



United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

March 30, 2007

The Honorable Mike Rogers

Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight  
Committee on Homeland Security  
House of Representatives

Subject: *Homeland Security: Information on Training New Border Patrol Agents*

Dear Mr. Rogers:

The U.S. Border Patrol is responsible for patrolling 8,000 miles of the land and coastal borders of the United States to detect and prevent the illegal entry of aliens and contraband, including terrorists and weapons of mass destruction. Although the Border Patrol apprehends hundreds of thousands of people entering the country illegally each year, several hundreds of thousands more individuals successfully enter the country illegally and undetected each year.<sup>1</sup> In May 2006, the President called for comprehensive immigration reform that included strengthening control of the country's borders by, among other things, adding 6,000 new agents to the Border Patrol by the end of December 2008. This would increase the total number of agents from 12,349 to 18,319, an unprecedented 48 percent increase over the next 2 years. The Border Patrol plans to add these new agents to the southwest border while transferring up to 1,000 experienced agents to the northern border.

Concerned about the ability of the Border Patrol's basic training program to accommodate this significant increase in Border Patrol agent trainees, you requested that we provide information on the content, quality, and cost of the Border Patrol's basic training program for new agents. This report addresses the following questions:

- To what extent does the Border Patrol's basic training program for new border patrol agents exhibit the attributes of an effective training program and how has the training program changed since September 11, 2001?
- How much does it cost to train a new Border Patrol agent?
- How does the Border Patrol's basic training program and cost compare to those of other similar federal and nonfederal law enforcement basic training programs?
- What plans, if any, has the Border Patrol developed or considered to improve the efficiency of its basic training program?

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Border Security: The Role of the U.S. Border Patrol*, RL32562 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 25, 2006).

To determine the extent to which the Border Patrol's training program exhibited the attributes and characteristics of an effective training program, we reviewed the Border Patrol's basic training curriculum, including course materials, evaluation procedures and forms, and syllabi and compared them with GAO's guide for assessing federal training programs.<sup>2</sup> We also visited the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, New Mexico, and observed training in progress and discussed training content with the Academy Chief and course managers. To determine what changes the Border Patrol made to the basic training program since September 11, we obtained descriptions of new material added in response to the terrorist attacks.

To determine the cost to train a new border patrol agent, we reviewed the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center's (FLETC) methodology used to calculate the average training cost per agent. To assess the reliability of these training cost data, we discussed the data collection methods and internal control processes for ensuring data quality with responsible officials and staff, reviewed the data and information for reasonableness, and reviewed relevant audits and evaluations related to the data. We found that the data we used for our analyses were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report. We also reviewed the model used by Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Office of Finance to formulate its budget for deploying a new border patrol agent.

To compare the cost of the Border Patrol's basic training program to that of other similar basic training programs (i.e., civilian, patrol-based law enforcement training for operations in the southwest region of the United States), we obtained course curricula and training cost information from FLETC, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Southern Arizona Law Enforcement Training Center, and the Texas Department of Public Safety. We did not identify any private firms offering a similar training program. Because the cost information for BIA was calculated by FLETC using the same methodology used to provide cost information for the Border Patrol Academy, we determined that the information was sufficiently reliable for our purposes. To assess the reliability of the cost information provided by Arizona and Texas, we discussed how these cost estimates were derived with knowledgeable state officials and obtained and reviewed corroborating documentation for reasonableness. We determined that for the purpose of this report, the estimates were sufficiently reliable.

To determine what plans the Border Patrol has, or considered, for improving the efficiency of its basic training program, we interviewed CBP officials in headquarters, including the Chief of the Border Patrol; the Assistant Commissioner, Office of Training and Development; and Chief Patrol Agents at the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, New Mexico, and in El Paso and Tucson. We also obtained the views of these officials, as well as selected supervisory and new Border Patrol agents in the field regarding the training of new agents.

In February 2007, we discussed the results of our work with you. This report conveys the information provided during that discussion (see Enclosure I). We performed our work from September 2006 through March 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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<sup>2</sup> GAO, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, GAO-04-546G (Washington, D.C.: March 2004).

## Background

The U.S. Border Patrol, within the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) CBP, is responsible for patrolling 8,000 miles of the land and coastal borders of the United States to detect and prevent the illegal entry of aliens and contraband, including terrorists, terrorist weapons, and weapons of mass destruction. As of October 2006, the Border Patrol had 12,349 agents stationed in 20 sectors along the southwest, northern, and coastal borders. FLETC is an interagency training provider responsible for basic, advanced, and specialized training for approximately 82 federal agencies, including CBP's Border Patrol. Under a memorandum of understanding, FLETC hosts the Border Patrol's training academy in Artesia, New Mexico, and shares the cost of providing training with the Border Patrol. For example, FLETC provides the facilities, some instructors (e.g., retired Border Patrol agents), and services (e.g., laundry and infirmary) that are paid for out of FLETC's annual appropriations. CBP's Office of Training and Development designs the training curriculum (in conjunction with the Border Patrol and with input from FLETC) for the academy, administers the Border Patrol Academy, and provides permanent instructors and staff.

Basic training for new Border Patrol agents consists of three components: (1) basic training at the academy, (2) postacademy classroom training administered by the academy but conducted in the sectors, and (3) field training conducted on the job in the sectors. The academy portion of the training is currently an 81-day program consisting of 663 curriculum hours in six subject areas: Spanish, law/operations, physical training, driving, firearms, and general training. After graduating from the academy, new Border Patrol agents are required to attend classroom instruction at their respective sectors in Spanish and law/operations 1 day a week for a total of 20 weeks. Finally, new agents are generally assigned to senior agents in a sector's field training unit for additional on-the-job training intended to reinforce new agents' skills in safely, effectively, and ethically performing their duties under actual field conditions.

## Results

The briefing slides in the enclosure address each of our four questions regarding the training of new border patrol agents. In summary, we found the following:

- The Border Patrol's basic training program exhibits attributes of an effective training program. GAO's training assessment guide suggests the kinds of documentation to look for that indicate that a training program has a particular attribute in place, such as incorporating measures of effectiveness into its course designs. The Border Patrol had documentation that its training program had at least 1 key indicator in place for 31 of the 32 attributes of an effective training program.<sup>3</sup> While we determined the presence of indicators of particular attributes, we did not assess the extent to which these attributes contributed to the quality of the training program. For example, we confirmed that the Border Patrol surveys all students at the academy, but we did not verify how the agency used the results. In addition, the Border Patrol is pursuing accreditation of its training program from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation organization. The core training curriculum used at the Border Patrol Academy has not changed since September 11, but the Border Patrol added new material on responding to terrorism and practical field exercises. While Border Patrol officials are confident that the academy can accommodate the large influx of new trainees anticipated over the

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<sup>3</sup> One attribute dealing with the selection or voluntary self-selection of employees was not applicable because basic training is mandatory for all new Border Patrol agents.

next 2 years, they have expressed concerns over the sectors' ability to provide sufficient field training. For example, officials are concerned with having a sufficient number of experienced agents available in the sectors to serve as field training officers and first-line supervisors. CBP officials told us that a 5-to-1 agent-to-supervisor ratio is desirable to ensure proper supervision of new agents, although the desired ratio in certain work units with more experienced agents would be higher. Our analysis of Border Patrol data showed that as of October 2006, the overall agent-to-supervisor ratios for southwest sectors, where the Border Patrol assigns all new agents, ranged from about 7 to 1 up to 11 to 1. These ratios include some work units with a higher percentage of experienced agents that do not require the same level of supervision as new agents. However, given the large numbers of new agents the Border Patrol plans to assign to the southwest border over the next 2 years, along with the planned reassignment of experienced agents from the southwest border to the northern border, it will be a challenge for the agency to achieve the desired 5-to-1 ratio for new agents in all work units in those sectors receiving the largest numbers of new agents. In addition to concerns about having a sufficient number of experienced agents, the Border Patrol does not have a uniform field training program that establishes uniform standards and practices that each sector's field training should follow. As a result, Border Patrol officials are not confident that all new trainees receive consistent postacademy field training. While the Border Patrol is in the process of developing a uniform field training program, sectors currently design and administer their own field training based on their particular operational environment independent of the other sectors.

- In fiscal year 2006, the average cost to train a new Border Patrol agent at the academy was about \$14,700. This cost represents the amounts expended by both the Border Patrol and FLETC. The Border Patrol paid about \$6,600 for the trainee's meals and lodging, and a portion of the cost of instructors, and FLETC paid about \$8,100 for tuition, a portion of the cost of instructors, and miscellaneous expenses such as support services, supplies, and utilities. The \$14,700 cost figure does not include the costs associated with instructors conducting postacademy and field training in the sectors.
- Given the Border Patrol's unique mission and difficulties making direct comparisons with other federal and nonfederal law enforcement training programs, it appears that the Border Patrol's average cost per trainee at the academy is consistent with that of training programs that cover similar subjects and prepare officers for operations in similar geographic areas. For example, the estimated average cost per trainee for (1) a BIA police officer is \$15,291; (2) an Arizona state police officer, \$15,555; and (3) a Texas state trooper, \$14,739. However, differences in the emphasis of some subject areas over others dictated by jurisdiction and mission make a direct comparison difficult. For example, while both the Border Patrol and the Texas Department of Public Safety require Spanish instruction, the Border Patrol requires 214 hours of instruction compared with 50 hours for a Texas state trooper. Similarly, the Border Patrol does not provide instruction in investigation techniques while BIA, Arizona, and Texas require 139, 50, and 165 hours of such instruction, respectively.
- The Border Patrol is considering several alternatives to improve the efficiency of basic training delivery and to return agents to the sectors more quickly. For example, the Border Patrol is pilot-testing a proficiency test for Spanish that will allow those who pass the test to shorten their time at the academy by about 30 days. According to Border Patrol officials, this could benefit about half of all trainees, because about half of all recruits already speak Spanish. The Border Patrol also plans to convert postacademy classroom training to computer-based training, allowing agents to complete the 1-day-a-week training at their duty stations rather than having to travel to the sector headquarters for this training. As a result, fewer senior agents will be required to serve as instructors for postacademy training. Finally, the Border Patrol is considering what other training it can shift from the academy to postacademy and field training conducted in the sectors, which could further reduce the amount of time trainees spend at the academy. However, these planned improvements may present trade-offs

and challenges. For example, some officials said that proficiency testing for Spanish could diminish esprit de corps in that while at the academy, those who already speak Spanish sometimes help non-Spanish speakers learn the language, enhancing esprit de corps. In addition, officials expressed concern about the sectors' ability to train and supervise the nearly 6,000 new agents the Border Patrol anticipates hiring over the next 2 years. This increase is nearly equivalent to the number of agents gained over the past 10 years, from 5,878 at the end of fiscal year 1996 to 12,349 at the end of fiscal year 2006.

## **Concluding Observations**

The Border Patrol's basic training program exhibits the attributes of an effective training program, and the average cost to train a Border Patrol agent is in line with that of other similar law enforcement training programs. However, the Border Patrol's plan to hire an unprecedented number of new agents over the next 2 years could strain the sectors' ability to provide adequate supervision and training. The large influx of new agents and the planned transfer of more experienced agents to the northern border could further exacerbate the already higher than desired agent-to-supervisor ratio in some southwest sectors. Moreover, the field training new agents receive is not consistent from sector to sector, a fact that has implications for how well agents perform their duties. To ensure that these new agents become proficient in the safe, effective, and ethical performance of their duties, it will be extremely important that new agents have the appropriate level of supervision and that the Border Patrol have a standardized field training program.

## **Agency Comments and Our Evaluation**

On March 22, 2007, we received written comments on a draft of this report from the Department of Homeland Security (see Enclosure II). DHS said that we accurately stated the Border Patrol's concern about the availability of sufficient supervisory personnel to address the rapid influx of inexperienced new agents.

DHS pointed out that while a 5-to-1 agent-to-supervisor ratio is desired for work units within a sector composed predominantly of new agents, a higher ratio is appropriate for those units composed predominantly of more experienced agents. The overall agent-to-supervisor ratio of an entire sector would represent a combined average ratio of all work units within the sector. This combined ratio results in a higher ratio than if only those work units composed predominantly of new agents were considered. While this may be true, officials we met with in the field said that achieving the desired 5-to-1 ratio for new agents has been a challenge. For example, one supervisory agent said that about three-quarters of the 30 to 40 agents assigned to his duty station had 3 or fewer years of experience and only three supervisors. We modified our report as appropriate to reflect DHS's comment that the 5-to-1 ratio does not apply to all work units.

We are sending copies of this report to the Department of Homeland Security and interested congressional committees. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8816 or by e-mail at Stanar@gao.gov. Key contributors to this report were Michael Dino, Assistant Director; Mark Abraham; E. Jerry Seigler; Julie Silvers, Ph.D.; and Gladys Toro. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard M. Stana".

Richard M. Stana, Director  
Homeland Security and Justice Issues

Enclosures

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# Enclosure I: Briefing Slides



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## **Training New Border Patrol Agents: An Overview**

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**Briefing for the Honorable Mike Rogers,  
Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on  
Management, Investigations, and Oversight,  
House Homeland Security Committee**

**February 14, 2007**

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## Introduction

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- The Border Patrol plans to increase the total number of Border Patrol agents by 6,000 by December 2008.
  - To achieve this goal, the Border Patrol anticipates needing to hire and train about 9,100 agents to account for these additional positions and attrition.
  - You requested that we provide information on the Border Patrol's basic training program for new agents.
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## Objectives

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- Determine the extent to which the Border Patrol's basic training program for new Border Patrol agents exhibits the attributes of an effective training program as outlined in GAO's guide for assessing training programs\* and identify how it has changed since September 11, 2001.
  - Determine the cost to train a new Border Patrol agent.
  - Compare the Border Patrol's basic training program and cost to other similar federal and non-federal law enforcement basic training programs.
  - Identify any Border Patrol plans to improve the efficiency of its current basic training program.

\*U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, GAO-04-546G (Washington, D.C.: March 2004).

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## Scope and Methodology

- Reviewed Border Patrol's basic training curriculum including course materials, evaluation procedures and forms, and syllabi.
- Compared documentation related to the Border Patrol's basic training program with GAO's guide for assessing federal training programs to determine the extent to which the Border Patrol's training program exhibited the attributes and characteristics of an effective training program.
- Reviewed the methodology used by the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) to determine the cost of basic Border Patrol training for fiscal year 2006. To assess the reliability of FLETC's cost data, we talked with agency officials about data quality control procedures and reviewed relevant documentation. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.
- Compared the length, content, and cost of the Border Patrol's basic training program to those of other similar basic training programs (i.e., civilian, patrol-based law enforcement training for operations in the southwest region of the United States), including the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Southern Arizona Law Enforcement Training Center, and the Texas Department of Public Safety. We did not identify any private firms offering a similar training program.
- Visited the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, New Mexico, and observed training in progress, obtained training materials, and interviewed FLETC officials, the Chief of the Academy, and course managers.
- Interviewed the Chief of the Border Patrol, Assistant Commissioner for Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Office of Training and Development, and the Chief Patrol Agents and selected supervisory and new Border Patrol agents, within the El Paso and Tucson sectors to obtain their views and concerns regarding training of new agents.

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## Background

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- FLETC is an interagency training provider responsible for basic, advanced, and specialized training for approximately 82 federal agencies at four U.S. and five international locations.
  - FLETC hosts the Border Patrol's training academy in Artesia, New Mexico, and shares the training cost with the Border Patrol.
    - FLETC provides the facilities, some instructors (e.g., retired border patrol agents), and services (e.g., laundry and infirmary).
    - CBP's Office of Training and Development designs the training curriculum (in conjunction with the Border Patrol and with input from FLETC), administers the Border Patrol Academy, and provides permanent instructors and staff.
  - In July 2005, the Border Patrol launched a national recruiting campaign to increase its ranks by an additional 6,000 new Border Patrol agents by the end of December 2008.
  - All new agents are deployed along the southwest border while the Border Patrol plans to reassign up to 1,000 experienced agents to the northern border.
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# Background

## Projected number of Border Patrol agents

Location	September 2006	December 2008	Increase (number)	Percentage increase
Southwest border	11,032	15,828	4,796	43
Northern border	919	1,975	1,056	115
Coastal border	153	205	52	34
Headquarters	119	185	66	55
Other offices within Customs and Border Protection	126	126	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,349</b>	<b>18,319</b>	<b>5,970<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>48</b>

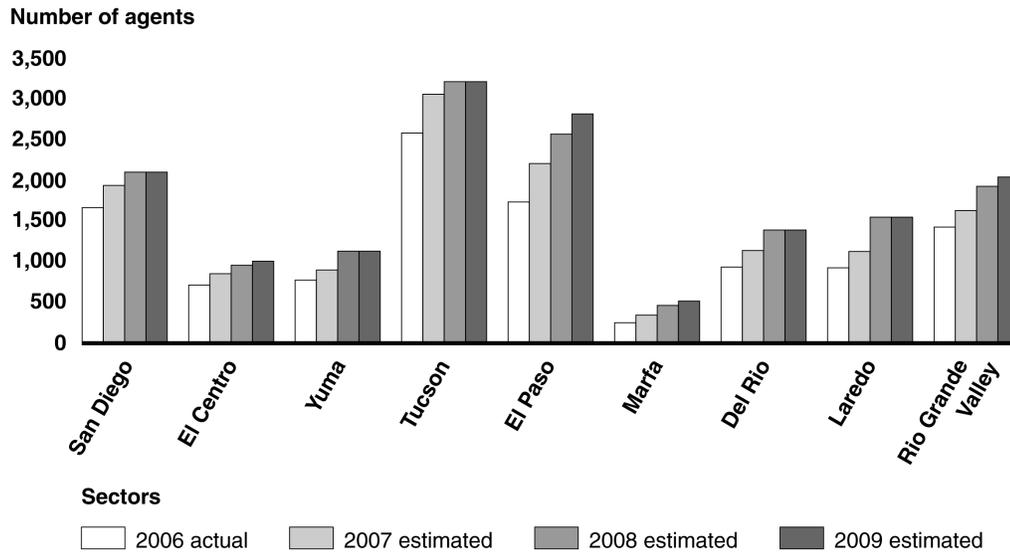
Source: GAO analysis of Office of Border Patrol data.

Note: These allocations of agents are preliminary and subject to change based on operational requirements.

<sup>a</sup>Total reduced by 30 agents to account for overhires in fiscal year 2006.

# Background

**Projected Number of Border Agents in the Southwest Sectors, End of Fiscal Years 2006–2008 and First Quarter 2009**



Source: GAO analysis of Border Patrol data.

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## Background

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Basic Border Patrol Agent training at the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, New Mexico

Length

- 16.2 weeks or 81 days
- Trainees on a 5-day/week schedule

Content

- Consists of 663 curriculum hours in six subject areas:
  - Spanish—214 hours
  - Law/operations—199 hours
  - Physical training—125 hours
  - Driving training—44 hours
  - Firearms training—67 hours
  - FLETC general training and administrative—14 hours

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# Background

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## Academy Graduation Requirements

**Spanish:**

- Maintain a minimum cumulative average of 70% (consists of 10 vocabulary exams, 7 progress exams, 1 midterm exam, and 1 final exam).

**Law/operations:**

- Maintain a minimum cumulative average of 70% (consists of three operations and law exams).

**Physical training:**

- Successful completion of three timed events (long-distance run, sprint, obstacle course).
- Achieve a minimum score of 70% on the final exam.
- Achieve a minimum score of 80% in order to complete the pepper spray certification (includes exam, skills, and use of force).

**Driving:**

- Achieve a minimum score of 80% on three practical exercises including Emergency Response (high-speed), Utility/Van Operations (formerly known as nonemergency vehicle operations), and Skid Control. The 4x4 program is not tested.

**Firearms:**

- Achieve a minimum score of 70% in the handgun and shotgun courses of fire.
- Achieve a score of 100% in the Judgment Pistol Shooting course.

Over the past 3 years, about 73 percent of those entering the academy have graduated.

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## Background

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### Postacademy and Field Training

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- After graduating from the academy, new Border Patrol agents are required to attend classroom instruction at their respective sectors in Spanish and law/operations 1 day a week for a total of 20 weeks.
  - New agents are also required to pass two probationary exams (the 7- and 10-month exams) administered in the sectors.
  - New agents are generally assigned to a field training unit, led by at least one senior agent, for on-the-job training.
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## Border Patrol's Basic Training Program Contains the Attributes of an Effective Training Program

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- In March 2004, GAO issued a guide for assessing federal training programs. GAO, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, GAO-04-546G (Washington, D.C.: March 2004).
- The guide summarizes attributes of effective training and development programs and presents related questions concerning the components of the training and development process.
  - Four broad components: (1) planning/front-end analysis, (2) design/development, (3) implementation, and (4) evaluation
  - Thirty-two key questions to consider when assessing the four components
  - Indicators related to each key question
    - Indicators serve as guides for assessment and do not constitute a complete or mandatory "set" of indicators needed in response to each question.
  - For example, under design/development, a key question is "How well does the agency incorporate measures of effectiveness into courses it designs?" The guide suggests looking for indicators, such as
    - clear linkages between specific learning objectives and organizational results, and
    - well-written learning objectives that are unambiguous, achievable, and measurable.

# Border Patrol’s Basic Training Program Contains the Attributes of an Effective Training Program

## GAO Attributes of an Effective Training Program

Planning and front-end analysis	Design and development
✓ Training goals are consistent with its overall mission, goals, and culture	✓ Ensures that training is connected to improving individual and agency performance in achieving specific results
✓ Has strategic and annual performance planning processes that incorporate human capital professionals	✓ The design of the training program is integrated with other strategies to improve performance and meet emerging demands
✓ Determines the skills and competencies of its workforce	✓ Uses the most appropriate mix of centralized and decentralized approaches for its training
✓ Identifies the appropriate level of investment to provide for training	✓ Uses criteria in determining whether to design training programs in-house or obtain from a contractor or other external source
✓ Has measures to assess the contributions that training efforts make toward individual mastery of learning	✓ Compares the merits of different delivery mechanisms (such as classroom or computer-based training) and determines what mix to use to ensure efficient and cost-effective delivery
✓ Incorporates employees’ developmental goals in its planning processes	✓ Determines a targeted level of improved performance in order to ensure that the cost of a training program is appropriate to achieve the anticipated benefit
✓ Integrates the need for continuous and lifelong learning into its planning processes	✓ Incorporates measures of effectiveness into courses it designs
✓ Considers governmentwide reforms and other targeted initiatives to improve management and performance when planning its training programs	
✓ Has a formal process to ensure that strategic and tactical changes are promptly incorporated into training	

✓ = indicators (in place or in development) of the attribute

Source: GAO analysis based on GAO-04-546G.

# Border Patrol’s Basic Training Program Contains the Attributes of an Effective Training Program

## GAO Attributes of an Effective Training Program

Implementation	Evaluation
✓ Agency leaders communicate the importance of training and developing employees, and their expectations for training programs	✓ Systematically plans for and evaluates the effectiveness of its training efforts
✓ Has a training and performance organization that is held accountable, along with the line executives, for the maximum performance of the workforce	✓ Uses the appropriate analytical approaches to assess its training programs
✓ Agency managers are responsible for reinforcing new behaviors, providing useful tools, and identifying and removing barriers to help employees implement learned behaviors on the job	✓ Uses performance data (including qualitative and quantitative measures) to assess the results achieved through training efforts
n/a Selects employees (or provides the opportunity for employees to self select) to participate in training and development efforts	✓ Incorporates evaluation feedback into the planning, design, and implementation of its training efforts
✓ The agency considers options in paying for employee training and development and adjusting employee work schedules so that employees can participate in these developmental activities	✓ Incorporates different perspectives (including those of line managers and staff; customers; and experts in areas such as financial, information, and human capital management) in assessing the impact of training on performance
✓ Takes actions to foster an environment conducive to effective training	✓ Tracks the cost and delivery of its training programs
✓ Takes steps to encourage employees to buy into the goals of training efforts	✓ Assesses the benefits achieved through training programs
✓ Collects data during implementation to ensure feedback on its training programs	✓ Compares its training investments, methods, or outcomes with those of other organizations to identify innovative approaches or lessons learned

✓ = indicators (in place or in development) of the attribute      n/a = not applicable

Source: GAO analysis based on GAO-04-546G.

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## **Border Patrol's Basic Training Program Contains the Attributes of an Effective Training Program**

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- The Border Patrol has changed its core curriculum for basic training very little since 2001, but has added new classes:
    - Anti-terrorism course—overview of terrorist groups, responding to terrorism, weapons of mass effect, and personal radiation detector (PRD) training.
    - Practical field exercises—simulate situations involving a PRD alert, or where agents might encounter surface-to-air missiles, biological weapons, and improvised explosive devices (IED).
  - The Border Patrol is pursuing accreditation of its training program from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation organization.
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## Concerns Regarding Training

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Border Patrol officials have some concerns regarding the uniformity of field training.

- Field training is not consistent from one sector to another and therefore there is no assurance that all new trainees receive consistent postacademy field training.
  - The Border Patrol is in the process of developing a uniform nationwide field training program for sectors to use.
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## Concerns Regarding Training

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Border Patrol officials expressed concern about having a sufficient number of experienced journeyman agents and first-line supervisors to train and supervise new agents.

- The sectors will need more experienced journeyman agents to serve as field training officers to train the anticipated large influx of new agents.
- The sectors will also need more first-line supervisors to provide adequate supervision to new agents.
  - The desired agent-to-supervisor ratios vary among the sectors and work units within sectors depending on the mix of experienced and new agents as well as the special tasks assigned to the work unit.
  - As of October 2006, sectorwide agent-to-supervisor ratios for sectors along the southwest border ranged from about 7 to 1 (Laredo) to 11 to 1 (El Paso).
  - As new agents are hired over the next 2 years, the sectors will be challenged to maintain the desired ratio of 5 new agents to 1 supervisor.

# Cost to Train a New Agent

- For fiscal year 2007, CBP budgeted \$187,744 to bring on each new Border Patrol agent.

	<b>First year</b>
Recruitment through hiring	\$ 30,707
Training <sup>a</sup>	3,836
Equipment <sup>b</sup>	21,072
Deployment <sup>c</sup>	74,338
Infrastructural impact <sup>d</sup>	57,791
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$187,744</b>

Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Note: With the exception of the \$3,836 for training, GAO did not verify these estimates.

<sup>a</sup>Training only includes the CBP's incremental cost for a trainee's meals (\$2,010) and lodging (\$1,826) while attending the academy.

<sup>b</sup>Uniforms, firearms, radios, etc.

<sup>c</sup>Salaries and benefits, overtime, administrative services, etc.

<sup>d</sup>Vehicles, utilities, technical support, etc.

## Cost to Train a New Agent

The total average cost to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for training a new Border Patrol agent at the academy was about \$14,700 for fiscal year 2006.

	FLETC	CDP	Total cost to DHS
Tuition	\$1,773	0	\$ 1,773
Meals	0	\$2,010	2,010
Lodging	0	1,826	1,826
Instructor cost per student	3,069	2,805	5,874
Miscellaneous <sup>a</sup>	3,250	0	3,250
<b>Cost per student</b>	<b>\$8,092</b>	<b>\$6,641</b>	<b>\$14,733</b>

Source: Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

Note: While FLETC's costs include the cost of training materials for postacademy training conducted in the sectors, these costs do not include the cost of postacademy instructors or field training conducted in the sectors.

<sup>a</sup>Miscellaneous costs include items such as support services (health unit, uniform laundry, janitorial), supplies (athletic trainer and student supplies, utility uniforms), and utilities (garbage collection, gas, electricity, and water and sewer).

## Border Patrol Basic Training Compared to Similar Selected Federal and non-Federal Law Enforcement Programs

	Border Patrol Academy	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Southern Arizona Law Enforcement Training Center	Texas Department of Public Safety
Class size (average)	50	50	40	130
Length of training (weeks)	16	16	36	26
Length of training (hours)	663	736	680	1,246
Cost per student (average)	\$14,733	\$15,291	\$15,555	\$14,739
<b>Course curriculum</b>				
	<b>Training hours</b>			
Spanish	214	n/a	n/a	50
Law/operations	191	152	223.5	567
Firearms training	67	71.25	70	119.5
Driving training	44	104.5	28	71
Basic investigative techniques	n/a	139	50	165
Physical fitness and safety	125	239.5	114.75	96.5
Anti-terrorism	8	9	4	16
General training and administration	14	21	189.75	161

Source: GAO analysis of information received from FLETC, the Office of Border Patrol, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Southern Arizona Law Enforcement Training Center, and the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Note: Training hours may not add to length of training due to rounding.

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## Border Patrol's Plans to Improve Efficiency of Basic Training

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- Use of proficiency tests for Spanish
  - reduces time at the academy by about 30 days and
  - could apply to about half of all trainees
- Moving to computer-based postacademy training
  - allows trainees to train at their duty stations rather than traveling to the sector headquarters and
  - reduces number of instructors needed at the sector
- Considering shifting more training from the academy to postacademy and field training, which may reduce the amount of time trainees spend at the academy

## Trade-offs and Challenges

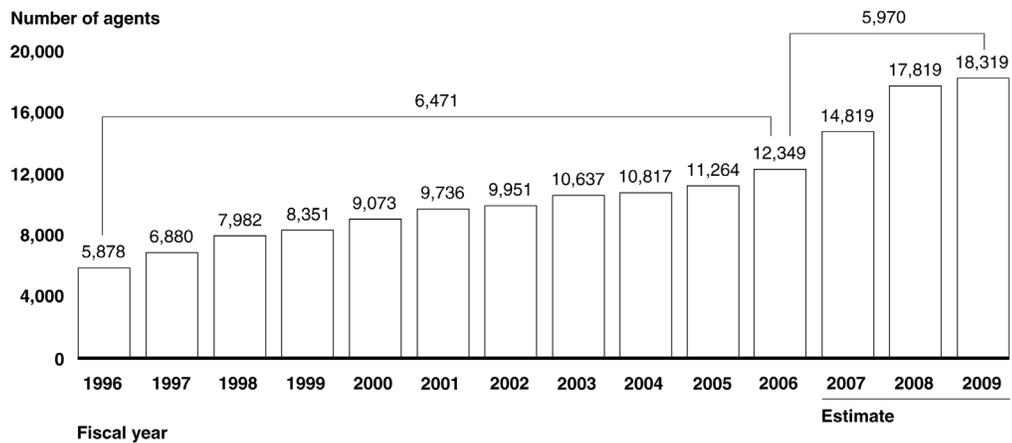
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The Border Patrol's plans for improving the efficiency of its basic training program may involve trade-offs and challenges to overcome.

- At the academy, native Spanish speakers sometimes help non-native speakers learn the language, enhancing esprit de corps. Splitting native and non-native Spanish speakers through proficiency testing could negatively affect esprit de corps.
  - Officials are concerned with the sectors' ability to train and supervise the large number of new agents the Border Patrol anticipates hiring over the next 2 years.
-

# Trade-offs and Challenges

- Another challenge for CBP will be to realize a net gain of about 6,000 agents over approximately the next 2 years (by the end of December 2008, the first quarter of fiscal year 2009).
- Over the next 3 fiscal years, the Border Patrol plans to increase its number of agents by almost as much as it did over the previous 10 years.



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

## Concluding Observations

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- The average cost of training a new Border Patrol agent is in line with that of other similar federal and non-federal law enforcement training programs.
  - Plans for proficiency testing and shifting some training from the academy to the sectors would allow the Border Patrol to put new agents on the job more quickly, but there are concerns.
  - It will be a challenge for sectors along the southwest border to absorb and provide adequate field training and supervision to large numbers of new agents.
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# Enclosure II: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

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



**Homeland  
Security**

March 22, 2007

Mr. Richard M. Stana  
Director Homeland Security and Justice  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Stana:

Re: Draft Report GAO-07-540R, Information on Training New Border Patrol Agents.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) appreciated the opportunity to review and comment on the subject draft report. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted this review in response to a request made by Representative Mike Rogers, Chairman, Subcommittee on Management, Integration, and Oversight, Committee on Homeland Security. Concerned about the ability of the Border Patrol's basic training program to accommodate a significant increase in Border Patrol agent trainees, Mr. Rogers requested that GAO provide information on the content, quality, and cost of the Border Patrol's basic training program for new agents.

GAO concluded that the Border Patrol's basic training program exhibits attributes of an effective training program, and the average cost to train a new Border Patrol agent is in line with similar law enforcement training programs. However, GAO also concluded that the Border Patrol's plan to hire an unprecedented number of new agents over the next two years could strain the sectors' ability to provide adequate supervision and training. GAO also observed that the large influx of new agents and the planned transfer of more experienced agents to the northern border could further exacerbate the already higher than desired agent-to-supervisor ratio in some Southwestern sectors. Moreover, the field training new agents receive is not consistent from sector to sector, which has implications for how well agents perform their duties. The draft report does not contain any recommendations.

After reviewing the draft report, CBP recommends that GAO modify its report to include a more accurate explanation of the desired 5-to-1 ratio of agents to supervisors. Within the first paragraph on page 4, GAO accurately states the Border Patrol's concern about the availability of sufficient supervisory personnel to address the rapid influx of

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inexperienced new agents. However, GAO neither conveys nor captures the complete picture of the proper application of the desired 5 to 1 ratio of agents to supervisors. When looking at the supervisor to agent ratio at the sector or national level, the results do not portray the desired 5 to 1 ratio because the entire Border Patrol staff is not made up of new agents. The 5 to 1 ratio would be applied in areas where the agent population is mostly comprised of new agents. It would be inefficient and unnecessary to obtain or maintain this same ratio level for journeyman agents. Therefore, not all units within a sector, or even at the station level, would require this ratio, which would result in a combined average higher than 5 to 1.

In general, the agent workforce within a station is made up of several patrol groups (shifts) that are broken down into individual units, as well as specialty units (all terrain vehicle units, tracking units, liaison units, etc). New agents, after participating in the field training unit, will eventually be assigned to a unit in one of the patrol groups. Depending on the actual number of new agents assigned, these units may require the higher number of supervisors compared to agents. The specialty units are generally made up of experienced journeyman agents and do not require this same level of supervision. In addition, as the new agents gain experience, they too would no longer require the 5 to 1 ratio.

At the sector level, the specialty units (Border Patrol Search, Trauma and Rescue; Special Response Team; asset forfeiture; air mobile unit; etc) would normally never have a new agent as part of their workforce. As a result, these units do not require the same level of supervisory attention. On the opposite side of the spectrum, there may be specialized units that require an even higher (or lower depending on your view) ratio of supervisors to agents, regardless of the experience level. When comparing all of these units at the sector or station level, you would see that the 5 to 1 ratio does not apply unilaterally based on the explanations above. CBP recommends that GAO modify the report to reflect the more accurate explanation of the Border Patrol's recommended ratio of 5 new agents to 1 supervisor.

CBP did not identify any sensitive information that would require a "For Official Use Only" designation or warrant protection under the Freedom of Information Act.

We thank you again for the opportunity to review this report and provide clarifying comments and technical changes.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Pecinovsky  
Director  
Departmental GAO/OIG Liaison Office

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