



**U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection**

**MAR - 7 2012**

The Honorable Darrell Issa  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Issa:

Thank you for your March 1, 2012 letter in which you inquire about operational metrics used by the United States Border Patrol (USBP) to track operational activities along the Southwest border. It is my pleasure to respond and I look forward to working with the Committee in its review of this data. A separate, identical response letter was sent to your cosigner, Chairman Jason Chaffetz.

First, as a veteran of the Border Patrol for almost 25 years, and as the Chief today, I want to underscore just how critical it is for my organization to utilize data to drive our operations. At the Headquarters level, we rely upon data from the field offices to make broader, system-wide strategic decisions and, in the field offices on a shift-to-shift basis; we make tactical adjustments from day to day, hour to hour and even minute to minute. These decisions are made carefully and for reasons that include operational effectiveness, efficiency, and most importantly, officer safety. We also recognize that individual observations or narrowly focused anecdotal information may not represent a complete picture of the border region, which is why we strive to collect a broad array of accurate frontline data to conduct the risk-based analysis that guides our personnel and resource allocations. It is more important to me that our data is accurate because it directly impacts the health and safety of our agents. To that end, I have sought to expand, rather than contract, the number of data points being collected in the field in order to enhance safety, bolster record-keeping and increase situational awareness on the ground.

Any suggestion that USBP data collection methods were altered in order to enhance overall border statistics is patently inaccurate. The Border Condition Index is a tool CBP created in response to requests by Congress for metrics to track and communicate conditions at the border. In particular, the Border Condition Index will be a measurement that attempts to combine various statistics and effects. The Index, which is currently undergoing peer review, will include consideration of different metrics to include things like the number of suspected "got aways." I think we can agree that the more expansive and accurate our understanding of the border

condition, the more effective the Border Patrol can be in executing our mission and protecting our agents.

As it relates to your analysis of the USBP shift data from the Casa Grande station, I think it is important to clarify what may be a misunderstanding of operational data. First, you suggest in your correspondence that “[U.S. Customs and Border Protection] CBP leadership altered the method by which got-aways are counted.” This suggestion is inaccurate. CBP leadership took no such action. However, it is possible that the confusion stems from the efforts of supervisory agents in the Casa Grande Station to refine the manner in which data regarding “got-aways” is collected in order to enhance the accuracy of this data. I would welcome the opportunity to brief you and your staff regarding all reports in question and to provide insight into our data collection process and operational analysis.

With regard to your suggestion that that “the border security statistics do not count 82 people who entered the country illegally through Casa Grande,” my staff has reviewed the data and has yet to identify any incursions that were not properly recorded. We would appreciate the opportunity to review the data with your staff in order to clear up any uncertainties. If, in fact, a significant number of illegal incursions were not properly recorded, we will take corrective action. Nevertheless, to the extent that any incursions were not recorded, any attempt to extrapolate “got-aways” in the Casa Grande station to a border-wide analysis of illegal entrants misunderstands the dynamic nature of the border. Each sector, as well as each station within a sector, encounters varying flows on given hours, days, weeks and months. For this reason, attempts to extrapolate in the fashion outlined in your correspondence tend to result in grossly inaccurate results.

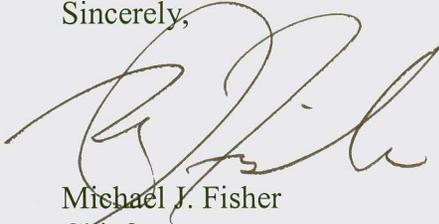
Finally, you requested that we provide extensive data about all of the stations within the Tucson Sector. This data consists of thousands of pages of information, which we will provide as quickly as feasible. We will work with your staff to clarify what reports are required and to get the data to you in an efficient and timely manner. We have already commenced a data retrieval process of some of the requested reports and look forward to working collaboratively with you on your oversight request.

On a personal note, I want to thank you and the committee for your continued support for our border security mission. We now have more than 21,000 agents as well as enhanced technology, which have significantly increased our enforcement capability. As a result, our activity levels are at historic lows and for the first time in my career, we are proactively deploying resources to threats along our border rather than reacting to it. This scenario is different from when I was the Chief in San Diego Sector and briefed you and other members of congress during a field hearing in Imperial Beach, California. It appears that although the border environment has changed with time, both of our objectives remain the same; to get the facts right and secure our border for the American people who deserve no less.

The Honorable Darrell Issa  
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Thank you for your attention to this correspondence and I look forward to working with the Committee in its review of this data.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Fisher", written in a cursive style.

Michael J. Fisher  
Chief  
U.S. Border Patrol