

# Are There Terrorists Seeping through Our Porous Border?

By PETER B. GEMMA

Protecting the 1,954-mile Mexico-U.S. line is not just to stave off the dangerous drug cartels and the flood of savage criminal gangs. In an August 13, 2013, op/ed in *The Washington Times*, Retired Adm. James Lyons, who was senior U.S. military representative to the United Nations, stated: “Fixing our porous borders is one of combating the threat of terrorism that America faces. In the various efforts to reform the U.S. immigration system, often overlooked in the debate is its impact on national security.”



Retired Admiral James Lyons

One year later, Congressman Mike Rogers (R-MI), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, has observed:

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*Peter B. Gemma, a Social Contract Contributing Editor, is a widely published writer whose work has appeared in USA Today, DailyCaller.com, and Military History.*

A very dangerous trend [began] a few years ago when the Iranian Quds force, an external terrorist group supported by the country of Iran, was planning an operation to use the southern border. A porous southern border is now on the advertising list for those who want to do nefarious activities entering the United States, everything from criminal activity—gangs, we’ve seen that surely—human trafficking, and now you’re seeing these groups who we believe are connected in some way with terrorist organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Just recently, Congressman Ryan Zinke (R-MT) asserted: “It’s not about immigration alone. It’s about national security...if children can walk across our southern border without consequences, what makes this administration think that ISIS can’t?”<sup>2</sup>

The statistics to back up these statements are worrisome. According to an analysis by the Pew Research Center, more non-Mexicans than Mexicans were apprehended by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency (CBP).<sup>3</sup> In 2014 approximately 257,000 non-Mexicans were compared to about 229,000 Mexicans—that’s significantly more than any Mexican/non-Mexican ratio in 60 years. The Pew Research Center reveals that these large numbers of aliens outside of Latin America are from nations with high-risk security concerns:

- Twenty-eight individuals from Pakistan were apprehended while crossing the U.S. border this year, with another 211 individuals either turning themselves in or being caught at official ports of entry.<sup>4</sup>
- Thirteen Egyptians were apprehended while crossing the U.S. border this year, with another 168 either turning themselves in or being caught at official ports of entry.
- Four individuals from Yemen were apprehended while crossing the U.S. border in 2014, with another 34 individuals either turning themselves in or being caught attempting to illegally enter at the ports of entry.<sup>5</sup>

- Four individuals from Somalia were apprehended while crossing the U.S. border in 2014. Another 290 either turned themselves in or were apprehended at official ports of entry.

From September 11, 2001 to 2006, the Department of Homeland Security reported a 41 percent increase in arrests along the Texas/Mexico border of “special-interest aliens” —including illegals from Iran, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Yemen, and Afghanistan—all apprehended in the South Texas region alone. The situation has worsened dramatically in recent years.

From 2008 to 2010, an estimated 180,000 OTMs (Other Than Mexicans) were believed to have crossed the border illegally. In that same period, 1,918 “Special Interest” OTMs—from states with terrorist bases—were captured at the border.

When CBP released its apprehension statistics for 2014, it showed that of the 486,651 arrests, 257,473 were from countries “other than Mexico,” including 1,191 suspects from even more high-risk countries such as Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, and Libya. *Of course, these statistics do not account for illegal aliens who cross over the border without being caught.*

Beyond the numbers there are specifics. Atlanta’s Channel 2-TV has reported: “Government officials have denied that terrorists have crossed our open border. Still, Channel 2 Action News has proof they have. Channel 2 Anchor Justin Farmer found documents filed in federal court in San Antonio, Texas, in May of 2010. They show an indictment against Ahmed Muhammad Dhakane for allegedly smuggling hundreds of people from Brazil to Mexico, then into the U.S. The federal indictment states it includes some Somalis from the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. Terrorism experts say the group is responsible for terrorist attacks and suicide bombings worldwide.”<sup>6</sup>

In a separate incident, Jamal Yousef was arrested in New York City with a weapons cache of 100 M-16 assault rifles, 100 AR-15 rifles, 2,500 hand grenades, C4 explosives, and antitank munitions. According to Yousef, the arms were stored in Mexico and had been stolen from Iraq with the help of his cousin who was a member of Hezbollah.<sup>7</sup>

We know most illegal aliens crawl under fences and swim part of the Rio Grande to get here—then cross dangerous desert to meld into a subterranean culture within American cities. From the Middle East, the route is different. NBC has reported that some illegal aliens pay \$8,000-\$10,000 to get over the border safely; several recent investigative news reports have disclosed the price tag for getting into the U.S. via Mexico goes as high as \$50,000. As part of the bigger picture, according to the German newspaper *Zeit*, ISIS pulls in as much as \$3 million a day.

In an op/ed for the *Arizona Capitol Times*, “Hezbollah terror threat on U.S.-Mexico border is real,” State Senator Sylvia Allen wrote:

Terrorism expert Patrick Poole [of the Center for Security Policy] reported to my committee last year that the first al-Qaida cell in the United States was located right here in Tucson. Tucson has been called the “birthplace of al-Qaida in America.” The 9/11 Commission Report has 59 references to terrorist activity in Arizona and makes reference to a classified CIA/FBI report titled “Arizona’s Long-Range Nexus for Islamic Extremists.”<sup>8</sup>

Senator Allen goes on to quote former Chief of Operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency Michael Braun, who testified before Congress about Iran’s growing influence along the southern U.S. border. Braun testified that the terrorist group Hezbollah has developed strong, sophisticated relationships with Mexican drug cartels. “And by developing those relations it provides them with the ability to operate far from home in our neighborhood and—on our doorstep.”

Braun had spoken earlier about the Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah, which has long been involved in narcotics and human trafficking in South America, relies on Mexican narcotics syndicates controlling access to transit routes into the U.S.: “The same criminal weapons smugglers, document traffickers and transportation experts as the drug cartels,” according to Braun.<sup>9</sup>

When advocating for immediate and comprehensive security measures on the Mexican border, Senator Allen, Michael Braun, and others keep these bone-chilling quotes in mind:

- Kuwaiti professor Abdallah Al-Nafisi: “There is no need for airplanes and planning; one man with the courage to carry a suitcase of anthrax through the tunnels from Mexico to the United States could kill 330,000 Americans in one hour.”
- Congressman Jeff Duncan: “Wake up, America! With a porous southern border, we have no idea who’s in our country.”
- Sudanese cleric Muhammad Al-Jazouli: “Oh Americans, if your armed forces land in Iraq once again, this will mean a new phase in targeting you—your tourist resorts, your embassies in our Arab capitals, your diplomatic delegations, your universities and schools, your coffee shops and restaurants, your airplanes and ships, your shops and companies.”
- Congressman Jason Chaffetz (R-UT): “I have a reason to believe that on September 10,

2014, there were actually four individuals trying to cross the Texas border who were apprehended at two different stations, that do have ties to known terrorist organizations in the Middle East.”

And there’s this new warning from Capitol Hill: “Terrorism has gone viral.” Finding homegrown terrorists who are inspired and instructed through the Internet “is like finding a needle in a haystack sometimes, and it’s going to get worse—not better,” says Congressman Michael McCaul (R-TX), the Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security.

Since the beginning of this year, ISIS has published 1,700 pieces of “terrorist messaging,” including videos, pictorial reports, and online magazines, according to deputy director of the National Counterterrorism Center John Mulligan. A Brookings Institution report issued in March, estimates 200,000 people receive an ISIS message each day around the world. It starts with about 2,000 “core” propagandists posting on Twitter and elsewhere, and then another 50,000 people “re-Tweet” and further distribute that message to a wider audience.

Intelligence experts are tracking veteran terrorists who are not only coming in, but wanna-be ISIS recruits are going overseas for training. According to Britain’s *Daily Mail*, the CIA estimates about 2,000 Westerners have traveled to Iraq and Syria (many via Turkey) to join ISIS. Of these, at least 500 are from the UK, and more than 700 from France, according to estimates from authorities in those countries.<sup>10</sup> Americans now fighting for ISIS and other terrorist groups are estimated at 150 in a report by the Director of National Intelligence.<sup>11</sup>

Congressman Duncan Hunter (R-CA), a member of the House Armed Services Committee, summed up the danger of the terrorism threat at the border this way: “ISIS doesn’t have a navy, they don’t have an air force, they don’t have nuclear weapons. The only way that ISIS is going to harm Americans is by coming through the southern border—which they already have.” He went on to say: “They aren’t flying B-1 bombers, bombing American cities, but they are going to be bombing American cities coming across from Mexico.... All you have to do is ask the border patrol.”<sup>12</sup>

There is an important side bar to all this.

Sealing off the border is the promise of many politicians, but their delivery has gone from bad to worse. The Department of Homeland Security spends \$4 billion annually deploying over 58,000 personnel with 16,875 vehicles, 269 aircraft, 300 watercraft, and 300 camera towers. It even uses aerial drones to enhance the scrutiny. In 2012, the Border Patrol apprehended about 357,000 people—a 78 percent drop since 2000. A Feb-

ruary, 2013 Government Accountability Office report found that just 44 percent of the border was under “operational control,” 37 percent was “monitored,” and the rest “low-level monitored.” In 2006, Congress passed a bill that called for a double-tier fence to be built along 700 miles of the border. But a year later, the U.S. Senate slipped language into a spending bill to water that requirement down, giving Homeland Security officials the leeway to determine how much and what type of fencing. As of early 2014, the department had built just 36 miles of two-tier fencing, 316 miles of single-tier fence, and another 299 miles of vehicle barriers that still allow pedestrians to cross, but is meant to keep out smuggling vehicles.

There’s also an underside to the “protect our border” chants, even in light of national security concerns.

Last year, as part of a border security plan, the Senate approved legislation that increases border protection initiatives by \$38 billion and includes unusual language mandating the purchase of specific models of helicopters and radar equipment for deployment along the U.S.-Mexican border. That proviso provides a potential windfall worth tens of millions of dollars to top defense contractors—the very same people who are fueling Washington’s neo-conservative interventionist foreign policy. The parent corporations of multi-national corporations that manufacture arms and defense equipment, such as Northrop Grumman, have raised nearly \$11.5 million for federal candidates’ campaigns that emphasize the need to increase defense lines along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The 2014 legislation required the U.S. Border Patrol to acquire, among other items, six Northrop Grumman airborne radar systems that cost \$9.3 million each; 15 Sikorsky Black Hawk helicopters that average more than \$17 million apiece; eight light enforcement helicopters made by American Eurocopter that sell for about \$3 million each; and 17 UH-1N helicopters made by Bell Helicopter, an older model that the company no longer manufactures. The legislation sets aside a \$4.5 billion fund for defense contractors looking for a new financial outlet as (and if) Middle East incursions subside. The insatiable Military-Industrial Complex is always at work.

The threat of terrorists sneaking into the U.S. is provable—and getting worse. Our defensive mechanism is faulty and weak, and will take time, and a lot of money (given to the usual suspects), to upgrade. In the meantime, new strategies and new tactics are desperately needed. Thinking outside the box may start with former Congressman Ron Paul’s (R-TX) elephant-in-the-room observation: “They wouldn’t be over here if we weren’t over there.” That’s a subject requiring a much longer article. ■

### Endnotes

1. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/aug/3/rogers-enemies-see-weakness-americas-southern-bord/>
2. <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2015/01/12/rep-ryan-zinke-porous-southern-border-direct-threat-to-national-security/>
3. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/30/u-s-border-apprehensions-of-mexicans-fall-to-historic-lows/>
4. An example. According to the article, “Terrorist threat pulls most U.S. personnel from Pakistan’s second-largest city,” in London’s *Daily Mail*: “The evacuation of all nonessential staffers in Lahore was due to ‘specific threats concerning the U.S. consulate,’ read a travel warning posted on the State Department’s website. Americans were also advised to avoid travel to the country.”
5. Another example. Britain’s *The Week* revealed: “The US and UK have withdrawn diplomatic staff and urged their citizens to leave. The prospect of a major terrorist incident in Yemen clearly has the West rattled and the BBC reports that there are ‘unprecedented security measures’ in place in the capital, Sana’a.”
6. [http://www.wsbtv.com/news/news/channel-2-uncovers-proof-terrorists-crossed-mexican-border/#\\_federated=1](http://www.wsbtv.com/news/news/channel-2-uncovers-proof-terrorists-crossed-mexican-border/#_federated=1)
7. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/20/nyregion/20sting.html>
8. <http://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2012/03/23/hezbollah-terror-threat-on-u-s-mexico-border-is-real/>
9. <http://www.clarionproject.org/analysis/us-mexican-border-porous-jihadists>
10. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2753004/CIA-believes-ranks-ISIS-fighters-swollen-TRIPLE-number-previously-thought-31-500-fighters-2-000-Westerners.html>
11. <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/testimonies/209-congressional-testimonies-2015/1173-national-counterterrorism-center-director-nicholas-j-rasmussen-statement-for-the-record-before-the-ssci>
12. <http://washington.cbslocal.com/2014/10/08/gop-rep-at-least-ten-isis-fighters-have-been-caught-coming-across-the-mexican-border/>

## U.S. Customs and Border Protection

*A summary of CBP facts and figures*

**On a typical day, CBP:**

- **Processed 1,026,234 passengers and pedestrians; 293,285 incoming international air passengers and crew; 54,008 passengers and crew on arriving ship/boat; 678,941 incoming land travelers.**
- **70,334 truck, rail, and sea containers**
- **307,680 incoming privately owned vehicles**
- **Conducted 1,333 apprehensions between U.S. ports of entry**
- **Arrested 21 wanted criminals at U.S. ports of entry**
- **Refused 241 inadmissible persons at U.S. ports of entry**
- **Discovered 425 pests at U.S. ports of entry and 4,447 materials for quarantine**
- **Seized 10,327 pounds of drugs; \$650,117 in undeclared or illicit currency; \$3.4 million dollars’ worth of products with Intellectual Property Rights violations**
- **IDENTIFIED 548 INDIVIDUALS WITH SUSPECTED NATIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS [emphasis added]**
- **Intercepted 76 fraudulent documents**
- **Employed 59,544 CBP employees, including: 22,274 CBP officers; 2,368 CBP Agriculture specialists; 20,824 Border Patrol agents; 729 Air Interdiction agents (pilots); 329 Marine Interdiction agents; 133 Aviation Enforcement officers**
- **Deployed more than 1,463 canine teams and 300 horse patrols**
- **Flew 213 hours enforcement missions over the United States**
- **Conducted operations at: 328 ports of entry within 20 field offices; 136 Border Patrol stations and five substations within 20 sectors, with 35 permanent checkpoints; 21 Air and Marine branches, six National Security Operations, and one Air and Marine Operations Center. ■**

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/30/u-s-border-apprehensions-of-mexicans-fall-to-historic-lows/>