



U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Border Patrol Search, Trauma, and Rescue (BORSTAR)

FACT SHEET

Border Patrol Search, Trauma, and Rescue Unit is a highly specialized unit capable of responding to emergency search and rescue situations anywhere in the United States. Created in 1998 in response to the growing number of migrant deaths occurring along our nation's border, BORSTAR deploys to areas of concern and provides assistance to those in distress.

BORSTAR is comprised of Border Patrol agents who volunteer to go beyond their regular duties. After serving two years in the Border Patrol, agents must apply for and pass a selection process in order to attend a five-week BORSTAR Academy. During the physically and mentally demanding BORSTAR Academy, candidates learn various search and rescue techniques and other skills, including tactical medicine, technical rescue, land navigation, communication, swift-water rescue, air operations, and, possibly the most important, teamwork. Following the basic academy, BORSTAR agents will attend an emergency medical technician course to be certified as Basic Emergency Medical Technicians. BORSTAR agents may receive additional specialized training after the academy, including paramedic, police safety diver, rescue watercraft/boat operator, and cold-weather operations training.

BORSTAR national headquarters is located in El Paso, Texas. There are local BORSTAR teams at each Southwest Border sector. BORSTAR works closely with the Border Patrol Tactical Unit and Special Response Teams by providing medical and other support during training and operations. All Border Patrol Special Operations Group members, including BORSTAR trained agents, perform these functions in addition to their primary law enforcement duties as Border Patrol agents.

Search and rescue operations are conducted throughout the year in varying climates and topographies. BORSTAR agents have responded to rescue operations lasting from a few hours to Federal Emergency Management Agency supported natural disaster operations prolonged for weeks at a time. These situations vary in difficulty from simply locating victims and providing them with water to complex rescues requiring agents to rappel into remote canyons to assist victims and extract them by helicopter.

Rescue

When the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department in Arizona received a 911 distress call from an individual claiming to have been shot in the Madera Canyon area, they contacted the Tucson Sector BORSTAR. Tucson BORSTAR agents responded, and with the assistance of a National Guard helicopter, were able to locate the individual in the Santa Rita Mountains, approximately two miles from the nearest landing zone for the helicopter. BORSTAR agents hiked to the subject's location, and treated, stabilized, and extracted the subject on foot.

Although such rescues predominantly involve undocumented aliens who entered the country illegally through remote areas, Border Patrol agents, residents, and visitors to the border area also find themselves in need of assistance. These rescues take place in varying environments from the bitter cold and precipitation of mountainous terrain to the blistering heat of the low desert areas. Because of these conditions and the remoteness of the areas, BORSTAR training must be all-inclusive. BORSTAR is an all-weather and all-terrain capable SAR and enforcement unit, and is often the only rescue entity available for miles along the inhospitable border regions they patrol. ❖



BORSTAR agent administers first aid to an illegal immigrant.