

Mexican Border Problems

The U.S.-Mexico border region is one of the most dynamic in the world. It extends more than 3,100 kilometers (2,000 miles) from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, and 100 kilometers (62.5 miles) on each side of the international border and is marked by high concrete fences in the west and a broad shallow river in the east when it reaches Texas. The region includes large deserts, numerous mountain ranges, rivers, wetlands, large estuaries, and shared aquifers. While its people share natural resources like water and air, the border region is characterized by many social, economic, and political contrasts. There is the single biggest and most dangerous problem facing America: violence from illegal immigrants, smugglers and drug runners along America's southern border. Until recently, the Border Patrol focused on catching aliens who had already gained access to the U.S. Now they concentrate on never letting them in the first place. For instance, in 1991 at one crossing point alone, there were 60 million crossings through the official gates between San Diego and Tijuana. In 1965, the number of aliens caught at the border was 110,000. By 1996, that number had risen to 1,650,000, and is sure to keep rising because of the increases in both Mexicans being smuggled and the number of Border Patrol agents trained and hired. The militarized border, created by the United States in the 1920s, produces intense individual dramas every day. All along the border people wait for dark, when they will try to cross the border, evade the guards, and reach safety with family and friends on the other side.

Concern is growing at the top levels of government about the US-Mexican border becoming a back door for terrorists entering the United States. While Al Qaeda infiltration across the nation's southern border has been a constant concern since 9/11, US officials cite recent intelligence giving the most definitive evidence yet that terrorists are planning to use it as an entry point - if they haven't already. "I'm worried about our border," Sen. John McCain of Arizona said at a March 17 2005 at Senate hearing on threats facing the US. "We have

now hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people who are crossing illegally every year. And we are now seeing a larger number of people cross our southern border who are from countries of interest as opposed to just Latin American [countries]."

He pointed out that speaking about the illegal immigrants there is one more problem. There are "Mexicans" and there are "other than Mexicans" or so called OTMs. The Mexicans know that if they get caught all that happens is that they are deported. But the OTMs are different. They come from other Latin American countries as well as other parts of the world: Afghanistan, Iraq etc. When they cross the border, if there are caught, there are not deported immediately, but are allowed in, pending immigration hearings. They are given an appearance ticket for a court hearing and released into America's population. They don't show up for court, because they know they'll lose the case. These people won't have to walk through miles and miles of desert, they carry cell phones and call 911. The sheriff shows up and arrests them. Then he turns them over to Border Patrol and they do the paperwork, and release them anyway. It's not clear how many terrorists or people having connections to terror groups may have entered the US as OTMs. But FBI Director Robert Mueller, in a House Appropriations Committee hearing March 9 2005 said he was aware that individuals from countries with known Al Qaeda ties had entered the US under false identities. Of the 44,000 OTMs who entered the US last year, it is not known how many were detained and how many remain free. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) supplied numbers of OTMs registered, by country of origin, who had been released on their own recognizance for fiscal years 2002, 2003, and 2004 were 5,775, 9,139, and 30,756 respectively.

The United States is a sovereign nation that has every right to protect its borders, as other countries do, without baseless accusations of 'discrimination'. The process for entering the United States legally is straightforward and not terribly difficult - it seems painfully obvious that deterrence measures like walls only 'discriminate' against those who intend to break the law. The four States directly affected by the illegal immigrant problem

need to take the following actions: 1) declare the existence of a critical State emergency (Arizona and New Mexico have already taken this step); 2) issue a Resolution advising the Congress and the Executive Branch that the borders of the United States have been breached and the nation has been invaded and, according to Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, the Congress of the United States is obligated to send the Militias of those States to protect and seal the borders of those several States from alien invasion.

These new resources won't solve the problem overnight. But they represent real, concrete steps forward in dealing with a large and complex problem. Certainly, they stand in market contrast to some profoundly unhelpful remarks of late by Mexican President Vicente Fox, who has publicly scoffed at U.S. objections to illegal immigration and called efforts to enforce the border, such as the "triple fence" planned for San Diego, "discriminatory" and "against freedom." What make Fox's statements particularly galling are reports that Mexico consistently violates the rights of illegal immigrants crossing its own southern border from Central and South America. The State Department's February Human Rights Practices report cites abuses at all levels of the Mexican government, and charges that Mexican police and immigration officials not only abuse illegal immigrants, but actually participate in trafficking them. I think if President Fox is serious about helping to reduce illegal immigration and its various related problems, he should look in his own back yard. Another good step would be to acknowledge the United States' right to defend its borders and demonstrate perhaps a little less disdain for the rule of law north of the border.