



GAO

Accountability \* Integrity \* Reliability

United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

January 29, 2009

Congressional Committees

Subject: *Secure Border Initiative Fence Construction Costs*

Much of the United States' 6,000 miles of international borders with Canada and Mexico remains vulnerable to illegal entry of aliens, criminals, and cargo. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) apprehends hundreds of thousands of people and seizes large volumes of cargo entering the country illegally each year; however, several hundreds of thousands of individuals and an unknown volume of contraband also enter the United States illegally and undetected. DHS's U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is the agency responsible for securing the nation's borders along and between ports of entry.<sup>1</sup> In November 2005, DHS announced the launch of the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), a multiyear, multibillion-dollar program aimed at securing U.S. borders and reducing illegal immigration. CBP's SBI program office is responsible for managing the SBI program and for developing a comprehensive border protection system. This system has two main components: *SBI*net, which employs radars, sensors, and cameras to detect, identify, and classify the threat level associated with an illegal entry into the United States between the ports of entry, and SBI tactical infrastructure (TI), fencing, roads, and lighting intended to enhance U.S. Border Patrol agents' ability to respond to the area of the illegal entry and bring the situation to a law enforcement resolution (i.e., arrest). The current focus of the SBI program is on the southwest border areas between ports of entry that CBP has designated as having the highest need for enhanced border security because of serious vulnerabilities.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008, required DHS to complete construction by December 31, 2008, of either 370 miles or other mileage determined by the Secretary, of reinforced fencing along the southwest border wherever the Secretary determines it would be most practical and effective in deterring smugglers and aliens attempting illegal entry.<sup>2</sup> DHS set a goal to complete approximately 670 miles of

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<sup>1</sup>At a port of entry location, CBP officers are to secure the flow of people and cargo into and out of the country, while facilitating legitimate travel and trade.

<sup>2</sup>Pub. L. No. 110-161, div. E, § 564(a)(2)(B)(ii), 121 Stat. 1844, 2090-91 (2007) (amending section 102(b)(1) of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-208, div. C, 110 Stat. 3009-546, 3009-554, as amended by section 3(2) of the Secure Fence Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-367, 120 Stat. 2638, 2639). This provision also required the construction of reinforced fencing along a total of not less than 700 miles of the southwest border where fencing would be most practical and effective, but it did not establish a deadline for completion of the full 700 miles.

fencing by December 31, 2008. Of these miles, DHS planned about 370 miles of pedestrian fencing—fencing that prevents people on foot from crossing the border, and about 300 miles of vehicle fencing—barriers used primarily in remote areas to prohibit vehicles engaged in drug trafficking and alien smuggling operations from crossing the border. Most of the pedestrian fencing under construction is single layer fencing—referred to as primary fencing. However, in some areas a second layer of fencing—referred to as secondary fencing—is being constructed parallel to existing primary fencing for additional operational advantage to deter illegal cross-border activities. In September 2008, we testified that SBI fencing project costs were increasing and land acquisition issues posed a challenge to DHS in meeting its goal to have about 670 miles of fencing completed by December 31, 2008.<sup>3</sup> Also in September 2008, DHS revised its goal such that it planned to have these miles either built, under construction, or under contract by December 31, 2008. In December 2008, DHS reported that it planned to complete all but one of the fence projects by March 2009.

As directed by the Explanatory Statement accompanying the fiscal year 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act,<sup>4</sup> we examined the costs of constructing fencing along the southern border of the United States. This report addresses the following questions:

- What were the construction costs of primary pedestrian and vehicle fencing miles completed under the SBI program as of September 30, 2007, and October 31, 2008?<sup>5</sup>
- What were the construction costs of secondary pedestrian fencing completed along existing primary fencing as of October 31, 2008?
- If appropriated SBI funds from fiscal years 2007 and 2008 that were allocated for *SBI<sub>net</sub>* had been used to construct fencing, how many additional miles of pedestrian or vehicle fencing could have been constructed?

To determine the construction costs of fencing miles completed under the SBI program and costs of existing completed secondary fencing and to estimate the total number of miles of fencing that could be constructed if appropriated funds from fiscal years 2007 and 2008 that were allocated for *SBI<sub>net</sub>* were used to construct fencing, we obtained agency documents regarding SBI fence construction costs, including construction estimates, contract awards, overhead expenditures, and real estate acquisition costs. To report on costs of fencing miles completed, we relied on CBP's estimates for total contract awards for various fencing segments as of September 30, 2007, and October 31, 2008, however, total contract amounts will not be known until closeout of the contracts. According to CBP, these data include costs

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<sup>3</sup>See GAO, *Secure Border Initiative: Observations on Deployment Challenges*, GAO-08-1141T (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2008).

<sup>4</sup>H. Comm. on Appropriations, 110th Cong., Committee Print on H.R. 2764/Public Law 110-161, at 1036-37 (2008) (referring to H.R. 2638, 110th Cong. § 560 (as passed by Senate, July 26, 2007)).

<sup>5</sup>We used data as of October 31, 2008 because they were the most recently available data at the time of our review.

for planning and oversight, environmental compliance, design, real estate acquisition, labor, and materials. To estimate the total number of miles of additional fencing that could have been constructed in fiscal years 2007 and 2008, we used average cost per mile estimates developed by CBP in response to our information needs for this review. CBP officials said that these cost estimates were based on averages of commercial contracts awarded in fiscal years 2007 and 2008 and assumed the construction industry had access to needed resources—steel, cement, and labor—to complete fence construction. CBP officials said the cost estimates also assume that the fencing miles would have been completed by commercial contractors in both fiscal years because Border Patrol and Department of Defense (DOD) labor—which was used to complete previous fencing—would not have been available. CBP officials said that the average cost estimates include all construction and related costs, including costs for planning and oversight, environmental compliance, design, real estate acquisition, labor, and materials.<sup>6</sup> However, they noted that the estimates do not include contingency funding for increased costs caused by delays and construction risk. We also interviewed CBP’s SBI TI program officials and officials from CBP’s contractor, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), about costs, fencing locations, and construction schedule. We reviewed data, such as fence miles completed and fencing construction costs provided by CBP and inquired about the source of these data, the systems used to record and maintain the data and the policies and procedures used to maintain the integrity of these data. CBP officials said they believe their data and their cost estimates are complete, accurate and sufficient for the purposes of our work. However, we did not independently verify, validate, or test the data underlying the CBP cost estimates.<sup>7</sup> We conducted our work from September 2008 through January 2009.

## Results in Brief

CBP had completed about 73 miles of primary SBI fencing costing approximately \$198 million as of September 30, 2007, and about 215 miles of fencing costing about \$625 million as of October 31, 2008. Seventy-one of the miles completed as of September 30, 2007, were pedestrian fencing completed at costs ranging from \$400,000 to \$4.8 million per mile and averaging \$2.8 million per mile. CBP had also finished about 2 miles of vehicle fencing at a cost of \$2.8 million. Pedestrian fencing accounted for 140 of the miles that CBP had completed as of October 31, 2008, with

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<sup>6</sup>Because fiscal year 2007 projects were primarily constructed on government land, there were no real estate acquisition costs and few environmental costs. However, CBP officials said that had they built more fencing in fiscal year 2007, they would have encountered these costs because they were constructing on private land. Therefore, based on its estimates, CBP added a factor of \$0.8 million per mile to account for these additional costs.

<sup>7</sup>An Independent Auditor's Report on DHS's Fiscal Year 2008 Financial Statements found that CBP did not have adequate policies and procedures in place to properly account for steel purchases and construction of the U.S. border fence in an accurate and timely manner. As a result, for several months throughout the year, CBP’s financial statements did not accurately reflect the construction activity. The report noted that the error made as a result of the improper accounting was corrected in September 2008. The report also stated that since the SBI initiative is not part of CBP’s normal course of business, CBP did not implement processes to record these transactions properly. Accordingly, for several months throughout the year, CBP’s financial statements did not accurately reflect the construction activity. It is unclear whether or to what extent this audit finding was material to the cost estimates provided to us by CBP.

costs ranging from \$400,000 to \$15.1 million per mile for an average of \$3.9 million per mile. Seventy-five of the miles were vehicle fencing and costs ranged from \$200,000 to \$1.8 million per mile, averaging \$1.0 million per mile. The per mile costs to build the fencing varied considerably because of the type of fencing, topography, materials used, land acquisition costs, and labor costs, among other things.

As of October 31, 2008, CBP reported that approximately 32 miles of secondary fence existed along the southwest border and about 18 of those miles had an average construction cost of \$2 million per mile. CBP officials said that they do not have cost information for the remaining miles because they were constructed by the International Boundary and Water Commission.<sup>8</sup> In addition, CBP had obligated \$58 million of fiscal year 2008 funding on a 3.5-mile secondary fencing project in the San Diego sector<sup>9</sup> that is scheduled to be completed in calendar year 2009.

If the approximately \$393 million in appropriated SBI funds from fiscal years 2007 and 2008 that were allocated for *SBI* had been used to construct fencing, depending on the operational needs of the Border Patrol and a number of assumptions that were discussed above, we estimate that CBP could have built about 73 miles of additional pedestrian fencing or about 232 miles of additional vehicle fencing. Alternatively, depending on the operational needs of the Border Patrol, CBP could have constructed a mix of additional pedestrian and vehicle fencing. For example, if the additional funding had been divided equally between pedestrian and vehicle fencing in fiscal years 2007 and 2008, CBP could have constructed 36 miles of pedestrian and 116 miles of vehicle fencing. However, these estimates are approximate, and depending on actual costs at the time, more or less fencing could have been built, particularly taking into account the complexities of fence construction, specifically, increased material costs, a short supply of labor, and a compressed schedule to complete fence construction projects.

## Background

For fiscal years 2006 through 2009, the SBI program received about \$3.6 billion in appropriated funds. Of this amount, about \$2.4 billion has been allocated to complete approximately 670 miles of vehicle and pedestrian fencing along the roughly 2,000 miles of border between the United States and Mexico. The SBI TI program office is using USACE to contract for ongoing fencing construction projects and supporting infrastructure (such as lights and roads), complete required environmental assessments, and acquire necessary real estate.<sup>10</sup> Segments of pedestrian and vehicle fencing projects have been built across portions of the southwest border, extending

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<sup>8</sup>The International Boundary and Water Commission is an international organization that operates bilateral projects related to the borders and rivers shared by the United States and Mexico.

<sup>9</sup>The Border Patrol has 20 sectors and is responsible for detecting, interdicting, and apprehending those who attempt to illegally enter or to smuggle people, including terrorists, or contraband, including weapons of mass destruction, across U.S. borders between official ports of entry.

<sup>10</sup>The SBI program office contracted with Boeing Company to construct 32 miles of fencing in the Barry M. Goldwater Range. Deployment of this fencing has been completed, and the SBI program office plans to use USACE to contract for most of the remaining pedestrian fencing and vehicle barriers to be deployed.

from the San Diego sector through the Rio Grande Valley sector, and include fencing segments in urban, rural and remote areas along the southwest border. As of January 2009, the majority of the fencing has been constructed in Border Patrol sectors in California, Arizona, and New Mexico (see fig. 1).

**Figure 1: Map of Border Patrol Sectors Along the Southwest Border**



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data.

Prior to initiating the SBI program, DHS constructed approximately 78 miles of pedestrian fencing and 57 miles of vehicle fencing along the southwest border using primarily Border Patrol and DOD labor. SBI TI program office officials refer to fencing in place before the SBI program as legacy fencing. Much of the legacy fencing was built along the border in more populated urban areas because urban areas require a greater number of enforcement personnel to effectively confront the illegal activity. In this environment, pedestrian fencing slows the progress of illegal entrants in areas where they can be across the border and into the community in a matter of minutes or seconds. For example, in 1990, the Border Patrol began erecting a 10-foot-high welded steel primary fence in the San Diego sector to deter illegal entries and drug smuggling.

In addition to the legacy fencing, the SBI TI program office has completed or plans to complete projects known as Pedestrian Fence 70 (PF 70), Pedestrian Fence 225 (PF 225), and Vehicle Fence 300 (VF 300) to reach the DHS goal of constructing about 670 miles of fencing along the southwest border. PF 70 was the initial SBI project under

which 81 miles of fencing were constructed. PF 225 is the second pedestrian fencing project and is expected to result in approximately 210 miles of fence construction. The VF 300 project is expected to construct approximately 227 miles of vehicle fencing barriers along the southwest border. SBI program officials explained that the total fencing miles completed or planned under these projects total 661 because several fencing segments that were scheduled to be built in calendar year 2008 will now be constructed through a different project in calendar year 2009 (see table 1).

**Table 1: Fence Projects along the Southwest Border**

<b>Fence projects</b>	<b>Pedestrian fence miles</b>	<b>Vehicle fence miles</b>	<b>Total miles</b>
PF 70	81	N/A	<b>81</b>
PF 225	210	N/A	<b>210</b>
VF 300	N/A	227	<b>227</b>
Legacy pedestrian fence	67 <sup>a</sup>	N/A	<b>67</b>
Legacy vehicle fence	N/A	76 <sup>a</sup>	<b>76</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>358</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>661</b>

Source: SBI.

Note: N/A = not applicable.

<sup>a</sup>Seventy-eight miles of pedestrian fencing and 57 miles of vehicle fencing were in place before the SBI program began. However, since SBI began construction, some miles of fencing have been removed, replaced or retrofitted resulting in mileage totals that are different from those we have previously reported.

In an effort to identify lower-cost and easily deployable fencing solutions, CBP funded a project called Fence Lab in February 2007. Fence Lab tested fence/barrier prototypes and evaluated them based on performance criteria such as their ability to disable a vehicle traveling at 40 miles per hour, allowing animals to migrate through them, and cost-effectiveness. SBI TI program office officials told us these performance standards apply only to primary fencing, and SBI currently does not have performance standards for secondary fencing. Each style of fencing has different costs associated with construction, and the Border Patrol determines which fencing style is appropriate based on the operational need of a specific geographic area along the southwest border. Figure 2 shows examples of approved SBI Fence Lab fencing.

**Figure 2: Examples of SBI Fence Lab Fencing Styles**



Sources: CBP and GAO.

Picket fence (upper left), post and rail with wire mesh (upper right), and bollard fence (lower left) are examples of pedestrian fencing; Normandy vehicle barrier (lower right), is an example of vehicle fencing.

In October 2007, we reported that fencing costs vary based on the type of terrain, materials used, land acquisition, who performs the construction, and the need to meet an expedited schedule.<sup>11</sup> To minimize one of the many factors that add to cost, in the past, DHS used Border Patrol agents and DOD personnel to construct the fencing. At that time, CBP officials also reported that they planned to use commercial labor for future infrastructure projects because using Border Patrol agents took them away from their other duties and the Department of Defense had notified DHS that military personnel would no longer be available to build fencing.

### **Costs of Fencing Completed**

As of September 30, 2007, about 73 miles of SBI fencing had been completed by CBP at a cost of approximately \$198 million. Of the 73 miles of fencing, the SBI program had completed about 70 miles of pedestrian fencing through the PF 70 project at a cost of approximately \$192 million, with per mile costs ranging from \$400,000 to \$4.8 million and about 1 mile of pedestrian fencing through the PF 225 project at a cost of about \$3.0 million. In addition, approximately 2 miles of vehicle fencing were

<sup>11</sup>See GAO, *Secure Border Initiative: Observations on Selected Aspects of SBI net Program Implementation*, GAO-08-131T (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 24, 2007).

constructed at a cost of \$2.8 million. Table 2 summarizes SBI fencing miles, costs, and cost ranges and average costs as of September 30, 2007.

**Table 2: Completed Miles and Cost of SBI Fencing as of September 30, 2007**

Dollars in millions

Project	Miles completed	Project cost	Cost range per mile	Average cost per mile
PF 70	70 <sup>a</sup>	\$192.3	\$0.4 to 4.8	\$2.7
PF 225	1 <sup>b</sup>	3.0	4.2	4.2
VF 300	2 <sup>c</sup>	2.8	1.8	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>\$198.1</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Source: SBI.

Note: N/A = not applicable.

<sup>a</sup>This excludes approximately 5 miles that were completed under PF 70, but were not funded by SBI.

<sup>b</sup>Actual fence completed was 0.72 miles.

<sup>c</sup>Actual fence completed was 1.6 miles.

As of October 31, 2008, CBP had completed a total of about 215 miles of SBI fencing at a cost of approximately \$625 million. Of the 215 miles of fencing, 75 miles were completed under PF 70 at a cost of approximately \$214 million, 65 miles were completed under PF 225 at a cost of about \$334 million, and 75 miles were completed under VF 300 at a cost of approximately \$78 million. Table 3 summarizes SBI fencing miles, costs, and cost ranges and average costs as of October 31, 2008.

**Table 3: Completed Miles and Cost of SBI Fencing as of October 31, 2008**

Dollars in millions

Project	Miles completed	Project cost	Cost range per mile	Average cost per mile
PF 70	75 <sup>a</sup>	\$213.6	\$0.4 to 4.8	\$2.8
PF 225	65	333.7	2.8 to 15.1	5.1
VF 300	75	78.1	0.2 to 1.8	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>\$625.4</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Source: SBI.

Note: N/A = not applicable.

<sup>a</sup>This excludes approximately 5 miles that were completed under PF 70, but were not funded by SBI.

The per mile cost ranges can be attributed to several factors. For example, by design, it is less expensive to construct vehicle fencing than pedestrian fencing. Also, as discussed previously, costs for fencing completed by commercial contractors are higher than for fencing built by the Border Patrol or the military. In addition, differences in terrain and other factors, such as whether the fencing is built on public or private land, can drive cost differences. More specifically, the increase in costs between the PF 70 and PF 225 projects occurred, in part, because there were minimal land acquisition costs in fiscal year 2007 when most of PF 70 was being built, while costs for real estate, labor, and materials increased in fiscal year 2008 when PF 225 was being built. In addition, about 40 percent of PF 70 was built by Border Patrol and

DOD personnel, while PF 225 was built solely by commercial contractors. We reported in September 2008, that beginning in July 2008, as SBI TI officials were in the process of finalizing construction contracts, cost estimates for pedestrian fencing in Texas began to increase.<sup>12</sup> For example, the officials said that as a result of a construction boom in Texas, labor was in short supply and contractors reported that they needed to provide premium pay and overtime to attract workers. In terms of materials, USACE officials stated that the price of cement and steel had increased and in some areas within Texas obtaining cement near the fence construction site was difficult.

### **Costs of Secondary Fencing Completed**

As of October 31, 2008, CBP reported that approximately 32 miles of secondary fencing existed along the southwest border and about 18 of those miles had an average construction cost of \$2 million per mile, but CBP was not able to provide cost information for the remaining miles. CBP reported that 9.1 miles were constructed using military labor at a total cost of about \$20 million, and 9.2 miles were constructed using commercial contracts at a total cost of about \$19 million. Construction of the 18.3 miles initially began in the 1990s under the management of CBP legacy agencies.<sup>13</sup> Construction on these miles was intermittent and continued through 2008, during which time legacy agencies were merged into DHS and fence construction fell under the management of CBP's SBI program. CBP does not have the cost information for remaining secondary fencing miles because those were funded and constructed by the International Boundary and Water Commission.

In 2009, CBP has obligated \$58 million of fiscal year 2008 SBI funds to construct approximately 3.5 miles of secondary fencing in the San Diego sector at an average cost of about \$16 million per mile. This per mile cost is substantially higher than the cost for existing secondary fencing because of the difficult terrain where the secondary fencing is to be built. In addition to the 3.5 fencing miles being constructed, CBP officials said that SBI would need to undertake significant earth and drainage work, construct all-weather access roads, and deploy additional lighting.

### **Estimates of Additional Pedestrian and Vehicle Fencing That Could Have Been Constructed with Fiscal Year 2007 and Fiscal Year 2008 Appropriated Funds Allocated to SBI*net***

If the SBI funding from fiscal years 2007 and 2008 that was allocated for SBI*net* had been used to construct fencing, we estimate that CBP could have built about 73 additional miles of pedestrian fencing or about 232 additional miles of vehicle fencing. For fiscal years 2007 and 2008, once program management funds, operations and maintenance funds, and funds already obligated to the TI program are accounted

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<sup>12</sup>GAO-08-1141T.

<sup>13</sup>Legacy agencies are the entities (i.e., Immigration and Naturalization Service and U.S. Customs Service) that existed before the creation of DHS; they have since been merged into CBP and other DHS components.

for, about \$227 million and \$166 million, respectively, that was allocated for *SBI*net, would have been potentially available for fence construction projects (see table 4).

**Table 4: Appropriated Funds Allocated to *SBI*net That Could Have Been Potentially Available to Construct Fencing, Fiscal Years 2007 and 2008**

Dollars in millions

<b>Funds</b>	<b>FY 2007</b>	<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>Total</b>
Appropriated funds	\$1,188	\$1,225 <sup>a</sup>	<b>\$2,413</b>
SBI program management funds	68	39	<b>\$107</b>
Operations and maintenance funds	43	38	<b>\$81</b>
Funds allocated to <i>SBI</i> net and TI programs	1,077	1,148	<b>\$2,225</b>
Funds allocated to the TI program	850	982	<b>\$1,832</b>
Funds allocated to the <i>SBI</i> net program	227	166	<b>\$393</b>

Source: SBI.

<sup>a</sup>The SBI program also received an additional \$77.6 million in reprogrammed funds in fiscal year 2008 that were not included in this total. All of these funds were obligated to TI projects.

To estimate how much fencing could have been built with the funds allocated to *SBI*net, we used estimated average cost per mile figures supplied by CBP. CBP based the cost estimates on averages of commercial contracts awarded in fiscal years 2007 and 2008. CBP assumed that the fencing miles would have been completed by commercial contractors in both fiscal years because, as previously discussed, Border Patrol agents and DOD labor would not have been available. The average cost estimates include all construction and related costs, including costs for planning and oversight, environmental compliance, design, real estate acquisition, labor, and materials.<sup>14</sup> However, they do not include contingency funding for increased costs because of delays and construction risk. Using these estimates, pedestrian fencing would have cost approximately \$4.8 million per mile in fiscal year 2007 and \$6.5 million per mile in fiscal year 2008. Based on these averages, about 47 and 26 additional miles of pedestrian fencing could have been built in fiscal years 2007 and 2008, respectively. Furthermore, using the CBP estimates, vehicle fencing would have cost \$1.7 million per mile in both fiscal years 2007 and 2008. If vehicle fencing had been built instead of pedestrian fencing, about 134 and 98 additional miles could have been built in fiscal years 2007 and 2008, respectively. Alternatively, depending on the operational needs of the Border Patrol, a mixture of additional pedestrian fencing and vehicle fencing could have been built. For example, if the additional funding had been divided equally between pedestrian and vehicle fencing in fiscal years 2007 and 2008, 36 miles of pedestrian and 116 miles of vehicle fencing could have been built.

Taking into account the complexities of fence construction, specifically, uncertain land acquisition costs, increased material costs, a short supply of labor, and a compressed schedule to complete fence construction projects, the estimates of

<sup>14</sup>Because fiscal year 2007 projects were primarily constructed on government land there were no real estate acquisition costs and few environmental costs. However, CBP officials said that had they built more fencing in fiscal year 2007, they would have encountered these costs because they were constructing on private land. Therefore, CBP added a factor of \$0.8 million per mile, to account for these additional costs.

additional miles of pedestrian fencing or vehicle fencing that could have been constructed are approximate, and depending on actual costs at the time, more or less fencing could have been built. Finally, based on the environmental features and natural terrain along the southwest border, the actual mixture of pedestrian and vehicle fencing that would be deployed would be based on the operational needs of the Border Patrol.

### **Agency Comments**

On January 9, 2009, we provided a draft of this report to the Secretary of Homeland Security for comment. We received written comments on January 22, 2009. In its written comments, which appear in Enclosure I, DHS agreed with our findings. In addition, the department provided technical clarifications that we considered and incorporated as appropriate.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of other Senate and House committees that have authorization and oversight responsibilities for homeland security. We are also sending copies to the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. This report is also available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any further questions about this report, please contact Richard Stana at (202) 512-8777 or [stanar@gao.gov](mailto:stanar@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in Enclosure II.



Richard M. Stana, Director  
Homeland Security and Justice Issues

*List of Committees*

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## Enclosure I: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland  
Security**

January 22, 2009

Mr. Richard M. Stana  
Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Stana:

RE: Draft Report 09-244R, Secure Border Initiative Fence Construction Costs  
(GAO Job Code 440722)

The Department of Homeland Security, particularly U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report referenced above. As directed by the House Committee on Appropriations, the U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) examined the costs of constructing fencing along the southern border. The report does not include any recommendations.

The CBP Secure Border Initiative (SBI) program worked closely with the GAO to develop the appropriate assumptions for this report. CBP believes that the draft report properly reflects the Tactical Infrastructure program operational costs and resulting estimates of additional pedestrian and vehicle fencing that could have been constructed with FY 2007 and FY 2008 appropriated funds to the SBI<sup>net</sup> program.

Technical comments have been provided under separate cover and should help clarify statements in the draft report before issuance of the final report. With regard to the classification of the report, CBP did not identify any sensitive information that would require a "For Official Use Only" designation or warrant protection under the Freedom of Information Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerald E. Levine".

Jerald E. Levine  
Director  
Departmental GAO/OIG Liaison Office

[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)

## **Enclosure II: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments**

### **GAO Contact**

Richard M. Stana (202) 512-8777 or stanar@gao.gov

### **Acknowledgments**

In addition to the contact named above, Susan Quinlan, Assistant Director, and Jeanette Espinola, Analyst-in-Charge, managed this assignment. Frances Cook, Katherine Davis, Jeremy Rothgerber, and Erin Smith made significant contributions to the work.

## Related GAO Products

*Department of Homeland Security: Billions Invested in Major Programs Lack Appropriate Oversight.* [GAO-09-29](#). Washington, D.C.: November 18, 2008.

*Secure Border Initiative: Observations on Deployment Challenges.* [GAO-08-1141T](#). Washington, D.C.: September 10, 2008.

*Secure Border Initiative: DHS Needs to Address Significant Risks in Delivering Key Technology Investment.* [GAO-08-1148T](#). Washington, D.C.: September 10, 2008.

*Secure Border Initiative: Fiscal Year 2008 Expenditure Plan Shows Improvement, but Deficiencies Limit Congressional Oversight and DHS Accountability.* [GAO-08-739R](#). Washington, D.C.: June 26, 2008.

*Department of Homeland Security: Better Planning and Assessment Needed to Improve Outcomes for Complex Service Acquisitions.* [GAO-08-263](#). Washington, D.C.: April 22, 2008.

*Secure Border Initiative: Observations on the Importance of Applying Lessons Learned to Future Projects.* [GAO-08-508T](#). Washington, D.C.: February 27, 2008.

*Secure Border Initiative: Observations on Selected Aspects of SBInet Program Implementation.* [GAO-08-131T](#). Washington, D.C.: October 24, 2007.

*Secure Border Initiative: SBInet Planning and Management Improvements Needed to Control Risks.* [GAO-07-504T](#). Washington, D.C.: February 27, 2007.

*Secure Border Initiative: SBInet Expenditure Plan Needs to Better Support Oversight and Accountability.* [GAO-07-309](#). Washington, D.C.: February 15, 2007.

(440722)

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