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Testimony Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee of Energy and Commerce

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Dear Chairman Griffith, Ranking Member Castor, Chairwoman Rodgers, Ranking Member Pallone, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Good morning, and thank you for inviting me to testify before you.

As a Senior Fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, I bring 22 years of military experience and a deep understanding of border security from my time in the Army and U.S. Border Patrol. My roles have ranged from Infantry Officer in Operation Lone Star to Collateral Intelligence Agent and Marine Border Patrol Agent. I've been on the frontlines of combating drug trafficking and illegal immigration, and I have also coordinated efforts for border wall construction. My career has been dedicated to protecting our nation from threats at our international borders.

Today, I address a pivotal concern, one that, if disregarded, could yield dire repercussions for both our security and the welfare of our citizens. In recent years, I have personally witnessed a noteworthy evolution in the security and stability of our border region. The nature of the challenges confronting us has transformed, necessitating proactive engagement and a comprehensive reevaluation of our strategies. This transition signifies both an opening for advancement and a looming danger.

Americans today are at the mercy of distant forces seeking to eradicate our national sovereignty through unchecked weaponized mass migration affecting every state. Due to the policy decisions and inaction by the current administration, during the past three years, each state has become increasingly threatened by the weaponization of mass migration, Mexican cartels, and adversarial threat networks all emanating from an open border.

Central to this discourse is the current debate surrounding the nature and categorization of the border: Is the border secure? Who has operational control? Is there an invasion? Is there a crisis? Is every town a border town? How do we know? On the surface, these categorizations might appear as mere semantic distinctions. But they are not. How we label and perceive the border situation will shape our strategic response, the allocation of resources, and, most critically, our ability to secure it.

Yet, despite two decades having elapsed since the inception of the Department of Homeland Security and USNORTHCOM, the border remains shrouded in ambiguity, with pervasive uncertainty, enveloping policy frameworks and the parties involved. A significant challenge also

arises from the absence of a standardized definition for Mexican cartel border crimes and the spillover of violence.

We need to recognize the multifaceted and interconnected nature of the threats we face and devise a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to counter them. We need to allocate sufficient and appropriate resources to secure our border, protect our citizens, and uphold our laws. We need to hold our government accountable for its actions and inactions, and demand transparency and accountability from our media and public officials.

We, the American people, have the right and the duty to defend our nation and our values. We cannot let our border crisis become our national downfall. We must act now before it is too late.

WEAPONIZATION OF MASS MIGRATION
The United States is facing an unprecedented crisis at its southern border. Under this current administration, there have been over 6.2 million illegal crossings of our southern border, and 7.5 million enforcement encounters nationwide. Many of them are fleeing violence, poverty, and persecution in their home countries, but others are being lured by false promises and incentives from the Biden administration.

This is not a spontaneous humanitarian emergency. It is a deliberate and calculated strategy of weaponizing migration to undermine the sovereignty and security of the United States and its states, especially Texas. It is a form of hybrid warfare that exploits the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of liberal democracies, which are bound by international norms and laws to protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

The Biden administration has created the conditions for this weaponization of mass migration by reversing the policies of the previous administration that deterred and prevented illegal immigration, such as the Remain in Mexico program, the asylum cooperation agreements with Central American countries, and the border wall construction. Instead, the current administration has offered illegal aliens various incentives, such as benefits of parole, flights, transportation, or other monetary benefits, to induce them to leave their countries and head to the U.S. border.

The administration has then unleashed a sudden and massive influx of migrants and asylum seekers into the U.S., overwhelming its capacity to process, accommodate, and integrate them. It has tried to prevent the states, especially Texas, from controlling their borders or managing the migration flow. It has accused them of violating human rights, endangering public health, and inciting violence while ignoring or downplaying the humanitarian, security, and economic costs of the crisis.

Other countries such as Russia, Belarus, and Venezuela, have used foreign nationals as weapons against their neighbors more than 80 times since "the 1951 Refugee Convention, which granted those fleeing political persecution the right to seek asylum in states that are signatories to the agreement." However, this would be an unprecedented case of a government using this form of a hybrid attack as a strategy against its sovereignty and people.

The weaponization of mass migration is a serious threat to the national security and sovereignty of the United States and its states. It is also a violation of the human dignity and rights of the migrants and asylum seekers, who are being used as pawns in a political game. The American people deserve to know the truth about this crisis and its causes and to demand accountability and action from their elected representatives. The states, especially Texas, have the right and the duty to defend their borders and their interests and to cooperate with other countries to address the root causes of migration and to find humane and sustainable solutions. The United States must not succumb to the weaponization of mass migration but must uphold its values and principles as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

SCREENING
The United States is facing a humanitarian and security crisis at its southern border. Thousands of illegal aliens are arriving at the border every day. However, the current vetting and screening process for these illegal aliens is inadequate, inconsistent, and unlawful. It violates the immigration law, undermines the rule of law, and exposes the nation to potential threats from criminals and terrorists.

According to the immigration law, any alien who enters or attempts to enter the United States at any time or place other than as designated by immigration officers eludes examination or inspection by immigration officers, or attempts to enter or obtains entry to the United States by a willfully false or misleading representation or the willful concealment of a material fact, can be fined or imprisoned, or both, under 8 U.S. Code § 1325. This statute is the controlling authority and contains no defenses to entry between ports of entry. Furthermore, it is illegal to be inadmissible, and that is why aliens who are and are not seeking asylum can by law be prevented from entering or promptly removed from the U.S. per 8 U.S.C. § 1225(b)(1) and the Secure Fence Act 2006.

However, the Border Patrol is not enforcing this law consistently or effectively. Many illegal aliens are processed and released based on their nationality, familial status, criminal history, and ICE detention space, without regard to their legal status or eligibility for asylum. Moreover, illegal aliens are not being asked the credible fear questions by Border Patrol agents, which are based on the Expedited Removal Provisions, which allow certain individuals who enter the United States through its southwest land border or adjacent coastal borders to be subject to expedited removal without an immigration hearing, unless they can demonstrate an exception to the rule or rebut the presumption. These questions are:
  - Why did you leave your home or country of last residence?
  - Do you have any fear or concern about being returned to your home country or being removed from the United States?
  - Would you be harmed if you returned to your home country or country of last residence?
  - Do you have any questions or is there anything else you would like to add?

These questions are essential to determine whether an illegal alien has a legitimate asylum claim or not. Asylum is a protection granted to foreign nationals already in the United States or at the border who meet the international law definition of a "refugee." According to the American

[Immigration Council](#), "The United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol define a refugee as a person who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her home country, and cannot obtain protection in that country, due to past persecution or a well-founded fear of being persecuted in the future 'on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.' Congress incorporated this definition into U.S. immigration law in the Refugee Act of 1980."

However, not every illegal alien who arrives at the border is eligible for asylum. According to the immigration law, an alien who violated 8 U.S.C. § 1325(a) entering the U.S., and there is no asylum exception, or who lacked immigration documents per § 1182(a)(7), 1181 and 1184, is ineligible for "Affirmative Asylum" and can only request it defensively. Furthermore, 8 U.S.C. § 1158(a)(1) allows for a request only after an illegal entry. Therefore, it is crucial to ask credible fear questions to screen out those who do not have a valid asylum claim and to expedite their removal, as well as to identify those who do have a valid asylum claim and refer them to the appropriate authorities for further processing.

The current vetting and screening process for illegal aliens at the border is not only illegal but also dangerous. It creates loopholes and incentives for migrants to enter the country illegally, without proper documentation or verification. It also allows criminals and terrorists to exploit the system and evade detection. According to the Department of Homeland Security, some of the illegal aliens who have been apprehended at the border have been found to have ties to transnational criminal organizations, such as drug cartels, human traffickers, and gangs. Some of them have also been found to have links to terrorist groups, such as ISIS, Hezbollah, and al-Qaeda. These individuals pose a serious threat to the national security, border security, homeland security, and public safety of the United States.

The United States is a nation of immigrants, but also a nation of laws. Immigration law is designed to protect the sovereignty, security, and prosperity of the country, as well as the rights and dignity of the migrants. The Border Patrol's vetting and screening process is failing to uphold the immigration law and to serve the national interest. It is time to reform the process and restore the rule of law at the border.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
The U.S. border with Mexico is one of the most complex and dynamic regions in the world, with millions of people, goods, and vehicles crossing it every day. Securing this border is a vital national interest, as it affects the safety, economy, and sovereignty of the country. However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the agency responsible for border security, has failed to achieve full operational control of the border, which means it cannot prevent or detect all illegal entries.

DHS has relied heavily on various technologies and infrastructure to enhance its border security efforts, such as ground sensors, fences, and Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RVSS) towers. However, these have proven to be ineffective, unreliable, and costly, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), the watchdog of the federal government.

For example, GAO found that the ground sensors deployed by DHS have a high false alarm rate and are often triggered by animals, weather, or vegetation. This reduces the situational awareness and response capabilities of the border agents, who have to waste time and resources to investigate each alarm. Moreover, DHS has not established performance measures or standards for these sensors, making it difficult to assess their effectiveness and efficiency.

Similarly, GAO found that the fences constructed by DHS have not been systematically evaluated for their impact on border security outcomes, such as apprehensions or deterrence. There is no evidence that the fences have reduced the flow of illegal crossings, as migrants and smugglers have adapted to them by using tunnels, ladders, or other methods. Furthermore, DHS has not developed a comprehensive plan to identify, prioritize, and address the maintenance and repair needs of the existing fencing, which could compromise its functionality and longevity.

Another example is the RVSS towers, which are fixed towers equipped with cameras and sensors that provide situational awareness to border agents. GAO found that these towers have experienced technical problems, such as poor image quality, limited coverage, and frequent outages. These problems reduce the visibility and accuracy of the border agents, who have to rely on other sources of information or physical inspection. Additionally, DHS has not fully implemented its plans to upgrade and modernize the RVSS towers, which could improve their performance and capabilities.

GAO has also reported that DHS has spent billions of dollars on border security programs and initiatives but has not consistently measured or reported on their effectiveness, efficiency, or return on investment. For instance, GAO found that DHS has not developed or implemented a reliable method to estimate the total cost of border security, which could help inform resource allocation and budget decisions. Moreover, DHS has not established clear and consistent goals, objectives, and performance measures for its border security efforts, which could help assess progress and identify gaps or areas for improvement.

These findings suggest that DHS needs to rethink its border security strategy and adopt a more holistic, evidence-based, and cost-effective approach. DHS should conduct rigorous evaluations of the technologies and infrastructure it deploys and ensure that they meet the operational needs and expectations of the border agents and the public. DHS should also develop and implement a comprehensive and transparent framework to measure and report on the outcomes and impacts of its border security efforts and use this information to guide its planning and decision-making. DHS should also seek to collaborate and coordinate with other stakeholders, such as state and local governments, the private sector, civil society, and international partners, to leverage their expertise, resources, and perspectives.

Securing the U.S. border with Mexico is a daunting and dynamic challenge, but it is not impossible. By rethinking its border security strategy, DHS can enhance its ability to protect the country from threats, while respecting the rights and dignity of the people who live and work in the border region.

Border Metrics

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (NDAA), enacted on December 23, 2016, was the first to legally codify border security metrics. Under this legislation, DHS is mandated to annually report on 43 distinct measures. Yet, these measures predominantly capture immigration statistics. By prioritizing immigration metrics, the federal government shifted public perception. The border environment is viewed almost exclusively through the lens of immigration and migration. This limited perspective overshadows and thus undermines more extensive national security threats.

Consequently, the federal government has strategically framed the border challenge mainly as an immigration matter. Within this context, border security effectiveness hinges on the tally of apprehensions, turnbacks, and getaways, sidestepping wider security implications.

However, the border between the United States and Mexico is one of the most complex and dynamic regions in the world. It is also one of the most dangerous, as the brutal drug war in Mexico has claimed over 300,000 lives since 2006. The violence perpetrated by the powerful drug cartels has spilled over into the U.S. territory, affecting the security, economy, and quality of life of millions of Americans living in the border states.

The true extent and nature of this spillover violence remains largely unknown, due to a glaring data gap that hinders our ability to measure, monitor, and respond to the threat posed by the cartels. The current data sources are inadequate, inconsistent, and unreliable, leaving us with a distorted and incomplete picture of the reality on the ground.

The main source of data on cartel-related crime and violence in the U.S. is the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, which collects and publishes crime statistics from over 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country. However, the UCR program has several limitations that undermine its usefulness for capturing the full scope of cartel activity.

First, the UCR program does not have a clear and consistent definition of what constitutes a cartel-related crime. Different agencies may use different criteria and methods to identify and classify such crimes, resulting in variations and discrepancies in the data. For example, some agencies may only report crimes that are directly linked to the cartels, while others may include crimes that are indirectly or potentially related to them. Some agencies may rely on intelligence or evidence to establish the connection, while others may use assumptions or speculations.

Second, the UCR program does not capture all the types and aspects of cartel-related crime and violence. The program only collects data on eight major categories of crimes, known as Part I offenses, which include murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. However, these categories do not cover many other forms of crime and violence that are commonly associated with cartels, such as kidnapping, extortion, human trafficking, money laundering, corruption, and intimidation. Moreover, the program does not collect data on the characteristics and circumstances of the crimes, such as the motives, methods, weapons, victims, perpetrators, and locations.

Third, the UCR program does not account for the underreporting and undercounting of cartel-related crime and violence. Many victims and witnesses of such crimes are reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement, due to fear of retaliation or deportation. Many law enforcement agencies may also be reluctant to report such crimes, due to lack of resources, capacity, or willingness.

To address these limitations, the UCR program transitioned to a new data collection system, known as the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), on January 1, 2021. The NIBRS system is designed to provide more detailed and comprehensive data on crime incidents, including the nature, context, and consequences of the crimes, as well as the characteristics of the offenders, victims, and locations. The system also collects data on 24 additional categories of crimes, known as Part II offenses, which include some of the crimes that are relevant to cartel activity, such as drug offenses, fraud, gambling, and prostitution.

However, the NIBRS system is not without its challenges and limitations. The system is still voluntary, meaning that not all law enforcement agencies are required or willing to participate in it. As of 2019, only 43% of the agencies that reported to the UCR program were NIBRS-certified. The system is also more complex and costly to implement and maintain, requiring more training, equipment, and personnel. Moreover, the system does not have a specific category or indicator for cartel-related crime, leaving the identification and classification of such crimes to the discretion and judgment of the reporting agencies.

One possible reason why it is difficult to understand how and where the Mexican cartels operate in the U.S. due to the limited scope of NIBRS is that NIBRS does not capture data on drug trafficking offenses, which are the main activities of the cartels. According to the FBI, NIBRS collects data on 52 offenses, but none of them are specifically related to drug trafficking. Instead, NIBRS only records data on drug and narcotic violations, which are [defined as](#) "the unlawful cultivation, manufacture, distribution, sale, purchase, use, possession, transportation, or importation of any controlled drug or narcotic substance." This means that NIBRS does not distinguish between different types and levels of drug-related crimes, such as possession, distribution, or trafficking, nor does it indicate the source, destination, or quantity of the drugs involved. Therefore, NIBRS data may not reflect the full extent and impact of the Mexican cartels' operations in the U.S., especially in terms of their networks, routes, methods, and profits.

Another possible reason why it is difficult to understand how and where the Mexican cartels operate in the U.S. due to the limited scope of NIBRS is that NIBRS is not yet fully implemented and standardized across the country. Although the FBI has set a deadline of January 1, 2021, for all law enforcement agencies to transition to NIBRS, as of May 2023, only 77% of the U.S. population is covered by NIBRS-reporting agencies. This means that there are still gaps and inconsistencies in the national crime data collection and reporting system, which may affect the quality and comparability of the data. Moreover, some states and localities may have different definitions, classifications, and reporting practices for drug-related offenses, which may also affect the accuracy and reliability of the data. Therefore, NIBRS data may not provide a comprehensive and uniform picture of the Mexican cartels' presence and activities in the U.S., especially in terms of their geographic distribution and variation.

The data gap on cartel violence has serious implications for our national security and public safety. Without reliable and comprehensive data, we cannot assess the magnitude and impact of the problem, identify the patterns and trends, evaluate the effectiveness of our policies and strategies, or allocate our resources and priorities. We are essentially flying blind in the face of a formidable and evolving enemy.

We must close the data gap on cartel violence, by developing and implementing a standardized and comprehensive data collection and reporting system that can capture the full spectrum and dimension of cartel activity in the U.S. Such a system should:
- Define and operationalize what constitutes a cartel-related crime, based on clear and consistent criteria and indicators.
- Collect and report data on all types and aspects of cartel-related crime and violence, including the motives, methods, weapons, victims, perpetrators, and locations.
- Account for the underreporting and undercounting of cartel-related crime and violence, by encouraging and facilitating the cooperation and collaboration of victims, witnesses, and law enforcement agencies.
- Integrate and coordinate data from multiple sources and levels, such as federal, state, and local agencies, as well as intelligence, military, and international partners.
- Analyze and disseminate data in a timely and transparent manner, to inform and support decision-making, policy-making, and public awareness.

By closing the data gap on cartel violence, we can enhance our understanding and awareness of the border region and improve our ability and readiness to secure and protect it. We can also foster a more informed and balanced dialogue and debate on the issues and challenges facing the border, and the solutions and opportunities available to address them.

MEXICAN CARTELS
The Mexican cartels are not just criminal organizations that traffic drugs, weapons, and people across the U.S.-Mexico border. They are also hybrid adversaries that challenge the U.S. national security and interests by using a combination of political, military, economic, social, and information means, and conventional, irregular, catastrophic, terrorism, and disruptive/criminal warfare methods. They may also collaborate with other state and non-state actors that share their goals or interests.

How the Mexican Cartels Operate as Hybrid Threats
The Mexican cartels are not monolithic entities, but rather networks of factions, cells, and affiliates that operate with varying degrees of autonomy and coordination. They are constantly adapting to the changing environment and opportunities, and they employ a mix of conventional and unconventional methods to achieve their objectives. Some of the methods they use include:
- Conventional warfare: The Mexican cartels have access to sophisticated weapons and equipment, such as assault rifles, grenades, rocket launchers, armored vehicles, and drones. They use these weapons to engage in confrontations with the Mexican security forces, rival cartels, and vigilante groups. They also use them to intimidate and coerce the local populations and authorities, and to protect their routes and territories.

- Irregular warfare: The Mexican cartels also rely on guerrilla tactics, such as ambushes, raids, assassinations, kidnappings, extortion, and bombings. They use these tactics to avoid direct clashes with superior forces, to disrupt and degrade the enemy's capabilities and morale, and to create a climate of fear and insecurity. They also use these tactics to target specific individuals or groups that oppose or challenge them, such as journalists, activists, politicians, judges, and law enforcement officers.
- Catastrophic warfare: The Mexican cartels have the potential to cause mass casualties and damage by using weapons of mass destruction (WMD), such as chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) agents. They may acquire these weapons from rogue states, terrorist groups, or black markets, or they may develop them themselves. They may use these weapons to deter or retaliate against the US or Mexican governments, to escalate the conflict, or to create chaos and panic.
- Terrorism: The Mexican cartels use violence or the threat of violence to influence the behavior and attitudes of the public, the media, and the government. They use terrorism to spread their propaganda, to demonstrate their power and legitimacy, to undermine the credibility and authority of the state, and to coerce or deter their enemies. They may also use terrorism to provoke or manipulate the US or Mexican governments into overreacting or underreacting, or to create divisions and conflicts among them.
- Disruptive/criminal warfare: The Mexican cartels use various forms of illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, money laundering, cybercrime, and corruption, to generate revenue, finance their operations, expand their influence, and weaken their adversaries. They use these activities to infiltrate and subvert the legal and institutional systems, to exploit the gaps and vulnerabilities in security and governance, and to erode the social and economic fabric of society.

How the Mexican Cartels Govern and Control Their Territories and Populations
The Mexican cartels are not only violent actors but also political actors who seek to establish and maintain their authority and legitimacy over their territories and populations. They do so by using a combination of coercion and co-optation, and by providing or denying public goods and services. Some of the ways they govern and control their domains include:
- Coercion: The Mexican cartels use violence or the threat of violence to impose their rules and regulations, enforce their taxes and fees, punish their enemies and defectors, and deter their challengers and competitors. They use coercion to instill fear and obedience, to eliminate or weaken the alternative sources of power and order, and to assert their dominance and monopoly.
- Co-optation: The Mexican cartels also use incentives or inducements to recruit and retain their members and supporters, to bribe and corrupt their allies and collaborators, to influence and manipulate their beneficiaries and clients, and to appease and placate their critics and opponents. They use co-optation to build and sustain their networks and coalitions, to gain and exploit access and information, and to create and maintain loyalty and dependence.
- Public goods and services: The Mexican cartels also provide or deny public goods and services, such as security, justice, health, education, infrastructure, and welfare, to their territories and populations. They provide these goods and services to fill the gaps and needs left by the state, to win the hearts and minds of the people, to enhance their

reputation and image, and to justify their existence and actions. They deny these goods and services to create or exacerbate the problems and grievances of the people, to undermine the state's capacity and legitimacy, and to increase their demand and leverage.

How the Mexican Cartels Use Coercion and Cyberspace to Advance Their Agendas
The Mexican cartels are not only physical actors but also virtual actors that use cyberspace as a domain and a tool to advance their agendas. They use cyberspace to communicate and coordinate, to collect and disseminate information, to conduct and facilitate operations, and to influence and manipulate perceptions and behaviors. Some of the ways they use coercion and cyberspace include:

- Communication and coordination: The Mexican cartels use various platforms and technologies, such as cell phones, radios, the internet, social media, and encryption, to communicate and coordinate among themselves and with their partners and associates. They use these platforms and technologies to share and exchange intelligence, plan and execute attacks, monitor and evade detection, and manage and control their resources and activities.
- Information collection and dissemination: The Mexican cartels use various sources and methods, such as surveillance, reconnaissance, informants, hacking, and leaks, to collect and disseminate information. They use this information to gain and maintain situational awareness, to identify and exploit opportunities and vulnerabilities, to anticipate and counter threats and risks, and to support and inform their decisions and actions.
- Operation conduct and facilitation: The Mexican cartels use various capabilities and techniques, such as cyberattacks, cybercrime, cyberespionage, and cyberwarfare, to conduct and facilitate operations. They use these capabilities and techniques to disrupt and damage the systems and networks of their enemies and targets, to steal and sabotage the data and assets of their rivals and adversaries, to spy and infiltrate the organizations and institutions of their competitors and opponents, and to wage and escalate the conflict and violence.
- Perception and behavior influence and manipulation: The Mexican cartels use various strategies and tactics, such as propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and deception, to influence and manipulate perceptions and behaviors. They use these strategies and tactics to shape and spread their narratives and messages, to create and reinforce their identities and ideologies, to generate and amplify their support and sympathy, and to undermine and discredit their challengers and critics.

How the Mexican Cartels Exploit Corruption and Weak Governance to Undermine the Rule of Law
The Mexican cartels are not only economic actors but also political actors that seek to exploit [corruption and weak governance](#) to undermine the rule of law. They do so by using a combination of money and power, and by penetrating and subverting the legal and institutional systems. Some of the ways they exploit corruption and weak governance include:

- Money and power: The Mexican cartels use their enormous wealth and influence to buy and coerce the cooperation and compliance of public officials and institutions, such as politicians, judges, prosecutors, police, military, and customs. They use money and power to secure and expand their interests and operations, to protect and immunize themselves

from prosecution and punishment, and to interfere and obstruct the law enforcement and justice processes.

- Penetration and subversion: The Mexican cartels use their extensive networks and connections to infiltrate and subvert public agencies and organizations, such as political parties, electoral bodies, media outlets, civil society groups, and academic institutions. They use penetration and subversion to gain and exploit access and information, to influence and manipulate policies and outcomes, and to erode and weaken the state's capacity and legitimacy.

How and Why the Mexican Cartels Operationally Control the U.S. Border and Pose a Threat to the U.S.

The US-Mexico border is not only a physical barrier but also a battleground for a covert war between the Mexican cartels and the U.S. authorities. The cartels have devised a cunning strategy to evade detection and prosecution by creating a "sanitary zone" inside the Texas border, where they can operate with impunity and use the local population as their pawns. The cartels exploit the legal loopholes and the social vulnerabilities of the border communities, especially the minors and the gangs, to smuggle drugs, weapons, money, and people across the border. The cartels also employ sophisticated technology, such as drones, to monitor and evade law enforcement agencies. The result is a humanitarian and security crisis that threatens the stability and prosperity of both nations.

The evidence for this alarming conclusion is overwhelming. The [Arizona Daily Press](#) reported that, according to the data from Customs and Border Protection, "more than 2.7 million encounters were recorded in fiscal year 2022," and, according to Fox News, "migrant crossings in the Yuma sector increased by 171% between 2021 and 20221." Additionally, "the cartels charge as much as $20,000 each to help migrants sneak into the U.S.," and those who can't afford to pay often agree to bring in drugs to settle their debt. Finally, "cartels have seen their profits soar from $500 million in 2018 to an estimated $13 billion in 2022," according to Homeland Security Investigations.

The consequences of this cartel control are devastating for both sides of the border. The cartels are responsible for countless atrocities and abuses against illegal aliens, including rape, torture, kidnapping, extortion, and murder. The cartels also pose a grave threat to the national security of the U.S., as they smuggle not only drugs, but also weapons, money, and potential terrorists into the country. The cartels have also infiltrated and corrupted the local authorities and institutions along the border, undermining the rule of law and our constitutional republic.

The Mexican cartels operate in the U.S. by smuggling drugs across the border and distributing them through various networks and associates, such as gangs, dealers, and couriers. According to the [DEA](#), the Mexican cartels control most of the illicit drug market in the U.S., and they are responsible for the supply of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and fentanyl. The Mexican cartels also engage in other criminal activities in the U.S., such as money laundering, kidnapping, extortion, and murder.

The Mexican cartels use different methods and routes to transport drugs into the U.S., such as tunnels, vehicles, boats, planes, drones, and human carriers. They also exploit the legal ports of entry, by hiding drugs in cargo, containers, or passenger vehicles. The DEA estimates that the southwest border is the main entry point for most of the drugs coming from Mexico, especially in the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

The Mexican cartels have established alliances and partnerships with various U.S.-based criminal groups, such as street gangs, prison gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs, and domestic drug trafficking organizations. These groups act as intermediaries, distributors, or enforcers for the cartels, and they receive drugs, money, or weapons in exchange for their services. Some of the most notorious U.S. gangs that work with the Mexican cartels are the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), the Barrio Azteca, the Sureños, the Norteños, and the Hells Angels.

The Mexican cartels also have cells or operatives in the U.S., who are responsible for overseeing, coordinating, or facilitating drug trafficking operations. These cells or operatives may include cartel members, relatives, associates, or hired hands, who act as managers, brokers, transporters, stash house operators, or hitmen. The DEA identifies several U.S. cities where the Mexican cartels have a significant presence or influence, such as Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Atlanta, and Houston.

The Mexican cartels pose a serious threat to U.S. national security, to every community, and law enforcement, as they contribute to the drug abuse epidemic, the overdose deaths, the violence, and the corruption in the country.

The current administration has failed to address this crisis effectively and has instead implemented policies that have only emboldened and empowered the cartels. By enticing and releasing millions of illegal aliens into the country on parole or a Notice to Appear (NAT) rather than detaining or removing them, the administration has created a magnet for illegal immigration and a boon for the cartels.

The Mexican cartels are hybrid threats that pose a serious and complex challenge to the U.S.

The U.S. needs to recognize and address the multifaceted and dynamic nature of the Mexican cartels and to develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to counter and contain them. The US cannot afford to ignore or underestimate the Mexican cartels, as they are not only a threat to the US, but also a threat to regional and global stability and order.

IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES
Communities like Colony Ridge portray microcosms of a macroscopic issue spread across the United States that hide in plain sight.

The surge of illegal aliens at the U.S.-Mexico border has been widely reported as a humanitarian and security crisis. But there is another aspect of this phenomenon that deserves more attention: how Mexican cartels and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) exploit and terrorize immigrant communities in the U.S. through fear tactics and violence.

The Mexican cartels and TCOs do not stop at the border. They extend their reach and influence into the U.S. territory, where they prey on vulnerable immigrant communities, especially those who are undocumented or have precarious legal status. They use various methods to control and extort these communities, such as:

- Threatening to expose or deport them to immigration authorities if they do not pay a ransom or a regular fee.
- Forcing them to work as drug couriers, money launderers, or sex workers.
- Kidnapping, torturing, or killing their relatives in Mexico or Central America if they do not cooperate or comply with their demands.
- Recruiting or coercing their children to join their ranks as gang members or assassins5.

These practices have devastating consequences for the immigrant communities, who live in constant fear, isolation, and trauma. They also undermine the rule of law, public safety, and social cohesion in the U.S., as the cartels and TCOs create parallel structures of power and governance that challenge legitimate authorities and institutions.

Dossiers from National Geographic's docuseries 'Underworld Inc.' episodes, notably 'Human Cargo,' manifest a glimpse into the dark liaisons between Mexican Cartels and these enclave communities.

'Human Cargo' spotlights Houston, where journalists entrenched with the Sinaloa Cartel unravel a tapestry of underworld control over socioeconomic dynamics, cultural levers, and governance mechanisms. The cartel's grip extends to every societal segment, the grim narrative of a trafficked young girl serving as a chilling testament.

The U.S. cannot afford to ignore or underestimate the threat that the cartels and TCOs pose to its national security and interests, as well as to the human rights and dignity of the immigrant communities. It is time to act decisively and effectively to confront and combat this menace.

CHINA

The U.S. opioid crisis is not only a public health emergency but also a national security threat. Behind the scenes, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is weaponizing the Mexican cartels in the U.S. by supplying them with precursor chemicals and synthetic drugs, such as fentanyl, that are used to produce and traffic deadly opioids across the border. The CCP is also facilitating the money laundering and financial transactions of the cartels, by using Chinese banks, businesses, and networks to move and hide their illicit profits. The CCP is exploiting the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the U.S. drug market, border security, and law enforcement, by enabling and empowering the cartels to poison and harm the American population, and by undermining U.S. national security and interests.

A 2018 article from the Trumpet explained that "By turning a blind eye, at the very least, to Chinese fentanyl traffickers, the Chinese government enjoys the benefit of waging drug warfare against the Americans and weakening them. A Chinese military attack using actual chemical weapons would risk an overwhelming military response, but using the chemical weapon of illicit

drugs is a subtle siege that tears at the fragile fabric of American society by attacking not its strategic vulnerabilities but its moral ones. America's self-inflicted and China-facilitated fentanyl epidemic is ripping apart families, multiplying crime, crippling the economy, and destroying the minds of the next generation of Americans."

The CCP's strategy of drug warfare is not new, nor unique to the U.S. China has a long history of using drugs as a tool of political and economic domination, dating back to the Opium Wars in the 19th century, when the British Empire forced China to open its ports and markets to opium imports, resulting in widespread addiction and social unrest among the Chinese people. The CCP's founder, Mao Zedong, famously declared that "drug warfare, obtaining sudden and huge profits by spreading disaster in other countries" was one of the "three great campaigns" of the Chinese revolution, along with guerrilla warfare and propaganda warfare. The CCP has also been accused of supporting and arming communist insurgencies and terrorist groups in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa, by providing them with drugs and weapons in exchange for loyalty and influence.

The CCP leadership's chemical and political warfare against the U.S. coincides with a surge in the number of Chinese illegal aliens crossing the southern border without authorization. According to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, more than 10,000 Chinese illegal aliens have been apprehended since October 2022, compared to less than 500 in the same period in 2021. This increase may be attributed to various factors, such as the economic and social uncertainties and the limited personal freedoms in China, as well as the demand for cheap labor and the availability of smugglers in the U.S. However, some of these illegal aliens may also be victims of labor and sex trafficking, lured by false promises of jobs and opportunities in the U.S.

The CCP leadership has also been operating covert police stations in several U.S. cities, such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, and others. These stations are staffed by volunteers who claim to provide services to Chinese nationals living abroad, such as renewing their driver's licenses or passports. However, they are part of the CCP's overseas repression operations, aimed at locating, intimidating, and silencing dissidents, activists, and critics of the regime. The FBI recently arrested two men who were running a secret Chinese police station in Manhattan, accusing them of conspiring to act as agents of the CCP and obstructing the investigation. The FBI also warned that these stations may pose a threat to the U.S. national security, sovereignty, and law enforcement, as they violate the principle of non-intervention and circumvent the standard judicial and diplomatic processes. They also undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the U.S. government and its institutions and create divisions and conflicts among the American people.

The CCP police stations are part of the CCP's broader strategy of hybrid warfare, which involves using various means of coercion, pressure, and destabilization against the U.S. and its allies, such as cyberattacks, espionage, disinformation, and weaponized migration. These tactics are designed to exploit the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of the U.S. and its allies and to erode their trust and confidence in their systems and values.

These trends indicate that the CCP leadership is waging unrestricted warfare against the U.S., using various methods to undermine its national security, sovereignty, and values. The U.S. government and the public should be aware of the dangers posed by the CCP and take appropriate measures to counter its malign influence and protect its interests and allies.

CONCLUSION

The border dilemma is more than a matter of physical barriers; it is also a challenge of finding truth and understanding. Without clear definitions and reliable data, we cannot measure the impact of mass migration, cartel violence, fentanyl addiction, and China's aggression on our border security. The conflicting narratives from government officials only add to the confusion.

To solve this problem, we need a joint effort from federal and state agencies. They must work together to create consistent definitions, improve data collection methods, and increase transparency. Only by defining and understanding the problem can we devise a solution. The federal government must overcome its cluelessness and give the American people the clarity they deserve about the border situation and the cartel threat.