

February 2013

# SOUTHWEST BORDER SECURITY

## Data Are Limited and Concerns Vary about Spillover Crime along the Southwest Border



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Highlights of [GAO-13-175](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Drug-related homicides have dramatically increased in recent years in Mexico along the nearly 2,000-mile border it shares with the United States. U.S. federal, state, and local officials have stated that the prospect of crime, including violence, spilling over from Mexico into the southwestern United States is a concern. GAO was asked to review crime rates and assess information on spillover crime along the border. Specifically, this report addresses: (1) What information do reported crime rates in southwest border communities provide on spillover crime and what do they show? (2) What efforts, if any, have federal, state, and select local law enforcement agencies made to track spillover crime along the southwest border? (3) What concerns, if any, do these agencies have about spillover crime? (4) What steps, if any, have these agencies taken to address spillover crime?

GAO analyzed crime data from all of the 24 southwest border counties from 2004 through 2011 and federal documentation, such as threat assessments and DHS's plans for addressing violence along the southwest border. GAO interviewed officials from DHS and DOJ and their components. GAO also interviewed officials from 37 state and local law enforcement agencies responsible for investigating and tracking crime in the border counties in the four southwest border states (Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas). While the results of the interviews are not generalizable, they provided insights. GAO is not making any recommendations. DHS provided comments, which highlighted border-related crime initiatives recognized by GAO.

View [GAO-13-175](#). For more information, contact Cary B. Russell at (202) 512-5431 or [russellc@gao.gov](mailto:russellc@gao.gov).

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### Data Are Limited and Concerns Vary about Spillover Crime along the Southwest Border

## What GAO Found

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, the government's centralized repository for crime data, provides the only available standardized way to track crime levels in border counties over time. However, UCR data lack information on whether reported offenses are attributable to spillover crime, and have other limitations, such as underreporting to police. Also, UCR data cannot be used to identify links with crimes often associated with spillover from Mexico, such as cartel-related drug trafficking. Cognizant of these limitations, GAO's analysis of data for southwest border counties with sufficiently complete data show that, generally, both violent and property crimes were lower in 2011 than in 2004. For example, the violent crime rate in three states' border counties was lower by at least 26 percent in 2011 than in 2004 and in one other state lower by 8 percent in 2011 than in 2005.

Law enforcement agencies have few efforts to track spillover crime. No common federal government definition of such crime exists, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) components, including those with a definition, either do not collect data to track spillover crime, or do not maintain such data that can be readily retrieved and analyzed. However, several components collect violent incident data that could serve as indirect indicators of spillover crime. For example, GAO analysis of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data show that, generally, assaults on agents between southwest border ports of entry were about 25 percent lower in 2012 than in 2006. State and local law enforcement agencies, except for one state agency, do not track what might be considered to be spillover crime because they lack a common definition and do not systematically collect these crime data in a way that can be used to analyze trends. Officials from 22 of 37 state and local agencies told GAO that they have limited resources to collect additional data. Since April 2012, DHS and the Texas Department of Public Safety have coled an effort to propose definitions and metrics for border-related crime by March 2013.

Law enforcement agencies have varying concerns regarding the extent to which violent crime from Mexico spills into southwest border communities. While DHS and DOJ threat assessments indicate that violent infighting between drug cartels has remained largely in Mexico, DHS assessments also show that aggressive tactics used by traffickers to evade capture demonstrate an increasing threat to U.S. law enforcement. Also, officials in 31 of the 37 state and local agencies stated that they have not observed violent crime from Mexico regularly spilling into their counties; nonetheless, officials in 33 of the 37 agencies were at least somewhat concerned, for example, for the safety of their personnel or residents.

Law enforcement agencies have undertaken initiatives to target border-related crime, including one effort to address violent crime spilling over from Mexico. For example, in October 2008, DHS developed a contingency plan for the possibility that a significant southwest border violence escalation may exceed DHS assets' ability to respond. In addition, officials from all state and local law enforcement agencies that GAO spoke with said their agencies had undertaken some efforts, either individually or in partnership with others, to combat criminal activities often associated with spillover crime, such as drug and human smuggling.

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# Contents

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Letter		1
	Background	6
	Best Available Data Cannot Be Used to Make Insights about Spillover Crime but Show a General Decline in Reported Crime Rates in Counties with Sufficiently Complete Data along the Southwest Border	11
	Few Law Enforcement Agencies Track Spillover Crime along the Southwest Border	16
	Law Enforcement Agencies Have Varying Concerns about Potential Effects of Violent Crime in Mexico on Border Communities	22
	Law Enforcement Agencies Have Initiatives that Target Border-related Crime, Including a Federal Contingency Plan to Address Violent Crime Spilling Over from Mexico	27
	Agency Comments	28
Appendix I	Southwest Border Counties by State	30
Appendix II	Objectives, Scope, and Methodology	31
Appendix III	Comparison of UCR SRS with NIBRS	36
Appendix IV	UCR Data Tables for Southwest Border Counties, 2004-2011	39
Appendix V	Results from Analyzing UCR SRS and NIBRS Crime Data	43
Appendix VI	Assaults against Border Patrol Agents by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006-2012	52
Appendix VII	Select Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement Efforts along the Southwest Border	56

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Appendix VIII	Comments from the Department of Homeland Security	59
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Appendix IX	GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments	60
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Tables

Table 1: Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security Components Combating Drug Cartel-Related Activities along the Southwest Border	8
Table 2: Uniform Crime Reporting Summary Reporting System and National-Incident Based Reporting System Offenses	37
Table 3: Types of Information in Uniform Crime Reporting Summary and National-Incident Based Reporting Systems	38
Table 4: Data Tables on Assaults against Border Patrol Agents by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006-2012	54
Table 5: Select Federal Law Enforcement Entities' Efforts to Combat Mexican Drug Cartel-Related Activities along the Southwest Border	56
Table 6: Select State and Local Law Enforcement Efforts to Target Border-Related Crime	58

---

Figures

Figure 1: Violent and Property Crime Rates in Southwest Border States by Border and Nonborder Counties, 2004-2011	13
Figure 2: Assaults against Border Patrol Agents in Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Category, Fiscal Years 2006-2012	18
Figure 3: Violent Crime Rates per 100,000 Population In Southwest Border and Nonborder Counties, Combined by State, 2004-2011	45
Figure 4: Total Number of Reported Violent Crimes in Seven Small Southwest Border Counties, 2004-2011	47
Figure 5 : Property Crime Rates per 100,000 Population for Border and Nonborder Counties Combined by State, 2004-2011	49
Figure 6: Total Number of Reported Property Crimes in Small Southwest Border Counties, 2004-2011	51
Figure 7: Number of Assaults against Border Patrol Agents by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006-2012	53

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## Abbreviations

CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
EPIC	El Paso Intelligence Center
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
NIBRS	National Incident-Based Reporting System
SRS	Summary Reporting System
UCR	Uniform Crime Reporting

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United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

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February 26, 2013

The Honorable Bennie Thompson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Sheila Jackson-Lee  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security  
Committee on Homeland Security  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Henry Cuellar  
Member  
House of Representatives

The U.S. government has identified Mexican drug cartels—whose trafficking of drugs, cash, and firearms engenders violence—as an organized crime threat to the United States. Drug cartel-related violence, including kidnappings and homicides, has dramatically increased in recent years in Mexico. Based on data compiled by the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego, homicides related to organized crime increased by 523 percent from 2006 (1,152) through 2011 (7,178) in the six Mexican states that share the nearly 2,000-mile border with the United States.<sup>1</sup> As an extension of its counternarcotics policy, and in response to the possibility that violence in Mexico may spread, or spill over, to the United States, the U.S. government has been supporting Mexico’s campaign against Mexican drug cartels by implementing bilateral security initiatives, enhancing border security programs, and introducing initiatives to reduce the movement of drugs, money, and weapons to and from Mexico.

Stakeholders view the term “spillover” differently. Depending on the stakeholder, the term “spillover” might refer only to Mexican drug cartel-

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<sup>1</sup>For more information, see Trans-Border Institute, *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2010* (University of San Diego: February 2011), and Trans-Border Institute, *Drug Violence in Mexico: Data and Analysis Through 2011* (University of San Diego: March 2012).

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related violence or be defined as a broader concept of spillover crime, which includes both violent and nonviolent activities. Examples of such activities include rape or murder committed in connection with cross-border or drug cartel activity; keeping smuggled aliens in stash houses and ransoming them back to Mexico; smuggling of firearms, drugs, and people; vandalism such as littering on smuggling routes; and destroying private property, such as cutting fences and killing cattle. In addition, stakeholders have varying perspectives on the existence and effects of crime spilling over from Mexico into communities along the southwest border. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano testified in 2009 that increases in drug cartel-related violence in the United States were far below Mexican levels and were limited to acts of violence between cartel members and assaults on U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Border Patrol agents.<sup>2</sup> In 2011, she stated that while the United States must continue to guard against spillover effects of drug cartel-related violence in Mexico, border communities were among the safest in America.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, some members of Congress and officials from state governments and state and local law enforcement agencies have publicly asserted that drug cartel-related violent crime is spilling over from Mexico into the United States, endangering the lives and property of Americans living in U.S. southwest border communities. Federal law does not specifically require the collection of data on spillover crime, but legislation has been introduced in Congress that would require federal agencies to report on incidents of cross-border violence or on their ability to track and quantify the level of cross-border violence occurring along the southwest border.<sup>4</sup>

You asked us to review crime rates and assess information on spillover crime from Mexico in communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. This report addresses the following questions: (1) What information do

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<sup>2</sup>*Southern Border Violence: Homeland Security Threats, Vulnerabilities, and Responsibilities, Before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs*, 111th Cong. (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 25, 2009) (statement of Janet Napolitano, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security).

<sup>3</sup>*Securing the Border: Progress at the Federal Level, Before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs*, 112th Cong. (Washington, D.C.: May 3, 2011) (statement of Janet Napolitano, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security).

<sup>4</sup>H.R. 2124, 112th Cong. (2011); H.R. 6368, 112th Cong. (as passed by the House, Sept. 19, 2012).

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reported crime rates in southwest border communities provide on spillover crime and what do they show? (2) What efforts, if any, have federal, state, and select local law enforcement agencies made to track spillover crime along the southwest border? (3) What concerns, if any, do these agencies have about spillover crime? (4) What steps, if any, have these agencies taken to address spillover crime?

To describe crime rates, we analyzed Summary Reporting System (SRS) data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program—the government's centralized repository for crime data—from January 2004 through December 2011 for the four southwest border states (Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas).<sup>5</sup> We selected January 2004 as the initial date because it provided us with data for more than 2 years prior to December 2006, when Mexican President Felipe Calderón took office and began a major military offensive against Mexican drug cartels. We also analyzed UCR's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data, available from January 2007 through December 2010, for the single southwest border law enforcement agency reporting such data—the sheriff's office in Yuma County, Arizona.<sup>6</sup> To assess the reliability of the UCR data, we conducted analyses to test for irregularities in the data, reviewed FBI documentation on how the data can and cannot be used and on the FBI's procedures for ensuring UCR data quality, and interviewed FBI officials knowledgeable about the data. On the basis of this assessment, we excluded some counties from our analysis because they did not report complete crime data to the FBI. We concluded that the data for the remaining counties were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our review. In addition, to determine what other data are systematically collected in southwest border counties, we interviewed officials from the state and local law enforcement agencies that are responsible for investigating and tracking crime occurring in their jurisdictions. At the state level, we conducted

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<sup>5</sup>The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

<sup>6</sup>NIBRS includes data on individual crime incidents, including information about the nature and types of specific offenses in the incident, characteristics of the victims and offenders, and the types and value of any property stolen and recovered. We did not analyze 2011 NIBRS data for the Yuma County Sheriff's Office because the FBI said the office was experiencing record management system problems and could not provide complete 2011 NIBRS data.



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interviews with officials from the California Highway Patrol, and the Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas Departments of Public Safety.<sup>7</sup> At the local level, we interviewed officials representing 21 of the 24 sheriffs' offices in southwest border counties and 12 large municipal police departments in the border counties.<sup>8</sup> We selected departments from each of four states, and we selected large departments because on the basis of our review of the UCR SRS data, in general, large departments had more reported crimes than did smaller departments. A list of the 24 southwest border counties can be found in appendix I. In total, we interviewed officials from 37 state and law enforcement agencies on the southwest border.

Further, we conducted site visits to five southwest border counties: Pima and Santa Cruz Counties in Arizona, and Cameron, Hidalgo, and Webb Counties in Texas. We selected these counties because they represent diverse urban and rural environments and contain geographic features, such as rivers and mountains, which could affect the levels and types of crime they experience. As part of our visits, in addition to interviewing state and local law enforcement agencies, we met with federal officials, such as CBP agents and officers operating between and at the ports of entry along the southwest border. The information we obtained from these visits is not generalizable to all southwest border counties, but it provides insights on the perspectives that law enforcement representatives have on crime occurring in southwest border communities.

To describe efforts agencies have taken to track spillover crime, we collected information, such as crime reports and documentation on categories of data collected, from and conducted interviews with the state and local law enforcement agencies identified above, as well as with federal agencies that have responsibilities for combating drug cartel-related activities along the southwest border. For example, these federal agencies include components and intelligence offices from DHS, such as

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<sup>7</sup>The California Department of Justice is the agency that collects and reports crime data in California. However, in response to our interview request, California Department of Justice officials referred us to the California Highway Patrol as the agency best qualified to discuss what crime data are collected in the California jurisdictions along the southwest border.

<sup>8</sup>Officials from 2 sheriffs' offices in Texas were not available for interviews and 1 sheriff's office in Texas declined our request for an interview.

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CBP and DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis; Department of Justice (DOJ), such as Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the FBI; and interagency task forces, such as the Border Enforcement Security Task Force.<sup>9</sup> We asked agencies about their efforts to track spillover crime, any challenges they encountered in doing so, and whether they collected or tracked other data they considered related to spillover crime and violence on the southwest border. Specifically, we analyzed CBP data on the number of assaults on Border Patrol agents in southwest border patrol sectors from fiscal years 2006 through 2012, and the number of assaults on Office of Field Operations personnel at southwest border ports of entry for fiscal years 2011 and 2012, the date ranges for which these data were available. To assess the reliability of these data, we reviewed relevant documentation, such as procedures for collecting data consistently, and interviewed officials responsible for the data. On the basis of our efforts, we determined the data to be sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our report.

To identify concerns about spillover crime, we reviewed threat assessments for the southwest border developed by federal agencies, such as DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis. In addition, we included questions in our interviews with the officials from 37 state and local law enforcement agencies about their concerns regarding the existence and potential effects of crime from Mexico spilling into their communities. In addition, to obtain the perspectives of local businesses in southwest border counties about what concerns, if any, they may have about spillover crime, we interviewed officials from Chambers of Commerce in four of the five counties we visited—Cameron, Hidalgo, Santa Cruz, and Webb Counties.<sup>10</sup> While the results of these interviews are not generalizable to all local businesses or Chambers of Commerce on the southwest border, they provide perspectives about the effects that violence in Mexico might have had on the businesses in their communities.

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<sup>9</sup>The Border Enforcement Security Task Force is led by DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement in partnership with federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement counterparts to stem cross-border criminal activity and associated violence. There are 14 teams located along the southwest border.

<sup>10</sup>We did not interview officials from a Chamber of Commerce in Pima County because the county's major city, Tucson, is not located directly on the border with Mexico.

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To describe steps that agencies have taken to address spillover crime, we reviewed agency protocols and contingency plans, such as the DHS Operations Plan for Southwest Border Violence, from and conducted interviews with federal, state, and local agencies and task forces identified above. Additional details on our scope and methodology are contained in appendix II.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2012 through February 2013, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Background

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### Federal Border Security and Counternarcotics Efforts

The federal government has taken a number of steps to combat threats posed by drug cartels, including potential crime and violence directed against U.S. citizens and government interests. For example, in 2008, the U.S. government began a program—known as the Mérida Initiative—to provide Mexico and the countries of Central America with financial and technical assistance for counterdrug efforts, among others.<sup>11</sup> In March 2009, as a response to the violence in Mexico, DHS announced a new southwest border initiative to guard against violent crime spillover into the United States by increasing the deployment of personnel and technology along the southwest border. In addition, in June 2009, the Office of National Drug Control Policy issued the National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy with the goal to substantially reduce the flow of illicit drugs, drug proceeds, and associated instruments of violence across the southwest border.<sup>12</sup> To accomplish this goal, the strategy listed disrupting and dismantling drug-trafficking organizations along the

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<sup>11</sup>According to the State Department, the Mérida Initiative received \$1.6 billion since its start in fiscal year 2008.

<sup>12</sup>This strategy was issued pursuant to Section 1110 of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Reauthorization Act of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-469, § 1110, 120 Stat. 3502, 3543-44).

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southwest border as one of its key objectives. In August 2010, President Barack Obama signed an emergency supplemental appropriation for border security, which included \$600 million in supplemental funds for enhanced border protection and law enforcement activities.<sup>13</sup> The President also separately authorized the temporary deployment of up to an additional 1,200 National Guard troops to the border to assist law enforcement agencies in their efforts to target illicit networks' trafficking in people, drugs, illegal weapons, and money, and the violence associated with these illegal activities. Moreover, in May 2011, DHS Secretary Napolitano stated that CBP, in partnership with independent third-party stakeholders, had begun the process of developing an index to comprehensively and systematically measure security along the southwest border and quality of life in the region. As we reported in May 2012, this index—the Border Condition Index—is being developed, and accordingly, it is too early to determine how it will be used to provide oversight of border security efforts.<sup>14</sup>

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## Federal, State, and Local Responsibilities

At the federal level, five agencies in two departments are responsible for securing the border and combating drug cartel–related activities along the southwest border. These agencies enforce federal laws related to, among other things, immigration, drugs, weapons, and organized crime. Additionally, they collect data related to their criminal investigations and operations to support prosecutions. Specifically, they track violations of federal criminal statutes relevant to their responsibilities, including the number of pending and closed cases, arrests, convictions, indictments, seizures, and forfeitures. Table 1 presents information on these law enforcement agencies and their responsibilities.

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<sup>13</sup>Among other items, the supplemental appropriation provided \$244 million to hire new and maintain existing levels of Border Patrol agents and CBP officers on the southwest border and \$80 million for new U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and supporting investments along the southwest border. It also provided \$196 million for DOJ to increase federal law enforcement activities in the southwest border region. (Pub. L. No. 111-230, 124 Stat. 2485, 2485, 2486, 2486-87 (2010)).

<sup>14</sup>In the past, we have reported on a variety of DHS border security programs and related performance goals and measures. For a list of our reports that examined DHS's efforts to secure the U.S. borders, please see Related Products page in GAO, *Border Patrol Strategy: Progress and Challenges in Implementation and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-12-688T](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 8, 2012).

**Table 1: Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security Components Combating Drug Cartel-Related Activities along the Southwest Border**

Organization		Responsibilities
DOJ	Drug Enforcement Administration	Enforce drug laws; pursue investigations and develop intelligence with the goal of identifying, infiltrating, and dismantling drug-trafficking organizations and disrupting their operations.
	Federal Bureau of Investigation	Enforce laws and conduct investigations related to combating transnational and national criminal organizations and enterprises.
	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives	Enforce laws and pursue investigations related to stopping illegal gun trafficking from the United States to Mexico.
DHS	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	Enforce U.S. immigration laws and interdict persons and contraband crossing the border illegally. Within CBP, the Office of Field Operations is responsible for the interdictions at the legal border crossing points, and the Border Patrol is responsible for the interdictions between those points.
	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Enforce federal laws governing border control, customs, trade and immigration. Within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations is responsible for enforcing U.S. laws covering a wide range of domestic and international activities arising from the illegal movement of people and goods into, within, and out of the United States to combat transnational criminal organizations.

Source: GAO analysis of agency documents and interviews with agency officials.

In addition to enforcing laws, a number of agencies have intelligence components and oversee interagency task forces responsible for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information related to threats from the drug cartels. These components include DHS’s Office of Intelligence and Analysis and intelligence offices within CBP and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), as well as DOJ’s DEA, and the FBI. These entities produce various intelligence products, such as threat assessments, related to Mexican drug cartel-related activities in support of law enforcement operations. Also, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, in the Executive Office of the President, is responsible for coordinating the national drug control effort, and designates areas within the United States that are significant centers of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution as High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas. Law enforcement agencies in these designated areas collect and share intelligence and coordinate interagency task forces to target drug-trafficking operations.

At the state and local levels, sheriffs’ offices and municipal police departments are responsible for investigating and tracking crime occurring in their jurisdictions, based on the laws of their respective states. If the investigation determines that the criminal violation falls under federal purview, such as an immigration violation, the local law

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enforcement agency may refer the case to the appropriate federal agency and might not track such cases in its records. The Departments of Public Safety in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, and the state Department of Justice in California, are responsible for overseeing the process for collecting, validating, and publishing crime data from local agencies.<sup>15</sup> These agencies voluntarily submit crime data to the FBI, which is responsible for publishing and archiving national crime statistics.

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## The UCR Program

The FBI oversees the UCR Program, the federal government's centralized repository for crime data. The UCR Program provides a nationwide view of crime, and is based on the voluntary submission of a variety of statistics by city, county, and state law enforcement agencies.<sup>16</sup> Begun in 1930, the UCR Program established a system to collect summary data, known as SRS data, and now contains 8 types of violent and property crimes, referred to as Part I offenses, that are reported to law enforcement agencies.<sup>17</sup> Violent crimes are composed of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes are composed of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. If multiple offenses are reported for an individual crime incident, only the highest-level offense is recorded. Offense data submitted to the FBI by local law enforcement agencies show the aggregate counts for reported crimes and arrests for the 8 Part I offenses and aggregate counts on arrests made for 21 other offenses, such as embezzlement, prostitution, and drug abuse violations. These UCR data can be used to measure fluctuations in the type and volume of crime for specific offenses in a particular jurisdiction for which they have been collected.

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<sup>15</sup>The California Department of Justice is the agency that collects and reports crime data in California. However, in response to our interview request, the agency referred us to the California Highway Patrol as the agency best qualified to discuss what crime data are collected in the California jurisdictions along the southwest border.

<sup>16</sup>University and college, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies also submit crime data to the UCR Program.

<sup>17</sup>In addition to the SRS data, the UCR Program contains statistics on the number of sworn officers and civilian law enforcement personnel, data on incidents in which law enforcement officers are killed or assaulted while performing their duties, and data on incidents of hate crimes.

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The FBI reported that 18,233 law enforcement agencies in the United States, representing 97.8 percent of the U.S. population, submitted UCR data in 2011. As of November 2012, law enforcement agencies in 46 states and the District of Columbia were submitting UCR data through a state UCR Program, or a district system in the case of the District of Columbia. In the remaining 4 states, local law enforcement agencies submit UCR data directly to the FBI. State programs are to conform to national UCR Program standards, definitions, and quality control procedures in order for their data to be submitted to the FBI. The FBI is to help state UCR Programs meet these requirements by, among other actions, reviewing and editing data submitted by individual agencies and providing technical assistance on reporting procedures.

To meet the needs of the law enforcement community for more detailed crime data, the FBI introduced NIBRS in 1988 with the intent that local law enforcement agencies will transition from the SRS to NIBRS at their own pace. NIBRS collects data on more types of offenses than the traditional SRS and includes details on individual incidents, such as information on offenders, victims, property, and whether multiple offenses are reported in an individual crime incident. NIBRS collects offense and arrest data on 46 specific crimes grouped in 22 offense categories, which include 8 Part I offenses and other offenses, such as extortion and kidnapping. In addition, NIBRS collects arrest data for 10 other crimes, such as trespassing and driving under the influence. The data can be used to examine linkages among offenses, offenders, victims, property, and arrestees. Tables that list offenses collected for the UCR SRS and the NIBRS programs and summarize the main differences between the two crime data systems can be found in appendix III.

NIBRS allows local law enforcement agencies to report a wider range of offenses and arrests. However, the FBI reported that, as of 2011, 7,819 law enforcement agencies, representing 28 percent of the U.S. population, contributed NIBRS data to the UCR Program. According to senior FBI officials, because of the voluntary nature of the UCR Program, implementation of the NIBRS occurs at the pace commensurate with the resources, abilities, and limitations of the contributing law enforcement agency. Since participation in the program is limited, the FBI converts NIBRS data submitted by law enforcement agencies to the format for the SRS data system.

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## Best Available Data Cannot Be Used to Make Insights about Spillover Crime but Show a General Decline in Reported Crime Rates in Counties with Sufficiently Complete Data along the Southwest Border

UCR SRS data provide the best available information on crime levels and crime trends in southwest border counties. Our interviews with officials from 33 of the 36 local law enforcement agencies in the southwest border counties determined that SRS data are the only crime data that those agencies collect in a systematic way—that is, in an automated form that can be readily retrieved and analyzed.<sup>18</sup> Our analysis determined that the remaining 3 local law enforcement agencies also systematically collect SRS data, but we do not know if they also systematically collect other crime data because these agencies were not available to participate in our interviews. The sheriff's office in Yuma County, Arizona, is the only southwest border law enforcement agency that collects NIBRS data.

The UCR data cannot be used to draw conclusions about the extent to which crimes are attributable to spillover from Mexico. The SRS does not collect data on all types of crimes committed in the United States that have been associated with Mexican drug-trafficking organizations, such as particular types of kidnappings or home invasions. Further, the SRS does not collect enough information, such as a motivation for committing a crime, to identify a link between violent or property crime rates and crimes associated with spillover from Mexico, such as drug trafficking. Because of its summary nature, the SRS does not provide data about individual crime incidents, including details on offenses, arrests, victim/offender relationships, or whether multiple offenses occurred in an individual crime incident. In addition, UCR data might also underreport the actual amount of crime that has occurred, since not all crimes are reported to law enforcement. For example, law enforcement officials with whom we spoke stated that individuals who may have been assaulted or robbed in the course of drug trafficking and other illicit activities are hesitant to report their involvement to the police. Moreover, senior FBI officials stated that NIBRS data, although more comprehensive than SRS data, also might not include sufficient detail to provide information on spillover crime even if they were more widely available.

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<sup>18</sup>This includes officials from all 12 police departments and 21 out of 24 sheriffs' offices who we interviewed. In addition, according to the officials from state agencies responsible for collecting crime data, border counties in Arizona and New Mexico do not systematically collect crime data beyond what they submit to the UCR Program. Further, border counties in California, in addition to the data they submit to the UCR Program, systematically collect data on antireproductive rights, deaths in custody, and violent crimes against senior citizens, among others. In addition, border counties in Texas systematically collect data on family violence.



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Cognizant of these limitations, we analyzed SRS crime data to calculate violent and property crime rates for both border and nonborder counties in the four southwest border states: Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. Our analyses of SRS data for border and nonborder counties showed that in all four states, both violent and property crime rates per 100,000 population were generally lower in 2011 than in 2004.<sup>19</sup> Figure 1 shows the changes in crime rates from 2004 through 2011 for southwest border and nonborder counties. (Detailed data for fig.1 can be found in app. IV.)

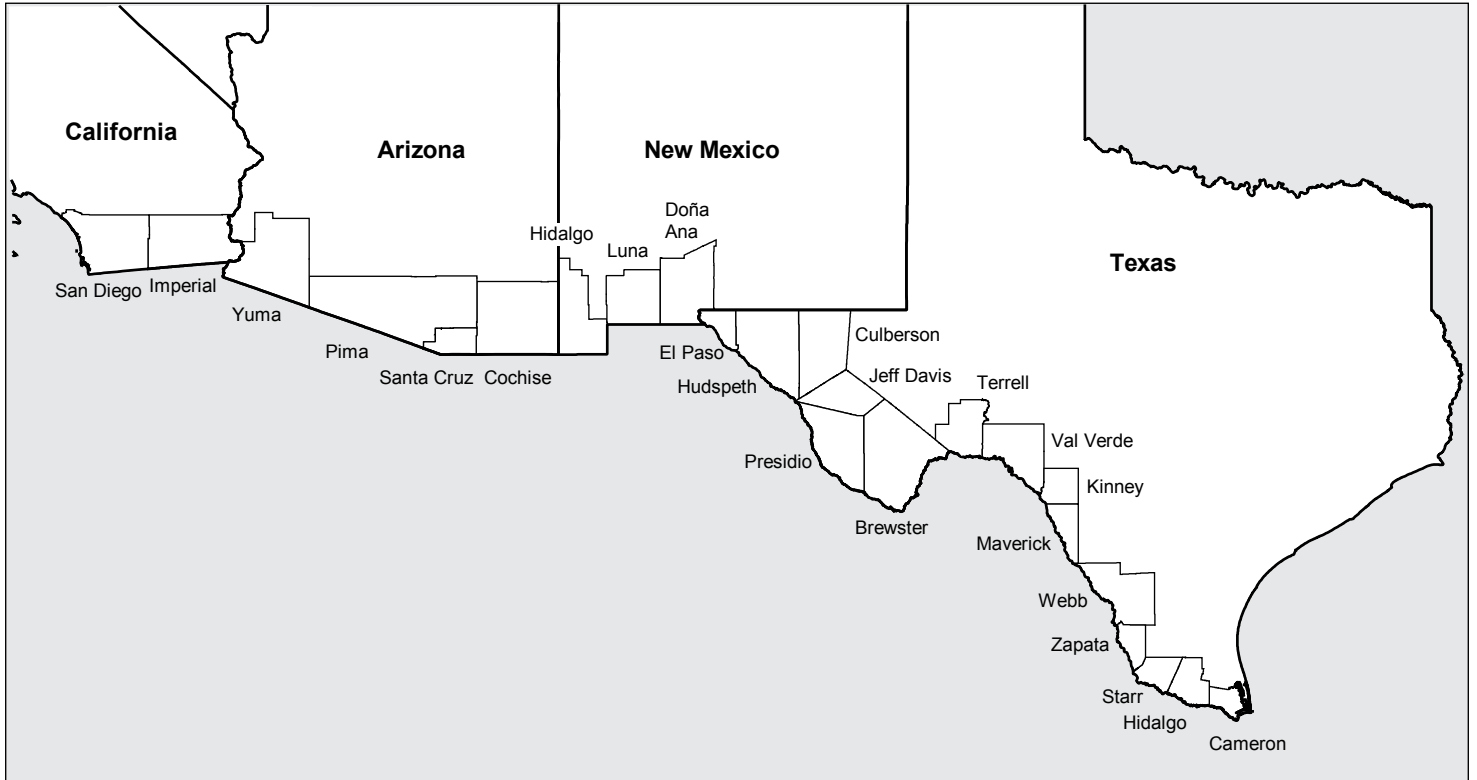
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<sup>19</sup>We excluded New Mexico from these analyses for 2004 because local law enforcement agencies in the 3 border counties (Dona Ana, Luna, and Hidalgo) submitted incomplete SRS data to the FBI. One New Mexico nonborder county (De Baca) did not report SRS violent or property crime data to the FBI. Further, according to UCR Program practice, because of limited participation and varying data collection practices by law enforcement agencies nationwide, we excluded arson crimes when calculating property crime rates.

**Interactive graphic**

**Figure 1: Violent and Property Crime Rates in Southwest Border States by Border and Nonborder Counties, 2004-2011**

Mouse over the state or county names to find out more information about border crime statistics.



Source: GAO analysis of Uniform Crime Reporting data; MapInfo (map).

Note: We report crime rates per 100,000 population for large border counties. Large border counties are: Cochise, Pima, Santa Cruz, and Yuma Counties in Arizona; Imperial and San Diego Counties in California; Dona Ana and Luna Counties in New Mexico; and, Cameron, El Paso, Hidalgo, Maverick, Starr, Val Verde, and Webb Counties in Texas. For small counties we report numbers of crimes, instead of crime rates per 100,000 population. The small border counties are: Hidalgo County in New Mexico; Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Kinney, Presidio, Terrell, and Zapata Counties in Texas.

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With respect to violent crimes, as shown in figure 1,

- The violent crime rate was lower in border counties than nonborder counties for three of the four southwest border states. Comparing all border counties combined with all nonborder counties combined within each state, the violent crime rate in California and Texas border counties was lower than in nonborder counties each year from 2004 through 2011, and lower in New Mexico border counties each year from 2005 through 2011. In contrast, the violent crime rate in Arizona border counties was higher than in nonborder counties from 2004 to 2011.
- The violent crime rate declined over time in both border and nonborder counties across all southwest border states. Comparing 2011 with 2004, the violent crime rate in border counties in 2011 was lower by 33 percent in Arizona, 26 percent in California, and 30 percent in Texas. In nonborder counties, the decrease was 22 percent, 25 percent, and 24 percent, respectively. The violent crime rate in border counties in New Mexico was lower by 8 percent in 2011 than in 2005, and in nonborder counties the decrease was 19 percent.
- With two exceptions, the violent crime rate was lower over time in large border counties across the southwest border states. The violent crime rate in 2011 was lower than in 2004 in 10 of 12 large border counties in Arizona, California, and Texas with sufficiently complete data for analysis. The violent crime rate in Dona Ana County, New Mexico, was lower in 2011 than in 2005. Additionally, across all 7 small border counties with sufficiently complete data for analysis, the

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total number of violent crimes for these counties in 2011 was also lower than in 2004.<sup>20</sup>

With respect to property crimes, as shown in figure 1,

- The property crime rate in border counties was either lower or similar to the rate in nonborder counties in three of the four southwest border states.<sup>21</sup> Comparing all border counties combined with all nonborder counties combined within each state, the property crime rate in California border counties was lower than the rate in nonborder counties each year from 2009 through 2011. Each year from 2004 through 2008, the crime rate in California border and nonborder counties was similar. The rate in Texas border counties was similar to the rate in nonborder counties each year from 2004 through 2011. The rate in New Mexico border counties was lower than in nonborder counties in all years, 2005 through 2011.
- The property crime rate declined over time in both border and nonborder counties in three of the four southwest border states.<sup>22</sup> Comparing 2011 with 2004, the property crime rate in border counties in 2011 was lower by 35 percent in California and 28 percent in

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<sup>20</sup>We designated large border counties as those with populations of 25,000 or more. We designated small border counties as those with populations of less than 25,000. Based on these designations, there are 15 large and 9 small border counties in the four states. The large border counties are Cochise, Pima, Santa Cruz, and Yuma Counties in Arizona; Imperial and San Diego Counties in California; Dona Ana and Luna Counties in New Mexico; and Cameron, El Paso, Hidalgo, Maverick, Starr, Val Verde, and Webb Counties in Texas. The small border counties are Hidalgo County in New Mexico; Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Kinney, Presidio, Terrell, and Zapata Counties in Texas. When we conducted county-level analyses of violent crime rates, we excluded 2 large counties (Santa Cruz, Arizona, and Luna, New Mexico) and 2 small counties (Hidalgo, New Mexico, and Presidio, Texas) because the SRS data submitted by law enforcement agencies to the FBI were incomplete. For the same reason, from 2004 we excluded 1 large county (Dona Ana, New Mexico). For small counties, we report numbers of crimes, instead of crime rates per 100,000 population, because, in general, these counties have relatively low numbers of reported crimes, and small year-to-year changes in these numbers can lead to large percentage changes in the crime rate.

<sup>21</sup>For state-level analyses—that is, when we separately combined border and nonborder counties within their states for our analyses of property crimes—we excluded Arizona because Tucson, in Pima County, reported the data improperly, according to the FBI, and Tucson accounts for about 40 percent of the total population of Arizona's border counties.

<sup>22</sup>As stated previously, for state-level analyses we excluded Arizona because Tucson, in Pima County, reported the data improperly, according to the FBI, and Tucson accounts for about 40 percent of the total population of Arizona's border counties.

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Texas. In nonborder counties, the decrease was 23 percent and 22 percent, respectively. The property crime rate in border counties in New Mexico was lower by 7 percent in 2011 than in 2005, and in nonborder counties the decrease was 18 percent.

- The property crime rate was lower over time in large border counties across the southwest border states. The property crime rate in 2011 was lower than in 2004 in all 11 large border counties in Arizona, California, and Texas with sufficiently complete data for analysis. The property crime rate in Dona Ana County, New Mexico, was lower in 2011 than in 2005. Additionally, across all 7 small border counties with sufficiently complete data for analysis, the total number of property crimes for these counties in 2011 was also lower than in 2004.<sup>23</sup>

Comparing UCR SRS and NIBRS data for the Yuma County sheriff's office, we found comparable decreases in violent crimes. Specifically, we found that the total number of violent crimes reported through NIBRS was 32 percent lower in 2010 than in 2007, when the office began reporting NIBRS data. The number of violent crimes reported in the SRS format was 33 percent lower in 2010 than in 2007. (Additional detail on our analysis results is presented in app. V.) Local law enforcement officials with whom we spoke provided a range of factors that they thought contributed to declining violent and property crime rates, including increased law enforcement presence, either federal, local or a combination of both, and new infrastructure, such as a border fence.

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## Few Law Enforcement Agencies Track Spillover Crime along the Southwest Border

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<sup>23</sup>When we conducted county-level analyses of property crime rates, we excluded 3 large counties (Pima and Santa Cruz, Arizona, and Luna, New Mexico) and 2 small counties (Hidalgo, New Mexico, and Presidio, Texas) because the SRS data submitted by local law enforcement agencies to the FBI were incomplete or improperly reported. From 2004, we excluded 1 large county (Dona Ana, New Mexico) because SRS data were incomplete.

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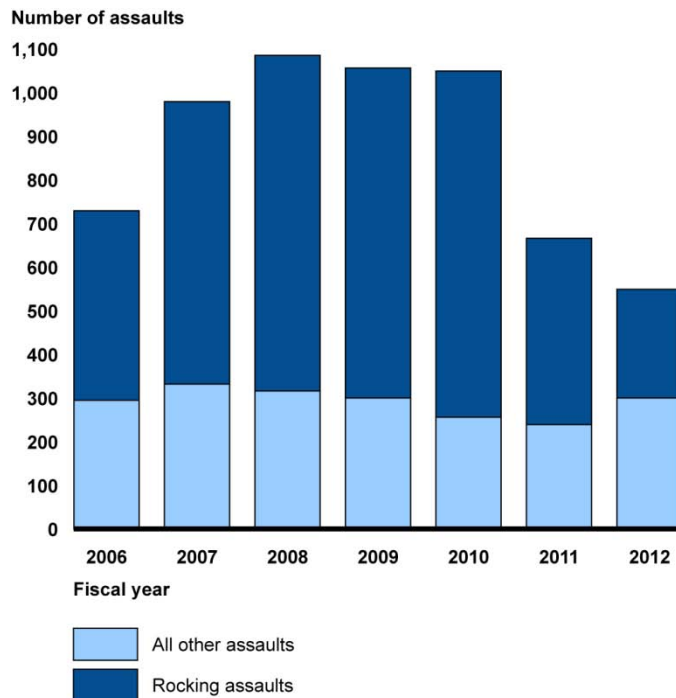
## Federal Law Enforcement Agencies

Federal law enforcement agencies have few efforts under way to track what might be considered to be spillover crime, including violence, for several reasons. First, while several federal components established a definition of spillover crime, there is no common government definition of such crime. For example, in 2009, the DEA reported that U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies agreed to define spillover violence as deliberate, planned attacks by drug cartels on U.S. assets, including people and institutions. This definition does not include trafficker-on-trafficker violence. On the other hand, according to officials from DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis, also in 2009, in partnership with other intelligence agencies, DHS developed definitions of spillover violence that include violence in the United States directed by Mexican drug cartels and violence committed by cartel members or their associates against each other. Second, DHS and DOJ components, including those that have a formal definition of spillover crime, either do not collect data for the purposes of tracking spillover crime, or do not maintain such data in an automated format that can be readily retrieved and analyzed. However, officials from Arizona and Rio Grande Valley Border Enforcement Security Task Forces—multiagency teams led by DHS's ICE to combat cross-border criminal activity—stated that while data are not tracked systematically, teams maintain information on violent activities related to drug and human smuggling they identify during the course of their investigations. Teams use this information, which includes home invasions, assaults on individuals during illegal border crossings, and robberies of drug traffickers, to inform their assessments of violent trends along the U.S.-Mexico border. In addition, the Executive Committee for Southwest Border Intelligence and Information Sharing, cochaired by the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis and Texas Department of Public Safety, has been working since April 2012 to propose new terms and definitions for various facets of border-related crime and violence and identify new metrics and indicators to measure such crime. The committee plans to complete this effort in March 2013.

CBP reported that while it does not specifically define spillover crime, it does collect and maintain automated, retrievable data on assaults against Border Patrol agents and officers at ports of entry. CBP recognizes that these data do not directly measure the extent of spillover crime but may serve as an indirect indicator of such crime. With respect to Border Patrol agents, CBP maintains data on physical assaults, assaults with a vehicle, assaults with weapons, assaults with rocks, and assaults with instruments

other than rocks. CBP data show that the total number of assaults against Border Patrol agents in southwest border sectors in fiscal year 2012 (549) was about 25 percent lower than in fiscal year 2006 (729).<sup>24</sup> Generally, assaults increased from 2006 (729) through 2008 (1,085), decreased slightly from 2008 (1,085) through 2010 (1,049), and decreased sharply from 2010 (1,049) through 2012 (549). (See fig 2.)

**Figure 2: Assaults against Border Patrol Agents in Southwest Border Patrol Sectors by Category, Fiscal Years 2006-2012**



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Customs and Border Protection assault data.

Notes: Rocking assaults are thrown rocks, for example, by drug or alien smugglers, at Border Patrol agents with the intent of threatening or inflicting physical harm.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Border Patrol has divided geographic responsibility for border security operations along the southwest border among nine sectors, each of which has a headquarters with management personnel.

<sup>24</sup>Border Patrol has divided geographic responsibility for border security operations along the southwest border among nine sectors, each of which has a headquarters with management personnel; these sectors are further divided geographically into varying numbers of stations, with agents assigned to patrol defined geographic areas.

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In each fiscal year from 2006 through 2011, there were more rockings—defined as thrown rocks, for example by drug or human smugglers, at Border Patrol agents with the intent of threatening or inflicting physical harm—than all other assaults combined in Border Patrol sectors along the southwest border. In 2012, when the number of rockings was at a 7-year low, there were 51 fewer rockings than all other assaults. While the total number of assaults for all sectors combined in 2012 is smaller than in 2006, certain southwest border sectors show an increase in the number of all assaults other than rockings in 2012 from 2006. For example, the Tucson sector experienced 91 such assaults in 2012 compared with 76 in 2006, and the Rio Grande Valley sector experienced 77 such assaults compared with 41 in 2006. (Additional analysis of assault trends for fiscal years 2006 through 2012 by Border Patrol sector is presented in appendix VI.) CBP officials cited several factors that could affect a change in the number of assaults against Border Patrol agents, including changes in the level of illegal activity crossing the border, as well as changes in Border Patrol presence along the border. Also, CBP officials reported that from September 2004 through November 2012, 3 out of 22 Border Patrol agent deaths on the southwest border had a nexus to cross-border crime, while the remaining deaths mostly resulted from vehicular accidents or health issues.

With respect to officers at ports of entry, CBP maintains data on physical assaults, assaults with a vehicle, and assaults with a weapon. For the 2 fiscal years that CBP has reliable data, the data show that assaults against officers at southwest border ports of entry declined from 37 assaults in fiscal year 2011 to 26 assaults in fiscal year 2012.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the FBI reported that its Latin American Southwest Border Threat Section—created to focus on issues specifically related to drug cartels—began in fiscal year 2010 to classify incidents of violent crime with links to Mexico, including kidnappings of American citizens and non-terrorism-related hostage taking occurring in or having a substantial nexus to Mexico or Central and South America. According to the FBI, under the new classifications, from October 2009 through September 2012, it investigated and closed five cases involving kidnappings of American citizens and five cases involving non-terrorism-related hostage

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<sup>25</sup>CBP reported that, prior to 2011, it did not systematically collect data on assaults against officers at ports of entry.



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taking. None of these cases occurred in the United States. FBI officials cautioned that drug cartel related crimes, such as kidnappings and home invasions, are highly underreported and are not captured in national crime statistics.

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## State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies

Only 1 of the 37 state and local law enforcement agencies that we interviewed—the Texas Department of Public Safety—stated that it tracks spillover crime. There are several reasons spillover crime is not more widely measured and tracked across these agencies. First, there is no common definition of spillover crime shared by the border law enforcement communities, and our interviews with border sheriffs and police officials indicated that their opinions on what types of incidents constitute spillover crime vary. For example, the Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition defined spillover crime as any action on one side of the border that is the result of violence or the threat of violence that causes a reaction on the other side of the border, such as a law enforcement response, or an economic or social impact. The Luna County, New Mexico, sheriff's office defined spillover crime as occurring when a person is injured by any means by an act along the border that has a direct nexus to Mexican drug-trafficking organizations. The Cochise County, Arizona, sheriff's office defined spillover crime as any crime associated with cross-border trafficking. Officials from 27 out of 37 state and local law enforcement agencies stated that it would be at least somewhat useful to have a common definition of spillover crime, because it would establish types of activities that constitute spillover crime and allow agencies to track such crime, among other uses.<sup>26</sup> However, officials from 22 of those 27 agencies also stated that accomplishing such a task might be challenging.<sup>27</sup> The reasons cited included differences of opinion among border counties about what incidents represent spillover crime and differences in the missions and priorities of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. As discussed previously in this report, the Texas Department of Public Safety and the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis are leading an effort by select state and local law enforcement agencies to propose new terms and definitions and identify metrics for various facets of border-related crime and violence by March 2013.

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<sup>26</sup>Two of the 37 agencies did not provide comments on this issue.

<sup>27</sup>Two of the 27 agencies did not provide comments on this issue.

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Second, no state or local law enforcement agency we interviewed in our review systematically collects data on what might be considered to be spillover crime in a way that can be used to analyze trends. Officials from the Texas Department of Public Safety, the single agency that said it tracks spillover crime, stated that the department collects data on crimes it considers to be related to spillover, such as murders, kidnappings, and shootings related to activities of the Mexican drug cartels.<sup>28</sup> The department manages six intelligence centers along the border that, according to officials, rely on a variety of sources, including incident reports from sheriffs' offices, news reports, and intelligence information from interagency task forces, to assess which incidents can be clearly linked to Mexico and determined to be spillover crime. However, officials stated that spillover incidents reported by the department cannot be used to analyze trends over time because they are not collected systematically and may be incomplete. For example, the incident reports can vary by sheriff's office in terms of what is reported and how incidents are characterized. For example, we found in our interviews with Texas border sheriffs' offices that each office may have different ways of capturing information on incidents and may consider different incidents to be related to spillover crime.

While the Texas Department of Public safety is the only state or local law enforcement agency we interviewed that reported collecting data specifically on spillover crime, 6 out of 37 law enforcement agencies we spoke with stated that they collect information on cross-border and drug-related activities, which could be elements of spillover crime. Specifically,

- Officials from 3 sheriffs' offices in Arizona and Texas and 1 police department in California stated their agencies collect information on incidents that involve aliens without lawful immigration status to track cross-border activity. However, the officials noted that the data are too general to determine whether a specific crime incident is attributable to spillover from Mexico.
- Officials from the Laredo, Texas, Police Department stated that since 2003, the department has tracked incidents of drug smuggling, human smuggling, and the types of weapons seized. According to officials, while the data contribute to intelligence necessary to determine

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<sup>28</sup>The Texas Department of Public Safety defines spillover crime as any crime reported in the NIBRS that occurs in Texas as a result of an unsecured border with Mexico.

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whether a crime is cartel-related, the data do not contain sufficient detail to determine whether a specific crime incident is attributable to spillover from Mexico.

- Officials from the San Diego office of the California Highway Patrol stated that in 2012 their field office began tracking how often they respond to calls from CBP's Office of Field Operations to investigate incidents at the port of entry. However, the officials noted that the data could not be a measure for spillover crime because the incident may not always result in a crime or an arrest and may not be related to cartel activity or involve Mexican nationals.

Officials from 27 out of 37 state and local law enforcement agencies stated that it would be at least somewhat useful to collect spillover crime data.<sup>29</sup> Some of the reasons given were that the data would enhance intelligence, identify trends, and assist the agencies in making decisions about deploying resources. In addition, some officials said that data on spillover crime could help agencies apply for grants. However, the majority also expressed concerns about the burden of collecting additional information. Specifically, officials from 22 out of 37 state and local agencies stated that they have limited technological, financial, and human resources to collect additional data.

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## Law Enforcement Agencies Have Varying Concerns about Potential Effects of Violent Crime in Mexico on Border Communities

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### Federal Concerns

Officials from all of the DHS and DOJ components we interviewed stated that while they do not believe that spillover violence has been a significant problem, they expressed concerns about the potential for it to occur in the

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<sup>29</sup>Two of the 37 agencies did not provide comments on this issue.

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future because drug cartels employ increasingly violent methods to interact with rivals and law enforcement agencies in Mexico. Threat assessments conducted by DHS and DOJ during fiscal years 2006 through 2012 do not indicate that violence from Mexico spilled over the southwest border. For example, the assessments indicate that violent infighting among rival Mexican cartels has remained largely in Mexico, and crimes such as kidnappings and home invasion robberies directed against drug traffickers have remained largely isolated instances in U.S. border communities.<sup>30</sup> However, DHS threat assessments have reported that the threat facing U.S. law enforcement personnel from drug-trafficking organizations has been increasing, as evidenced by more aggressive tactics used by drug-trafficking organizations and smugglers to confront or evade law enforcement. Examples of such tactics include ramming or impeding police vehicles, fleeing at high speeds, and carrying weapons.

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## State and Local Concerns

Officials from 37 state and local law enforcement agencies and four Chambers of Commerce we interviewed expressed varying concerns regarding the extent to which violent crime from Mexico spills into and potentially affects their border communities. Officials in 31 of the 37 state and local law enforcement agencies stated that they have not observed violent crime from Mexico regularly spilling into their counties; nonetheless, officials from 33 of the 37 agencies said they are at least somewhat concerned about the potential for spillover crime to occur. Officials noted that there is always potential for the high levels of violence in Mexico, such as organized murders and kidnappings for ransom, to spread to their border towns. A senior DEA official in the El Paso, Texas, region testified in March 2009 that the southwest border is the principal arrival zone for most illicit drugs smuggled into the United States and is

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<sup>30</sup> The assessment reviewed UCR data for 2009, because at the time it was the most recent year for which complete data were available. For further information on the scope and methodology used to conduct this assessment, please see DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, *Assessment: The Impact of Mexican Drug Violence on Crime Along the U.S. Southwest Border*, IA-0240-11 (Washington, D.C.: March 25, 2011).

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also the predominant staging area for the drugs' distribution throughout the country.<sup>31</sup>

Further, state and local law enforcement officials expressed concerns about safety threats to law enforcement officers and residents who might encounter drug and human smugglers transiting through border communities, and according to some officials, smugglers are increasingly aggressive in evading capture and likely to be armed. For example, a New Mexico sheriff stated that while there have not been any serious injuries, drug smugglers ram police vehicles to stop a pursuit or speed through residential neighborhoods to avoid capture. In addition, armed cartel members on the Mexican border sometimes engage in gunfights with rival smugglers returning from the United States. According to the sheriff, such activities could result in vehicular accidents or shootings at U.S. law enforcement officers. An Arizona sheriff stated that most of the violence the office sees involves trafficker-on-trafficker violence. For example, a crew of smugglers might steal drug or human cargo from other smugglers to sell it themselves. In addition to the potential for violence during the event, there is also a potential for violence because of retaliation for the stolen goods. Officials in a California police department stated that auto thefts have increased, and officials believe that an increasing proportion of these thefts are related to cartel activity as cars are stolen to transport drug loads to the final destination after being transported over the border. Examples of some crimes that local officials attributed to spillover from Mexico include the following:

- A border sheriff in Arizona stated that a rancher was most likely murdered in 2010 by a smuggler.
- Officials in a Texas police department stated that they investigated a murder in 2010 that they attributed to spillover crime. Investigators in the case determined that the victim was a cartel member and the perpetrator was from a rival cartel in Mexico and had crossed the border to assassinate the rival cartel member.
- Officials in a California police department stated that a vehicle in Mexico was engaged in a gunfight with the Mexican police and the vehicle crossed the border into the United States.

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<sup>31</sup> *Violence along the Southwest Border, Before the House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, 111th Cong.* (Washington, DC.: Mar. 24, 2009) (Statement of Joseph Arabit, Special Agent in Charge of Drug Enforcement Administration's El Paso Region).

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- A sheriff in a border county in Texas stated that the property crime rates in his county had increased in 2008 because over a series of months, a group of smugglers from Mexico were burglarizing houses on their way back to Mexico. They were eventually arrested and prosecuted.

According to state and local law enforcement officials, many crimes associated with drug-trafficking threats are unreported, since in many instances, both the perpetrators and the victims may be involved in criminal activity, and the victim may not be in this country legally. Further, the sheriff of a rural county in Texas stated that while statistics indicate that there is little crime in his county, it may be because there are very few law enforcement officials or residents to confront or resist smugglers moving through the county, not because criminal activity is not occurring.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, a sheriff from another rural county in Texas stated that he believes that an enhanced law enforcement presence in the Rio Grande Valley may force illicit activity toward his county because it is less populated than other counties and smugglers are less likely to be confronted there. Moreover, according to some local law enforcement officials, the levels of violent crime in Mexico can have effects on the border communities that are not captured in the crime statistics. The 2011 Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center threat assessment stated that the southwest border violence, such as kidnappings and home invasions carried out by Mexican criminal organizations, and gang-related violence, present the most substantial threat to public safety in Arizona.<sup>33</sup>

While 33 of 37 law enforcement agencies expressed some concern about spillover crime, officials from 11 of the 37 agencies stated that they do not treat spillover crime differently than they would any other crime. In addition, an Arizona sheriff and a police official from the same county stated that they are not more concerned about spillover crime because their county has not experienced any incidents of kidnappings or extortion, which could be indicators that crime has spilled over from Mexico.

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<sup>32</sup>We define rural counties as those with populations less than 25,000.

<sup>33</sup>The Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center is a fusion center—generally, a collaborative effort of federal, state, local, or tribal government agencies that combines resources and expertise to maximize their ability to respond to criminal or terrorist activity—that provides intelligence, investigative, and technical support to agencies that are critical to Arizona and the country's homeland security efforts.

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In addition to concerns about crime and violence potentially spilling over from Mexico, local law enforcement officials provided a number of examples of how the violence in Mexico affects local communities:

- U.S. citizens that cross the border daily, such as for school or employment are vulnerable to extortion or recruitment by cartels. For example, police officials in a California border city stated that cartel members in Mexico have come into the United States to recruit gang members, and a sheriff in a county in New Mexico stated that in his county, 400 or more U.S. citizens live in Mexico but attend school in the United States. The students may be recruited or coerced to smuggle drugs into the United States on their way to school.
- A Texas sheriff stated that a local college was forced to close after bullets from a gunfight originating in Mexico hit the college dorm building.
- Cartels may target public officials and law enforcement for corruption. Specifically, we were told of cases from local law enforcement in both New Mexico and Arizona in which public officials had been corrupted by a Mexican cartel.
- Sheriff and police department officials in counties in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico stated that cartel members may reside with their families in U.S. border communities because they are considered to be safe havens. An officer in one police department stated a concern that there is a potential for violent altercations in the United States between cartel members living in their community that represent rival Mexican cartels.

In addition, we spoke with Chamber of Commerce officials in one Arizona and three Texas border counties, and they all stated that they have not seen spillover violence from Mexico, but that violence in Mexico has nonetheless negatively affected businesses in their border communities. Specifically, they said that violence in Mexico has resulted in a perception that border communities are not safe and this has hindered economic growth and tourism. For example, an official from a Chamber of Commerce in one Texas county stated that local universities and hospitals have difficulty recruiting students and staff. Additionally, Chamber of Commerce officials in all three Texas counties said that violence in Mexico and more delays and stricter searches at the border have impeded Mexican consumers' ability to more easily cross the border and purchase goods and services from the local U.S. businesses.

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## Law Enforcement Agencies Have Initiatives that Target Border-related Crime, Including a Federal Contingency Plan to Address Violent Crime Spilling Over from Mexico

At the federal level, officials from DOJ and DHS and their components stated that they have undertaken a number of efforts, both individually and through interagency partnerships, related to drug smuggling and cartel activity with a focus on the southwest border; however, all but one of these efforts do not specifically target spillover crime. For example, the FBI created a Latin American Southwest Border Threat Section to focus on issues specifically related to drug cartels. Also, DHS issued Border Violence Protocols in 2006 that set out the steps that CBP and Mexican government personnel are to follow when reporting incidents of border violence, and further updated them in 2011 to enhance coordination between the U.S. and Mexican agencies.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, interagency task forces provide a forum for federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to, among other things, share information and conduct coordinated enforcement activities to combat drug smuggling and cartel activity. Additional details on these and other efforts are contained in appendix VII.<sup>35</sup>

DHS developed the Operations Plan for Southwest Border Violence in October 2008 to address the possibility that spillover crime, such as a significant violent and spontaneous event that results in unintended cascading effects spilling over the border, may exceed DHS's assets to respond in those locations. This contingency plan describes the various roles and responsibilities that DHS components are to undertake to coordinate an agency-wide response to a variety of potential threats of violence that could arise along the southwest border, such as credible threats against U.S. facilities or personnel. Although the plan is to be updated annually, senior officials at DHS's Office of Operations Coordination and Planning—the office responsible for coordinating and facilitating development of the plan among the DHS components—stated that the plan has not been revised or updated in the 4 years since it was finalized.<sup>36</sup> According to these officials, DHS components have

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<sup>34</sup>CBP does not maintain data on these incidents, with the exception of the assaults against agents and officers, in an automated format that can easily be retrieved and analyzed.

<sup>35</sup>For a comprehensive discussion of federal efforts to combat drug cartel activities, see an appendix in CRS, *Southwest Border Violence: Issues in Identifying and Measuring Spillover Violence*, R41075 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 25, 2011).

<sup>36</sup>According to senior officials at DHS's Office of Operations Coordination and Planning, this plan has never been activated as the conditions for activation have not yet been met.



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undertaken related planning efforts, such as establishing local-level coordination mechanisms to increase coordination and information sharing along the southwest border. In addition, officials at DHS's Office of Operations Coordination and Planning stated that they do not plan to update the Operations Plan for Southwest Border Violence at this time because DHS has shifted to a more strategic approach to planning that will provide the framework for all of DHS's planning efforts. The officials could not provide additional details on what the new strategic approach would entail because it is still in the early stages of development. To complete its framework, DHS is awaiting approval of planning guidance that it submitted to the President in June 2012. DHS developed the planning guidance pursuant to Presidential Policy Directive 8, a directive that called for DHS to develop an integrated set of guidance, programs, and processes to enable the nation to meet its national preparedness goals. DHS's Office of Operations Coordination and Planning intends to develop DHS's strategic framework in accordance with the new planning guidance and expects to complete the framework by October 2014. The officials said they will then decide whether to update the Southwest Border Violence Operations Plan so it follows the new planning guidance or replace the operations plan with other plans developed under the strategic framework.

At the state and local levels, officials from all law enforcement agencies that we spoke with stated that their agencies had undertaken some efforts, either individually or in partnership with other agencies, to combat criminal activities often associated with spillover crime, such as drug and human smuggling. Generally, these efforts aim to increase state and local law enforcement agencies' capacity to combat criminal activities associated with spillover crime, such as forming units that focus on such crime, participating in federal grant programs, coordinating enforcement activities, and facilitating information sharing. Specific examples of state and local law enforcement efforts are contained in appendix VII.

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## Agency Comments

We provided a draft of our report to, DHS, DOJ, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy for their review and comment. DHS provided written comments, which are reprinted in full in appendix VIII. In its comments, DHS stated that it was pleased with our discussion of the initiatives that law enforcement agencies have undertaken to target border-related crime, including a DHS contingency plan for responding to a significant southwest border violence escalation and interagency task forces that combat drug smuggling and cartel activity. In addition, DHS reiterated its commitment to working with many partners across the federal

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government, public and private sectors, and internationally, to mitigate spillover crime along the southwest border. DOJ and the Office of National Drug Control Policy did not provide official written comments. All three agencies provided technical comments which we have incorporated where appropriate.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Attorney General, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and other interested parties. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-5431 or [russellc@gao.gov](mailto:russellc@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 acknowledged in appendix IX.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cary Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cary Russell  
Director  
Homeland Security and Justice Issues

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# Appendix I: Southwest Border Counties by State

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There are 24 U.S. counties that share a border with Mexico. These counties are arranged below by state, in an alphabetical order.

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## Arizona

1. Cochise County
  2. Pima County
  3. Santa Cruz County
  4. Yuma County
- 

## California

5. Imperial County
  6. San Diego County
- 

## New Mexico

7. Dona Ana County
  8. Hidalgo County
  9. Luna County
- 

## Texas

10. Brewster County
11. Cameron County
12. Culberson County
13. El Paso County
14. Hidalgo County
15. Hudspeth County
16. Jeff Davis County
17. Kinney County
18. Maverick County
19. Presidio County
20. Starr County
21. Terrell County
22. Val Verde County
23. Webb County
24. Zapata County

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# Appendix II: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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This report addresses the following questions: (1) What information do reported crime rates in southwest border communities provide on spillover crime and what do they show? (2) What efforts, if any, have federal, state, and select local law enforcement agencies made to track spillover crime along the southwest border? (3) What concerns, if any, do these agencies have about spillover crime? (4) What steps, if any, have these agencies taken to address spillover crime?

To address the first question, we analyzed Summary Reporting System (SRS) data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program—the government's centralized repository for crime data—from January 2004 through December 2011 for the four southwest border states (Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas).<sup>1</sup> We selected January 2004 as the initial date because it provided us with data for more than 2 years prior to December 2006, when Mexican President Felipe Calderón took office and began a major military offensive against Mexican drug cartels. We also analyzed UCR's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data, available from January 2007 through December 2010, for the single southwest border law enforcement agency reporting such data—the sheriff's office in Yuma County, Arizona.<sup>2</sup> To assess the reliability of the UCR data, we conducted analyses to test for irregularities in the data, reviewed FBI documentation on how the data can and cannot be used and on the FBI's procedures for ensuring UCR data quality, and interviewed FBI officials knowledgeable about the data. On the basis of this assessment, we excluded some counties from our analysis because they did not report complete crime data to the FBI. We concluded that the data for the remaining counties were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our review. In addition, we reviewed crime reports and documentation on crime databases published by the FBI, state agencies, and local law enforcement agencies in the four southwest border states. To further determine the types of data that are systematically collected, how these data are recorded and used in

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<sup>1</sup>The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

<sup>2</sup>NIBRS includes data on individual crime incidents, including information about the nature and types of specific offenses in the incident, characteristics of the victims and offenders, and the types and value of any property stolen and recovered. We did not analyze 2011 NIBRS data for the Yuma County Sheriff's Office because the FBI said the office was experiencing record management system problems and could not provide complete 2011 NIBRS data.

southwest border counties, and what information these data provide on spillover crime, we reviewed guidance documents and research reports developed by federal agencies, such as the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Congressional Research Service. Also, we interviewed knowledgeable officials from a total of 37 state and local agencies on the southwest border that are responsible for investigating and tracking crime occurring in their jurisdictions. At the state level, we conducted interviews with officials from the California Highway Patrol and the Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas Departments of Public Safety.<sup>3</sup> At the local level, we interviewed officials representing 21 of 24 sheriffs' offices in southwest border counties (4 in Arizona, 2 in California, 3 in New Mexico, and 12 in Texas), and 12 large municipal police departments in these border counties (4 in Arizona, 3 in California, 1 in New Mexico, and 4 in Texas).<sup>4</sup> We selected departments from each of four states, and we selected large departments because according to our review of the UCRSRS data, in general, large departments had more reported crimes than did smaller departments. A list of the 24 southwest border counties can be found in appendix I.

Moreover, to obtain information on spillover crime and efforts by law enforcement agencies along the U.S.-Mexico border to combat such crime, we conducted site visits to five southwest border counties in Arizona and Texas. These visits were to (1) Tucson, Pima County, Arizona; (2) Nogales, Santa Cruz County, Arizona; (3) Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas; (4) McAllen, Hidalgo County, Texas; and (5) Laredo, Webb County, Texas. We selected these locations because they represent diverse rural and urban environments, as well as have a range of border geographic features, such as rivers, mountains, agricultural deltas, and deserts that may pose different challenges for crossing the U.S. border from Mexico. These factors might have an effect on the levels and types of crime occurring in southwest border communities. As part of our visits, we met with federal officials, such as U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents and officers operating between and at the ports

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<sup>3</sup>The California Department of Justice is the agency that collects and reports crime data in California. However, in response to our interview request, California Department of Justice officials referred us to the California Highway Patrol as the agency best qualified to discuss what crime data are collected in the California jurisdictions along the southwest border.

<sup>4</sup>Officials from 2 sheriffs' offices in Texas were not available for interviews, and 1 sheriff's office in Texas declined our request for an interview.

of entry along the southwest border, state law enforcement officials from the Arizona Department of Public Safety, and local law enforcement officials, such as sheriffs in Santa Cruz and Hidalgo Counties and officials in the Tucson and Nogales Police Departments. The information we obtained from these visits is not generalizable to all southwest border counties. However, the information provides valuable insights into the types of crime information that are available to law enforcement agencies and perspectives on crime occurring in southwest border communities.

To address the second question, we collected information, such as crime reports and documentation on categories of data collected, from and conducted interviews with state and local law enforcement agencies identified above, as well as federal agencies and interagency task forces that have responsibilities for combating drug cartel-related activities along the southwest border. Federal agencies include Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and DOJ headquarters and field offices, including DHS's CBP, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Office of Policy, Office of Operations Coordination and Planning, and intelligence offices, such as the Office of Intelligence and Analysis; as well as DOJ's FBI; Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Interagency task forces—that is, partnerships of federal, state, and local law enforcement counterparts—include Arizona's High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, El Paso Intelligence Center, and Border Enforcement Security Task Forces in Arizona and Texas. State and local agencies include those identified above, as well as Arizona's Alliance for Countering Transnational Threats, the Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center, and members of the Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition. We asked agencies about their efforts to track spillover crime, any challenges they encountered in doing so, and whether they collected or tracked other data they considered related to spillover crime and violence on the southwest border. Specifically, we analyzed CBP data on the number of assaults on Border Patrol agents in southwest border patrol sectors from fiscal years 2006 through 2012, and the number of assaults on Office of Field Operations personnel at southwest border ports of entry for fiscal years 2011 and 2012, the date ranges for which these data were available. To assess the reliability of the CBP data on assaults and other crimes against agents and personnel, we reviewed relevant documentation, such as procedures for collecting data consistently, and interviewed CBP staff responsible for the data. On the basis of our efforts, we determined the data to be sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our report.

To address the third question, we analyzed threat assessments by federal agencies, covering the time period from 2004 through 2012, to determine the extent to which these agencies identified Mexican drug cartel–related threats facing southwest border communities and law enforcement agents in those communities. Specifically, we analyzed 4 DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis assessments that focused on violence along the entire southwest border covering the time period from 2006 through 2011. In addition, we analyzed the total of 12 Border Patrol threat assessments and Operational Requirements-Based Budgeting Process documents containing threat information for the Laredo, Tucson, and Rio Grande Valley sectors: 1 assessment in sample fiscal years 2004, 2007, 2009, and 2012 per each sector to discern any trends in crime and violence along the southwest border over time.<sup>5</sup> We selected the three Border Patrol sectors to correspond to the locations of our site visits. We selected these particular years because they approximate release dates of the DHS Intelligence and Analysis assessments to help identify potential similarities or differences in trends. To obtain additional context on potential threats facing southwest border communities, we reviewed several other assessments, such as National Drug Intelligence Center assessment (2011) and an Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center assessment (2011), and other documentation, such as congressional reports and testimonies.<sup>6</sup> To obtain perspectives on a range of concerns regarding the existence and potential effects of spillover crime, in addition to interviews with the officials from 37 state and local law enforcement agencies and federal officials identified above, we interviewed officials from Chambers of Commerce in four of the five counties we visited—Cameron, Hidalgo, Santa Cruz, and Webb Counties.<sup>7</sup> While the results of

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<sup>5</sup>Border Patrol has divided geographic responsibility for border security operations along the southwest border among nine sectors, which are further divided geographically into varying numbers of stations, with agents assigned to patrol defined geographic areas. Operational Requirements-Based Budgeting Program documents provide an operational assessment for each sector about Border Patrol resources needed to address threats and help the agency determine how and where to allocate additional agents, technology, and infrastructure.

<sup>6</sup>The National Drug Intelligence Center was established to consolidate drug intelligence from national security and law enforcement agencies and produce information on activities of drug-trafficking organizations. On June 15, 2012, the National Drug Intelligence Center closed. The Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center provides intelligence, investigative, and technical support to agencies that are critical to Arizona and the country's homeland security efforts.

<sup>7</sup>We did not interview officials from a Chamber of Commerce in Pima County because the county's major city, Tucson, is not located directly on the border with Mexico.

these interviews are not generalizable to all local businesses or Chambers of Commerce on the southwest border, they provide perspectives about the effects that violence in Mexico might have had on the businesses in their communities.

To address the fourth question, we reviewed and analyzed information, such as fact sheets and contingency plans, from and conducted interviews with all of the federal, state, and local agencies and task forces previously discussed.

We conducted this performance audit from January 2012 through February 2013, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.



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# Appendix III: Comparison of UCR SRS with NIBRS

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Appendix III provides information about differences between the UCR SRS and NIBRS. As shown in table 2, the SRS collects aggregate offense information for Part I offenses, and arrest information for Part I and Part II offenses. NIBRS collects offense information on each occurrence of crimes listed under Group A offenses and arrest information for Group A and Group B offenses.

**Table 2: Uniform Crime Reporting Summary Reporting System and National-Incident Based Reporting System Offenses**

UCR SRS	NIBRS
<b>Part I offenses</b>	<b>Group A offenses (Part I offenses underlined)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Criminal homicide</li> <li>2. Forcible rape</li> <li>3. Robbery</li> <li>4. Aggravated assault</li> <li>5. Burglary</li> <li>6. Larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft)</li> <li>7. Motor vehicle theft</li> <li>8. Arson</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Arson</u></li> <li>2. <u>Assault offenses</u></li> <li>3. Bribery</li> <li>4. <u>Burglary/breaking and entering</u></li> <li>5. Counterfeiting/forgery</li> <li>6. Destruction/damage/vandalism of property</li> <li>7. Drug/narcotic offenses</li> <li>8. Embezzlement</li> <li>9. Extortion/blackmail</li> <li>10. Fraud offenses</li> <li>11. Gambling offenses</li> <li>12. <u>Homicide offenses</u></li> <li>13. Kidnapping/abduction</li> <li>14. <u>Larceny/theft offenses</u></li> <li>15. <u>Motor vehicle theft</u></li> <li>16. Pornography/obscene materials</li> <li>17. Prostitution offenses</li> <li>18. <u>Robbery</u></li> <li>19. <u>Sex offenses, forcible</u></li> <li>20. Sex offenses, nonforcible</li> <li>21. Stolen property offenses (receiving, etc.)</li> <li>22. Weapons laws violations</li> </ol>
<b>Part II offenses</b>	<b>Group B offenses</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Other assaults</li> <li>2. Forgery and counterfeiting</li> <li>3. Fraud</li> <li>4. Embezzlement</li> <li>5. Stolen property: buying, receiving, or possessing</li> <li>6. Vandalism</li> <li>7. Weapons: carrying, possessing, etc.</li> <li>8. Prostitution and commercialized vice</li> <li>9. Sex offenses</li> <li>10. Drug abuse violations</li> <li>11. Gambling</li> <li>12. Offenses against the family and children</li> <li>13. Driving under the influence</li> <li>14. Liquor laws</li> <li>15. Drunkenness</li> <li>16. Disorderly conduct</li> <li>17. Vagrancy</li> <li>18. Suspicion</li> <li>19. Curfew and loitering laws (persons under 18)</li> <li>20. Runaways (persons under 18)</li> <li>21. All other offenses</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bad checks</li> <li>2. Curfew/loitering/vagrancy violations</li> <li>3. Disorderly conduct</li> <li>4. Driving under the influence</li> <li>5. Drunkenness</li> <li>6. Family offenses, nonviolent</li> <li>7. Liquor law violations</li> <li>8. Peeping tom</li> <li>9. Trespass of real property</li> <li>10. All other offenses</li> </ol>

Source: GAO analysis of DOJ information.

Table 3 summarizes the main differences between the two crime data systems.

**Table 3: Types of Information in Uniform Crime Reporting Summary and National-Incident Based Reporting Systems**

Summary of types of information in SRS	Summary of types of information in NIBRS
Consists of monthly aggregate crime counts for 8 Part I offenses.	Consists of individual incident records for 8 Part I offenses and 38 other offenses.
Gives a tally of the incidents. Does not contain information on each reported incident.	Contains information on each incident reported to police, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• characteristics of victim(s) and offender(s),</li> <li>• relationship between the victim and offender,</li> <li>• crimes committed,</li> <li>• injuries at the incident scene,</li> <li>• weapons used,</li> <li>• arrests made, and</li> <li>• incident location.</li> </ul>
Reports only the most serious crime committed, suppressing counts of lesser offenses in multiple-offense incidents (with some exceptions.) For example, if a murderer has raped his victim, only murder is reported.	Requires officers to report multiple offenses, victims, and offenders. This allows researchers to compare and analyze multiple incidents.
Does not distinguish between attempted and completed crimes.	Distinguishes between attempted and completed crimes.
Does not provide information about simple assault, which is the most commonly reported domestic violence offense.	Provides information about cases involving simple assault.
Records rape of females only.	Records rape of males and females.
Collects weapon information for murder, robbery, and aggravated assault.	Collects weapon information for all violent offenses.
Provides counts on arrests for the 8 Part I offenses and 21 other offenses.	Provides details on arrests for the 8 Part I offenses and 49 other offenses.

Source: GAO analysis of DOJ information.

# Appendix IV: UCR Data Tables for Southwest Border Counties, 2004-2011

## a. Violent crime rates per 100,000 for all border counties combined by state, 2004-2011

State	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Arizona	641.3	623.4	572.4	508.2	490.8	440.9	427.7	428.1
California	467.7	470.5	456.9	459	424.7	420.7	374.9	347.3
New Mexico	N/A	435.4	450.7	435.8	420.0	410.0	371.2	399.2
Texas	480.5	434.0	388.0	391.0	416.2	405.4	365.2	338.9

Source: GAO analysis of FBI data.

Notes: N/A stands for not available. Local law enforcement agencies in New Mexico border counties did not submit complete data to the FBI in 2004.

The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

## b. Violent crime rates per 100,000 for all nonborder counties combined by state, 2004-2011

State	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Arizona	469.0	524.4	495.0	471.7	435.6	389.6	370.4	363.8
California	557.9	531.6	540.9	528.5	510.0	478.4	446.7	417.3
New Mexico	N/A	709.0	692.3	698.1	683.0	645.2	593.9	577.3
Texas	547.1	540.7	531.8	523.8	518.2	500.3	459.9	414.8

Source: GAO analysis of FBI data.

Notes: N/A stands for not available. New Mexico violent crime rate for 2004 not calculated because comparable data for border counties not available.

The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

## c. Violent crime rates per 100,000 for large counties (population of 25,000 or more) by state, 2004-2011

State	County	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Arizona									
	Cochise	737.9	628.7	692.8	582.6	526.0	576.9	534.4	641.3
	Pima	640.2	649.7	591.8	522.5	518.6	439.2	429.3	431.9
	Santa Cruz	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
	Yuma	609.9	502.4	474.3	444.6	377.5	410.1	376.5	326.7
California									
	Imperial	455.1	511.5	421.7	336.9	289.6	355.4	354.1	268.4
	San Diego	468.4	468.3	458.7	465.7	432.1	424.3	376.0	351.5
New Mexico									
	Dona Ana	N/A	442.2	466.5	443.3	429.5	410.4	352.0	369.7

**Appendix IV: UCR Data Tables for Southwest  
Border Counties, 2004-2011**

**c. Violent crime rates per 100,000 for large counties (population of 25,000 or more) by state, 2004-2011**

State	County	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	Luna	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
Texas									
	Cameron	467.0	489.8	431.3	408.7	422.8	334.3	330.9	293.4
	El Paso	506.4	409.9	379.1	400.3	437.1	436.3	420.7	395.6
	Hidalgo	514.9	463.6	378.7	341.3	360.3	406.6	314.2	295.4
	Maverick	315.6	425.2	361.0	554.5	518.9	207.9	241.4	335.7
	Starr	271.1	213.8	148.4	260.4	287.7	281.1	293.6	242.6
	Val Verde	143.6	132.8	81.7	162.6	194.1	194.0	178.0	202.4
	Webb	532.7	502.5	545.7	565.8	602.1	575.4	508.6	464.6

Source: GAO analysis of FBI data.

Notes: N/A stands for not available. Local law enforcement agencies in Dona Ana County, New Mexico, did not submit complete data to the FBI in 2004.

The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

**d. Number of reported violent crimes for small counties (population under 25,000) by state, 2004-2011**

State	County	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
New Mexico									
	Hidalgo	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
Texas									
	Brewster	22	33	21	27	23	27	15	10
	Culberson	2	1	0	4	1	0	5	3
	Hudspeth	5	7	9	7	3	2	10	1
	Jeff Davis	3	6	7	0	8	6	5	3
	Kinney	0	0	0	5	4	1	7	0
	Presidio	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
	Terrell	7	1	3	1	2	1	4	4
	Zapata	54	33	34	28	46	39	37	21

Source: GAO analysis of FBI data.

Note: The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

**Appendix IV: UCR Data Tables for Southwest  
Border Counties, 2004-2011**

**e. Property crime rates per 100,000 for all border counties combined by state, 2004-2011**

State	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Arizona	Local law enforcement agencies did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
California	3,306.2	3,323.9	3,199.8	3,093.4	2,880.1	2,372.8	2,251.5	2,145.3
New Mexico	N/A	3,421.7	3,163.4	3,260.3	3,088.7	3,118.0	3,020.0	3,199.4
Texas	4,594.0	4,268.0	4,014.0	4,080.4	4,115.3	4,128.8	3,758.6	3,324.8

Source: GAO analysis of FBI data.

Notes: N/A stands for not available. Local law enforcement agencies in New Mexico border counties did not submit complete data to the FBI in 2004.

The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

**f. Property crime rates per 100,000 for all nonborder counties combined by state, 2004-2011**

State	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Arizona	Not computed because comparable data for border counties not available.							
California	3,415.2	3,316.4	3,173.3	3,027.8	2,926.2	2,761.7	2,674.3	2,628.1
New Mexico	N/A	4,410.6	4,222.5	3,948.4	4,036.6	3,928.9	3,494.9	3,598.0
Texas	4,491.4	4,343.0	4,093.3	4,128.3	3,974.0	4,005.3	3,790.0	3,520.4

Source: GAO analysis of FBI data.

Notes: N/A stands for not available. New Mexico violent crime rate for 2004 not calculated because comparable data for border counties not available.

The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

**g. Property crime rates per 100,000 for large counties (population of 25,000 or more) by state, 2004-2011**

State	County	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Arizona									
	Cochise	3,498.6	3,384.9	3,903.0	3,575.5	2,934.7	2,827.3	2,523.0	2,519.8
	Pima	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
	Santa Cruz	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
	Yuma	3,486.5	3,562.6	3,567.2	3,304.9	2,593.5	2,648.1	2,481.7	2,191.1
California									
	Imperial	3,722.3	4,059.0	4,062.9	3,749.9	3,805.1	3,399.0	3,399.0	3,378.9
	San Diego	3,285.0	3,285.7	3,154.0	3,057.2	2,829.3	2,316.2	2,192.0	2,078.8
New Mexico									
	Dona Ana	N/A	3,357.1	3,122.3	3,217.0	3,173.9	3,264.0	3,062.5	3,229.0

**Appendix IV: UCR Data Tables for Southwest  
Border Counties, 2004-2011**

**g. Property crime rates per 100,000 for large counties (population of 25,000 or more) by state, 2004-2011**

State	County	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	Luna	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
Texas									
	Cameron	5,422.1	5,004.7	4,701.9	4,857.0	4,864.2	4,769.0	4,549.0	4,111.9
	El Paso	3,293.5	3,115.2	3,211.1	3,079.5	3,109.8	2,915.2	2,589.3	2,375.4
	Hidalgo	5,645.2	5,249.8	4,514.7	4,549.9	4,618.6	4,996.3	4,693.8	3,956.0
	Maverick	3,087.0	2,697.7	3,298.4	3,168.7	3,264.9	3,235.4	2,856.7	2,635.4
	Starr	2,117.8	1,726.5	1,619.6	1,740.3	1,970.8	1,904.2	1,871.5	1,715.6
	Val Verde	2,743.3	2,849.1	2,402.7	2,889.7	2,125.1	1,853.3	1,837.2	1,939.6
	Webb	6,344.3	5,767.6	5,618.0	6,071.2	6,184.7	5,822.3	4,771.8	4,381.1

Source: GAO analysis of FBI data.

Notes: N/A stands for not available. Local law enforcement agencies in Dona Ana County, New Mexico, did not submit complete data to the FBI in 2004.

The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

**h. Number of reported property crimes for small counties (population under 25,000) by state, 2004-2011**

State	County	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
New Mexico									
	Hidalgo	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
Texas									
	Brewster	174	158	164	157	138	184	112	179
	Culberson	9	3	4	10	2	11	10	7
	Hudspeth	42	41	32	41	34	22	44	22
	Jeff Davis	11	10	12	13	11	8	9	14
	Kinney	2	0	5	9	28	27	14	2
	Presidio	Local law enforcement agencies in the county did not submit complete data to the FBI.							
	Terrell	15	7	11	13	17	66	30	9
	Zapata	448	292	214	239	145	272	279	264

Source: GAO analysis of FBI data.

Note: The FBI provided GAO with the 2011 SRS data when it publicly released these data in November 2012. According to the FBI, law enforcement agencies were able to revise these data until the end of the calendar year 2012.

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# Appendix V: Results from Analyzing UCR SRS and NIBRS Crime Data

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We analyzed UCR SRS crime data in the four southwest border states: Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas.<sup>1</sup> This appendix presents the results of our analyses of SRS crime data broken out by violent and property crimes for southwest border counties, separately and combined within each state, for the period 2004 through 2011. We also present the results of analyses of violent and property crime data for nonborder counties, combined within each state, and compare the nonborder county crime rates per 100,000 population with border county crime rates. We also analyzed available NIBRS data, covering the period 2007 through 2010, for the Yuma County, Arizona, sheriff's office.<sup>2</sup> The office is the single southwest border law enforcement agency that collects NIBRS data.

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## Violent Crime along the Southwest Border Reported through the UCR SRS

**All border and nonborder counties.** We analyzed SRS violent crime data for all 4 border counties in Arizona, both border counties in California, all 3 border counties in New Mexico, and all 15 border counties in Texas. We also analyzed these data for all 11 nonborder counties in Arizona, all 56 nonborder counties in California, 29 of 30 nonborder counties in New Mexico, and all 239 nonborder counties in Texas.<sup>3</sup> The violent crime rate for the New Mexico border counties was lower in 2011 than in 2005, but the rate in New Mexico's border counties decreased less than in its nonborder counties.<sup>4</sup> For the border counties in each of the other states, we found that the violent crime rate was lower in 2011 than in 2004, and the rate in the border counties decreased more than in the nonborder counties. Specifically, as shown in figure 3,

- The violent crime rate in Arizona's border counties was higher than in Arizona's nonborder counties in each year from 2004 through 2011.

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<sup>1</sup>As we discussed previously in this report, although SRS data provide the best available information on crime levels and crime trends in southwest border counties, because of its limitations, it cannot be used to draw conclusions about the extent to which crimes are attributable to spillover from Mexico.

<sup>2</sup>The FBI converts NIBRS data submitted by law enforcement agencies to the format for the SRS data system.

<sup>3</sup>One New Mexico nonborder county, De Baca, did not report SRS violent crime data to the FBI.

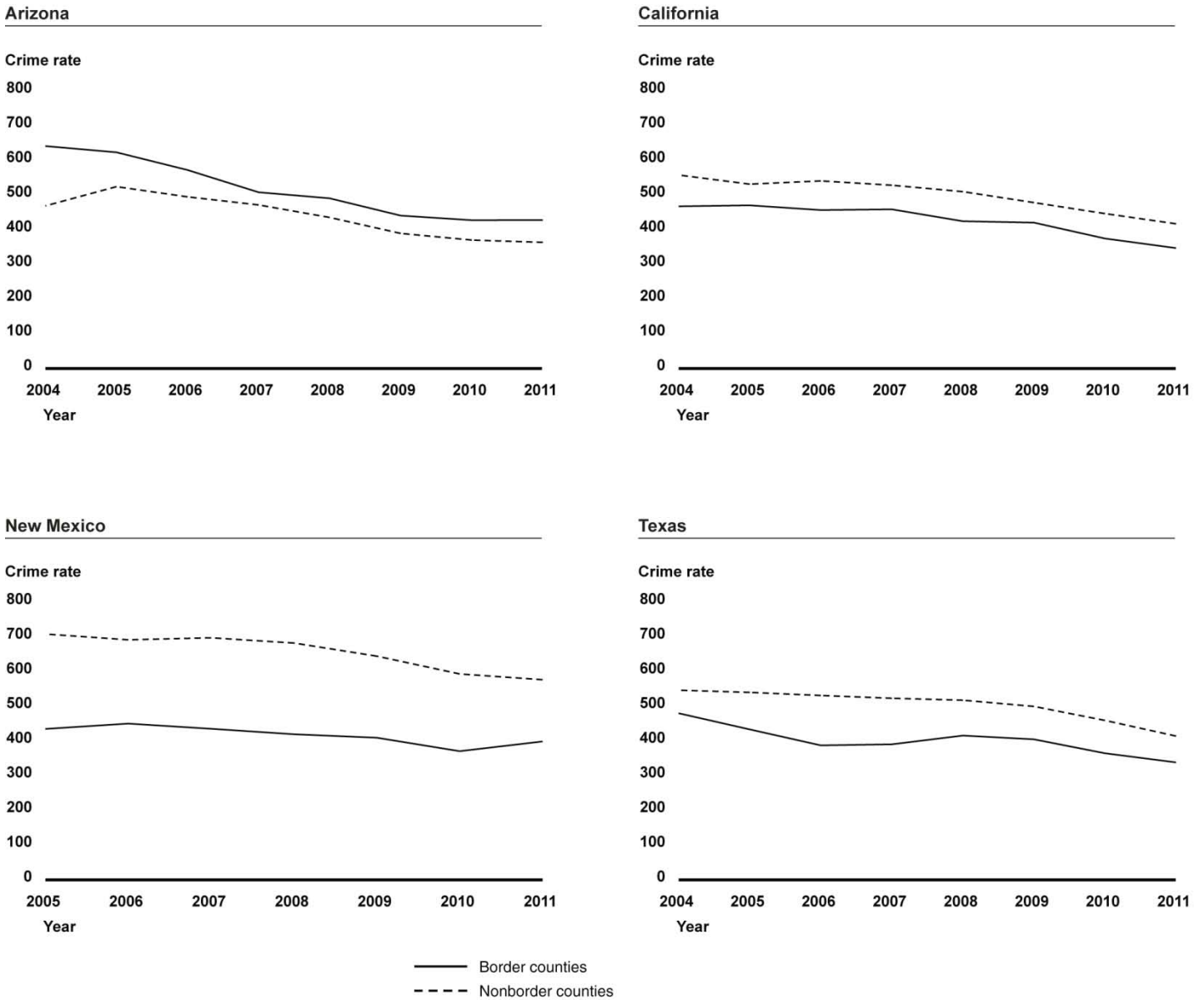
<sup>4</sup>We excluded New Mexico from these analyses for 2004 because local law enforcement agencies in the 3 border counties (Dona Ana, Luna, and Hidalgo) submitted incomplete SRS violent crime data to the FBI.



However, the crime rate decreased in both, with the rate in border counties being 33 percent lower in 2011 than 2004, and the rate in nonborder counties being 22 percent lower.

- The violent crime rate in California's border counties was lower than in California's nonborder counties in each year from 2004 through 2011. For border counties, the rate was 26 percent lower in 2011 than in 2004. The violent crime rate in California's nonborder counties generally decreased and was 25 percent lower in 2011 than in 2004.
- The violent crime rate in New Mexico's border counties was lower than in New Mexico's nonborder counties in each year from 2005 through 2011. The decrease in crime rate in border counties (8 percent) was smaller than the decrease in nonborder counties (19 percent).
- The violent crime rate in Texas's border counties was lower than in Texas's nonborder counties in each year from 2004 to 2011. For border counties, the rate was 30 percent lower in 2011 than in 2004, while the rate for nonborder counties was 24 percent lower.

**Figure 3: Violent Crime Rates per 100,000 Population In Southwest Border and Nonborder Counties, Combined by State, 2004-2011**



Source: GAO analysis of Uniform Crime Reporting data.

Note: The figure does not include New Mexico for 2004 because local law enforcement agencies in the 3 New Mexico border counties (Dona Ana, Luna, and Hidalgo) submitted incomplete SRS violent crime data to the FBI.

**Large border counties.** We analyzed SRS violent crime data for all 13 large southwest border counties—that is, counties with populations of 25,000 or more—that submitted sufficiently complete data to the FBI to enable us to calculate the violent crime rate.<sup>5</sup>

Of these, in 10 of the 12 large border Arizona, California, and Texas counties, the rate was lower in 2011 than in 2004. In 2 large border counties in Texas, the violent crime rate increased (see fig. 1). Specifically, (1) in Maverick County, Texas, the violent crime rate increased by 6 percent; and (2) in Val Verde County, Texas, the violent crime rate increased by 41 percent, largely because of an increase in aggravated assaults. Although lower in 2011 than in 2004, the violent crime rate in Cochise County, Arizona, increased 20 percent from 2010 to 2011, principally because of an increase in aggravated assaults. The violent crime rate in Dona Ana County, New Mexico, was lower in 2011 than in 2005. However, the rate increased 5 percent between 2010 and 2011, largely because of increases in robberies and aggravated assaults. Comparing UCR SRS and NIBRS data for the Yuma County sheriff's office—the single southwest border law enforcement agency that reports NIBRS data—we found comparable decreases in violent crimes. Specifically, we found that the total number of violent crimes reported through NIBRS was 32 percent lower in 2010 than in 2007, when the office began reporting NIBRS data. The number of violent crimes reported in the SRS format was 33 percent lower in 2010 than in 2007. Overall, the total number of violent crime offenses reported by the Yuma County sheriff's office through NIBRS was about 1 percent higher than those reported through the SRS.

**Small border counties.** The southwest border has 9 small counties—that is, counties with populations of less than 25,000.<sup>6</sup> The average

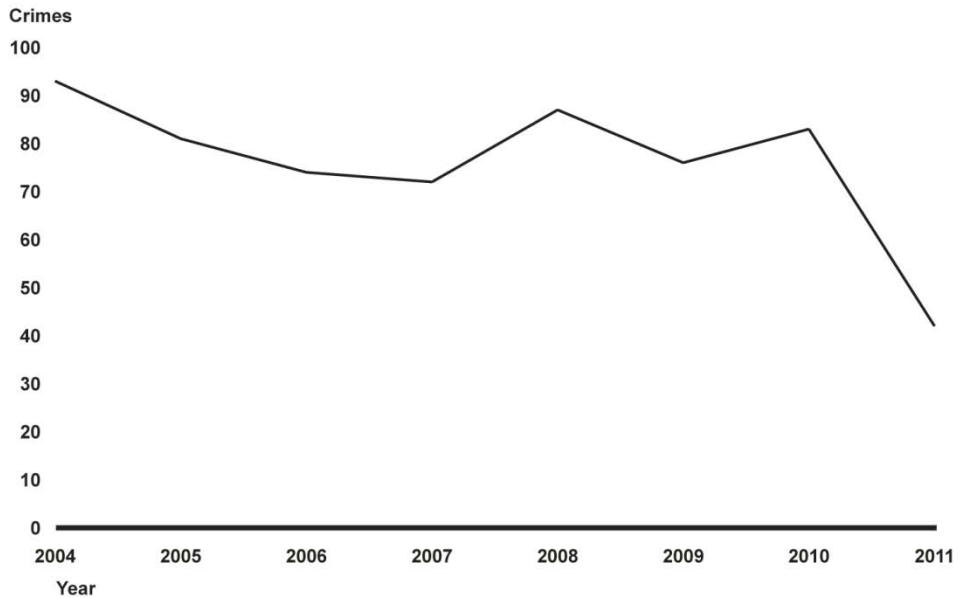
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<sup>5</sup>These analyses are based on reported violent crimes in 13 of 15 large counties along the southwest border. We designated large border counties as those with populations of 25,000 or more. The 15 large border counties are Cochise, Pima, Santa Cruz, and Yuma Counties in Arizona; Imperial and San Diego Counties in California; Dona Ana and Luna Counties in New Mexico; and Cameron, El Paso, Hidalgo, Maverick, Starr, Val Verde, and Webb Counties in Texas. We excluded 1 large border county in New Mexico (Luna) and 1 large border county in Arizona (Santa Cruz) because SRS violent crime data local law enforcement agencies submitted to the FBI were incomplete. For the same reason, we excluded 2004 data for Dona Ana County, New Mexico.

<sup>6</sup>The 9 small border counties are Hidalgo County in New Mexico and Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Kinney, Presidio, Terrell, and Zapata Counties in Texas.

combined population of these 9 counties from 2004 through 2011 was about 46,000. Our analysis of SRS violent crime data for 7 of the 9 counties with sufficiently complete data shows that the total number of reported violent crimes in these small counties decreased by 55 percent, that is, from a total of 93 violent crimes in 2004 to 42 in 2011 (see fig. 4).<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 4: Total Number of Reported Violent Crimes in Seven Small Southwest Border Counties, 2004-2011**



Source: GAO analysis of Uniform Crime Reporting data.

Notes: The 7 counties are Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Kinney, Terrell, and Zapata Counties in Texas. The average combined total population for the 7 counties from 2004 through 2011 was about 36,000.

<sup>7</sup>For small counties, we report numbers of crimes, instead of crime rates per 100,000 population, because, in general, these counties have relatively low numbers of reported crimes, and small year-to-year changes in these numbers can lead to large percentage changes in the crime rate. We excluded Hidalgo County, New Mexico, and Presidio County, Texas, because SRS violent crime data local law enforcement agencies submitted to the FBI were incomplete.

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Reported Property Crime  
along the Southwest  
Border through the UCR  
SRS

**All border and nonborder counties.** We analyzed SRS property crime data for both border counties in California, all 3 border counties in New Mexico, and all 15 border counties in Texas.<sup>8</sup> We also analyzed the data for the nonborder counties in California, New Mexico, and Texas.<sup>9</sup> For the border counties in California and Texas, we found that the reported property crime rate in 2011 was lower than in 2004, and the rate in the border counties decreased more than in the nonborder counties. The rate for New Mexico border counties was lower in 2011 than in 2005, but the rate in New Mexico's border counties decreased less than in its nonborder counties.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, as shown in figure 5,

- Each year from 2009 through 2011, the property crime rate in California's border counties was lower than the rate in California's nonborder counties; and each year from 2004 to 2008, the rate in border and nonborder counties was similar. For border counties, the rate was 35 percent lower in 2011 than in 2004. The property crime rate in California's nonborder counties decreased each year and was 23 percent lower in 2011 than in 2004.
- The property crime rate in New Mexico's border counties was lower than in New Mexico's nonborder counties in each year from 2005 to 2011. The decrease in crime rate in border counties (7 percent) was smaller than the decrease in nonborder counties (18 percent).
- The property crime rate in Texas's border counties was similar to the rate in nonborder counties in nearly all years. However, the crime rate decreased in both, with the rate in border counties being 28 percent lower in 2011 than 2004, and the rate in nonborder counties being 22 percent lower.

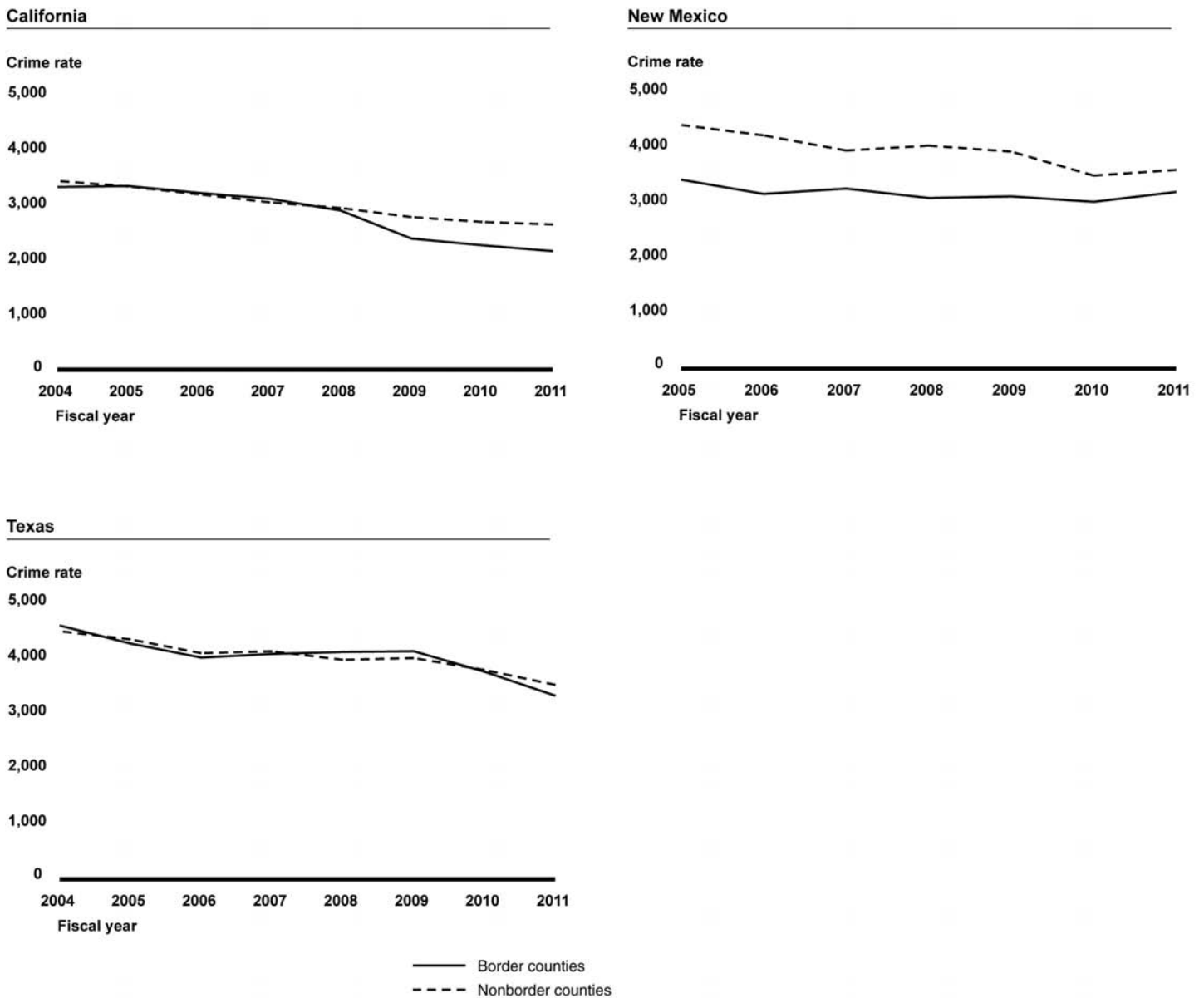
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<sup>8</sup>We excluded Arizona because Tucson, in Pima County, reported property crime data improperly, according to the FBI, and Tucson accounts for about 40 percent of the total population of Arizona's border counties. Further, according to UCR Program practice, because of limited participation and varying data collection practices by law enforcement agencies nationwide, we excluded arson crimes when calculating property crime rates.

<sup>9</sup>One New Mexico nonborder county, De Baca, did not report SRS property crime data to the FBI.

<sup>10</sup>We excluded New Mexico from these analyses for 2004 because local law enforcement agencies in the 3 border counties (Dona Ana, Luna, and Hidalgo) submitted incomplete SRS property crime data to the FBI.

Figure 5 : Property Crime Rates per 100,000 Population for Border and Nonborder Counties Combined by State, 2004-2011



Source: GAO analysis of Uniform Crime Reporting data.

Note: The figure does not include New Mexico for 2004 because local law enforcement agencies in the 3 New Mexico border counties (Dona Ana, Hidalgo, and Luna) submitted incomplete SRS property crime to the FBI, or Arizona because Tucson, in Pima County, reported property crime data improperly, according to the FBI, and Tucson accounts for about 40 percent of the total population of Arizona's border counties.

**Large border counties.** We analyzed SRS property crime data for the 12 large southwest border counties that submitted sufficiently complete data to the FBI to enable us to calculate the reported property crime rate.<sup>11</sup> Of these, in all 11 large border counties in Arizona, California, and Texas, the SRS data showed that the crime rate was lower in 2011 than in 2004, although there was variability in the rate in some counties, such as Cochise County, Arizona, and Val Verde County, Texas, over the years (see fig. 1). The reported property crime rate in Dona Ana County, New Mexico, was lower in 2011 than in 2005. Comparing UCR SRS and NIBRS data for the Yuma County sheriff's office, we found that both showed a decrease in property crimes. Specifically, the total number of property crimes reported through NIBRS was 27 percent lower in 2010 than in 2007, when the office began reporting NIBRS data. The number of property crimes reported in the SRS format was 33 percent lower in 2010 than in 2007. Overall, the total number of property crime offenses reported through NIBRS was about 24 percent higher than those reported through in the SRS format.

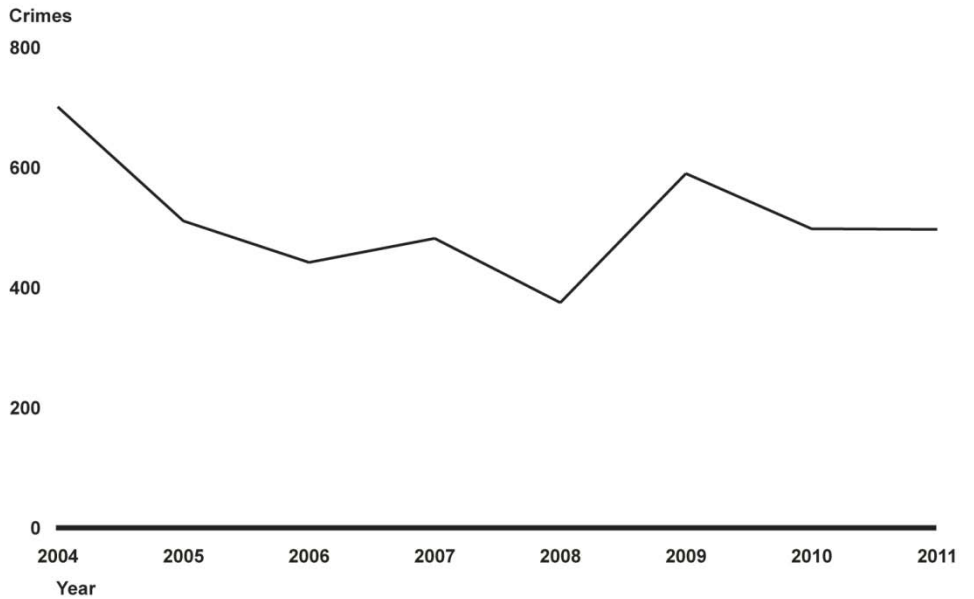
**Small border counties.** Our analysis of SRS data for 7 of 9 counties with sufficiently complete data shows that the total number of reported property crimes in these small counties decreased by about 29 percent, that is, from a total of 701 crimes in 2004 to 497 in 2011 (see fig. 6).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>These analyses are based on reported property crimes in 12 of 15 large counties along the southwest border. We excluded 1 border county in New Mexico (Luna) because local law enforcement agencies did not submit complete SRS property crime data to the FBI. For the same reason, we excluded 2004 data for Dona Ana County, New Mexico. Also, we excluded 2 of 4 border counties in Arizona (Pima and Santa Cruz) because data were incomplete or, according to the FBI, were reported improperly.

<sup>12</sup>We excluded Hidalgo County, New Mexico, and Presidio County, Texas, because SRS property crime data local law enforcement agencies submitted to the FBI were incomplete.

**Figure 6: Total Number of Reported Property Crimes in Small Southwest Border Counties, 2004-2011**



Source: GAO analysis of Uniform Crime Reporting data.

Notes: The 7 counties are Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Kinney, Terrell, and Zapata counties in Texas.

The average combined total population for the 7 counties from 2004 through 2011 was about 36,000.



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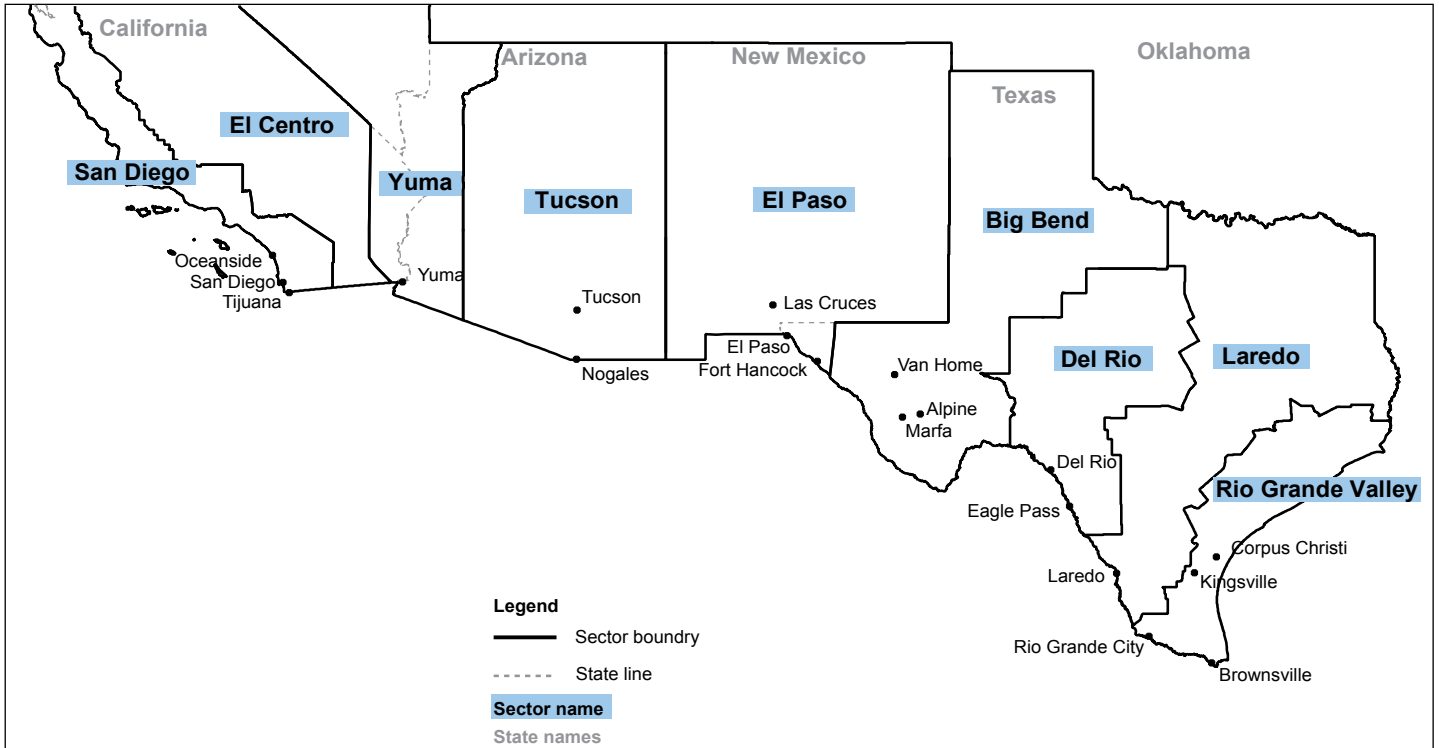
# Appendix VI: Assaults against Border Patrol Agents by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006-2012

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Analysis of assault trends for fiscal years 2006 through 2012 by Border Patrol sector is presented in figure 7 and source data for the analysis are presented in table 4.

**Interactive graphic** Figure 7: Number of Assaults against Border Patrol Agents by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006-2012

Move mouse over the sector name to learn more about the sector.



Source: GAO (analysis), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (data), Mapinfo (map).

Notes: Rocking assaults are thrown rocks, for example by drug or alien smugglers, at Border Patrol agents with the intent of threatening or inflicting physical harm.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Border Patrol has divided geographic responsibility for border security operations along the southwest border among nine sectors, each of which has a headquarters with management personnel.

**Appendix VI: Assaults against Border Patrol Agents by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006-2012**

**Table 4: Data Tables on Assaults against Border Patrol Agents by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006-2012**

**Big Bend Sector**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rocking assaults	0	2	0	0	0	1	0
All other assaults	2	5	0	3	2	2	1

**Del Rio Sector**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rocking assaults	3	7	9	8	2	1	0
All other assaults	13	26	10	15	6	8	14

**El Centro Sector**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rocking assaults	4	102	125	174	176	107	25
All other assaults	13	32	23	14	20	17	10

**El Paso Sector**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rocking assaults	34	40	66	25	106	21	8
All other assaults	25	38	22	25	11	16	9

**Laredo Sector**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rocking assaults	3	13	23	75	18	5	10
All other assaults	36	25	21	43	32	21	33

**Rio Grande Valley Sector**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Rocking assaults	14	12	18	48	25	36	48
All other assaults	41	39	60	63	68	72	77

**Appendix VI: Assaults against Border Patrol Agents by Border Patrol Sector, Fiscal Years 2006-2012**

<b>San Diego Sector</b>							
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Rocking assaults	140	214	294	203	100	46	73
All other assaults	60	40	83	49	30	31	60

<b>Tucson Sector</b>							
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Rocking assaults	116	124	169	189	340	188	73
All other assaults	76	86	86	72	81	63	91

<b>Yuma Sector</b>							
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Rocking assaults	120	133	65	34	26	22	12
All other assaults	29	41	11	16	6	9	5

Source: GAO analysis of CBP data

# Appendix VII: Select Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement Efforts along the Southwest Border

Select efforts by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to address crime along the southwest border are presented in tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5: Select Federal Law Enforcement Entities' Efforts to Combat Mexican Drug Cartel-Related Activities along the Southwest Border**

Organization		Efforts
DOJ	Federal Bureau of Investigation	The FBI created a Latin American Southwest Border Threat Section to focus on issues specifically related to drug cartels. Within this section, "hybrid-squads," dedicated to combating violent crime along the border, are to address crosscutting issues through investigations of different types of crimes related to drug-trafficking organizations and eliminate traditional law enforcement stovepipes to focus on the issue more holistically. The FBI also has nine border liaison officers who, among other things, are tasked with investigating acts of violence that occur in border areas.
DHS	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	DHS, jointly with the government of Mexico, issued Border Violence Protocols in 2006 that set out the steps that CBP and Mexican government personnel are to follow when reporting incidents of border violence, such as incursions, assaults on U.S. officers or private citizens, potential cross-border pursuits, significant arrests and seizures, and attacks or threats against critical U.S. infrastructure. The protocols, still in effect, were the result of an action plan for combating border violence that DHS and the Mexican government collaboratively prepared. DHS sought to expand on these protocols by issuing Border Violence Prevention Protocols in December 2011. The newer protocols set out a number of steps to enhance coordination between the United States and Mexico, including producing joint risk assessments and conducting coordinated patrols. CBP officials stated in June 2012 that they are still in the process of implementing these new protocols.
Interagency task forces	Border Enforcement Security Task Force	The Border Enforcement Security Task Force stems cross-border criminal activity and associated violence through efforts that identify, disrupt, and dismantle criminal organizations posing a significant threat to border security. The task force is led by ICE in partnership with its state, local, and foreign law enforcement counterparts. There are 14 Border Enforcement Security Task Force teams located along the southwest border in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas.
	High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program	The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program provides assistance to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States. The purpose of the program is to reduce drug trafficking and production in the United States by facilitating information sharing and coordinated enforcement activities. Participating agencies make up the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Executive Boards, which are composed of an equal number of federal and nonfederal (state, local, and tribal) law enforcement leaders. There are five southwest border designated areas in California, Arizona, New Mexico, West Texas, and South Texas.

**Appendix VII: Select Federal, State, and Local  
Law Enforcement Efforts along the Southwest  
Border**

Organization	Efforts
Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces	The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Program aims to reduce the availability of drugs, and the violence and other criminal activity associated with the drug trade, by disrupting and dismantling major drug-trafficking organizations, money-laundering organizations, and related criminal enterprises by targeting high-level cartel members. The program operates nationwide and combines the resources of many federal, state, and local agencies. Led by DOJ, participating agencies include 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the DEA; the FBI; Internal Revenue Service; U.S. Coast Guard; ICE/Homeland Security Investigations; U.S. Marshals Service; the Criminal Division of DOJ; and numerous state and local agencies. The program has four "strike forces" (San Diego, Arizona, South Texas, and West Texas) that operate along the southwest border by colocating federal prosecutors with investigative agents from multiple agencies.
Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats	The Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats operates in Arizona and New Mexico/West Texas and brings together law enforcement agencies to share intelligence, deploy tactical resources, and coordinate enforcement activities to "deter, deny, degrade, disrupt, and dismantle criminal organizations, and their ability to operate." Led by DHS, participating agencies include CBP; ICE; as well as over 60 other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.
Executive Committee for Southwest Border Intelligence and Information Sharing	The Executive Committee serves as a forum to address state and local intelligence needs; reinforce best practices; and advise local, state, or federal leadership on southwest border intelligence and information-sharing issues within the state and local environment. Coled by DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis and the Texas Department of Public Safety, participating agencies include select fusion centers, sheriffs' offices, and police departments. In April 2012, the committee formed the Southwest Border Violence and Crime Working Group to identify new metrics and indicators to measure border-related crime and violence, and propose new terms and definitions for various facets of such crime. The Working Group plans to complete this work by mid-March 2013.
El Paso Intelligence Center	The El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), located in Texas, is a national law enforcement intelligence center administered by the DEA that provides time-sensitive, actionable information and intelligence to over 39,000 federal, state, local, tribal, and international law enforcement officers, agents, and analysts who are approved center users. Participating agencies at EPIC include representatives from 24 different federal, state, and local agencies.

Source: GAO analysis of agency documents.

**Appendix VII: Select Federal, State, and Local  
Law Enforcement Efforts along the Southwest  
Border**

**Table 6: Select State and Local Law Enforcement Efforts to Target Border-Related Crime**

<b>Effort</b>	<b>Description</b>
Operation Stonegarden	Operation Stonegarden is a federal grant program administered by DHS's Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide funds to state and local agencies to hire additional law enforcement personnel; provide overtime pay, travel, and lodging expenses; and procure equipment to increase law enforcement presence and enhance their capabilities for securing the southwest border. Twenty-three out of 37 state and local law enforcement agencies we spoke to stated that they receive Operation Stonegarden funding.
Deputization across jurisdictional boundaries	The Luna County, New Mexico, Sheriff's Office seeks to increase local law enforcement capacity by developing memorandums of understanding with neighboring jurisdictions, allowing deputies from other counties to operate in their county so they can work together and present a larger law enforcement presence along the border.
Border Crimes Unit	The Pima County, Arizona, Sheriff's Office formed a border crimes enforcement unit in 2008 to deal with an increase in crimes related to illegal trafficking of drugs and people. This unit is responsible for patrolling rural areas and interdicting drug traffickers; undocumented aliens; and those who commit crimes such as homicide, assault, rape, and robbery against undocumented aliens.
Arizona Counter Terrorism Information Center	This fusion center provides intelligence, investigative, and technical support to state, local, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies on a variety of issues, including border security. It produces annual threat assessments on crime trends and criminal activity in Arizona. The center is a joint effort of the Arizona Department of Public Safety, Arizona Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and other participating agencies.
Joint Intelligence Operations Centers	Led by the Texas Department of Public Safety, the centers are responsible for analyzing intelligence and collecting border security information; collaborating with state, local, and federal law enforcement partners to conduct intelligence-directed border enforcement operations; and ensuring information exchange between agencies.
Texas Border Sheriff's Coalition	The coalition is an association of sheriffs from counties on or near the Texas-Mexico border. It provides a forum for joint law enforcement efforts.

Source: GAO analysis of agency documents and interviews.

# Appendix VIII: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

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



**Homeland  
Security**

February 20, 2013

Cary Russell  
Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-13-175, "SOUTHWEST BORDER SECURITY: Data Are Limited and Concerns Vary about Spillover Crime along the Southwest Border"

Dear Mr. Russell:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

The Department is pleased to note GAO's recognition of initiatives law enforcement agencies have undertaken to target border-related crime, including one effort to address violent crime spilling over from Mexico. For example, in October 2008, DHS developed a contingency plan for the possibility that a significant southwest border violence escalation may exceed DHS's ability to respond. In addition, interagency task forces provide a forum for federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to share information and conduct coordinated enforcement activities to combat drug smuggling and cartel activity. DHS remains committed to working with its many partners—including those across the Federal Government, public and private sectors, and internationally—to strengthen the Homeland Security enterprise to better mitigate and defend spillover crime along the southwest border and elsewhere.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim H. Crumpacker".

Jim H. Crumpacker  
Director  
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office



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# Appendix IX: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

Cary Russell, (202) 512-5431 or russellc@gao.gov

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Rebecca Gambler, Director; Cindy Ayers, Assistant Director; Evi Rezmovic, Assistant Director; David Alexander; Hiwotte Amare; Eric Hauswirth; Margaret McKenna; Erin O'Brien; Yanina G. Samuels; and Julia Vieweg made significant contributions to the work.

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