Forensics Team (Fall 2024) – Evidence (Harvard University, Fall 2022)

Topic: US government should substantially expand its surveillance infrastructure along its southern border.

Evidence from Harvard University Article on Border Surveillance

MISC. EVIDENCE (PRO)

PRO (Technology): AI-Enhanced Monitoring
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: Once Joe Biden's administration entered the White House, funding for the criminal prosecution of immigrants as well as the infamous border wall ceased---at least on paper.5 In its place, the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 bill, released on Biden's first day in office, included an initiative titled "Deploying Smart Technology at the Southern Border."6 According to the bill, technology is the sole method to "responsibly manage" and provide situational awareness on such a vast border.7 ***Biden's administration has envisioned a system of A.I.-based technological aids, many of which have already been implemented. Predator B drones, for example, have high-quality streaming and video taking capabilities, a speed limit of 276 mph, and a maximum altitude service of 50,000 feet; license plate readers, facial recognition cameras, ground sensors, and surveillance towers have also been installed.*** Currently, the southern border boasts 175 towers as part of a partnership with Anduril---a controversial collaboration due to the company's connections to multiple conservative groups---and the number of towers is set to increase in the upcoming months.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will significantly enhance border monitoring capabilities because the Biden administration is implementing a comprehensive system of AI-based technologies, including high-performance drones, license plate readers, facial recognition cameras, ground sensors, and an expanding network of surveillance towers.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be highly effective in detecting and preventing unauthorized border crossings for millions of potential migrants because these advanced AI-driven systems can process vast amounts of data in real-time, identifying potential threats more accurately.

PRO (Effectiveness): Comprehensive Coverage
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: The physical wall, which covers one third of the border, aims to delay potential border-crossers long enough for agents to arrive at the scene. Cargo X-ray and Gamma-ray scanners, as well as radiation devices, are utilized to detect potential illegal substances as vehicles approach the point of entry by detecting differences in density from the stated contents of packages. Buried ground seismic sensors, although susceptible to false signals due to animals or inanimate objects being carried by the wind, provide agents with information about approaching groups or lone-travelers beyond the immediately visible zone, where the majority of cameras are installed, in order to prevent illegal entrances through "weak-points" with no security checks. ***Six 200-foot-long unmanned aerostats are stationed thousands of feet above key areas of the U.S.-Mexico border, equipped with a downward-pointing radar system with a 200-mile radius sensor capability. Smaller versions of the machines closer to the ground have been constructed to identify individuals.*** The advanced forms of technology being used demonstrate the increase in invasiveness that have accompanied an increase in border security.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will dramatically improve situational awareness along the border because it employs a multi-layered system of technologies, including high-altitude aerostats with extensive radar coverage and ground-level identification systems, working in conjunction with existing physical barriers and scanning technologies.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be highly effective in creating a comprehensive border security system for monitoring thousands of miles of border because it combines long-range detection capabilities with precise individual identification.

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MISC. EVIDENCE (PRO): *CONTINUED…*

PRO (Efficiency): Streamlined Processing
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: CBP One operates as a decompression mechanism, doling out daily appointments, enrolling people in removal proceedings once they enter the country, and adding them to the back of the immigration court backlog. ***If use of the app led to a timely screening by an asylum officer, rather than a months-long wait in Mexico, it could help prioritize access to the U.S. land border to people with humanitarian protection claims and, over time, discourage the widespread perception among potential migrants that traveling to Mexico and waiting for an appointment will guarantee entry into the United States.*** This can be done by increasing the availability of daily appointments and assigning asylum officers to assess the merits of asylum claims raised at ports of entry.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will substantially improve the efficiency and fairness of the asylum process because technologies like the CBP One app can facilitate timely screenings, prioritize legitimate humanitarian claims, and potentially discourage unfounded asylum attempts.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be effective in managing the flow of hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers because it introduces a systematic, technology-driven approach to processing claims, expediting legitimate cases and deterring fraudulent ones.

PRO (Security): Enhanced Detection Capabilities
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: The physical wall, which covers one third of the border, aims to delay potential border-crossers long enough for agents to arrive at the scene. ***Cargo X-ray and Gamma-ray scanners, as well as radiation devices, are utilized to detect potential illegal substances as vehicles approach the point of entry by detecting differences in density from the stated contents of packages.*** Buried ground seismic sensors, although susceptible to false signals due to animals or inanimate objects being carried by the wind, provide agents with information about approaching groups or lone-travelers beyond the immediately visible zone, where the majority of cameras are installed, in order to prevent illegal entrances through "weak-points" with no security checks.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will improve detection of illegal substances because advanced scanning technologies are used to inspect vehicles and cargo at entry points.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be more effective in preventing smuggling activities involving thousands of potential smugglers because these sophisticated detection methods can identify discrepancies and potential threats that might otherwise go unnoticed.

PRO (Technology): Expanded Coverage Area
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: Currently, the southern border boasts ***175 towers as part of a partnership with Anduril---a controversial collaboration due to the company's connections to multiple conservative groups--- and the number of towers is set to increase in the upcoming months.***

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will expand coverage along the southern border because the number of surveillance towers is set to increase beyond the current 175.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be more effective in monitoring larger portions of the 2,000-mile southern border because the growing network of towers will provide wider coverage and reduce blind spots, potentially deterring thousands of illegal crossings.

MISC. EVIDENCE (PRO): *CONTINUED…*

PRO (Efficiency): Digital Appointment System
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: **CBP One operates as a decompression mechanism, doling out daily appointments, enrolling people in removal proceedings once they enter the country, and adding them to the back of the immigration court backlog.** If use of the app led to a timely screening by an asylum officer, rather than a months-long wait in Mexico, it could help prioritize access to the U.S. land border to people with humanitarian protection claims and, over time, discourage the widespread perception among potential migrants that traveling to Mexico and waiting for an appointment will guarantee entry into the United States.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will improve the organization of border crossings because the CBP One app allows for scheduling appointments and managing the flow of people entering the country.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be more effective in managing the entry process for hundreds of thousands of migrants because it provides a structured system for appointments and initial processing, potentially reducing chaos at border entry points.

PRO (Security): Multi-Layered Approach
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: **The physical wall, which covers one third of the border, aims to delay potential border-crossers long enough for agents to arrive at the scene. Cargo X-ray and Gamma-ray scanners, as well as radiation devices, are utilized to detect potential illegal substances as vehicles approach the point of entry by detecting differences in density from the stated contents of packages. Buried ground seismic sensors, although susceptible to false signals due to animals or inanimate objects being carried by the wind, provide agents with information about approaching groups or lone-travelers beyond the immediately visible zone, where the majority of cameras are installed, in order to prevent illegal entrances through "weak-points" with no security checks.**

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will create a comprehensive security system because it combines physical barriers, advanced scanning technologies, and various types of sensors to detect and deter unauthorized crossings.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be highly effective in securing the border against millions of potential unauthorized crossings because it employs multiple layers of detection and prevention methods, making it significantly more challenging for individuals to enter undetected.

PRO (Effectiveness): Improved Situational Awareness
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: **Six 200-foot-long unmanned aerostats are stationed thousands of feet above key areas of the U.S.-Mexico border, equipped with a downward-pointing radar system with a 200-mile radius sensor capability. Smaller versions of the machines closer to the ground have been constructed to identify individuals.** The advanced forms of technology being used demonstrate the increase in invasiveness that have accompanied an increase in border security.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will dramatically enhance border monitoring capabilities because it employs high-altitude aerostats with extensive radar coverage and ground-level identification systems.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be more effective in detecting and responding to unauthorized border crossings involving thousands of individuals because it provides both wide-area surveillance and precise identification capabilities, allowing for more targeted and efficient border patrol responses.

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MISC. EVIDENCE (PRO): *CONTINUED…*

PRO (Technology): Advanced Identification Systems
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: Biden's administration has envisioned a system of A.I.-based technological aids, many of which have already been implemented. Predator B drones, for example, have high-quality streaming and video taking capabilities, a speed limit of 276 mph, and a maximum altitude service of 50,000 feet; **license plate readers, facial recognition cameras, ground sensors, and surveillance towers have also been installed.**

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will significantly improve the ability to identify and track individuals because it incorporates advanced technologies such as license plate readers and facial recognition cameras.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be more effective in managing and monitoring the movement of thousands of individuals near the border because these identification systems can quickly process and cross-reference large amounts of data, potentially leading to more accurate and timely enforcement actions.

PRO (Efficiency): Streamlined Asylum Processing
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: If use of the app led to a timely screening by an asylum officer, rather than a months-long wait in Mexico, it could help prioritize access to the U.S. land border to people with humanitarian protection claims and, over time, discourage the widespread perception among potential migrants that traveling to Mexico and waiting for an appointment will guarantee entry into the United States. **This can be done by increasing the availability of daily appointments and assigning asylum officers to assess the merits of asylum claims raised at ports of entry.**

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will improve the efficiency of asylum claim processing because it allows for increased appointment availability and on-site merit assessments by asylum officers.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be more effective in managing the asylum process for tens of thousands of applicants because it reduces wait times and allows for faster, more accurate assessments of claims directly at the points of entry.

PRO (Security): Enhanced Identification Capabilities
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: **The FAA requires Predator drones to fly between 19,000 to 28,000 feet.36 According to DHS, images from a Predator drone's current camera cannot identify an individual's exact height, weight, eye color, hairstyle, or facial image from such a high altitude, but they can identify backpacks, vehicle types, and firearms (Image 2).37 These limitations would not apply to the smaller drones that CBP is currently testing.38 Small drones fly closer to the ground and can identify people's ethnicity, height, weight, and hairstyle. Image 4 is a frame from a video from one of CBP's small drones.39 Small drones can identify faces, and operators are able to read license plates, signs, banners, and other writing from the air.**

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will enhance identification capabilities because while high-altitude Predator drones can identify backpacks, vehicle types, and firearms, smaller drones flying at lower altitudes can identify individuals' physical characteristics and read license plates and other written information.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be effective in detecting and preventing illegal activities for thousands of potential border crossers because it provides border agents with detailed information about potential threats, allowing for more targeted and efficient enforcement.

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MISC. EVIDENCE (PRO): *CONTINUED…*

PRO (Effectiveness): Improved Data Processing

According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022

https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: ***Worryingly, CBP wants to combine its small drones with facial recognition software that could compare drone-captured images to a vast array of images in law enforcement databases.40 The FBI's Facial Analysis, Comparison, and Evaluation (FACE) Services unit allows the agency to access driver's license photos from 16 states and 411 million images from other sources, including the State and Defense departments.41 The FBI's Next Generation Identification and the Interstate Photo System (NGI-IPS) include more than 30 million photos.42 Around half of all American adults are in a law enforcement facial recognition network.43***

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will significantly enhance identification capabilities because CBP plans to combine drone imagery with facial recognition software, accessing vast law enforcement databases containing hundreds of millions of images.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be highly effective in identifying and tracking individuals of interest among millions of potential border crossers because it leverages extensive data resources and advanced facial recognition technology to rapidly process and match visual information.

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MISC. EVIDENCE (CON)

CON (Effectiveness): Overwhelmed Systems
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: On the cusp of the 2024 presidential election, immigration and U.S. border security are among the top issues of concern for American voters. Former President Donald Trump and his opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, are worlds apart on whether immigration is good or bad for the United States, but they do agree on one thing: the southern border has been in crisis, and the broken U.S. asylum system is to blame. *In 2022, the number of unauthorized border crossings reached a peak of 2.2 million, overwhelming not only border communities from Texas to California but also major cities such as New York, which received tens of thousands of new migrants with only limited support from the federal government. Images of disorder in border towns and of families being held in horrific conditions, as well as the increased presence of new arrivals lacking housing or work permits in U.S. cities, escalated public concern about the visible disarray of the U.S. immigration system.* Even though the numbers of unauthorized crossings at the southern border are down in 2024, the sense of crisis has persisted across the country.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will struggle to effectively manage the immigration crisis because the current system has already been overwhelmed by a record 2.2 million unauthorized crossings in 2022, leading to widespread disorder and strain on both border communities and major cities across the country.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be ineffective in solving the fundamental issues of the immigration crisis for millions of migrants and citizens because it fails to address the root causes of migration or provide adequate support systems for processing and integrating migrants.

CON (Effectiveness): Outdated Framework
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: *The last time the U.S. Congress weighed in on the question of whom the country should welcome was in 1990, when it passed legislation to increase the number of people who could immigrate to the United States. In the 34 years since then, advances in technology, an evolving labor market, the aging of the U.S. population, climate change, and political and humanitarian crises in the Western Hemisphere have driven more people to leave their homes, despite the fact that there are few safe legal pathways for those with a humanitarian or other urgent need to come to the United States. Today, the United States is relying on an immigration system designed for a different country at a different time.* In the absence of reforms that would have allowed the United States to adjust to the profound changes that have taken place since 1990 by making it easier to legally immigrate, migrants have increasingly resorted to using smuggling networks and claiming asylum at the U.S.-Mexican border in order to enter the country.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will fail to address modern migration challenges because the current immigration system is based on outdated legislation from 1990 that doesn't account for significant changes in technology, labor markets, demographics, climate, and global humanitarian crises over the past three decades.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be ineffective in managing current migration trends for millions of potential immigrants because it relies on an obsolete framework that doesn't provide adequate legal pathways for modern migration needs.

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MISC. EVIDENCE (CON): *CONTINUED…*

CON (Effectiveness): Shifting Migration Routes
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: ***Professor Bradford Jones at the University of California at Davis compiled data on this subject matter and found that, while prevention-by-deterrence did decrease the number of migrant apprehensions, it had severe unintended consequences. Examining the data regarding recovered remains and the number of migrants apprehended by Border Patrol, Jones points to the negative correlation between recovered remains and apprehensions as evidence that as crossing volume decreased, migrant deaths increased," though this correlation is relatively weak.*** Jones' findings also found a positive correlation between Border Patrol staffing and migrant deaths, supporting the theory that increased Border Patrol presence is positively correlated with the number of migrant deaths.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will lead to more dangerous migration attempts because as crossing volume decreased due to deterrence measures, migrant deaths increased.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be ineffective in reducing overall migration and may cause harm to thousands of migrants because it forces them to take more dangerous paths, potentially resulting in more injuries and fatalities rather than deterring migration attempts.

CON (Effectiveness): Limited Operational Capacity
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: ***Limitations of Drones: The biggest difficulty with drones is positioning them to surveil the border. Although CBP often comes close to or exceeds its flight-hour goals, its Predators were airborne only 6.4 percent of available hours per year from 2013 to 2016 (Table 1)—on average just 1 hour and 35 minutes per day.*** CBP's other aerial assets, such as unmanned buoyant aircraft outfitted with Tethered Aerostat Radar System (TARS), conduct surveillance at 15,000 feet and operate around 60 percent of the time.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will face significant operational constraints because CBP's Predator drones were airborne only 6.4 percent of available hours per year from 2013 to 2016, averaging just 1 hour and 35 minutes per day.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be ineffective in providing consistent coverage for thousands of miles of border because the limited operational time of surveillance drones leaves large gaps in monitoring, potentially allowing unauthorized crossings to occur undetected.

CON (Effectiveness): Weather-Dependent Reliability
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: ***CBP managed to conduct only 69 percent of its scheduled drone launches in 2016.9 The agency canceled 20 percent of its drone flights because of weather alone.*** When the flights do take place, weather can prevent drones from flying in the highest value airspace.10 Even occasional cloud cover can disrupt surveillance. In 2010, CBP allowed CNN to record an incident where operators tracked a group across the border, but just as the pilots started to instruct the agents on the ground, clouds blocked their view, and the subjects escaped.11 Unlike U.S. Border Patrol agents in the field, drones cannot apprehend subjects.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will struggle with consistency because CBP managed to conduct only 69 percent of its scheduled drone launches in 2016, with 20 percent canceled due to weather alone.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will fail to provide reliable monitoring for hundreds of miles of border because environmental conditions frequently prevent operations, creating opportunities for undetected border crossings.

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MISC. EVIDENCE (CON): *CONTINUED…*

CON (Cost): High Expense, Low Efficiency
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: Cost of Drones: ***Each Predator B drone costs $17 million to purchase and $12,255 per flight hour to operate.22 Thus, CBP's drone program cost a grand total of $255 million from 2013 to 2016 (Table 4).23 These figures likely understate the cost of the systems' depreciation because they assume a 20-year lifespan, but 18 percent of CBP drones crashed in their first 10 years. For comparison, manned aircraft with surveillance capabilities similar to the Predator B cost only about $1,500 to $2,000 per flight hour.24 Each drone apprehension costs the federal government $32,000 (Table 5). This cost of drone apprehension compares with the average cost of apprehension of less than $9,000.25***

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will be financially burdensome because each Predator B drone costs $17 million to purchase and $12,255 per flight hour to operate, with each drone apprehension costing the federal government $32,000 compared to an average apprehension cost of less than $9,000.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be an inefficient use of resources for monitoring thousands of border crossings because the high costs associated with drone technology do not correspond to a proportional increase in successful apprehensions or deterrence of illegal border crossings.

CON (Effectiveness): Limited Coverage Area
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: ***CBP drones also lack the authority to fly in certain areas. They require advanced permission from the U.S. Department of Defense to fly in restricted airspace and they cannot fly in areas with a high volume of commercial flights.15 Such restrictions block off large areas near San Diego, California, and Yuma, Arizona. Drones regularly patrolled only about 170 miles of the 2,000-mile southern land border in 2013, according to the most recent available data.16*** For these reasons, CBP drones fail to replace or displace any other surveillance equipment or agents in the field.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will have restricted reach because drones regularly patrolled only about 170 miles of the 2,000-mile southern land border in 2013, due to flight restrictions and other limitations.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be ineffective in monitoring vast stretches of the border because current technologies have significant limitations in their ability to cover the entire border region, leaving large areas vulnerable to unauthorized crossings.

CON (Effectiveness): Minimal Impact on Apprehensions
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: Effectiveness Of Drones: ***When CBP drones do fly, they contribute little to border security. From 2013 to 2016, the U.S. Border Patrol attributed fewer than 8,000 of its 1.7 million apprehensions to drones (Table 2).17 During the same years, only 3 percent of all U.S. Border Patrol marijuana seizures—which account for 99.3 percent of Border Patrol's drug seizures by weight—occurred in part because of drones (Table 3).18*** The agency has not provided any estimate of how many of these seizures or apprehensions would have occurred anyway had drones not identified them.

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will have minimal impact on illegal crossings because from 2013 to 2016, the U.S. Border Patrol attributed fewer than 8,000 of its 1.7 million apprehensions to drones.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will be ineffective in significantly enhancing border security because aerial surveillance contributes to only a tiny fraction of overall apprehensions, failing to justify the substantial investment in drone technology.

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MISC. EVIDENCE (CON): *CONTINUED…*

CON (Effectiveness): Low Detection Rate
According to... the Institute of Politics Policy Program, Harvard University, Fall 2022
https://www.iop.harvard.edu

Original: **CBP asserts that drones detect patterns of illegal entries, allowing the agency to reposition its assets accordingly. However, only 2 percent of drone missions resulted in any evidence of a previously undetected illegal crossing in 2014.19 Moreover, the Government Accountability Office found that drones detected only 21,384 suspected border crossers from 2014 to 2016.20 Yet during this time, the U.S. Border Patrol apprehended 1.2 million people while an estimated 570,000 evaded capture.21 In other words, drones may have detected at most 1.2 percent of total illegal border crossings.**

It states... Increasing US border surveillance will have limited detection capabilities because drones detected only 21,384 suspected border crossers from 2014 to 2016, which may have been at most 1.2 percent of total illegal border crossings.

This means... Increasing US border surveillance will fail to detect the vast majority of illegal border crossings because current drone technologies are only able to identify a small percentage of those attempting to cross the border, leaving hundreds of thousands of crossings undetected.