

CROSSING THE BORDER: SCENARIOS OF REAL ISSUES

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My name is Jason Nichols and I am a part of the National Guard unit deployed to El Paso, Texas to help our Border Patrol secure the 2,076-mile US-Mexican border through Operation Jump Start. Our mission is to stop the leakage of illegal Latin American immigrants from entering the United States. My National Guard unit is helping with surveillance, building and repairing fences, and maintaining vehicles.

An estimated 12 million illegal immigrants have strained the federal budget. Illegal immigrants in the state of California cost taxpayers \$3 billion annually in public safety, healthcare, and social services. Importantly, the U.S. government is providing funding to strengthen the enforcement of immigration laws.

The desire to enter the U.S. is so strong that migrants are putting themselves in grave danger in order to cross the border. For example, at about 2 a.m. yesterday morning, I was sitting in my jeep with the headlights off. I spotted three teenage boys who were attempting to complete their trip into the United States. The final steps are not easy. They entail swimming the 50-foot-wide Rio Grande, hiking up a steep embankment, scaling 10-foot fences, maneuvering through a swiftly flowing canal, and finally dashing across a busy border highway. One of the boys, wearing blue jeans and a Dallas Cowboys T-shirt, was hit by oncoming traffic. Upon seeing the border patrol agents, the two remaining boys made an attempt to run across a construction site. The boys were cornered, trapped and finally apprehended. Before being returned to Mexico, they will be sent to a detention center for fingerprinting.

In another instance, a carload of Mexican citizens attempted to speed through the border. As one of the Border Patrol Agents was checking passports I heard a strange noise. While the agent walked to the back of the car, the driver hit the accelerator. A border patrol car intercepted them and we returned the young lady and her infant son, hiding in the trunk, to Mexico.

While U.S. businesses are legally bound not to hire illegal immigrants, many still find work. Taking advantage of immigrants' inability to report their employers, some businessmen force immigrants to work long hours in a substandard environment for little pay. However, the anticipation of a reunion with their loved ones and attainment of better educational opportunities for their children keep immigrant spirits high.

1. What problems concerning U.S. and Latin American relations are mentioned in this scenario?
2. What are some of the solutions suggested?
3. Brainstorm other solutions to the problems.