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1 March 2019

Chairman Graham and distinguished members of the Committee,

I am honored to appear before you today to discuss U.S. Customs and Border Protection's response to the smuggling of persons at the Southern Border. Although it has been three years since I retired from the Border Patrol, I clearly remember appearing before this committee and briefing your staffs throughout my six years as the Chief. I want to thank you for your continued leadership on border security issues and for supporting the men and women of CBP who each day provide a blanket of safety and security for our citizens who deserve no less.

Transnational criminal organizations have profited for decades smuggling people and contraband into the United States along our Southern Border. In response, our country has taken deliberate and incremental steps to achieving what the President describes as "complete operational control" of the border. Throughout my tenure as the Chief, I have been asked what our country can do to stop the flow of illegal immigration. I believe the answer involves two equally important and fundamental considerations: 1) effective enforcement; and 2) strong U. S. policies and federal law to discourage illegal entry.

Enforcement

A comprehensive and blended enforcement approach is required to stem the tide of illegal entry. This includes physical barriers when appropriate, technology to increase situational awareness, and a workforce of brave and dedicated agents and support personnel.

Physical barriers are consistent with CBP's "persistent impedance" approach and are required in urban areas where the point of illegal entry to the point of assimilation is measured in seconds or minutes. With the addition of technology such as unattended ground sensors, cameras and radar, the ability to detect, classify, identify, track and respond to illegal incursions increases the probability of arrest, a foundation to achieving a secure border.



In remote areas of the border, where the point of illegal entry to the point of assimilation is measured in hours or days, physical barriers play a lesser role and in most cases are not required. However, situational awareness is paramount.

I used to tell my field commanders that it is important to know where people are crossing illegally between the ports of entry and I emphasized to them that it is equally important to know where they are not. In today's border security operations and with the advancement of technology, it is imperative to rely on innovative and cost-effective technology to increase situational awareness and harness verifiable data to know at any given time, how many people are illegally crossing the border. A good example of this innovative approach can be seen with CBP's Linear Ground Detection System Program. With the use of fiber optic intrusion detection technology, remote sections of the border can be monitored, and illegal incursions can be detected and classified at approximately one-tenth the cost of conventional border security solutions.

Policy

People will decide to enter illegally into the United States when they believe, either real or perceived, that the benefit exceeds the cost. Until and unless this paradigm shifts, people will continue to attempt illegal entry. Typically, we study "push and pull" factors of illegal entry to understand how and to what extent we can affect the illegal flow. As an example, individuals may be "pushed" out of their country of origin due to inadequate economic opportunities, violence, or natural disasters. Conversely, they may be "pulled" or enticed to enter illegally if our U.S. policies or federal laws are exploited, thus allowing them to be released after their arrest. It is my belief that the latter is happening and is the catalyst for the increases we are experiencing along our Southern Border today.

In conclusion, I again thank you for the opportunity to appear today and look forward to your questions.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Fisher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Michael J. Fisher
Chief U.S. Border Patrol (retired)
Vice President
ATSC