

Remarks by Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, Border Patrol Chief David Aguilar and Acting Director of Detention and Removal Operations John Torres at an Operational Briefing on the Secure Border Initiative

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Secretary Chertoff: Good morning, everybody. I'm here with Chief Aguilar of the Border Patrol and John Torres, the Acting Director of ICE Detention and Removal.

I think we've said that we are going to periodically update the public on how we are doing with the Secure Border Initiative, by way of marking how we have progressed, things we're pleased with, things we may not be as pleased as we want to be with.

And so, this is another -- and what I anticipate to be a reasonably regular number of appearances where we're going to talk about how we're doing at the border.

I want to begin, of course, by talking about the budget, which is a representation of what our strategic vision is of what we want to do at the border.

The President's Fiscal Year '07 Budget, which went up earlier this week, I think, underscores the President's very clear commitment to securing our borders and that, of course, is a strategy that involves not only apprehensions at the border, but detention, removal, and more vigorous worksite enforcement.

The Budget, as a whole, reflects a six percent increase in funding for the Department of Homeland Security and a 36 percent increase in gross discretionary funding for DHS since 2003.

More particularly, as it relates to the issue of the border, we're proposing to add over \$458 million to add 1500 additional border patrol agents in Fiscal Year '07. That's on top of the 1500 we have added this past year, which would reflect a 42 percent increase since September 11th, bringing the total up to almost 14,000 agents.

We're proposing in the President's Budget \$100 million for border technology as part of an integrated plan to build a 21st century system for surveillance and other kinds of visibility at the border that are integrated with our border enforcement assets.

We're proposing to add \$30 million to continue the construction of the San Diego Border Fence and \$50 million to construct permanent vehicle barriers in the Western Arizona Desert. The Budget also anticipates \$400 million for 6700 additional detention beds, bringing total beds, at the end of the fiscal year, to 27,500.

Coupled with our strong emphasis on reducing the amount of time it takes to return illegal migrants to their home countries, these additional assets continue our commitment to ensuring that catch-and-release becomes catch-and-return.

We also envision \$135 million to expand our employment verification program, which is a critical element to moving our interior enforcement program to a more robust level. The bottom line is we want to give employers the tools to verify and then we want to hold them accountable if they don't verify.

We're also talking about \$41.7 million in direct money for worksite enforcement and \$60 million for fugitive operations, which would include money for 18 additional fugitive operations teams, bringing our total up to 70 teams. That's designed to hunt down those who try to escape from our immigration justice system and make sure they are brought to justice.

Finally, we're including in the budget \$400 million for U.S. visit, including \$60 million to promote our movement to a 10-print system, which will enhance our total level of security.

Well, that's the Budget. Let me talk a little bit more specifically about some of what we are doing this year to continue to promote the goal of enhanced border security and then I'm going to have the Chief and John Torres talk a little bit more specifically about some of the facts and figures.

As part of our effort to get to the next generation of technology, starting contracting as early as the fourth quarter of this

fiscal year, we held an industry day in the last couple of weeks to reach out to the private sector to start to build a strategic partnership for the kind of technology we want to bring to the border in the next couple of years.

Over 400 representatives of private industry attended. We challenged industry to develop new technology, tactical infrastructure, and integrated solutions involving personnel, sensors, and communications to give us a better ability to operate nimbly and efficiently at the border, particularly in those areas in the desert, where there is a significant amount of territory to be covered.

We launched the SBInet Program, which is an effort to integrate multiple state-of-the-art systems and security infrastructure into a single, integrated architecture. Through SBInet, the department intends to create a comprehensive border security system that transforms, integrates, and expands technology and infrastructure to reduce illegal entry into the United States.

What are we talking about? We're talking about stuff like unmanned aerial vehicles, satellite imagery, sensors, cameras that are computer-programmed to be able to operate based on algorithms that identify certain kinds of movements that the camera targets on.

All of these systems, if integrated together, allows us to create a force multiplier for border patrol, taking the border patrol assets we have and makes them more effective to intercept and apprehend those people who are crossing the border illegally.

That's the bottom line: identifying, disrupting, and dismantling organizations that bring people illegally into this country.

Now, of course, the second part of this strategy, as I have pointed out, is once we catch them, we've got to remove them and that's ending catch-and-release and having it become catch-and-remove. Since we've begun SBI in this fiscal year, we have done a tremendous job in many, many categories in closing that gap between catch-and-remove.

As Chief Aguilar will explain with greater detail, as we have rolled out expedited removal across the border in the South and the North of the country and as we have begun to systematically apply expedited removal to categories of non-Mexicans, who we are capturing as they cross the border, we are seeing significant reductions in the gap between the number we apprehend and the number we return, without releasing them under the old catch-and-release program.

You will see that while there are a number of bright spots, there are a couple of persistent issues we have to tackle if we are going to live up to our target of ending catch-and-release at the border at the end of this fiscal year.

First, we do find that the ability to detain family groups has been somewhat difficult. There are certain housing needs that are required when you have children. We're working now with some of our other partners in the Government to find a way to solve those housing needs so that when family groups come across, we have the ability to detain them as well, until we can remove them. And, we don't release them into the community where, more likely than not, they're going to abscond.

A second significant challenge is illegal migrants from El Salvador. We are laboring under a 20-year-old court order that places serious restrictions on our ability to apply expedited removal to El Salvadorians. You are going to see, and the numbers, I think, tell a very compelling story here, that when we have a gap between catch-and-remove, that gap is -- a significant part of that gap is attributable to El Salvadorians whom we can not put into expedited removal.

We are working to see if we can address this through the courts. We're also working for prospective legislation that would address this issue and allow us to begin the process of expedited removal for all categories of non-Mexicans.

And as we continue to roll this program out, we'll talk about some of the other challenges we have, including categories of non-Mexicans from countries in Asia or other parts of the world where we do have difficulties getting the migrants returned.

We have to work consistently on reducing the delay it takes, when we apprehend somebody, to get that person back to their home country, because that is the key to increasing our detention capacity and to deterring these migrants from coming into this country.

Let me talk about two other issues before I turn it over to the Chief. Border violence; we have a zero-tolerance attitude to border violence. There has been an over 100 percent increase in the last fiscal year in border violence aimed at our border patrol agents. And that ranges from gunshots fired across the border to rocks being thrown, sometimes flaming rocks, and let me tell you, rockings are serious. You can get serious injuries when a rock, particularly a flaming rock, hits a border patrol agent.

We are not going to tolerate this kind of behavior. It is, in part, frankly, a reflection of our increased enforcement and a reflection of the fact that we're beginning to put pressure on criminal organizations, but if they think they're going to back us down or chase us away, the answer to that is no. Our border patrol is properly trained. They have rules of

engagement. They are entitled to defend themselves. They will defend themselves. We will support them in applying these rules of engagement.

The second piece of this, though, is we are working in close cooperation with the Mexican Government on this problem. The Mexican Government has been very interested in working with us to deal with the issue of border violence as it occurs on both sides of the border, the American side and the side in Mexico.

I have spoken to Minister Abascal. I have spoken to Minister Medina Mora. They are both very committed to working with us to make sure that this violence is not tolerated, whether in the United States or in Mexico. They are deploying vetted police, federal police into the area of Tijuana and other areas south of the border to increase their enforcement presence.

I also want to point out and applaud the fact that the Mexican Supreme Court has recently changed its ruling on extradition to make it much easier for us to extradite criminals back to the United States. That is a very welcome development.

We have increased exchange of communication and coordination and I look forward, in the next weeks in particular, to see what we can do, working with our counterparts in the Mexican Government, to make sure that on both sides of the border, we are elevating the level of our enforcement against criminal gangs that are trafficking in drugs or trafficking in illegal migrants.

This is dangerous to our country, it's dangerous to Mexico, it's dangerous to the human beings who are being smuggled into the country and then left to die in the desert or subject to being victims of assaults by the coyotes themselves. So, from a humanitarian and a national security standpoint, we have to have a very strong commitment to ending this activity by illegal trafficking organizations.

Chief, if you would now get into some detail.

Chief Aguilar: Thank you. Good morning. What I'm going to go into next here is basically to follow up on what the Secretary talked about on the border violence.

What we have seen recently is, in the San Diego area, that is where the highest level of our assaults against our officers has occurred, over 80 incidents since the beginning of the fiscal year.

In Laredo, Texas, over a period of three days during the week of the 24th of January, three shootings, literally back to back. Luckily, none of our officers were hit, but very dangerous situations. And over in the McAllen sector, the Rio Grande Valley area of South Texas, two shootings against our boats in the water, also where our agents were fortunately not hit, but again, a very serious type of situation.

What this shot will depict for you is the type of incidents that are occurring against our officers. This right here depicts -- these are trajectory rods depicting where the rounds came through the vehicle, with an officer sitting on the driver's side. Luckily, there was no officer sitting in the passenger side.

This right here is a cowling, a motor cowling of one of our boats that took a round through the motor here. This one here depicts five rounds fired at our officers. In this situation, there was -- this vehicle was hit with a total of 23 rounds from the south side. This happened in our El Centro sector.

And in this area here is, again, a trajectory rod shell for one of the rounds that went through our boats with our agents in the area. And unfortunately, what this shows -- depicts is the leg -- the femur of one of our officers that took a round to his right leg in June of last year. What you see here is rods and a straight rod up and down his leg, going through rehabilitation right now.

What I'm going to show you right next, very quickly, is going to be a very, very short video. I want you to listen to the -- and I hope we're able to pick it up -- I want you to listen to the ongoing communications between the officers and what's occurring.

This is our actual video cameras and rockings that are occurring. This is the U.S. side. This is Mexico. Our officers are pinned up against the wall. Trying to recover the officers that are pinned against the wall. You will see the size of the rocks. Those things can hurt you very bad.

Officers are right here. These are officers in San Diego with protective gear, trying to pull out one of their officers that is pinned down also. I want you to see this so that when you hear about rockings, these are not pebbles that are being thrown at our officers. This is the inside where one of our officers did take a rock to his eye. That's blood.

Okay. This is the size of a rock. Now, the next shot is going to be the inside of a vehicle where our officers are in a war wagon, protected. You will hear the rocks hitting the vehicle. This is in our Yuma sector.

And now, just to show the callousness of the smugglers, this is in Yuma, a Cocopah tribal police unit actually being hit

And now, just to show the seriousness of the smugglers, this is in Tuma, a Cocopah tribal police unit actually being hit. This is a smuggler, police unit, this is our officer -- I'll read the caption. "19 people in the vehicle, including two minors and a pregnant woman in that vehicle." What we'll show up here is our border patrol helicopter and our unit continuing to assist the police officer. The driver was apprehended.

The reason we show you this is, again, the seriousness of the assaults that are occurring against our officers and other law enforcement agents that are on the border, so that where we do have to take the actions of serious consequence, this is what we're facing.

Now, as the Secretary mentioned, a very, very good thing that is occurring currently, as we speak, is that the Government of Mexico is working with us in order to reduce and mitigate the violence that is occurring. As we speak, basically, right now, the Government of Mexico is deploying on the south side, between Mexicali and Tijuana, a total of about 300 Mexican law enforcement officers where an effort to stem the violence is occurring.

They are also deploying in the area of San Diego, the Rio Grande Valley, and Laredo, Texas PGR representatives, Procuraduría General de la República representatives, specifically for prosecutorial and deterrence efforts in coordination with the Mexican law enforcement agents and based on our threat assessments also, so again, working very closely.

I will cover this very quickly. Oasis program, which is a joint prosecutorial program at and between the ports of entry, between the Mexican Government and the U.S. Government; over 114 cases that have been prosecuted to date since we implemented this program.

In addition to this, they're working very closely with us on something that you've heard about and read about here lately, is a tunnel situation, working in close coordination with us. Working in the fact that our sector chief patrol agents are coordinating with the generals on the Mexican side, to the degree possible, to coordinate and keep instances from happening that assaults occur against our officers and frankly, against theirs also and against aliens crossing the border.

Now, moving on to OTM, something that the Secretary talked about a few minutes ago. This chart depicts from the year 2000 to basically, first quarter of 2006. This shows the developing trend of climbing of OTMs into the United States. This is a catch-and-release program.

Now, you will notice that right about here is where we implemented full ER across the Southwest border. You will see that the drop is dramatic. It is starting to take hold. As we've spoken about in the past, we have to apply resources to take effect. This is the effect that is occurring now. This is OTMs across the Southwest border.

Go to the next one. Now, in addition to expedited removal that's across -- this is the Southwest border now and actually, the United States, we are also taking a more comprehensive approach in selected sectors.

In Del Rio sector, we have implemented Operation Streamline. It's a joint effort, a very close effort between the border patrol, ICE investigations, ICE detention and removal, the judiciary system, the U.S. Marshals, and the prosecutors, where the chief patrol agent targets an area of focus. And anything and everything that crosses through there is prosecuted, prosecuted and they start serving time.

What this depicts here is the Del Rio OTM apprehensions. What you will see from this time period here, where we begin Streamline, which is in November -- mid-November compared with the same time period last year, this is what OTMs were doing. Streamline this year, this is where they're at now.

Now, this gap right here, this week represents -- this is a one-week time period compared to the same time period last year, a drop of 67 percent. What those numbers reflect are over 530 OTMs apprehended last year, same time period, just over a hundred this year. So again, it is taking effect. It is a combination of Operation Streamline and ER that was implemented across the Southwest border.

This chart; this is Del Rio sector, Rio Grande Valley sector, and El Paso sector. The reason we use those as a gauge is those three sectors account for 80 percent of all the OTMs apprehended along our nation's borders. This is inclusive of north and southern border, so those three sectors, 80 percent.

What you see here, and I'll take you through these graphical lines one at a time, is this top line here reflects all apprehensions of all OTMs, inclusive of El Salvadorians. What this line here represents is our intake capability, the bed spaces that are available.

This is -- between this line here and this line here was a gap that we needed to close in order to end catch-and-release and go to catch-and-remove. You will see that between this line here, after we implemented ER, it started closing dramatically here.

Now, this middle line here, this depicts all OTMs apprehended without El Salvadorians, for the reason that the Secretary just pointed out. El Salvadorians fall into a special category and we're addressing that, but I will point out

Secretary just pointed out. El Salvadorians fall into a special category and we're addressing that, but I will point out that between this gap and this gap here, a line where we are able to detain without constraints -- look at the gap and how much more accelerated the closing of that gap was and it continues.

What this gap represents here is between all OTMs. This is El Salvadorians, basically 15 percent of this is family units, and we're starting to see an increase in the family units. And the others are El Salvadorians. The bottom line is that the gap is closing. We are heading towards catch and remove.

Next.

SBI. Very quickly. Personnel, infrastructure and technology. Next week, we will swear in the 500th Border Patrol agent trainee as a part of the 1,500 that the Secretary talked about. On the 13th, that individual will show up at our academy in Artesia, New Mexico.

Technology and infrastructure. What you see here is a depiction of new tactical infrastructure that is being applied in the Yuma sector. Three miles will be up by April 15th. In Deming, New Mexico, we will have one mile of this type of same infrastructure in very focused areas that should have an impact on the drive-throughs that are occurring. This is the machine, by the way, that is drilling them into the ground here. Okay.

With that, I will pass it on to Mr. Torres.

Mr. Torres: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, and Chief. Building upon what we were talking about earlier with the deterrent effect and the increased efficiencies and being able to detain people here and detention removal operations for ICE, we have a chart here that depicts the timeframes specifically by nationality.

And to give you an example, before we implemented expedited removal across the Southwest border, the Southwest border, the average amount of time that a person spent in detention was about 90 days. Once we implemented expedited removal in South Texas last summer, we saw that timeframe drop to about 30 days. Our goal is to get to 15 days.

And if you take a look at some of these nationalities here across the board, specifically with Honduras, Guatemala, we are rapidly reducing that timeframe length of stay down to about 15 days.

Our current time right now is eighteen-and-a-half days. Why do I mention this? It is because it's simple math. If I have one bed, I can hold four people in that bed over the course of a year at a 90-day detention rate. As we break that down to about eighteen-and-a-half days, I can use that same bed for 20 people without getting any additional resources. So we're actually becoming more efficient. We can detain more people, we can remove more people quickly.

As we go to the next slide here, you can see the impact that we're having. The top dark shade is the intake. The red shade is the removal. We are working at a 99 percent rate of all people that we place into expedited removal of being able to remove them from the country. The gap that you see here represented on this chart actually reflects that eighteen-and-a-half day length of stay rate. So, eighteen-and-a-half days from now, that gap, those people will also be removed.

That gets us to talking about the budget. A little bit about the budget. For ICE, 21 percent increase from 3.8 billion last year to 4.7 billion requested this year. A little bit over \$425 million of that is for detention, additional beds, 6,700 additional beds.

What does that mean for us? If we use these beds for expedited removal, we will be able to remove at this current pace an additional 134,000 people just with those 67 beds alone. That's a dramatic increase, compared to when you consider last year we removed just over 130,000 people, and the year before, about 150,000 people.

So in effect, we're looking to increase by over 100 percent the amount of people we can detain and remove with just the addition of 6,700 beds.

In addition to the bed space, the Secretary mentioned that we are being allocated, or we're seeking an allocation of another \$60 million to add 18 fugitive operations teams.

We are currently slated to have 52 of these teams in operation by the end of this year. This will bring us up to 70 by the end of 2007. The current goal per team to arrest 1,000 people annually. The math again, 70,000 people that we'll be able to apprehend. These are people that have been ordered removed by an Immigration judge and have become fugitives, have failed to leave the country.

And so, since the teams have been implemented in 2003, we had no concerted effort actually before 2001 to go out and identify fugitives and absconders. They were each done ad hoc, office by office. We formalized the process in 2003, and since 2003, these teams that are currently in place have apprehended nearly 38,000 people, of which almost 50 percent of those have past criminal convictions.

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In addition to fugitive operations, we are also enhancing worksite enforcement, with a request for an additional 41 million, which will be able -- which will allow ICE to hire an additional 171 special agents and focus on restoring integrity to the workplace and ensure the -- and have a deterrent effect upon the hiring of illegal aliens in the workplace.

And then lastly, I want to touch on border violence. We heard the Secretary and the Chief talk about the border violence on the Southwest border. Recently, our border enforcement security task force, which is comprised of ICE agents, Customs and Border Protection officers, ATF, FBI and the marshals, and state and local officers, executed search warrants down in the Laredo area, which resulted in our officers discovering over 33 improvised explosive devices, assault weapons, bulletproof vests, and different sets of -- different types of weapons that were destined, we believe, for warring drug cartels in Mexico.

As of Monday, we made an arrest related to that. Our Public Affairs officers have more details and information if you would like to meet with them afterwards to get you the details on that arrest. And, unfortunately, later on that same night, a newspaper organization down in Laredo ended up -- actually, a grenade and assault rounds were fired into that --

Question: In Nuevo Laredo?

Mr. Torres:

In Nuevo Laredo, exactly. And so we're making progress. The border enforcement security task forces are being effective. And with that, I'll turn it back over to the Secretary.

Secretary Chertoff: Okay. We'll take some questions.

Question:

Mr. Secretary, could you talk to us about the -- or you didn't mention it today. Are there any specifics? Are you looking at electronic surveillance? What kinds of things are looking at?

Secretary Chertoff:

We had rolled out expedited removal along the Canadian border as well, so we're treating that as the same mission.

Now the volume of people coming across is not as great as it is across the southern border. But, again, there too we're looking at this mix of solutions.

It depends on the type of landscape you're dealing with. If you're dealing with ports of entry, for example, that's one kind of challenge. If you're dealing with vast areas of terrain that are really uninhabited, there you want to use, and we have in fact used in the past surveillance technology, aerial vehicles, things of that sort. We would look at the possibility of satellite solutions as well.

So this is a comprehensive approach to the whole border. And I should add as well, we have maritime borders as well. That's really Coast Guard's responsibility principally, at least in terms of patrolling. But there again, we work very hard to make sure we are equipping the Coast Guard with the most up-to-date technology so they can carry out their mission protecting our coasts as well.

Yes?

Question:

Congress is considering a plan to build a fence along the Canadian border and whether or not that's feasible. Do you agree with that? Do you think it's something necessary?

Secretary Chertoff: I think what I've said is that fencing has its place in certain parts of the border, depending on the terrain. The challenge in the border is apprehending people between the time they cross the border and the time they get to a road or a bus station or someplace where they can get transportation into the interior.

When the distance between the border and that transportation is short, like in a city, you really have to be up against the border. You have to put your resources right up at the border because you don't have very much time to apprehend people. And that's where fencing, like in El Paso or San Diego, makes a lot of sense.

When you're dealing with the desert, fencing actually doesn't make a lot of sense, because there you have -- really it's a matter of days for people to get from the border to a road.

It's actually more efficient for the Border Patrol to be able to spot them and then intercept them at a convenient place rather than force the Border Patrol to be right up against the fence in order to patrol the fence itself.

In fact, building a fence in the desert would have the somewhat ironic result of requiring us to put more bodies right up against the border, because it would be a less efficient way to deal with it.

So, we look at the total menu of options, depending on the terrain. Fencing has its place in some areas, but as a total solution, I don't think it's a good total solution.

Question: For the Canadian border you mean it's not --

Secretary Chertoff:

Well, for parts of the Mexican border as well. When you're dealing with the desert, for example, we don't advocate putting a fence in the desert because it's more efficient for us to intercept people when they're in the desert at a place of our own choosing, as opposed to being forced to guard the entire fence, right up against the fence.

Question: But I don't understand whether you think it makes sense for any part of the Canadian border.

Secretary Chertoff:

It would depend. I mean, you know, it would depend on the particular landscape, you know, whether you're dealing with an area where we have a lot of people sneaking across the border in an urban area, a little bit of fencing might make sense. If we're dealing with an uninhabited area, fencing wouldn't make sense.

As I stand here now, I'm not aware of a problem at the Canadian border where people are sneaking across in urban areas. First of all, we have a waterway that provides a significant amount of border protection at some places.

It's all a question of adapting the right tactics and the right mix of infrastructure and technology to the particular landscape you're dealing with.

Question:

Regarding the border violence, the usual argument from the Mexican government is that weapons come from the United States. Do you agree with that assessment of the Mexican government? And are you worried about any type of arms that have been appearing like in the -- and in the newspaper with grenades and big explosives?

Secretary Chertoff:

Well, I mean, we obviously focus on making sure people are not illegally smuggling weapons out of the United States into Mexico. But wherever the weapons come from, they're dangerous.

The grenade incident in Nuevo Laredo is a -- directed at a news organization -- is a particularly troubling example of escalation of violence. You know, I think what the video shows is this. A lot of people that this issue of human smuggling is -- you know, they picture people kind of coming across the border, unfortunate people who are, you know, migrating and they focus on them as victims, as they should focus on. What they don't see is behind this are some very sophisticated, brutal criminal organizations who traffic in humans and they traffic in drugs. And these are the same kinds of criminal organizations that we've been dealing with in this country for ten or twenty years. I mean, one organization fails, another one takes over.

But these are very sophisticated, hardened criminals who will use violence to protect their criminal businesses. The more pressure we put on them, the more violent they're going to be. I mean, the sad reality is that if we weren't being effective, they wouldn't use violence, because they wouldn't -- you know, they could afford to lose a load every once in a while.

But as we put more Border Patrol and more technology on the border, we're starting to really hurt them in terms of their profit, which is what it's all about for these criminal organizations. And that's why we've got to continue to apply this pressure, but we've also got to be prepared to deal very decisively with any violence directed at our Border Patrol agents.

Question: Do all weapons come from the U.S.?

Secretary Chertoff:

I don't know where weapons come -- I mean, wherever weapons come from, I don't care where they get them from, if people are directing weapons, whether they be rocks, which I guess you find on the ground, or oil -- you know, rocks wrapped with oil-soaked rags and lit on fire, or rifles or pistols, whatever it is, we're going to deal with it decisively.

You saw a vehicle being used as a weapon, someone using a car to ram the Border Patrol at a blockade. All of those things are unacceptable and will be dealt with very severely.

Question: Have you discovered a tunnel in the border with Laredo, sir?

Secretary Chertoff: Well, we have the tunnel in -- I think there have been a total of, what, 20 tunnels since 9/11?

Chief Aguilar: No to your answer. And, right, that we have not discovered one. There have been a total of 19 tunnels in California since 9/11, and 17 in Arizona. Four in four weeks during the month of January.

Question: In Yuma Sector, there was a huge spike of apprehensions over the last year, then there was a decrease on the other side of the state. Doesn't this kind of show that you can't do it in a piecemeal fashion? That the drug and the human smugglers always look for the path of least resistance?

Secretary Chertoff:

I mean, it is true that at the end, we have to do the -- it has to go across the whole border. You start with the areas that are the most vulnerable. The most vulnerable places for us are places where migrants can get very quickly into a major transportation hub, whether it be a bus station or a road or an airport. So we want to -- and where they have good infrastructure on the south side of the border supporting their efforts to sneak across the border.

So what we do with the Border Patrol is we prioritize those areas where we are most vulnerable, but we recognize that as we do that, the smugglers will then start to move to other areas which may be a little less hospitable but are still, you know, not as well protected. And so we want to then roll out our protection across the entire border.

That's why we're hiring 1,500 Border Patrol this year, 1,500 in the budget for next year. That's why we're trying to get the technology, because we do vision, envision as an end state, having this across the entire border.

Question: Mr. Secretary, based on the people that you have been apprehending at both borders, how would you characterize at this juncture the terrorist threat?

Secretary Chertoff: Well, I mean, I wouldn't want to suggest that most people we apprehend are terrorists.

Let me step back. When we consider the issue of terrorists, we have to look not only -- we have to look at the whole picture. We have to look at people coming between the ports of entry, people trying to sneak through the ports of entry, like Ressam, for example, the Millennium Bomber. Possibly the people who are trying to jump ship, coming in through the maritime environment. People using phony documentation to try to get on airplanes and come into the country and sneak into the country.

Our approach to terrorism is to look at all these things comprehensively. It involves better screening at the ports of entry, better enforcement between the ports of entry, better intelligence gathering and intelligence fusion, so we can focus on specific threats.

Because the fact of the matter is, you're looking at a lot of border, and to the extent we get intelligence that gives us some insight as to where to focus on a particular treat, that gives us a leg up.

So we're looking at a total package of things we use to deter terrorists from coming in. Obviously, a big part of that is taking the terrorists out overseas. Because as you kill or capture the planners and the operational leaders, you degrade their ability to carry out terrorist missions.

But this is a comprehensive approach. We've got to do a lot of different things at the same time in dealing with terrorism. It's not simply something that's addressed in one particular area or another area.

Question: But is there not a -- is there not a concern that with this porous border, particularly along the U.S. and Mexico, that terrorists could come into the country along with other people who are trying to come into the country?

Secretary Chertoff: Sure. That's why we are focused on raising the level of security in every respect: land borders, maritime borders, air, at the ports of entry, between the ports of entry, people who sneak in, people who come in with phony documentation, people who may come in with legitimate documentation, but intelligence would show us that in fact they mean to do us harm.

All of these things are part of the defense that we use, starting with intelligence overseas, that we gather overseas, that gives us information as to who the threat might be, and then all the layers of security we have that affect entry into this country.

Question: On the violence on the border, can you tell us about how many officers -- I guess I'd direct this to the Chief -- have been injured this quarter, in this fiscal year? And can you tell us -- you said there were 80 incidents in the first quarter. How does that compare to the last fiscal year?

Chief Aguilar: There has been 108 percent increase on the number of assaults against our officers as compared to the fiscal year before. That number is 778 assaults against our officers last year.

There have been 192 this fiscal year, since the beginning of the fiscal year. Now, fiscal is October to now. I don't have the numbers handy on the actual officers that have had stitches or taken rounds or things of that nature. I can get that for you later on.

Question: The video on the rocks that we saw, was that from this fiscal year, or was that from a --

Chief Aguilar: One of them was. The other one was not.

Question: The Coalition of Texas Border Sheriffs is up here this week lobbying Congress for money to go specifically to this Texas Border Sheriffs Coalition. They are impatient with the level of enforcement occurring at the border in Texas and are asking for 100 million or more dollars for their own efforts.

Do you view this as complementary to what you're doing? Is this competitive with what you're doing?

Secretary Chertoff: Well, something we did do which didn't get a lot of notice, a few weeks ago, we announced that we were going re-start something called Operation Stone Garden. Operation Stone Garden gives governors who receive certain categories of homeland security assistance the ability to seek to use some of that money for purposes of border enforcement if they do so in concert with our Border Patrol operations.

So we've actually taken steps to make more money available to local law enforcement to work with us and with our Border Patrol as part of joint task forces to patrol the border.

The critical thing for us, though, is coordination. We have to have a common operating picture and a common strategy in terms of how we manage the border. The experts in dealing with the challenge at the border, both in terms of the practical challenges and the legal rules, are the Border Patrol.

To the extent we -- you know, we're giving money to states or letting states use Homeland Security money, we're welcoming their assistance. But it has to come within the framework of a common strategy and a common picture. We don't want to have two different groups of law enforcement folks operating, you know, in an uncoordinated fashion. That's not particularly effective, and it's not even particularly safe.

I don't know if the Chief wants to add to that.

Chief Aguilar: I think the Secretary touched on the most important thing, and that's the partnerships, we're working together so that we have a focus on that border. And Stone Garden gives us that.

Now, I have to say that our partnership with the state, local and tribal authorities is very, very good. We work together in an outstanding manner. And by bringing those forces together, we are more effective.

Question: Sir, do you have something new in regards to the military persons? Have you found any possible evidence that involved the Mexican military?

Secretary Chertoff: Well, the particular, I guess the incursion on January 23rd, at least the Mexican government has indicated to us they identified several individuals involved with that who they said were not members of Mexican military. And I think we were informed that the particular vehicle in question or vehicles in question are an older model that are not used by the Mexican armed forces.

I think this matter is also being looked at by ICE and the FBI. So, you know, again, as further information comes out, we'll reveal it. But, you know, this at least is the preliminary report of the Mexican government.

Question: What about number of apprehensions on the Canadian border? Any numbers on that?

Chief Aguilar: On the what, ma'am?

Question: Canadian border.

Chief Aguilar: Number of apprehensions --

Question: Yes.

Chief Aguilar: -- in total? They are counted on a yearly basis. I don't have that up to speed right now, on a yearly basis between 2 and 3 percent of our total apprehensions nationwide.

Question: And usually for what?

Moderator: We can work with you to get those statistics. Thank you very much, everyone. Have a nice day.