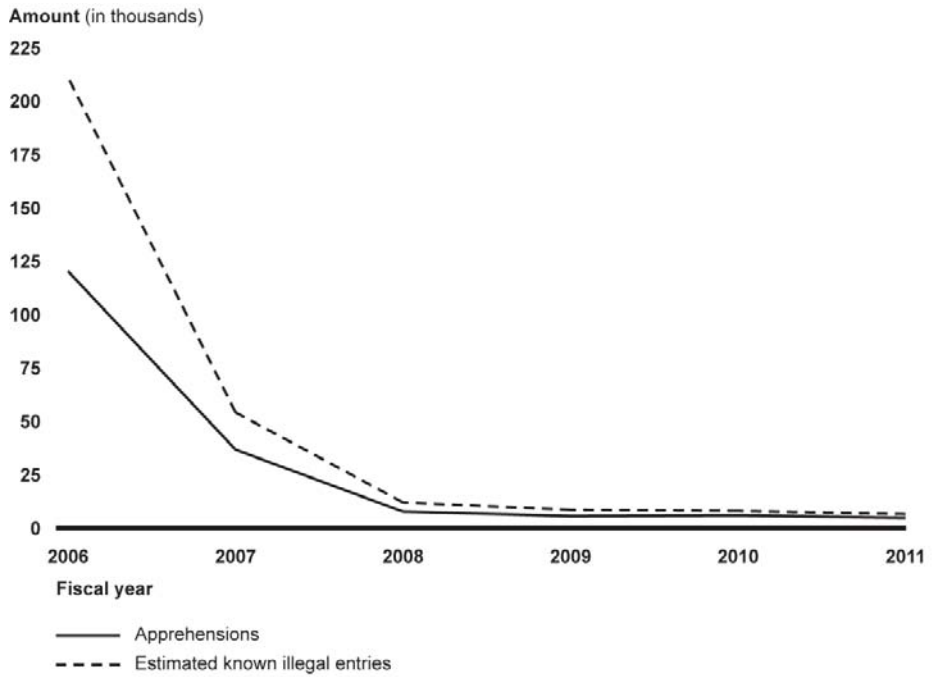
**Figure 25: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the
El Centro Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011**



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

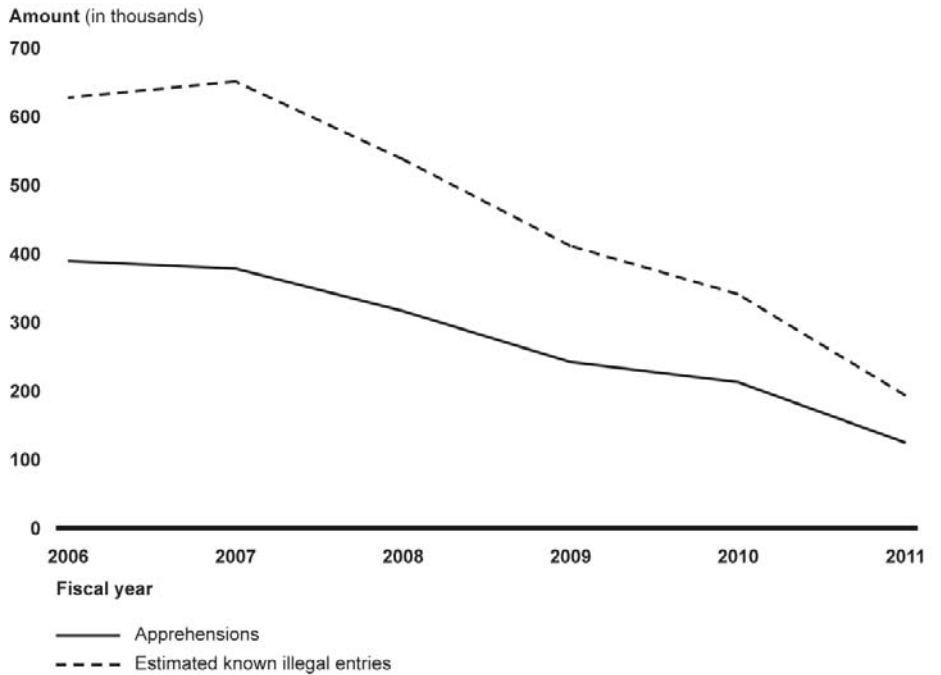
Figure 26: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Yuma Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

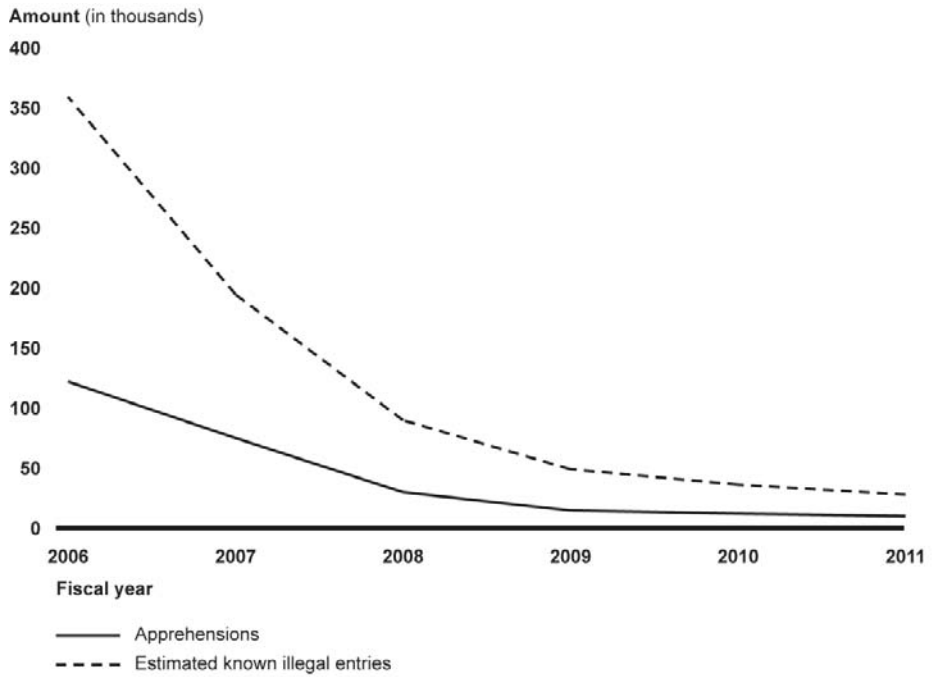
Figure 27: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Tucson Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

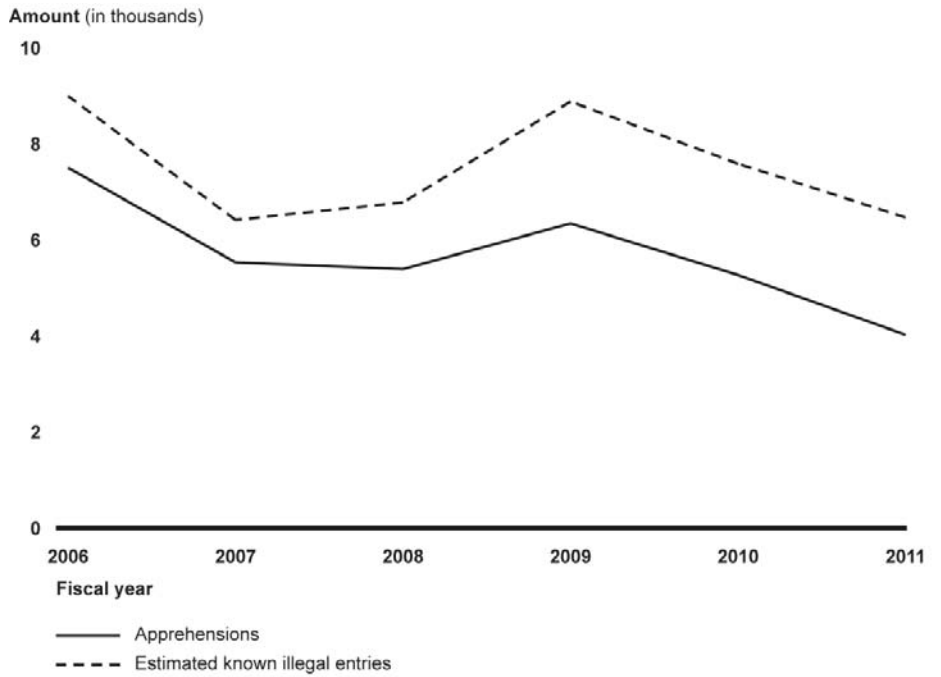
Figure 28: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the El Paso Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

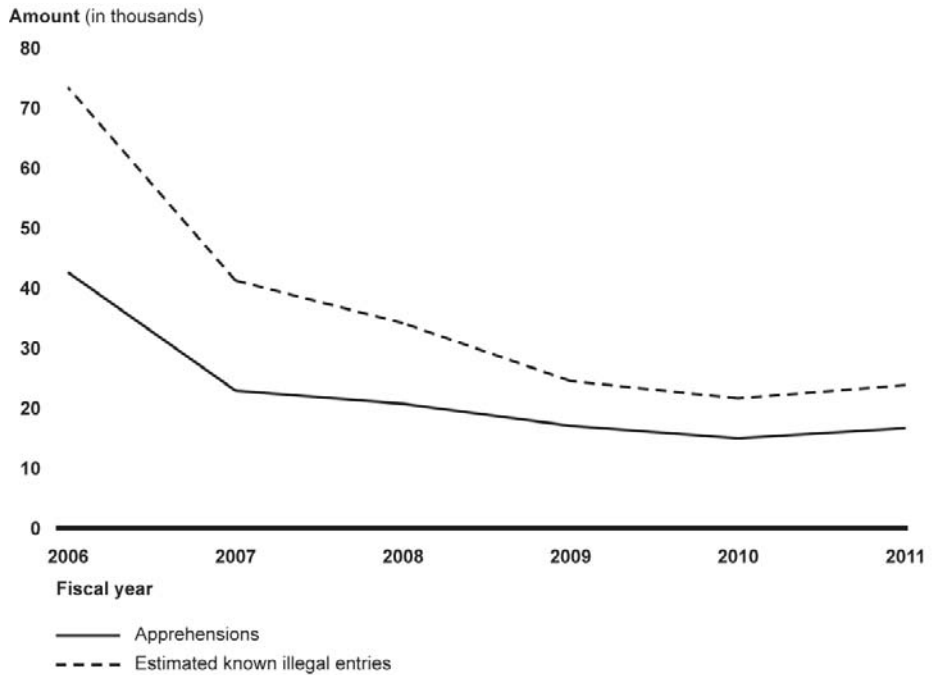
Figure 29: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Big Bend Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

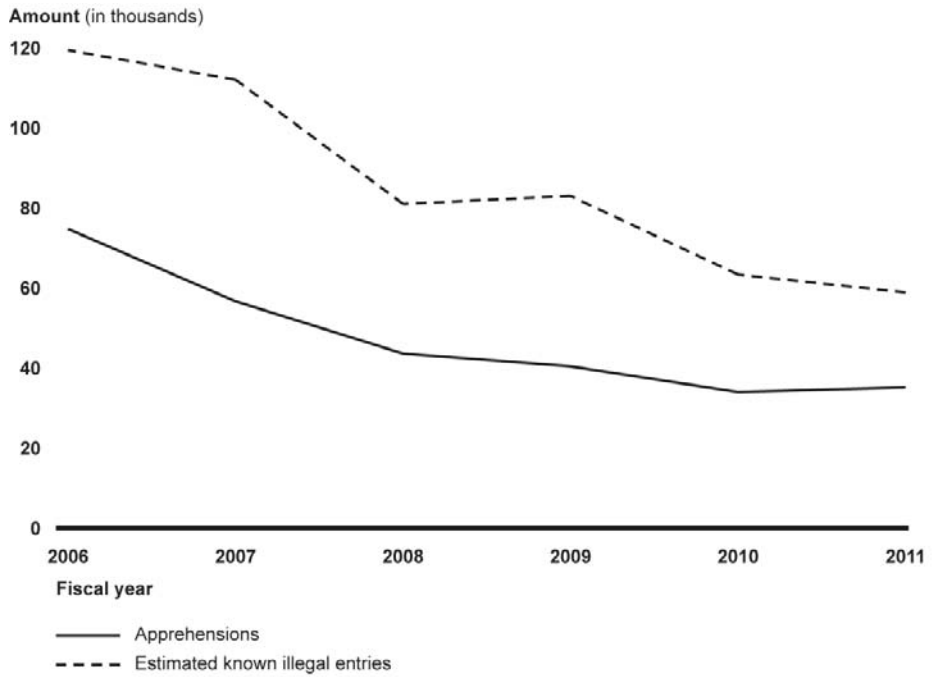
Figure 30: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Del Rio Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

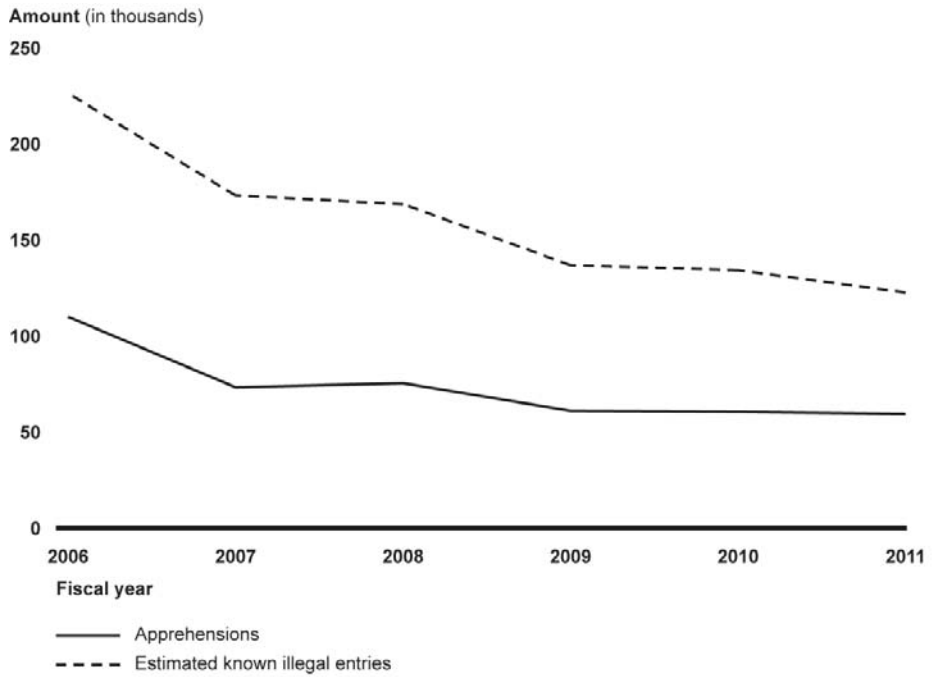
Figure 31: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Laredo Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix V: Border Patrol Estimated Known
Illegal Entries and Apprehensions by
Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Years
2006 through 2011

Figure 32: Border Patrol Apprehensions and Estimated Known Illegal Entries in the Rio Grande Valley Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

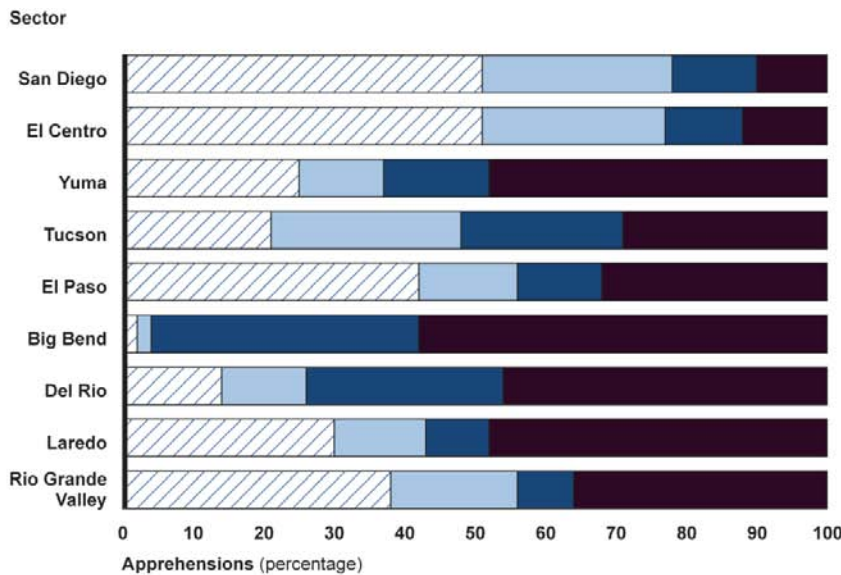


Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VI: Apprehensions by Southwest Border Patrol Sectors and Distance from the Border, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011

Border Patrol's 2004 Strategy recognized that both apprehensions and apprehending individuals closer to the border affect border security. Our analysis of Border Patrol data showed that apprehensions across the southwest border decreased by 69 percent from fiscal year 2006 to fiscal year 2011. Across the southwest border, from fiscal year 2010 to 2011, apprehensions within 5 miles of the border increased slightly, from 54 percent to 55 percent of total apprehensions. Apprehensions that occurred more than 20 miles from the border decreased slightly from fiscal year 2010 to 2011, from 28 percent to 26 percent across the southwest border. See figures 33 and 34 for apprehensions by southwest Border Patrol sector and distances from the border, for fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

Figure 33: Number and Percentage of Apprehensions across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Distance from the Border, Fiscal Year 2010



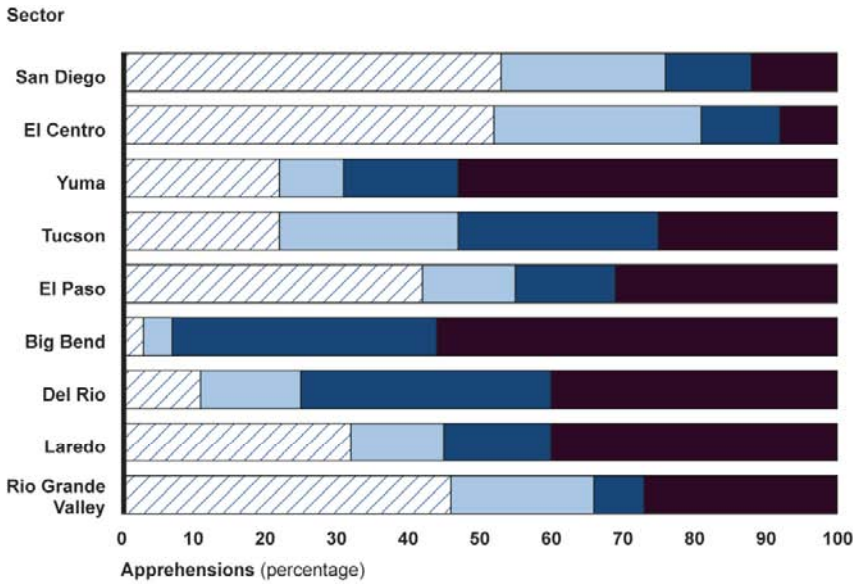
Apprehension totals

	San Diego	El Centro	Yuma	Tucson	El Paso	Big Bend	Del Rio	Laredo	Rio Grande Valley
0-1 mile	34,045	15,983	1,709	43,188	5,019	100	1,908	10,324	22,836
More than 1-5 miles	18,032	8,244	724	56,955	1,718	108	1,614	4,570	10,619
More than 5-20 miles	8,119	3,438	1,018	49,405	1,314	2,001	3,977	3,245	4,509
More than 20 miles	7,033	3,785	3,189	60,091	3,851	2,992	6,501	16,637	20,897

Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VI: Apprehensions by Southwest Border Patrol Sectors and Distance from the Border, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011

Figure 34: Number and Percentage of Apprehensions across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Distance from the Border, Fiscal Year 2011



Apprehension totals

	San Diego	El Centro	Yuma	Tucson	El Paso	Big Bend	Del Rio	Laredo	Rio Grande Valley
0-1 mile	22,253	15,633	1,222	25,625	4,176	114	1,796	11,521	27,639
More than 1-5 miles	9,605	8,470	528	29,835	1,332	171	2,186	4,659	11,811
More than 5-20 miles	5,020	3,350	873	33,789	1,409	1,483	5,539	5,295	4,013
More than 20 miles	5,089	2,535	2,972	29,881	3,158	2,237	6,504	14,410	15,874

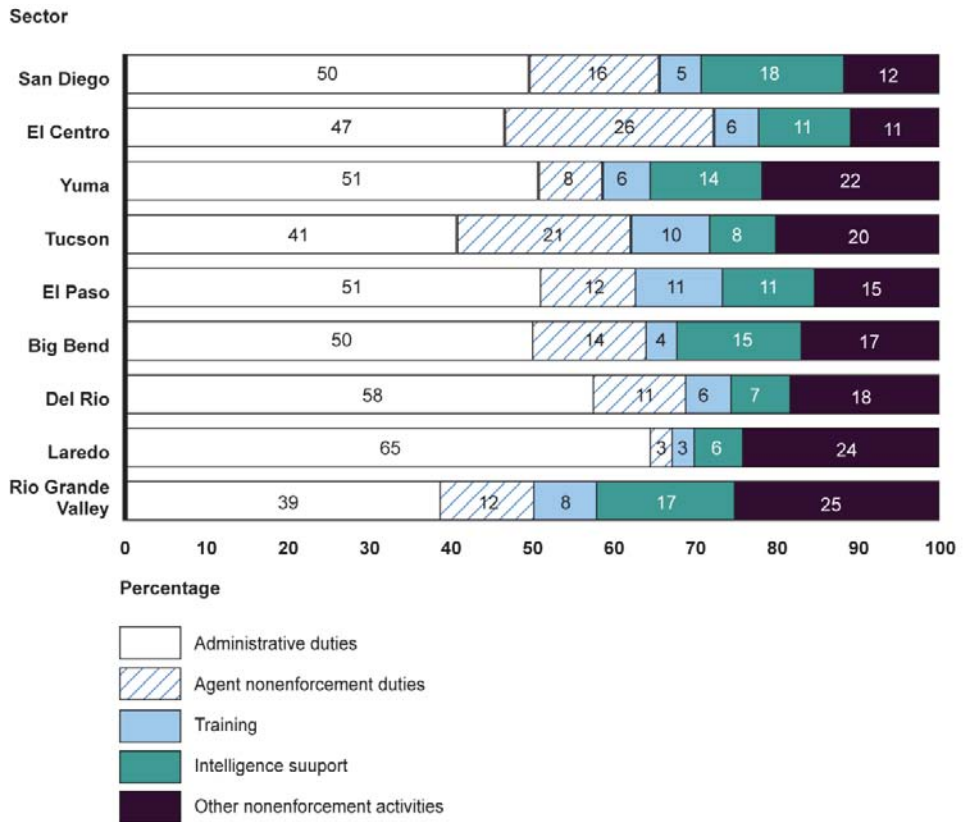
Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VII: Border Patrol Nonenforcement Activities by Southwest Border Sector, Fiscal Year 2011

Border Patrol schedules the deployment of agents to various activities, which are categorized as either enforcement or nonenforcement.¹ In fiscal year 2011 the percentage of agent workdays scheduled for nonenforcement activities varied by southwest border sector, from 19 percent for the Big Bend sector to 34 percent for the Yuma sector. The percentage of nonenforcement agent workdays scheduled to individual activities in fiscal year 2011 varied across sectors, as shown in figure 35, with “administration” accounting for a greater proportion of agent workdays than any other nonenforcement activities across all southwest border sectors. Border Patrol officials stated that examples of administrative activities include remote-video surveillance, public and congressional affairs duties, asset forfeiture duties, and employee support duties. Agent workdays scheduled to administration ranged from about 39 percent of all nonenforcement agent workdays in the Rio Grande Valley sector to almost 65 percent in the Laredo sector. Within the Tucson sector—our focus sector—training, intelligence support, and agent nonenforcement duties (defined to include duties such as brush removal; facility, fence, and vehicle maintenance; and video surveillance system operations) each accounted for a greater proportion of agent workdays than any other nonenforcement activity after administration. The percentage of agent workdays scheduled to these activities in other sectors varied, as shown in figure 35. “Other nonenforcement activities” includes duties such as litigation, camera operations, and public relations.

¹Border Patrol has a database to track the scheduling of agent deployment in the field, which is to be updated to reflect the most recent deployment changes. Deployment figures referred to in this report therefore may be for scheduled, not actual, agent deployment. Agents are assigned to activities in 8-hour shifts, referred to as agent workdays in this report. According to Border Patrol officials, agent activities are categorized as enforcement- or nonenforcement-related based on the subject matter expertise of headquarters officials.

Figure 35: Percentage of Border Patrol Agent Nonenforcement Workdays Scheduled for Nonenforcement Activities across Southwest Border Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011



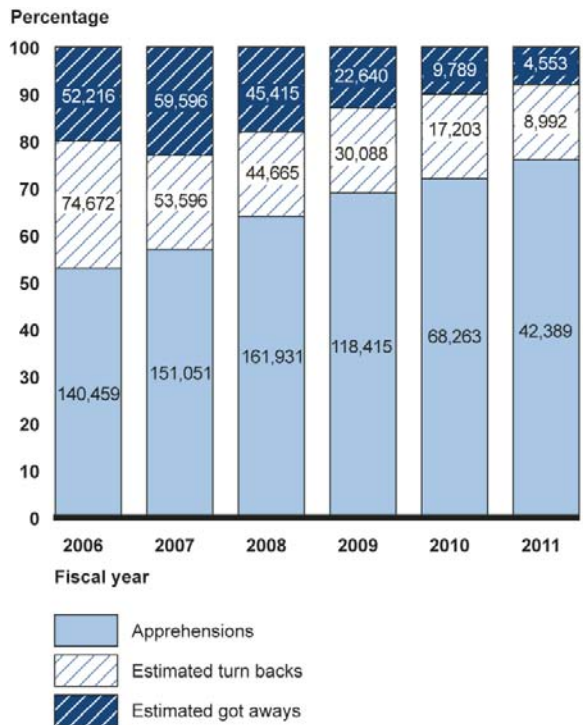
Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

Figures 36 through 44 show the number of apprehensions, turn backs, and got aways as percentages of total estimated known illegal entries for each southwest border sector, from fiscal years 2006 through 2011.

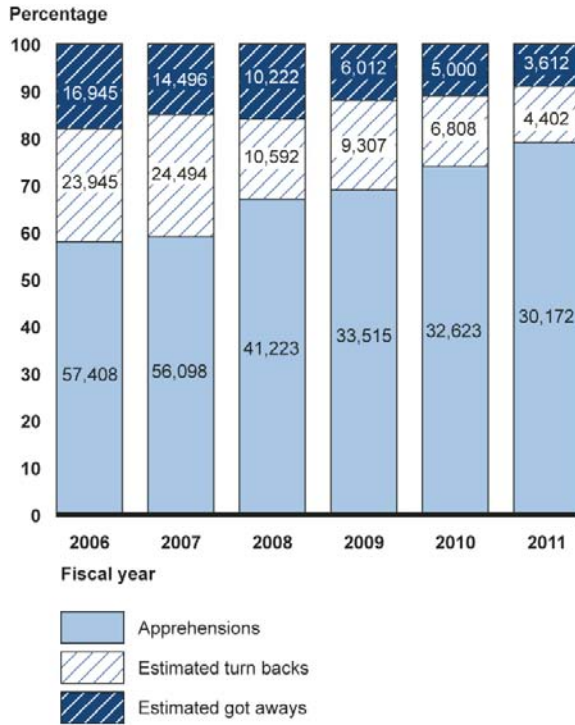
Figure 36: Number of San Diego Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

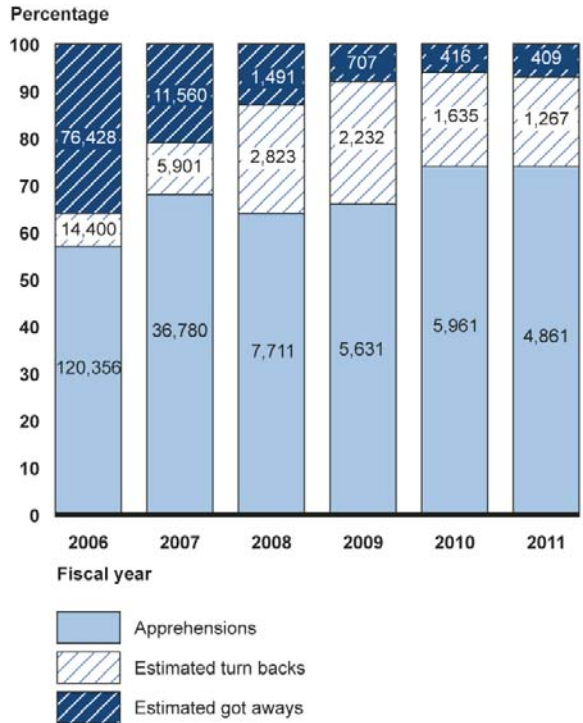
Figure 37: Number of El Centro Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

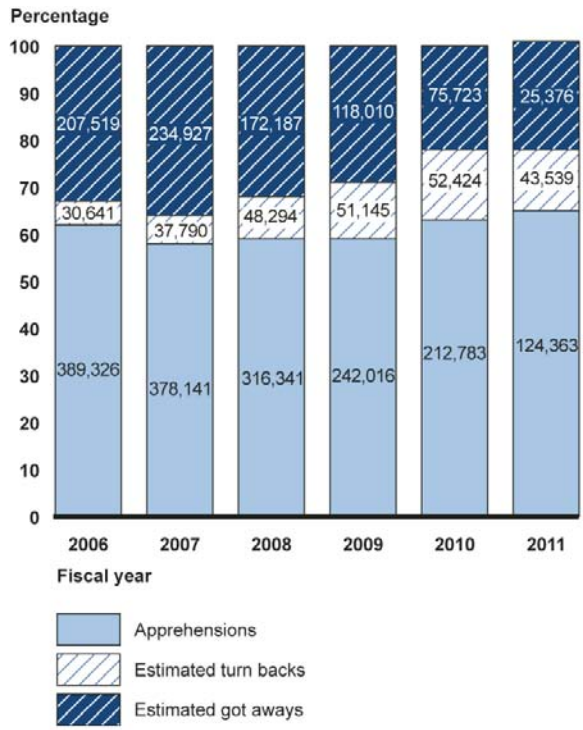
Figure 38: Number of Yuma Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

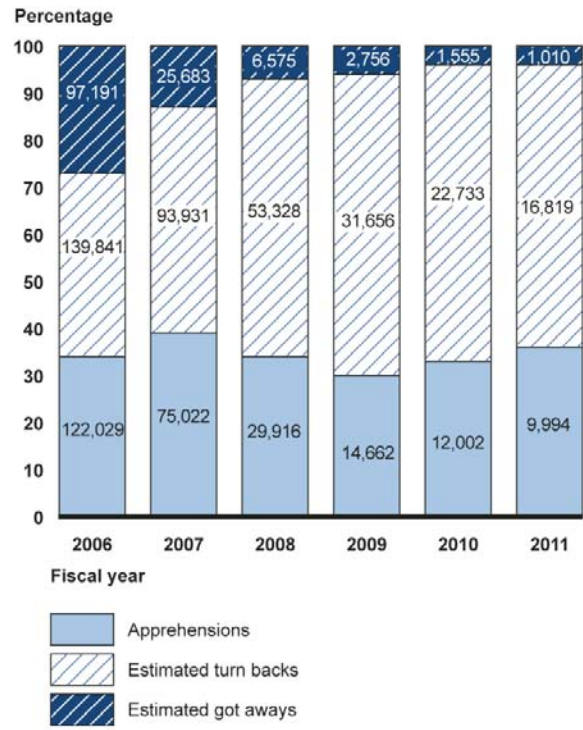
Figure 39: Number of Tucson Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

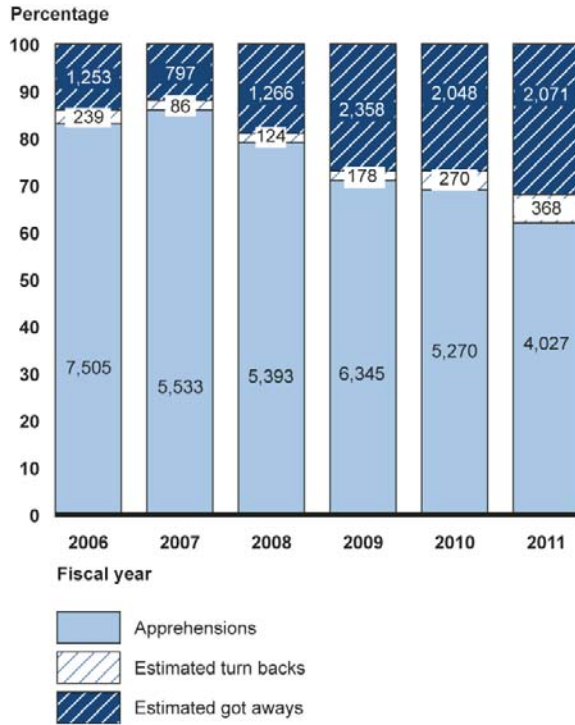
Figure 40: Number of El Paso Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

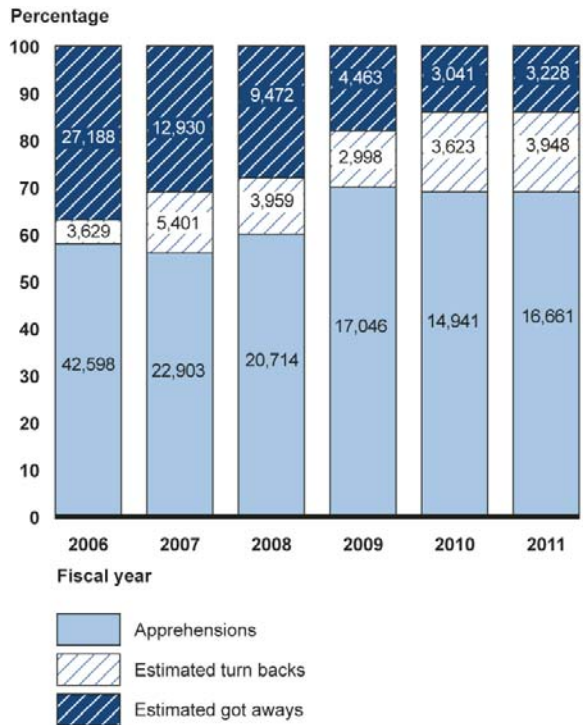
Figure 41: Number of Big Bend Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

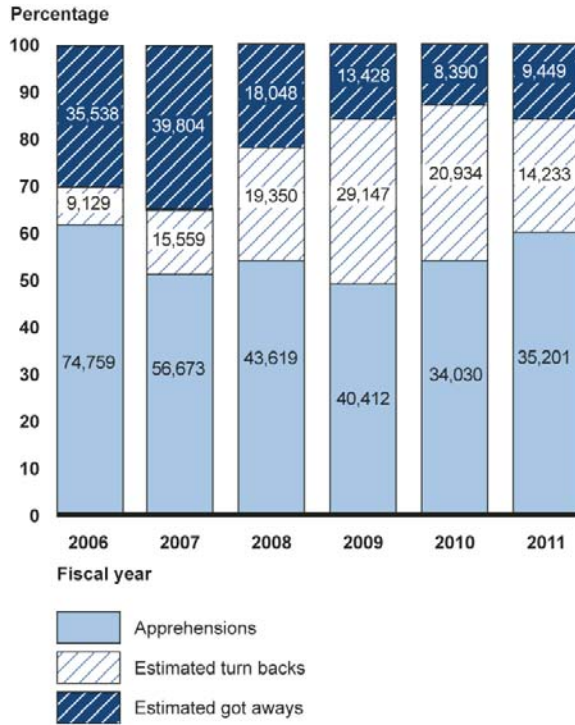
Figure 42: Number of Del Rio Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

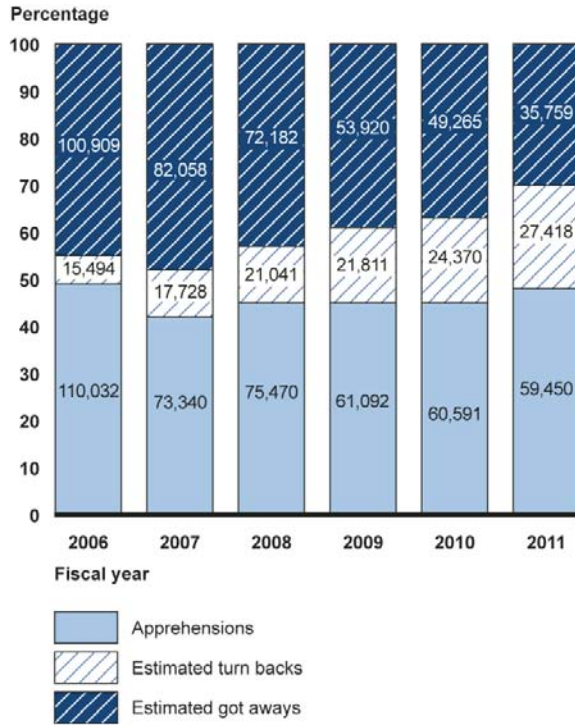
Figure 43: Number of Laredo Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix VIII: Estimated Illegal Entries by Data Element (Apprehensions, Estimated Turn Backs, and Estimated Got Aways) by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011

Figure 44: Number of Rio Grande Valley Sector Border Patrol Apprehensions, Turn Backs, and Got Aways as a Percentage of Estimated Known Illegal Entries, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2011



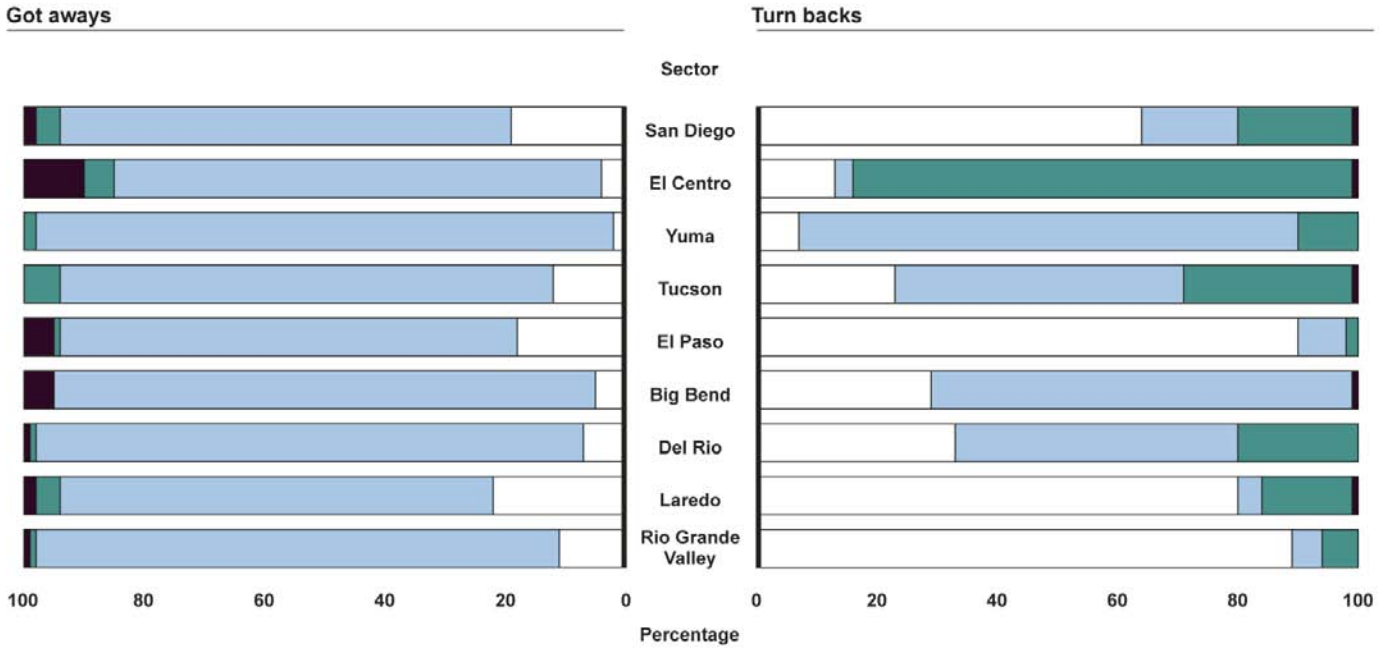
Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix IX: Identification Sources for Turn Backs and Got Aways by Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011

Border Patrol sectors rely on a different mix of cameras, sign cutting, credible source, and visual observation to identify and report the number of turn backs and got aways used to determine the number of estimated known illegal entries across locations. Figure 45 shows the breakdown by source of data that sectors used to estimate got aways and turn backs in fiscal year 2011.

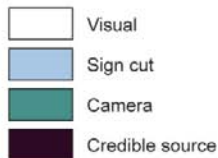
Appendix IX: Identification Sources for Turn Backs and Got Aways by Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011

Figure 45: Source of Data Collection for Turn Back and Got Away Data across Southwest Border Patrol Sectors, Fiscal Year 2011



Sector	Visual	Sign cut	Camera	Credible source
San Diego	884	3,380	188	101
El Centro	160	2,923	180	349
Yuma	10	390	9	0
Tucson	3,052	20,636	1,574	114
El Paso	184	765	9	52
Big Bend	112	1,862	0	97
Del Rio	233	2,952	26	17
Laredo	2,093	6,798	384	174
Rio Grande Valley	3,929	31,274	269	287

Sector	Visual	Sign cut	Camera	Credible source
San Diego	5,803	1,440	1,670	79
El Centro	551	149	3,668	34
Yuma	91	1,055	121	0
Tucson	10,082	20,958	11,995	504
El Paso	15,100	1,319	384	16
Big Bend	105	261	0	2
Del Rio	1,287	1,848	798	15
Laredo	11,390	640	2,124	79
Rio Grande Valley	24,388	1,422	1,587	21



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Appendix X: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

November 27, 2012

Rebecca Gambler
Acting Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-13-25, "BORDER PATROL: Key Elements of New Strategic Plan Not Yet in Place to Inform Border Security Status and Resource Needs"

Dear Ms. Gambler:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

As the draft report acknowledges, securing our borders against the evolving threat of terrorism and transnational crime is essential to the protection of the Nation. The Department is pleased that the report recognizes the importance of establishing secure national borders and that DHS has dramatically increased resources and activities at the southwest border over the past several years to deter illegal crossings and secure the border. We also appreciate GAO's positive recognition that U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) is in the process of implementing key elements of the 2012–2016 Border Patrol Strategic Plan and a process for assessing resource needs.

The draft report contains two recommendations with which the Department concurs. Specifically, GAO recommends that Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) ensure that the Chief of the Office of Border Patrol establish milestones for developing:

Recommendation 1: A performance goal, or goals, for border security between the POEs that defines how border security is to be measured.

Response: Concur. DHS fully appreciates the importance and need of having measurable goals to assess progress in the area of border security. USBP will develop goals and performance measures, as per its 2012–2016 Border Patrol Strategic Plan, that indicate the level of security of the border between ports of entry (POEs). Estimated Completion Date (ECD): November 30, 2013

Recommendation 2: A performance measure, or measures – linked to a performance goal or goals – for assessing progress made in securing the border between POEs and informing resource identification and allocation efforts.

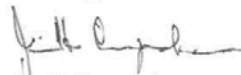
Response: Concur. While the Chief, USBP, cannot unilaterally develop a performance goal for border security and define how it is to be measured, USBP can address the development of performance goals that will likely become key components of an overarching goal for border security. Subsequent to the release earlier this year of the 2012–2016 Border Patrol Strategic Plan, USBP has been working towards its full implementation by first establishing tools and processes for managing risk. As these tools and processes mature, USBP will use them to help inform performance measures for assessing progress in USBP contributions to securing borders between the POEs. USBP will align these measures to its goals and objectives, as well as to overarching CBP and DHS goals and objectives.

USBP has already begun the process of developing performance measures that are linked to the 2012–2016 Border Patrol Strategic Plan and demonstrate progress towards securing the border. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, USBP began using internal measures to monitor improvements resulting from creation of the Consequence Delivery System (CDS), an analytical process for systematically applying consequences to apprehended illegal aliens. In FY 2012, USBP increased the percentage of apprehensions that resulted in the use of more effective and efficient consequences from 59 percent in FY 2011 to 78 percent in FY 2012. USBP also developed two outcome measures to track progress: “Percentage of people apprehended multiple times,” which fell from 20 percent in FY 2011 to 17 percent in FY 2012, and “Average number of apprehensions for persons with multiple apprehensions,” which fell from 2.54 percent in FY 2011 to 2.40 percent by the end of FY 2012.

USBP plans to begin reporting these measures publicly in FY 2013 as part of the *Government Performance and Results Act* performance measure set. In FY 2012, CBP stood up the Integrated CDS Program Management Office, consisting of personnel from USBP and the Office of Field Operations. The office is organized to align with each Southwest Border corridor and field office, as well as representatives in each field location. This organizational structure allows for operational differences within each geographic location and the facilitation of CDS management. The collection and dissemination of integrated CDS-related data and analysis will further enhance our ability to report on and improve border security. Ultimately, rigorous analysis of CDS Program outputs, coupled with application of other evolving USBP tools and processes, will help inform resource identification and allocation. ECD: November 30, 2013.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Jim H. Crumpacker
Director
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Appendix XI: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Rebecca Gambler, (202) 512-8777 or gablerr@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Lacinda Ayers (Assistant Director); Joshua S. Akery; Frances A. Cook; Barbara A. Guffy; Eric D. Hauswirth; Stanley J. Kostyla; Brian J. Lipman; John W. Mingus, Jr.; Jessica S. Orr; Susan A. Sachs; and Jerome T. Sandau made key contributions to this report.

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