

PART I

DEADLY APPREHENSION METHODS

THE CONSEQUENCES OF
CHASE & SCATTER
IN THE WILDERNESS



Part I: Deadly Apprehension Methods

The Consequences of Chase & Scatter in the Wilderness



“We’ll let him tire himself out, if he wants to run we’ll let him run . . . You kind of have to pick your battles, and I usually pick the one who runs the most . . . We’ve got bodies running all over the place . . . It’s a never-ending game for us.”

—Border Patrol agent in active pursuit on his all-terrain vehicle (Border Wars)¹

On March 6, 2015, José Cesario Aguilar Esparza was migrating on foot through Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Southern Arizona with his two nephews and a guide.² The three men had spent several days hiding out in caves before crossing the border. They were walking at night in the high-desert mountains when Border Patrol agents began chasing after them. José Cesario’s two nephews were arrested, but it was too dark to see what happened to the rest of the group; they remembered hearing the sound of someone falling and a scream. José Cesario had tumbled and landed eerily on his feet but slumped up against rocks. He had fallen from a cliff while running: he was dead.

José was identified from the ID in his wallet; his family’s contact information was in his pocket. When his loved ones were informed of his death, they were told nothing of the way he had died. “We thought [Border Patrol agents] had shot him. We had no idea he had fallen from a cliff until his nephews were able to contact us from detention, at least two weeks later,” they reported. When a No More Deaths volunteer contacted the US Border Patrol to confirm the details in this story, Supervising Agent

¹ Border Wars, Season 2, episode 4, “Lost in the River.” Border Wars is National Geographic Television series that follows agents of the US Border Patrol and other divisions of the Department of Homeland Security while interdicting unauthorized border crossers.

² Case received by La Coalición de Derechos Humanos’s Missing Migrant Crisis Line; information used with permission of José’s immediate family.

Gutiérrez said that several agents were chasing three men, one of whom fell off a cliff.¹

The case of José Esparza is all too common: it demonstrates the way in which contemporary immigration enforcement in the US–Mexico borderlands routinely relies on the apprehension methods of chase and scatter, which directly cause disappearance and death. Since the mid-1990s, the Border Patrol’s policy of Prevention Through Deterrence has pushed migration into increasingly remote corridors. In turn, Border Patrol agents have been tasked with apprehending migrants, refugees, and other border crossers in the isolated, vast expanses of wilderness between official ports of entry.² With the exception of those border crossers who have already decided to surrender to border agents, the sole method of apprehension available to Border Patrol personnel is chase through deadly terrain.

Part I of this three-part report investigates the US Border Patrol’s deadly apprehension methods in wilderness areas. *Chase and Scatter* is divided into two sections.

In the first section, we discuss two major aspects of the apprehension method of chase.

Environmental Hazards: Environmental hazards during pursuit often lead to injury and death. Border Patrol agents chase border crossers through the remote terrain and utilize the landscape as a weapon to slow down, injure, and apprehend them. We show how chases lead to heat exhaustion and dehydration, blisters and sprains, injuries due to falls, and drownings.

Assaults by Border Patrol: Border Patrol violence as another outcome of chase. Border Patrol agents regularly assault border crossers at the culmination of a chase. Assault then contributes to a violent cycle in which border crossers flee from both interdiction and potential serious injury and death and agents, in turn, often respond with escalating aggression. We examine how chase in remote areas commonly results in excessive use of force. In our survey, tackles, beatings, Tasers, dog attacks, and assault with vehicles were all reportedly employed by the Border Patrol against border crossers during chase.

In the second section, we examine the deadly and traumatic outcomes of scatter.

The scattering of border crossers causes spatial disorientation, separation from one’s guide and companions, loss of supplies and belongings, and exposure to the hazards of hostile terrain. In the remote wilderness, this directly leads to death and disappearance.

Through analysis of surveys of border crossers and stories from the Derechos Humanos Missing Migrant Crisis Line’s database,³ our team finds that the Border Patrol’s practice of chasing and scattering border crossers is indisputably responsible for human deaths and disappearances. Despite the clear and mortal

1 No More Deaths obtained Pima County Sheriff’s records of the incident in which investigators describe video footage from a Border Patrol aircraft that was present at the time of the fall. That footage confirms that the man fell while being pursued by both Border Patrol aircraft and agents on the ground, and that two other individuals nearly fell as well.

2 For the remainder of this report we will use the term border crossers to refer to all the categories of people who attempt to cross the US–Mexico border, categories which can be distinct or overlapping. See “A Note on Language” in the introduction to this report.

For this report, we follow the definition of wilderness used in wilderness medicine, namely, any location that is at least one hour of travel time away from definitive care. For those traveling on foot through rugged terrain (while potentially medically compromised), wilderness would be between one and four miles from active roads or inhabited dwellings.

Ports of entry are staffed and patrolled by the Office of Field Operations, which oversees approximately 22,000 officers. The Office of Border Patrol oversees approximately 21,000 agents who are tasked with patrolling the areas of the border between ports of entry.

3 This database consists of information from the phone calls that are received. See “Data Sources,” below.

danger associated with these apprehension tactics, chase remains a primary apprehension method of the US Border Patrol.

“They let them come across and chase them until they drop. That’s what kills a lot of people. It is not a pleasant thing to find a corpse up there while you’re ranching cattle.”
—Gary Thrasher, cattle rancher in Southern Arizona ¹

¹ Paul Lewis, “Arizona’s High Desert: Where Border Politics Become a Harsh, Almost Sinister Experience,” The Guardian, October 7, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/oct/07/arizona-democrats-border-midterms-ranchers-latinos-immigration>.

DATA SOURCES

For this report, we attempted to locate the Border Patrol's official policy and rules of conduct for agents in pursuit. However, no such information is publicly available. Our team then filed a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain those records, but the agency has failed to respond within the statutorily required time frame and has yet to produce the requested records.

Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey

To document Border Patrol apprehension methods and the impacts on those who survive their encounters with the Border Patrol, we conducted a voluntary survey of 58 people who had attempted to cross the US–Mexico border within the last five years. Surveys were administered in the border region, both in the Arizona backcountry and in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. All information included in this report is shared with the express consent of participants; all names have been changed.

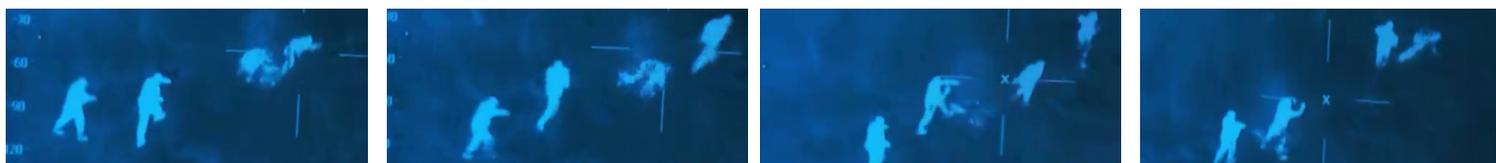
Missing Persons Cases received by the Missing Migrant Crisis Line: cases of individuals who went missing in remote wilderness areas

To account for the experiences of those who died or were disappeared after they were chased and/or scattered by the Border Patrol, we examined missing persons cases reported to the Missing Migrant Crisis Line. For the purpose of Part I of this report, we only addressed the cases for the year 2015 that were categorized as “closed” or “disappeared.” We did not analyze the 268 “open” cases, whose outcome was yet to be determined at the time of this report’s writing.

- Closed cases are those where the whereabouts of the individual have been discovered, which can mean anything from the individual being found in detention to recovered remains being positively identified.
- Disappeared cases are those in which the Crisis Line team has exhausted every possible step to locate the person without success, and has forwarded the relevant case information to other organizations for identification purposes should the person’s remains be found.

Out of the 812 cases in the closed and disappeared categories, the report focuses on those cases where someone went missing while crossing through the wilderness. We excluded cases where (1) the person went missing within the detention system, (2) had crossed at an urban port of entry, or (3) the reporting party had such scarce information that it was impossible to say where or how a crossing attempt had been made. This left us with 544 cases, which we will draw from for the remainder of Part I.

Chase

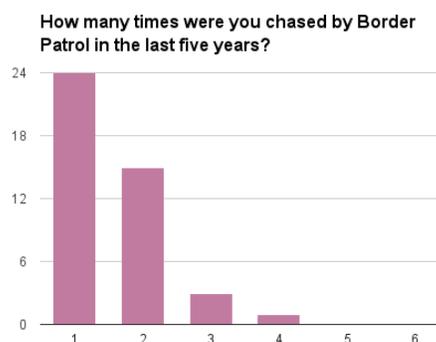
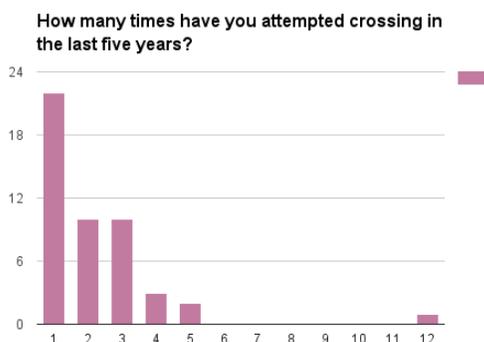


US Border Patrol agents approach border crossers at night, who flee, Border Wars¹

US Border Patrol agents are tasked with apprehending border crossers in the remote terrain between official ports of entry. After agents encounter or are alerted to the presence of suspected border crossers, they make an attempt to interdict and detain them. This attempt at detention often involves chase. Frequently employing helicopters, SUVs, ATVs, horses, and dogs, Border Patrol agents pursue fleeing individuals at high speeds through the wilderness.²

For the purposes of this report, we define chase as the active period of pursuit of border crossers by US Border Patrol agents during an attempted apprehension.

In our Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey, 47 of the 58 people we interviewed were chased by Border Patrol agents within the last five years. Our team documented at least 67 incidents of chase in remote terrain, meaning that a number of individuals were subject to chase multiple times. These numbers support our finding that chase is the predominant method used by the Border Patrol to apprehend border crossers.



1 Season 2, episode 1, “Death on the Rio Grande.”

2 The Border Patrol uses horses and ATVs often in roadless, isolated desert areas, where vehicles have no access point.

Injury and Death Due to Environmental Hazards

A family member of Maycol, a 29-year-old man from El Salvador, contacted the Missing Migrant Crisis Line for help. Maycol had gone missing on the morning of August 27, 2015 in South Texas. A Border Patrol helicopter had hovered low over the group he was traveling with in the early morning hours and everyone ran into the brush. In the course of the ensuing chase, Maycol injured his foot and was left behind by his companions. He told his family in a text message that he thought his foot was broken. Eight months later, no information has been found as to Maycol’s whereabouts.¹

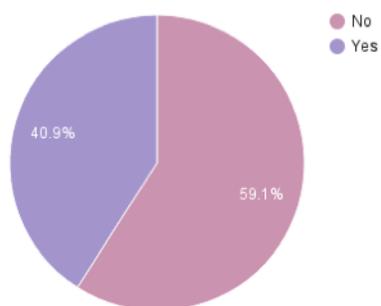
The high-speed pursuit of border crossers by the Border Patrol can span multiple hours as agents attempt to corral those fleeing on foot into choke points in order to apprehend them. Chases occur in rugged areas characterized by cacti, trees, shrubs, cliffs, canyons, and rocky ground. In these areas of the Southwest border, average temperatures are extreme, reaching as high as 120 degrees in the summer and well below freezing in the winter. Nighttime chases render border crossers blind to the unforgiving terrain, while Border Patrol agents employ night-vision equipment so that they themselves can see and avoid deadly obstacles.

“We run as if we were blind, as if we had a cloth over our eyes. Border Patrol can see everything though, and they know where the fences and the cliffs are. They will chase you towards them.”

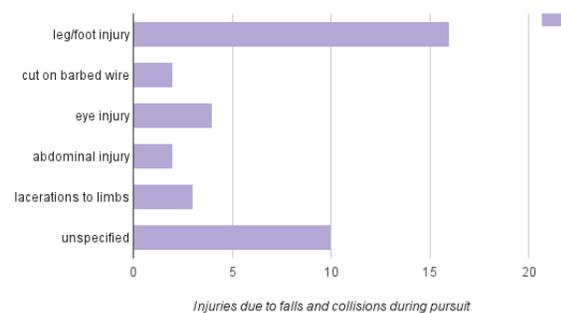
—Border crosser in the desert who had suffered lacerations from running into a barbed-wire fence²

Long-distance chases result in frequent injuries such as foot blisters, muscular exhaustion, and sprains and strains, as well as illnesses caused by dehydration and hyperthermia and the exacerbation of preexisting medical conditions. Running along winding and narrow trails, through dense trees or brush, and down steep inclines routinely results in traumatic falls. In the Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey, participants reported that in 27 (40.9%) instances of pursuit by Border Patrol resulted in someone being injured by the terrain.³ The most commonly reported injuries are to the leg and foot.⁴

Did the chase result in someone being injured by the terrain while being pursued?



Injuries caused by the terrain during chase



1 Missing Migrant Crisis Line.

2 Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

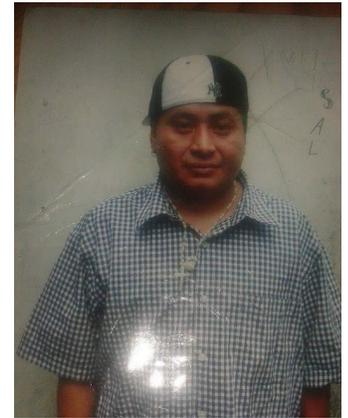
3 Injured by the terrain, as opposed to injured by Border Patrol agents during chase. The latter type of injury will be mentioned in the section “Injury and Death Due to Border Patrol Violence.”

4 Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

“That’s about a mile-and-a-half straight run down rocks. I don’t know how he didn’t kill himself.”
—Border Patrol agent J. J. Carrol on someone’s unsuccessful attempt to flee his presence¹

EXHAUSTION

A man contacted the Missing Migrant Crisis Line in August of 2015 to report that his brother, Cirilio, had been crossing through the South Texas desert in a group when, according to another group member, they were pursued by a helicopter. This group member had called to tell Cirilio’s family that Cirilio had been left behind in the “middle of the desert” with symptoms consistent with heat exhaustion. The group left him with food and water. Eight months later, Cirilio has not been found.²



The exhaustion and dehydration experienced by Cirilio are frequent consequences of protracted Border Patrol chases. With water sources being scarce or polluted, dehydration sets in quickly during chase. Groups that might have rested in the shade during the heat of day will choose exposure to the sun during prolonged chases by Border Patrol agents. Exhaustion contributes to further injury as border crossers become sluggish and clumsy while traversing challenging terrain.

“So we’ve been pushing this group for over three hours now and they’re still moving.”
—Border Patrol agent Chris Hamer (Border Wars)³

BLISTERS AND SPRAINS

Wilma was walking with five people at night when she and her group saw flashlights and started running. This was the second time they had been chased by the Border Patrol in the same crossing. They ran into a ditch and when they came out, there was one member of the group whom they could not locate. The missing man was 50 years old; he had been very tired with blisters on both of his feet. Two hours later, Border Patrol agents detained all of the people in Wilma’s group except for the 50-year-old man. His name was Adolfo and he was from Puebla and had been heading to Colorado. It is unknown what happened to him.⁴



Friction injuries such as foot blisters are a common injury of border crossing, and travel during the rainy seasons results in more extreme blistering as feet are continuously wet. Such injuries occur more often during Border Patrol chases.

Severe blistering can grow to span the surface area of the bottom of both feet and can impact the ability to keep up with a group or guide, as well as the ability to seek rescue. The possibility for infection is also heightened when, as often, people are without supplies to treat their wounds.

1 *Border Wars*, Season 2, episode 8, “Man Hunt.”

2 Missing Migrant Crisis Line.

3 Season 2, episode 2, “Checkpoint Texas.”

4 Maria Jimenez, Humanitarian Crisis: Migrant Deaths at the U.S.-Mexico Border, American Civil Liberties Union, October 1, 2009, <https://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/immigrants/humanitariancrisisreport.pdf>.

Other low-impact injuries, such as sprains and strains of the knees and ankles, occur frequently during chase. As with blisters, these injuries can ultimately make it impossible for border crossers to continue walking or to seek help.

INJURED UPON IMPACT: FALLS

Ángel attempted to cross the border in February of 2016 through Arizona. While walking, Ángel was chased by a US Border Patrol helicopter, which reportedly hovered over his group and pursued them for over an hour at very low altitudes, flying at “about the height of a telephone pole.” So close to the ground, the helicopter kicked up dust around those fleeing. During the chase, Ángel’s foot went into a hole in the ground and he fell. He twisted his ankle and struck the front of his knee against a rock. He remained where he was as the helicopter passed over and continued after the group. Ángel limped through the desert for three days afterward looking for help. At the time of the survey, 10 days after the chase, he was still unable to walk without crutches.

Many blunt-force injuries occur when border crossers trip and fall while running from agents. These chase-induced injuries can be fatal or disabling. As in Ángel’s case, a person who suddenly falls during chase can be left behind by their group, alone and injured in the wilderness.

“What do you think happened to him?”

“I think the man died, bled out...There was too much blood.”

“Do you think somebody found him?”

“I don’t think so. Because Border Patrol agents only look for those who are running; they want to try to catch those who are running. They don’t go after those who stay behind...They don’t even care...I don’t think they found him or helped him.”

—A man describing a group member who broke his lower leg while being chased by Border Patrol agents

INJURED BY CHASE INTO OR OVER BARRIERS

María had been walking in a group of five when a Border Patrol vehicle approached. The group started to run, and Border Patrol agents pursued them on foot. María fell behind and tried to climb over the border wall back into Mexico to get away. She fell from the wall and broke her foot and was bedridden for two months.¹

Injuries from impact with fences and walls occur during chase by Border Patrol agents. Our team documented incidents where border crossers had tangled themselves in barbed-wire fences or had attempted to climb fences topped with razor wire or different types of border walls to flee from Border Patrol agents—all resulting in serious injury.

“We’ve seen people lose fingers and whatnot.”

-Border Patrol agent speaking to the camera after pulling a man off the border wall. The man remained on the ground, bleeding from one hand and his lower leg.²



How did you cut yourself?
With the fence.



Can you lift your pants up?

DROWNINGS



The mother of Nestor, 26 years old, called the Missing Migrant Crisis Line looking for help. Nestor had crossed through Laredo, Texas in December. According to his mother, he did not know how to swim very well. He was traveling with another person and the two had crossed the Rio Grande together. Nestor’s friend was climbing out of the river when Border Patrol agents approached them. Nestor fled along the edge of the river—and then fell into the water. When Nestor’s companion was caught by the Border Patrol, he reported hearing Nestor’s shouts from the river and explained that Nestor could not swim well. The agents said they would look for him. Four months later, no information has been found as to Nestor’s whereabouts.³

The Rio Grande is the most deadly stretch of water for those crossing into the United States. Demarcating the border between Texas and Mexico, the Rio Grande has strong undercurrents, whirlpools, concealed debris, quicksand, and sharp rocks.⁴ Release of dammed water from upstream reservoirs can unleash a deadly wave in a matter of moments.

The Rio Grande is not the only deadly waterway along the border. In California’s American Canal alone, 550 people have drowned since 1940, many while attempting to cross into the US without authorization. In one 2015 case received by the Missing Migrant Crisis Line, a man was chased by Border Patrol agents into the American Canal and was confirmed to have drowned.

In the year 2015, the Missing Migrant Crisis Line received eight cases of individuals who had died or disappeared after chase by Border Patrol agents toward a body of water. Agents’ pursuit of border

1 Ibid.

2 Season 2, episode 6, “Border Wars”

3 Missing Migrant Crisis Line.

4 Jorge Ramos, “A Dangerous Crossing,” Fusion, July 29, 2014, <http://fusion.net/story/6183/a-dangerous-crossing/>.

crossers back into dangerous waterways—which many were only able to cross initially with the assistance of tubes and other swimmers—clearly endangers lives and leads to deaths by drowning.¹

The fire chief for Mission, Texas reported that the number of bodies recovered from their area of the Rio Grande increased from one a month to one a week in the first six months of 2015.² Exact counts of drownings in the Rio Grande are not known; no binational effort to document these deaths exists.

“They get tied down [by debris] and it’s hard to get away from that in black water. And they are often panicking, running from agents.”

-Capt. Joel Dominguez, part of the Mission, Texas dive-and-rescue team³

Dangerous waterways are featured in Border Wars episodes that chronicle enforcement activities in the South Texas backcountry. In one episode, US Border Patrol agents are shown recovering the body of a young man found floating in the water. The agents comment that the deceased person was probably someone they had “spooked” back into the water. In another episode, a Border Patrol agent remarks, “I consider myself a halfway decent swimmer; I wouldn’t try to swim across that,” after a border crosser flees from enforcement back into the waters of the Rio Grande. In one scene, Border Patrol agents are shown chasing after a group of border crossers and taking possession of their inner tubes on the US side. Then, agents chase the group back into the river. The individuals, up to their chests in the floodwaters, plead with the agents to return their flotation devices so they can make the trip back across to Mexico. The agents refuse, night falls, and some members of the group appear to attempt the return crossing. A woman screams from the middle of the river that her child is drowning. Border Patrol agents on the shore appear uncertain about how to proceed; they give some tubes to the people standing in the water, and say that those people might go rescue the child. Eventually, they decide to call a helicopter, which later sweeps over the river.⁴ No one, however, is seen in the downstream waters of the channel.⁵

1 It is not only the US Border Patrol that pursues people into these perilous waters. “We do not aim to detain, we would much rather send them back into the river into Mexico,” said a Texas Militia member. David Neiwert, “Border Militiamen Detaining Migrants, Sowing Fear among Camp Neighbors,” Southern Poverty Law Center, October 9, 2014, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2014/10/09/border-militiamen-detaining-immigrants-sowing-fear-among-camp%E2%80%99s-neighbors>.

2 Seth Robbins, “Drownings along Rio Grande Spike after Enforcement Surge,” Yahoo News, March 29, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/drownings-along-rio-grande-spike-enforcement-surge-144558350.html?ref=gs>.

3 Seth Robbins, “Drownings along Rio Grande Spike after Enforcement Surge,” Yahoo News, March 29, 2015, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/drownings-along-rio-grande-spike-enforcement-surge-144558350.html?ref=gs>.

4 In one incident in Border Wars there is an acknowledgment of the deadly combination that helicopters and swimmers make. A pilot remarks, “The rotor wash coming off these heavy helicopters forcing air down can literally shove them under the water and can cause someone to have a panic response and drown.” Season 2, episode 4, “Lost in the River.”

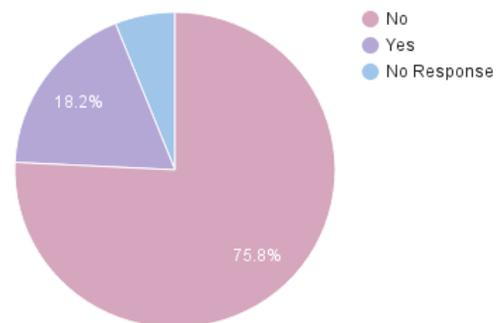
5 Season 2, episode 15, “Storm Surge.”

Injury and Death Due to Border Patrol Violence

The mother of a young man from Mexico called the Missing Migrant Crisis Line to ask for help locating her son, Ernesto. He had been arrested and she had been informed by the consulate that he had “been beaten” by US Border Patrol agents. Eventually, she made contact with her son in detention and learned that he had been running from the Border Patrol when an agent tackled him to the ground. According to Ernesto, the agent then stood up and drove his knee down onto his back. The agent grabbed his arm and twisted it behind him. When Ernesto cried out in pain, the agent hit him repeatedly over the head. Three months later, Ernesto was still seeking medical attention while still being held in immigration detention in the US. He continued to suffer problems with his vision that started after the Border Patrol assault in the desert. When he finally saw a doctor “to get glasses” to treat his vision impairment, the doctor ordered a scan of Ernesto’s brain and said that glasses were not needed: Ernesto was suffering from brain swelling from the beating he had received from the Border Patrol three months prior. This swelling of his brain continues to affect his vision.¹

As an agency, the US Border Patrol has been under increasing scrutiny for its excessive use of force, including during apprehension. Much of the public reporting on use of force by Border Patrol agents focuses on the activities of personnel in urban areas around ports of entry, but our research finds that it is also routine for Border Patrol agents to use excessive force in remote areas, especially during apprehension attempts involving chase.² In the Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey, 12 (18.2%) instances of chase resulted in Border Patrol injuring someone during the apprehension attempt. Consequently, injuries abound when border crossers are detained in the backcountry through physical force.

Did the chase result in someone injured by the apprehending agent?



TACKLES



Ismael was walking at 3 a.m. in a group when they heard engines. Border Patrol agents were soon riding up on horseback and foot. Ismael and the others began to run, and a Border Patrol agent threw himself onto Ismael’s back. Ismael fell onto his right forearm and lacerated the skin. At the time of the interview, six days later, he still had an open wound on his arm.³

Our Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey shows, through testimonies like the one above, that

¹ Missing Migrant Crisis Line.

² See, for example, what an American Civil Liberties Union spokesperson terms “high-speed pursuit syndrome,” in which “officers get so angry and pumped up, and the adrenaline rush is such that again and again . . . you see violence visited on suspects at the end of a pursuit.” Kevin Mullen, “The High-Speed Pursuit Syndrome,” SF Gate, March 5, 1996, <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/The-high-speed-chase-syndrome-3148123.php>.

³ Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

tackle is one of the primary methods of apprehending border crossers. We recorded stories of border crossers slammed into cacti, sharp rocks, and tree branches.

“Agent Mcardle has a problem: the man may now be seriously injured and unable to stand.”
-Narrator of Border Wars, after an agent tackled a seated man and sent him rolling “about 50 feet” down a hill¹

BEATINGS

In our Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey, our team documented three cases in which a border crosser was beaten during arrest in the wilderness. In the first case, a man reported that US Border Patrol agents had beaten a member of his group with the butt of a gun. In the second incident, a border crosser watched a man being beaten during arrest. Afterward,, the man who received the beating related that he had also been assaulted by a Border Patrol agent during his previous arrest. In the third incident, a woman witnessed multiple Border Patrol agents kicking a man in her group while he was on the ground. She reported that in the course of the assault, agents were cursing and laughing at the victim. The Border Patrol agents then “threw her onto the ground,” and when she began to cry audibly, one of them said, “Pick her up, she’s a woman,” thus ending the assault.

DOG ATTACKS

The US Border Patrol employs “K-9” dog units during chases in the backcountry to follow the tracks of border crossers. Our documentation shows that Border Patrol dogs have been set upon individuals during apprehension.² Our team recorded two specific incidents in which border crossers were bitten and dragged down by Border Patrol dogs during chases in the wilderness. In another testimony, individuals reported that Border Patrol agents threatened a group of border crossers saying that the agents’ dog would maul them if they moved.

*Agent to a crying four-year-old
about the dog that had just tracked*



and pursued him.³

TASERS

Our survey team spoke to three people who were “tased” by Border Patrol agents or witnessed a tasing while they were chased by agents. Two of these incidents occurred well after the issuance of the Border Patrol’s new Use of Force Policy, which limits Taser use to situations where “a suspect poses an imminent threat.”⁴

1 Season 1, episode 3, “Dead of Night.”

2 In a public statement, the president of the National Association for the Protection of Human Rights in Mexico said, “We recently had a case where a migrant was detained with the help of dogs, which bit the migrant on various parts of his body . . . He had to be hospitalized.” Quoted in Jesús Rivera, “Migrantes Agredidos,” La Prensa, July 17, 2013, <http://www.laprensa.mx/notas.asp?id=215235>.

In a lawsuit filed against the Border Patrol, a man said that he had been bitten repeatedly in the arm by a Border Patrol dog and had cried out to the agents for help but they did nothing to stop the attack. This left him with severe injuries to the muscles of his arm and without the ability to lift heavy objects a year afterward. “Narco Demanda a Patrulla Fronteriza por Mordedura de Perro,” El Siglo de Torreón, December 12, 2014, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/1067184.narco-demanda-a-patrulla-fronteriza-por-mordedura-de-perro.html>.

3 Season 4, episode 2, “Meth Mobile.”

4 Department of Homeland Security, Use of <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/dhs-use-of-force-policy.pdf>. US Customs and Border Protection, Use of Force Policy, Guidelines, and Procedures Handbook, Office of Training and Development, May 2014, <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/UseofForcePolicyHandbook.pdf>.

The specific conditions associated with Taser use by the Border Patrol have worrisome implications. When our team consulted with the medical professionals of the No More Deaths Medical Team about the possible effects of Tasers on border crossers, they said that “hypovolemia [low body fluid due to dehydration] can cause metabolic disturbances which can make the heart more irritable and at greater vulnerability to electrical disturbances from a Taser.”

Tasers were not available to US Border Patrol agents until 2008, when they were introduced as part of new measures aimed at curbing the incidence of fatal shootings by agents in the field. A subsequent study conducted by the Los Angeles Times found that out of the 450 reported uses of Tasers by Border Patrol agents between 2010 and 2013, 70 involved use on fleeing border crossers, where there was no struggle or indication the agents were in physical danger. Tasers were also reportedly used six times against border crossers climbing the border fence back into Mexico. The Times report then notes, “86 people have been injured in Taser incidents since 2010—68 seriously enough to require medical treatment.”¹

“Fleeing should not be the sole justification [for using a Taser].”

-2013 report by the Police Executive Research Forum on US Border Patrol use-of-force policy; commissioned by the Department of Homeland Security

ASSAULT WITH VEHICLE

The US Border Patrol uses SUVs, 4x4s, dirt bikes, and other vehicles as weapons while chasing fleeing border crossers. In one testimony, a man named David crossed with five others near Douglas, Arizona. They were walking at night when they saw the approaching lights of the Border Patrol on 4x4s. They threw themselves to the ground to hide. The agents managed to apprehend four of the six in the group and then sent the 4x4s out to look for the remaining two: David and his brother. One of the 4x4s approached the two at high speed and ran over David’s leg and fractured his left knee. David cried out and the Border Patrol agent reportedly yelled, “Shit! Mexicans!” The agent then reversed his vehicle over David, running over his head as he tried to protect himself with his hands. David received medical care more than 24 hours after the assault and was diagnosed with a fractured patella and a soft-tissue contusion.²

USE OF DEADLY FORCE

In both the Department of Homeland Security’s Use of Deadly Force Policy from 2004³ and Customs and Border Protection’s *2010 Use of Force Handbook*⁴, deadly force is prohibited when used “solely to prevent the escape of a fleeing suspect.” Use of deadly force is only allowed when an agent has a reasonable belief that the subject of such force poses an imminent danger of death or serious physical injury to the officer or to another person.

1 Joseph Tanfani, Brian Bennett, and Matt Hansen, “How Tasers Became Instruments of Excessive Force for Border Patrol,” Los Angeles Times, October 30, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-taser-border-20151030-story.html>.

2 Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

3 Department of Homeland Security, Use of Deadly Force Policy, June 2004, <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/dhs-use-of-force-policy.pdf>

4 Department of Homeland Security, Use of <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/dhs-use-of-force-policy.pdf> US Customs and Border Protection, Use of Force Policy, Guidelines, and Procedures Handbook, Office of Training and Development, May 2014, <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/UseofForcePolicyHandbook.pdf>.

However, since 2010, 48 people are known to have been killed directly by a US Border Patrol agent. Of these, 24 appear to have been killed during active pursuit.

The Border Patrol has faced increasing scrutiny of its use-of-force practices, especially related to the agency's public assertion that the throwing of rocks constitutes a lethal threat to agents and justifies a response with deadly force. The Border Patrol first claimed that agents in the field could respond to "rockings" with gunfire in June of 2010 following the death of 15-year-old Sergio Hernández Guereca when he was shot by a Border Patrol agent on the Mexico side of the border. The National Border Patrol Council, the union that represents Border Patrol agents, wrote in a press release that Hernández Guereca had been throwing rocks at the Border Patrol agent, which justified his killing.

Agents have since cited "rock assaults" to justify the use of lethal force against border crossers in wilderness areas—areas full of rocks and empty of witnesses. There is a startling lack of detail in public reports of deadly shootings in response to alleged rock throwing in remote areas, especially in comparison to rock-related shootings in urban environments. The routine underreporting of deadly incidents in the backcountry suggests that the National Border Patrol Council's justification of Hernández Guereca's killing gave carte blanche to agents to use weapons in wilderness areas.

"It is inherently suspect for a law-enforcement officer to use deadly force in response to rock throwing. In my experience I have never heard of, and do not know of, any law-enforcement agency that considers a thrown projectile as per se 'Deadly Force.'"

-Thomas Frazier, expert law-enforcement consultant¹

A CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

"They tell them lots of stuff on the other side. They tell them we're mean, we're going to beat them, so that's why they run."

-Agent after chasing a group in a remote location that included multiple minors, including two four-year-olds²

Border crossers flee US Border Patrol agents both because of their physical presence and because of the deadly reputation that precedes them. Given the Border Patrol's well-known record of abuse, which includes beatings, rapes, and shootings, those who encounter agents are more likely to flee into the wilderness not only to evade apprehension but to escape violence at the hands of their pursuers.³ As a consequence, we find that individuals in need of aid, who may be disoriented, exhausted, and medically compromised, nonetheless attempt to run away from armed Border Patrol agents. In turn, through our data we found that Border Patrol agents are prone to use excessive force when pursuing border crossers who run from their presence. These factors create a cycle of escalating violence on the part of US border-enforcement agencies, which can ultimately end in disappearance. Unless drastic change occurs, the cycle of violence will have increasingly deadly impacts on border crossers.

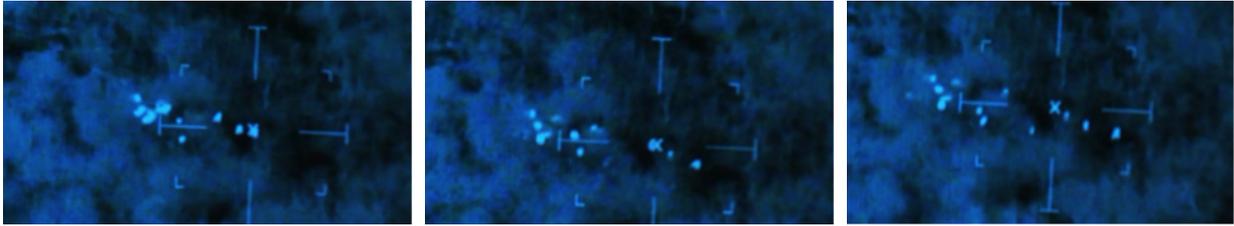
1 Ibid.

2 Season 4, episode 1, "Bullets over the Border."

3 Interview with John Carlos Frey, "Death on the Border: Shocking Video Shows Mexican Immigrant Beaten and Tased by Border Patrol Agents," Democracy Now! April 24, 2013, http://www.democracynow.org/2012/4/24/death_on_the_border_shocking_video; Mark Binelli, "Ten Shots across the Border," New York Times, March 3, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/06/magazine/10-shots-across-the-border.html?_r=0; Garrett Graff, "The Green Monster," Politico, November/December 2014, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/10/border-patrol-the-green-monster-112220>.

**Juan ya nunca regresó, en la línea se quedó, pobre Juan.
O la migra lo mató o el desierto lo enterró, pobre Juan.
But he never returned, at the border he stayed, poor Juan.
Either the Border Patrol killed him or the desert buried him, poor Juan.
-Song by Maná, "Pobre Juan"**

Scatter



Our study finds that chase by US Border Patrol agents routinely causes migrant groups to scatter. For the purposes of this report, we define scatter as the separation of individuals from a coherent group and their dispersal into the wilderness due to Border Patrol intervention. In the chaos, border crossers are separated from traveling companions, guides, and personal belongings—often permanently. This outcome is especially common at night. Slower-moving people, including the very young, very old, sick, and injured are left behind alone in the backcountry. Scatter is a routine result of chase through remote areas by Border Patrol agents on the ground. Our research shows that scattering by Border Patrol agents causes individuals to become disoriented, lost, and empty-handed: many border crossers perish during the prolonged exposure to the elements that results.

In the following section, we lay out the devastating factors of scatter in the wilderness, and their traumatic and deadly outcomes.

“When the chase is on, you’re no longer pursuing one group of 50 people. You’re in all likelihood pursuing 50 groups of one person going in 50 different directions.”

-T. J. Bonner, President of the National Border Patrol Council ¹

“Once they figure they’re about to get caught they scatter like a covey of quail.”

-Border Patrol agent²

“This is going to turn into a circus.”

-CBP helicopter pilot watching two ground agents sneaking up on a large sleeping group³

1 Frank James, “Border Control Technology Has a Long Way to Go,” Chicago Tribune, May 21, 2006, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2006-05-21/news/0605210329_1_national-border-patrol-council-border-control-technology-tactical-infrastructure.

2 *Border Wars*, Season 3, episode 1, “Going Underground.”

3 *Border Wars*, Season 2, episode 1, “Death on the Rio Grande.”

THE ROLE OF HELICOPTERS IN CHASE AND SCATTER

Jesús had been walking for five days when a helicopter appeared over his group. The helicopter left and came back two times. The third time, the helicopter approached and lowered almost directly onto Jesús, just three or four meters above him. He ducked down, but a stick kicked up by the wind from the helicopter blades hit him in the left eye. During the interview, three days after the event, his eye was still red and swollen and his vision blurred.¹

One individual in our survey reported that a helicopter tilted its blades towards the ground during a chase in order to force the group members to lie down.

Mario was walking at 3 a.m. when a helicopter flew over his group. It descended to about “one story” above them, and created a cloud of sticks and dust. Mario and other people in his group tried to run. Some were injured while running; one man badly injured his ankle. “It was awful,” said Mario. “I was disoriented and full of adrenaline.”²

A day and a half after they began, Julia’s group was approached by a helicopter. It circled around them, and then they were “pinned down” by it. Agents on foot arrived and everyone began to run. The group split in two. Julia didn’t know where the guide went or what happened to the other half of the group—they dropped their food and water so they could run. Afterwards, she wandered lost in the desert for several days.



In the Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey, of the 67 recorded incidents of chase in remote terrain, 36.9% involved a helicopter. When the total incidents of chase are compared to the incidents of chase involving a helicopter:

The number of people who became lost after a chase involving a helicopter was significantly higher than the number of people who became lost after a chase without a helicopter.³

In the course of a chase, Border Patrol agents collaborate with helicopter pilots and crew from Air and Marine Operations (part of Customs and Border Protection, like the Border Patrol) to find, track, pursue, and apprehend border crossers. Helicopters often swoop low over groups of individuals to indicate their location to ground agents or to “drive” their movement in a desired direction. When a helicopter is used in pursuit of humans, agents refer to its ability to “wear them out” and “hold them down”.⁴

“The Black Hawk, I look at it as an intimidator. When it comes in it’s loud, it’s noisy, it’s scary . . . it’s a beast all right.”

-Aviation-enforcement officer Oscar Peru⁵

1 Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

2 Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

3 Helicopter chases were associated with significantly more lost people, $\chi^2(1) = 5.08, p < .05$

4 *Border Wars*, Season 3, episode 1, “Drug-Smuggling Grandma”; season 3, episode 7, “Cartel Corridor.”

5 In the year 2012 a Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) officer assisting the Border Patrol as part of DPS’s “border enforcement” program shot at a truck from a helicopter, killing two men in the bed and injuring another. Six months be-

Border crossers often refer to helicopters as moscas, or “flies.” Their low-flying approach is known by borderlands residents and humanitarian aid workers as “dusting.” This euphemism refers to rotor wash, the effect that occurs when the strong winds created by a hovering helicopter cause a cloud of dust, gravel, and other debris. Helicopters’ presence in the sky terrorizes people who are crossing.

“Actually the Omaha [the helicopter] was able to get real close to him, get that rotor wash on him, get him disoriented.”

-Border Patrol agent Mcardle about the apprehension of a man that resulted in him being unable to stand afterward due to injury¹

LOST IN THE WILDERNESS



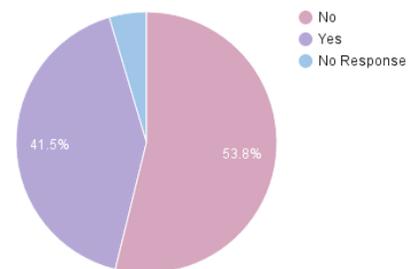
The brother of Juan Manuel called the Missing Migrant Crisis Line looking for information. His brother had been crossing through South Texas in November of 2015. Someone from Juan Manuel’s group had called from detention to tell his family that Border Patrol agents had chased and apprehended everyone in the group except for Juan Manuel. Four months later, no information has been found on his whereabouts, and his family is working to submit a DNA sample to the national missing persons DNA data bank.²

“They grab them from one side of the group or the other, but they almost never take them all.”

-Juan Manuel’s brother describing the scattering incident in which Juan Manuel disappeared

In our Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey, 28 out of 66 (42.4%) chases resulted in someone from the group being lost after the chase. During the course of a chase, slower-moving group members—including the sick, injured, and elderly—may fall behind, abandoned to the elements without a guide, companion, or resources in unfamiliar terrain. Sometimes these people will sustain injuries, or the elements will exacerbate an existing health condition. Some individuals can wander, lost, sometimes walking in circles, for weeks. Below, we examine further the deadly consequences of these practices.

Did the chase end with someone becoming lost?



DISORIENTATION

Important landmarks can be lost during chase. Border crossers may then become disoriented in vast and deadly terrain.

fore the October 2012 incident, Discovery Channel aired a documentary where DPS made its vision for border policing clear: “We’re not going to give up one square inch of this territory,” says Stacy Holland, captain of the DPS aviation division. “We’re using tactics and equipment that you will see in war zones.” To demonstrate, a DPS tactical officer, perched in a helicopter with a rifle, aims at a target on the ground. After the 2012 shooting, it became clear the agency had no policy regarding the use of deadly force from a helicopter. Melissa del Bosque, “Death on Sevenmile Road: The Rush to Militarize the US–Mexico Border Has Tragic Consequences in Texas,” Texas Observer, March 2015, <http://www.texasobserver.org/human-cost-border-security-build-up/>.

1 *Border Wars*, Season 1, episode 3, “Dead of Night.”

2 Missing Migrant Crisis Line.

“We do come across a lot of people who die from dehydration and exhaustion out here. If you don’t know where you’re going, you’re probably not going to be able to find it.”

-Unidentified Border Patrol agent¹

In May of 2001, 14 border crossers from one group died while crossing through Southern Arizona. Their story was told by Luis Alberto Urrea in his book, *The Devil’s Highway*. Urrea recounts how the group became lost shortly after being swept by the lights of a vehicle. The group was heading over a mountain pass that would have placed them on the eastern side of the Growler mountain range, near the town of Ajo. The lights caused the group to drop supplies and run from their intended path, heading instead into a 250 square mile area of the unpopulated wilderness that serves as a bombing practice range. They then cut an erratic path for 40 miles through 90-100 degree weather. This incident serves as an example of how even those who are familiar with the landscape, as the guide was, can become disoriented when diverted from a path.²

SEPARATION FROM GUIDE AND GROUP

The majority of those migrating through border territory travel in groups, often including family members, friends, companions, and one or two people familiar with the geography who guide them north. Few of those crossing are themselves familiar with the landscape and climate. Border crossers may be separated from both their guide and their group as a result of chase or scatter, which leaves them potentially perpetually lost in the backcountry.

In August of 2015 a mother called the Missing Migrant Crisis Line for advice on how to find her son. He was crossing through the Ajo region of Arizona. He had sent her a text message that afternoon saying he was lost in the desert and that his phone was running out of battery. He said “migración” had made his group scatter, and that he was alone, having lost sight of his group when everyone ran. Nine months later, her son remains disappeared.³

LOSS OF SUPPLIES AND BELONGINGS

A common result of Border Patrol chase is that border crossers are abandoned in a remote location, in extreme weather, and without potable water or access to lifesaving supplies. Many border crossers report dropping their water, food, clothing, and other belongings during the course of a high-speed chase. Water bottles, often carried in the hands instead of in a backpack, are typically the first thing dropped.

After having been chased by agents on foot, Wilmer said, “I didn’t know what had happened to the group. [My sister and I] were lost afterward, we had blisters on our feet and had dropped all of our water. We didn’t know what to do or where to go. We walked around calling out but couldn’t find anyone.”⁴

EXPOSURE TO THE ELEMENTS

The regions between ports of entry along the US–Mexico border are harsh, vast, and sparsely populated. In a climate characterized by extreme heat and cold—even for those who have some

1 *Border Wars*, Season 2, episode 2, “Checkpoint Texas.”

2 Though Urrea goes on to claim that Border Patrol would never be so reckless as to have scattered this group with their headlights, members of the group describe the incident as “an ambush” by “la Migra”. Our experience in researching this report leads us to disagree with Urrea’s assessment that Border Patrol agents have a moral aversion to group dispersal into the wilderness.

3 Missing Migrant Crisis Line.

4 Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

geographic knowledge to guide themselves toward civilization—dehydration, heat-related illness, and hypothermia can set in quickly.¹

Since 1999, the Pima County medical examiner’s office in Arizona has handled over 2,800 sets of remains of people who were attempting to cross the US–Mexico border. The primary causes of death are exposure and undetermined.²

OUTCOME OF BEING LOST IN THE WILDERNESS: SURVIVAL OF A TRAUMATIC ORDEAL

Miguel was crossing through Texas when his group was spotted by Border Patrol agents. Two women in the group were apprehended quickly. Miguel and two other men ran from the ground agents, trucks, and ATVs that came toward them. They jumped down a short cliff; one of Miguel’s companions landed on rocks. The man’s leg was obviously broken, as bone poked from his shin and he bled profusely. Miguel and the third man tried to bandage the injured man’s leg and told him to scream out so agents would find him. They continued to run for hours. The chase lasted until after dark as agents “tried to corral” them. Miguel became separated from his remaining companion, but eventually lost his pursuers as well. He had no water, as he had dropped it while running. His legs hurt, and he didn’t think he could go on. Miguel eventually found civilization, but only after four days of walking and eating roots and plants to survive.³

Evelyn tried to cross in June of 2015 through Arizona. She said that a helicopter came first; when her group heard it they began to move very quickly. Then there were agents on foot. One person she was with twisted his knee on loose rocks in the wash. He couldn’t go on and told the group to keep going. “I think he was arrested,” she said. She and one other person then “ran until we couldn’t anymore,” when they hid under some bushes. They had dropped all their supplies when they began to run and could now see Border Patrol agents dumping their water and food on the ground. “They were yelling at us to come out and cursing us,” she said. She and one other migrant proceeded to walk for five more days. They found a cattle tank and drank dirty water from it to survive.⁴

It can be a traumatic experience to be chased by a helicopter or by armed agents on horses or ATVs into the remote desert. No More Deaths volunteers in the field report talking with border crossers who have walked past bones and dead bodies and who talk about the constant fear of the landscape, the rattlesnakes, the howling of coyotes. Some tell of haunting decisions: leaving someone behind who could no longer walk, or trying to return to where they left them but never finding them again. Some speak of the isolation as the greatest enemy—the prospect of facing the wilderness alone.

1 In the deserts of Arizona, temperatures can reach 120 degrees at the height of summer; water sources are scant and polluted. In the humid brushlands of South Texas, high temperatures routinely persist through the night.

2 Undetermined refers to cases where a body has undergone decomposition to the point that only skeletal fragments remain and cause of death cannot be determined. Exposure refers to lack of protection from extreme temperatures and dangerous environmental conditions over prolonged periods of time.

3 Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

4 Dangerous Enforcement Practices Survey.

“This woman’s name is Alicia, left behind by her group when they were chased by Border Patrol. She has been wandering around the desert for the last two and half days alone without food, shelter, or water.” -Narrator of *Border Wars*¹

After a chase and scatter, people who are not apprehended frequently find themselves in a situation of emergency distress—and in urgent need of rescue. Many “rescue” themselves by walking to areas where they can ask residents for help, find humanitarian-aid groups, and sometimes even seek out the US Border Patrol, despite the fact that they will be apprehended.

For those who have the means to ask for rescue, by using a cell phone to call for help, for example, responses are often inadequate and discriminatory.² Some border crossers who have been chased have been traumatized to the point that they will not seek needed rescue for fear of the agency that has already so aggressively pursued them, being too frightened to make a much-needed rescue call.

OUTCOME OF BEING LOST IN THE WILDERNESS: DISAPPEARANCE AND DEATH

José’s family said that he had tried to cross through South Texas. They had received a call from the guide of José’s group who told them that while in the brush lands near Falfurrias, Texas, the Border Patrol had “fallen upon them.” The guide said he ran in one direction and José and some of the group ran off in another. The guide lost sight of José, but felt sure he hadn’t been apprehended. This was the last news the family received of José—to this date, no information has been found as to his whereabouts.³



Ulises was crossing through South Texas in August of 2015. According to a call received by his family, he had been left behind by his group after having been pursued by Border Patrol agents for three hours. He has a mental disability: according to his family he “has the mind of a nine- or ten-year-old child.” Apparently he was left near a cattle tank with some water. To this date, no information has been found about Ulises; his whereabouts remain unknown.

Diana crossed through Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico into Texas in July of 2015. She was crossing with her uncle and 17-year-old nephew. Her husband was contacted by their guide a few days after they had attempted to cross. He said that after they had crossed the river, he saw the three of them chased by Border Patrol agents. To this date, no information has been found on any of these individuals; the three of them disappeared together into the dense Texas brush.



Our research shows that the Border Patrol’s daily practices of chase and scatter often prove fatal for border crossers who are left behind in an unforgiving landscape. Of those who perish in the backcountry, sometimes their remains are found and recovered, and some are ultimately identified, but

1 Season 1, episode 1, “No End in Sight.”

2 During the border crossing itself, many people do not carry telephones for fear of increased surveillance or of facing criminal charges related to smuggling. When they do carry a telephone, the spotty signal and rapid dwindling of battery life associated with it are both impediments to communication. Part 3 of the report will focus more heavily on cell-phone usage and discriminatory emergency response.

3 Missing Migrant Crisis Line.

many are not found or not identified.

Of the 544 Missing Migrant Crisis Line cases where the missing person was reported to have passed through remote terrain, chase and scatter by the Border Patrol was explicitly mentioned in 84 cases as the event that had caused this person to go missing. In 36.9% of these cases (31 out of 84), death or disappearance is known to have resulted.

In those cases where chase and scatter in the wilderness was explicitly mentioned as the event that caused the person to go missing, 36.9% ended in death or disappearance.

Conclusions

Our investigation reveals that US Border Patrol enforcement practices cause wide-ranging trauma, injury, disappearance, and death for untold border crossers on a daily basis. From the numerous recorded testimonies that recount the details of this violence, it is clear that the tactics of chase and scatter are systematically used by the Border Patrol, and that these practices put countless individuals at direct risk of harm, including death. Whether by pursuing individuals into rivers, over cliffs, or deep into the desert, what may be framed as a “never-ending game” by agents on the ground¹ contributes, in the end, to a disturbing pattern of state-sanctioned disappearance.

Despite the clear and undue harms that these practices inflict on human beings—injury, trauma, disappearance, and death—the federal government does not publicly recognize the large-scale human catastrophe its enforcement activities have engineered. Indeed, despite recent public-relations efforts to cast the Border Patrol in a humanitarian light, this agency is not taking any meaningful steps to curb or eliminate its cruel and unusual policing practices. That the agency is not serious about valuing human life is clear from the practices described in this report, practices that put countless individuals at direct risk of harm.

The agency’s lack of transparency extends to refusal to disclose its policies or any records of its actions. Nevertheless, the stories featured in this report are not isolated incidents committed by a few rogue agents; chase and scatter are common and well-documented practices that have common and well-documented consequences. The Border Patrol’s sanction (formal or informal) of chase and scatter in the rural borderlands is evidence of an enforcement agenda that treats the lives of migrating peoples as disposable.

We assert that the known disappearance of thousands of people in the remote wilderness of the US–Mexico border zone marks one of the great historical crimes of our day. In turn, the aim of our research is a transformative one: we report our findings in order to challenge the Border Patrol to answer for these cruel enforcement practices—practices that are largely hidden from public view but that contribute to the shattering of thousands of lives, families, and communities. We offer a set of recommendations targeted at bringing the life-endangering realities of Border Patrol apprehension tactics out of the shadows and into the light of day. To this end, we call on the US Border Patrol to release its training materials, protocols, and policies concerning the apprehension of individuals in

1 *Border Wars*, Season 2, episode 4, “Lost in the River.”

the remote regions of the US–Mexico border, and to answer for the consequences of its enforcement practices.

The following list of recommendations is by no means comprehensive. Based on our research and on-the-ground observation of border-enforcement activities in the backcountry, it is the belief of our team that, ultimately, there is no method for interdicting border crossers in wilderness terrain that does not entail substantial risk of injury, death, and disappearance. *Consequently, we consider our first recommendation to be the most pressing: we call for the immediate end of Prevention Through Deterrence as an enforcement doctrine, and the removal of walls and infrastructure that serve only to push migration into the deadly backcountry.* Our research points to the indisputable truth that we will only see the end of the crisis of disappearance in the borderlands with the demilitarization of the US–Mexico border. Federal immigration policy must be rewritten to protect human life and human rights, and to address the US-sponsored violence and economic disruption causing so many to seek entrance into the US interior from the Global South.

Until that day comes, the US Border Patrol bears, and its collaborators must also bear, responsibility for the crisis of death and disappearance unfolding in the Southwest borderlands. To stem the tide of this ongoing human crisis, we urgently call on the US Border Patrol to administratively adopt the following guidelines to govern its border-enforcement activities.

Recommendations

1. Abolish the strategy of Prevention Through Deterrence, which, since its adoption in 1994, is responsible for pushing unauthorized border crossers into remote and deadly terrain.
2. Make the preservation of human life, human rights, and human dignity the cornerstone and guiding principle of all US Border Patrol operations.
3. Make all policies, policing standards, use of force, and safety guidelines relating to pursuit and apprehension in the backcountry publicly available, including guidelines for Air and Marine Operations air support.
4. Write and make available to the public an incident report each time a border crosser is pursued between ports of entry.
5. End all practices of chase and scatter by US Border Patrol personnel between ports of entry.