



U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection

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# News Release

## El Centro BP Agents Assist Local First Responders, Continue Investigation into Breach

**EL CENTRO, Calif.** – On the morning of March 2, [El Centro Sector](#) Border Patrol agents, at the request of the California Highway Patrol and Imperial County Sheriff's Office, responded to two separate critical incidents involving one vehicle each near Holtville, California. At no point, did CBP/USBP attempt to stop or pursue either vehicle. The following timeline approximates the series of those events.

At approximately 5:56 a.m., El Centro Sector Radio Communications dispatch advised agents working near Calexico, California that a red Suburban was engulfed in flames near the intersection of Interstate 8 and State Route 115. Agents responded from nearby locations.

At approximately 6:05 a.m., agents reported a 10-foot breach in the International Boundary Fence between Mexico and the United States near the Gordon's Well exit/Schneider's Bride area just off Interstate 8 approximately 30 miles east of the Highway 115/I-8 interchange. Within this area, the international boundary fence is a few hundred feet from Schneider's Bridge. Border Patrol Agents reported they were actively working border incursions to the east and west of where the breach occurred.

At 6:06 a.m., Border Patrol Agents reviewed surveillance footage which yielded images of two different vehicles leaving the area in proximity of the fence breach.

At approximately 6:30 a.m., agents assisting with the burning red Suburban encountered 19 individuals hiding in the brush nearby and determined they had entered the country illegally through the breach in the border fence.

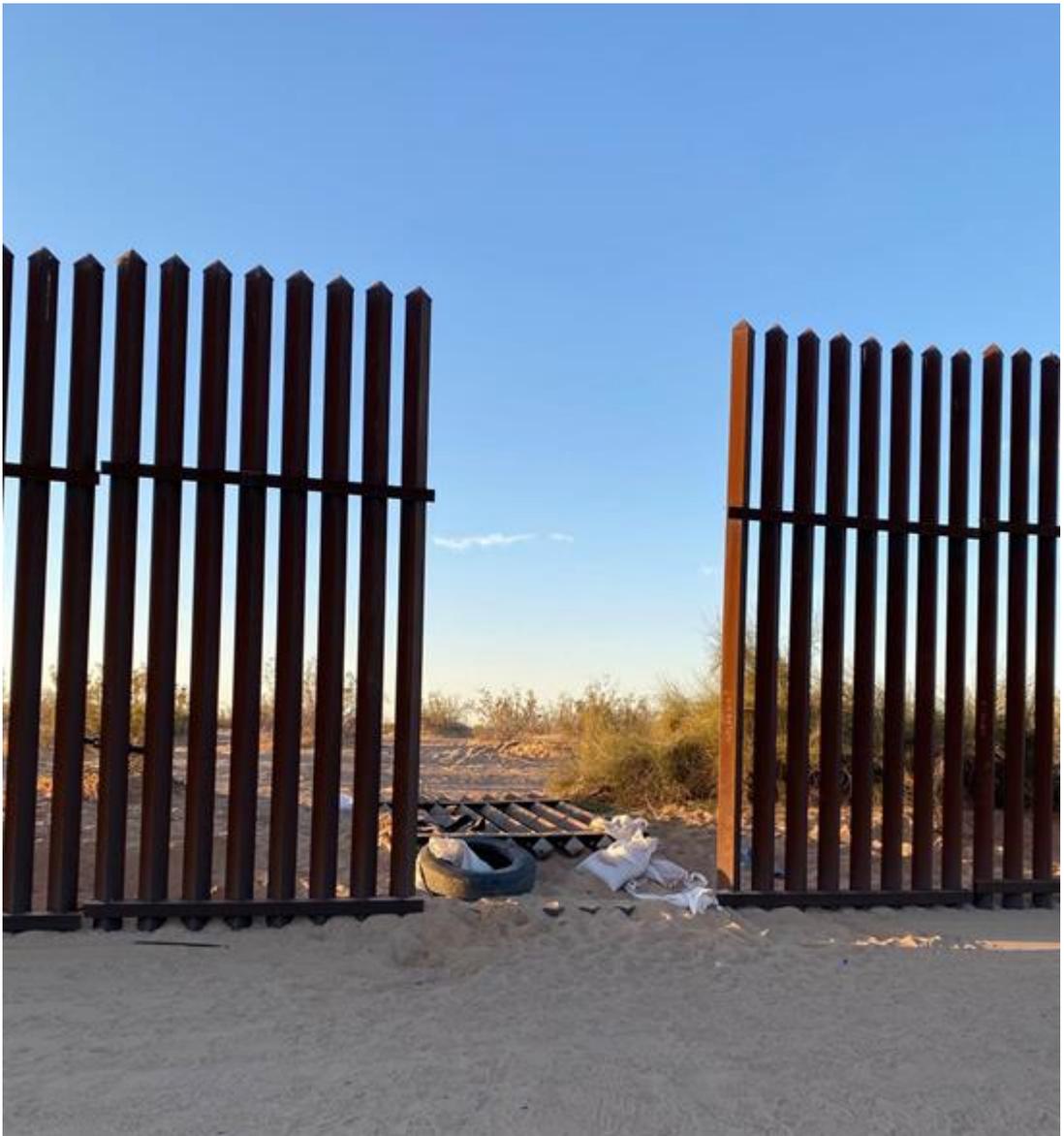
At approximately 7:05 a.m., Border Patrol assistance was again requested, this time with a vehicle collision near State Route 115 and Norrish Road. At approximately 7:11 a.m., members of the Border Patrol Search Trauma and Rescue team (BORSTAR) responded to the vehicle collision where a BORSTAR Paramedic assisted with lifesaving efforts to accident victims. In total, 12 of 25 individuals in the vehicle at the time of the accident were pronounced deceased at the scene. An additional individual later died at an area hospital. All are suspected to have entered the U.S. illegally.

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) has assumed lead over the investigation of the accident at State Route 115/ Norrish Road. Details regarding this investigation can be directed to CHP Public Affairs. Border Patrol is investigating the smuggling events. Further details of Border Patrol's smuggling investigation are being withheld pending potential prosecution.

“We pray for the accident victims and their families during this difficult time,” said El Centro Sector Chief Patrol Agent Gregory Bovino. “Initial investigation into the origins of the vehicles indicate a potential nexus to the aforementioned breach in the border wall. Human smugglers have proven time and again they have little regard for human life. Those who may be contemplating crossing the border illegally should pause to think of the dangers that all too often end in tragedy; tragedies our Border Patrol Agents and first responders are unfortunately very familiar with.”

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