How Border Enforcement Failed in the United States

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Why Border Enforcement Backfired
Mexican Migration Flows to the United States: Official Statistics

- Documented Migrants
- Temporary Workers
- Apprehensions per Capita

Key Events:
- Operation Wetback
- Bracero Program Cancelled & Numerical Quotas Imposed
- Economic Crisis in US
- Operation Blockade
- IRCA
- PATRIOT Act

Year:
- 1950
- 1955
- 1960
- 1965
- 1970
- 1975
- 1980
- 1985
- 1990
- 1995
- 2000
- 2005
- 2010
Figure 4. Feedback loop between apprehensions and border enforcement 1965-1995

Direct Effect of Entries on Percent Conservative Via Apprehensions: 0.848
Indirect Effect Through Enforcement Feedbacks: 0.691
Annual number of apprehensions and illegal migrants 1955-1995.

- Illegal Migrants
- Apprehensions

Key events:
- Bracero Program Ended
- Hemispheric Quotas Imposed
- Country Quotas Imposed
- IRCA Enacted
Figure 1. Border Patrol budget in millions of 2013 dollars.
• Effects of militarization on **border outcomes**
  – Transformed the geography of border crossing
  – Increased use of coyotes (border smugglers)
  – Increased cost of using coyotes
  – No effect on probability of border apprehension
  – Increased risk of death during border crossing

• Effects of militarization on **migrant behavior**
  – No effect on likelihood of first undocumented trip
  – Decreased likelihood of return from first trip
  – Decreased likelihood of additional undocumented trip
  – Decreased likelihood of returning from additional trip
What's the MMP?

The Mexican Migration Project (MMP) was created in 1982 by an interdisciplinary team of researchers to further our understanding of the complex process of Mexican migration to the United States. The project is a binational research effort co-directed by Jorge Duran, professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Guadalajara (Mexico), and Douglas S. Massey, professor of Sociology and Public Affairs at Princeton University (US).

Since its inception, the MMP's main focus has been to gather social as well as economic information on Mexican-US migration. The data collected has been compiled in a comprehensive database that is available to the public free of charge for research and educational purposes through this web-site.

The MMP is a unique source of data that enables researchers to track patterns and processes of contemporary Mexican immigration to the United States. The project is a multi-disciplinary research effort that generates public use data on the characteristics and behavior of Mexican migrants.

Aims and Scope of the Project

- To gather and maintain high quality data on the characteristics and behavior of documented and undocumented Mexican migrants to the United States.
- To make the collected data available to the public for research and educational purposes, while maintaining the confidentiality of our respondents.
- To continue to investigate the evolving nature of transnational migration between Mexico and the United States.
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<td>Rural Villages (&lt;=2500)</td>
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Figure 2. Observed probability of crossing at a traditional location and probability predicted from Border Patrol budget
Figure 3. Observed probability of crossing with a coyote and probability predicted from Border Patrol budget.

- Observed
- Predicted from Border Patrol budget
Figure 4. Observed trend in coyote costs and costs predicted from Border Patrol budget and place of crossing

- **Observed**
- **Predicted from Border Patrol budget and place of crossing**
Figure 5. Observed probabilities of apprehension on first attempt and eventual entry and apprehension probability predicted from trend in Border Patrol budget

- Observed probability of apprehension
- Probability of eventual entry
- Predicted from Border Patrol budget
Figure 6. Observed deaths at the border and deaths predicted by trend in Border Patrol budget.
Figure 7. Observed probability of first undocumented migration and probabilities predicted from trends in Border Patrol budget and average age.
Figure 7a. Probability of first undocumented migration predicted from U.S. fundamentals, Mexican fundamentals, and all factors combined.
Figure 8. Observed probability of return within 12 months of first undocumented trip and probability predicted from Border Patrol budget

- Observed
- Predicted from Border Patrol budget
Figure 9. Observed probability of taking an additional undocumented trip and probability predicted from Border Patrol budget.
Conclusions

• From 1986-2010 the U.S. spent $34.6 billion in border enforcement and in doing so:
  – Transformed what had been a circular flow of male workers going to three states into a settled population of families living in 50 states
  – Reduced out-migration while leaving in-migration unchanged to double the net rate of undocumented migration and population growth
  – Created a population of 11 million undocumented U.S. residents: 60% of Mexican immigrants and two-thirds of all Central American immigrants
  – All while attempting to end an undocumented flow that would have ended of its own accord after 2000
The Border as a Political Symbol

• In theory: Renato Rosaldo (1997):
  – “The U.S.-Mexico border has become theater, and border theater has become social violence. Actual violence has become inseparable from symbolic ritual on the border—crossings, invasions, lines of defense, high-tech surveillance, and more.”

• In practice: Rep. Beto O’Rourke (D) of Texas
  – “There’s a longstanding history in this country of projecting whatever fears we have onto the border. In the absence of understanding the border, they insert their fears. Before it was Iran and Al Qaeda. Now it’s ISIS. They just reach the conclusion that invasion is imminent, and it never is.”
• Ronald Reagan (1985)
  – “Terrorists and subversives are just two days driving time from [the
    border crossing at] Harlingen, Texas”
  – Communist agents will “feed on the anger and frustration of recent
    Central and South American immigrants who will not realize their own
    version of the American dream”

Red Dawn is a 1984 American war film directed by John Milius and co-written by Milius and Kevin Reynolds. It stars Patrick Swayze, C. Thomas Howell, Lea Thompson, Charlie Sheen, and Jennifer Grey. The film is set in an alternate 1980s in which the United States is invaded by the Soviet Union and its Cuban and Nicaraguan allies. The story follows a group of American high school students who resist the occupation with guerrilla warfare, calling themselves Wolverines, after their high school mascot.
• **Samuel P. Huntington (2004)**
  – “Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves—from Los Angeles to Miami—and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream.”
  – “The United States ignores this challenge at its peril.”

• **Lou Dobbs (2006)**
  – “invasion of illegal aliens” part of a “war on the middle class.”

• **Patrick Buchanan (2006)**
  – Illegal immigration part of “Aztlan Plot” hatched by Mexicans seeking to recapture lost lands
  – If we do not get control of our borders and stop this greatest invasion in history, I see the dissolution of the U.S. and the loss of the American southwest—culturally and linguistically, if not politically—to Mexico.” (Time, August 28, 2006, p. 6)
• Texas Congressman Louie Gohmert, R-Tyler

– said on C-SPAN’s "Washington Journal" April 17, 2013: "We know al Qaeda has camps over with the drug cartels on the other side of the Mexican border. We know that people are now being trained to come in and act like Hispanic when they’re radical Islamists. We know these things are happening and... it’s just insane not to protect ourselves."
• Texas Governor Rick Perry
  – It’s a “very real possibility” that individuals with the extremist group ISIS may have crossed into the United States at the southern border.
  – “Individuals from ISIS or other terrorist states could be taking advantage of the situation. I think it's a very real possibility that they may have already used [the border for entry].”

• Rep. Jeff Duncan (R) of South Carolina
  – “Wake up, America,” Mr. Duncan said before storming out of the hearing. “With a porous southern border we have no idea who’s in our country.”
• Senate Candidate Warns of Ebola Crossing Mexican Border
  – Scott Brown said Thursday that he doesn't want undocumented immigrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border because they might be carrying Ebola. "People coming in through normal channels—can you imagine what they can do through our porous borders?" the New Hampshire senate candidate said in a radio interview.

• U.S. General Warns Ebola Could Cross U.S. Southern Border
  – Marine Corps Gen. John F. Kelly, commander of U.S. Southern Command, said he was in Costa Rica last week and encountered an embassy employee who’d run across a handful of Liberian men preparing to be smuggled into the U.S. as illegal immigrants. “If Ebola breaks out in Haiti or in Central America, I think it is literally ‘Katie bar the door’ in terms of the mass migration of Central Americans into the United States,” the general said.