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Mission:

To make legislative recommendations to help the Texas Border Region grow and prosper economically.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New TBC Report Sheds Light on America's Border Security Blunders

Coalition Leaders Say Lack of Strategy, Investment in Legal Border Crossings Facilitates and Empowers Drug Cartels

EAGLE PASS, Texas (Jan. 12, 2012) – A [new report](#) released today by a coalition of Texas border mayors, county officials and economic development associations asserts that the U.S. government has spent nearly \$90 billion over the past decade to secure the Southwest border, with no better than mixed results.

While apprehension rates are up to 90 percent for undocumented persons seeking to cross the frontier between designated U.S.-Mexico border crossings, the Texas Border Coalition (TBC) says Mexican drug cartels continue to enjoy commercial success, smuggling more drugs than ever into the country through the nation's legal border crossings.

Meanwhile, a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) briefing on the costs and benefits of the Department of Defense's role in securing the Southwest land border noted that defense department officials have expressed concern "that there is no comprehensive southwest border security strategy" and that the National Guard's role has been "ad hoc."

"Our national success depends on defining and executing a strategy to defeat the cartels attacking our nation," said Eagle Pass Mayor and TBC Chairman Ramsey Cantu. "Without a strategy, America will continue to lose the border security war to the better financed, equipped, more mobile and agile drug cartels."

The border security policies examined in the TBC report fall under two broad categories: administrative and congressional. Administrative policies include U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) focused tactics – many grounded in operations that began in the 1990s when an anti-immigration backlash fueled crackdowns code-named "Operation Gatekeeper" and "Operation Hold-the-Line." Congressional policies center on building more fences and walls, and whether to

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snuff environmental protections for public lands on the Southwest and Northern borders.

[“Without Strategy: America’s Border Security Blunders Facilitate and Empower Mexico’s Drug Cartels”](#) suggests that to achieve national security, the U.S. needs well-built, equipped and staffed border crossings that can interdict lawbreakers and facilitate legitimate trade and travel.

The TBC research, as substantiated by former CBP Commissioner Alan Bersin, shows that 90 percent of the illegal traffickers are apprehended between the border crossings. Meanwhile, only 28 percent of “major violators” – meaning someone involved in criminal activity that would result in arrest – attempting to enter the U.S. at the border crossings are apprehended.

“To continue to fight the border security war where it has been won (between the border crossings) and to continue to surrender the war where we are losing (at the border crossings) is to threaten our national and border security and resign our nation to defeat,” Cantu said.

As the U.S. spent \$90 billion seeking to secure the Southwest border, the Mexican cartels have continued to smuggle cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine through the legal border crossings in California and South Texas, and marijuana between border crossings in remote areas of Arizona. They generally smuggle smaller loads of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine in non-commercial vehicles (cars, SUVs, and pickup trucks) to blend in with cross-border traffic.

GAO officials estimate America will need 6,000 new inspection personnel and \$6 billion to bring the facilities up to snuff. Yet, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has chosen to ignore these recommendations. Budget forecasts offer no new funding for border security infrastructure at the official border crossings for many years and personnel accounts remain static.

“We don’t expect Congress and the Administration to wave a fiscal wand and achieve full funding levels overnight,” said McAllen Richard Cortez, whose community is located about 5 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border. “But if there are additional resources to be allocated this year, they should go to the legal border crossings as a first priority.”

U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, who has co-authored legislation to make the Southwest border more secure, said the legal border crossings must serve as the front lines in protecting U.S. security and preserve the flow of trade by alleviating long wait times.

“Securing our legal border crossings is critical to our homeland security efforts, and it is important that when we think about border security we also think about our nation’s economic security efforts,” said Congressman Cuellar. “Our countries rely heavily on cross-border exchange of goods and commerce, and any federal investment we make in our border crossings is also an investment in our economy.”

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Immigration reform is an essential requirement for successful achievement of these metrics, said National Immigration Forum Executive Director Ali Noorani

“When migrant labor is channeled through the legal ports of entry, the Border Patrol and CBP inspectors can focus on catching drug smugglers and other criminals,” he said.

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About the Texas Border Coalition

The Texas Border Coalition (TBC) is a collective voice of border mayors, county judges, economic development commissions focused on issues that affect 2.5 million people along the Texas-Mexico border region and economically disadvantaged counties from El Paso to Brownsville. TBC is working closely with the state and federal government to educate, advocate, and secure funding for transportation, immigration and ports of entry, workforce and education and health care. For more information, visit the coalition website at www.texasbordercoalition.org.