SPECIAL BORDER EDITION

BAJA TIMES

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SECTIONS INSIDE:

Directory of Services.... 4
Coupons.... 5
Dining Guide.... 6
Classifieds.... 10

May 1-15, 2019 E-mail: bajatimes@yahoo.com WWW.BAJATIMES.COM

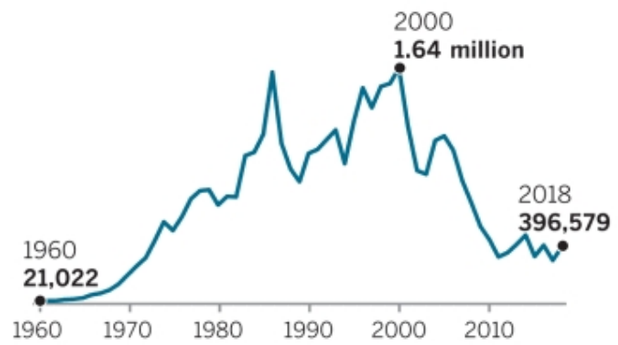
LOCAL & WORLD NEWS

Honoring All Those Who Have Helped Our At-Risk Kids...the Boys and Girls Club of Rosarito is hosting an "Evening of Appreciation" on Tuesday, May 21st at the Rosarito Beach Hotel's "Joint Salon." The evening's festivities...recognizing all those (patrons, volunteers, and Club members) who have helped & continue to help further this worthy cause... are scheduled to run from 5:00-800 PM and will include complimentary refreshments & karaoke as well as some truly special surprises. Please RSVP to Rosy Torres, the Club President, via phone, email, or on the Club's website: (661) 850-1773, rosytorres@hotmail.com or http://www.clubrosarito.org

Kudos to Hayden and Nolan Rodgers...a massive tip of the cap to brothers Hayden and Nolan Rodgers for their true spirit of aloha and selfless acts of caring. Last weekend, the Rodgers brothers headed south of the border, where they helped host Clinica De Surf in conjunction with the Baja Surf Club. Held at Playa La Fonda, near Rosarito, the event was to help some of the local Baja youngsters get stoked on surfing and learn more about ocean awareness and water safety. For the second year in a row, the Rodgers boys utilized their network of friends and family to donate surfboards, wetsuits and other gear, which they brought with them and contributed to the cause. The Rodgers boys also rallied San Clemente rippers Nico Coli, Rex Hennings and Ben Brantell to make the trip with them and get involved in the surf clinic. Coach Dave Post was a valued resource as well, thanks to his vast experience and passion for firing kids up on surfing. Surf brands Volcom, Sun Bum, Electric, Stance, FCS and Banzai Bowl also got behind the effort. Between what the Rodgers brothers are doing, and the example set by Pat and Tanner Gudauskas's surfboard drives to Jamaica, South Africa and Trinidad & Tobago, it's amazing to see the local South Orange County (CA) surf community paying it forward worldwide in such inspiring ways

5 Misconceptions About The U.S.-Mexico Border

Written By The Los Angeles Times Staff

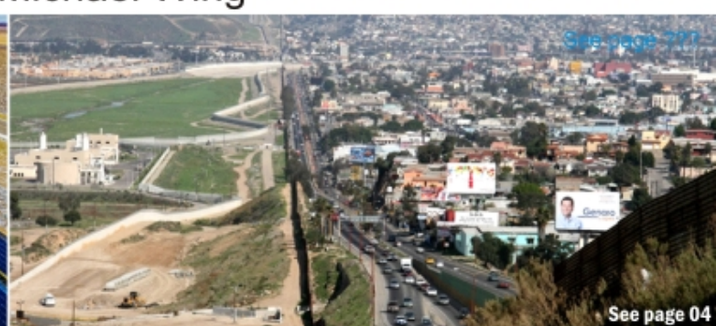


The latest current verified numbers for daily border crossings by location are not surprising (L), but the large drop off in the totals in the last two decades (R) definitely are!

See page 05

In Place of a Border Wall, Scientists Propose a 2000 Mile Long Alternative Energy Border Wall Park

Written By Michael Wing



See page 04

Walls can be horizontal as well as vertical. An example of the former (L) uses wind power to produce irrigation through reverse osmosis while the latter (R) separates countries while protecting each entity's energy infrastructure.

The Border Realities Beneath the Fury

Written by Jean Guerrero for The New York Times

See page 08

Warning signs on fences along Baja's beautiful Pacific beaches (L) don't dissuade locals & tourists from enjoying shopping while strolling along Tijuana's world famous *Avenida la Revolucion* (R) .

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LOCAL & WORLD NEWS

Officer applauded for turning in 6,000 pesos left at ATM... Residents of La Paz, Baja California Sur, voiced their approval on social media outlets after a police officer turned in a stack of forgotten banknotes. Local news sources reported that on Tuesday afternoon, Fidel Cisneros León was using an ATM at a Santander bank in the downtown area of the city when he noticed that a previous user had left behind 6,000 pesos (US $319) in the cash dispenser. The officer entered the bank and handed over the forgotten money and receipt to bank personnel, who handed him a voucher and promised to find the customer who had lost the money.

The 13-year police veteran said it never crossed his mind to pocket the cash, despite hard economic times. Reading the story, citizens took to social media to congratulate Cisneros on his honesty and professional ethics, calling him a "true police officer, and not one of the gangsters invading the city." One commenter called the officer a "man and a true public servant with principles and values." "Congratulations," said another. "Not everyone would be so honest [in that situation]."It was the second story of integrity in La Paz in less than a month. A woman returned 40,000 pesos she found i last month in The Home Depot parking lot. The story went viral and earned her two bottles of tequila as a gift from the money's owner and over 3,000 comments of praise on social media. She said the moral of the story was that returning something belonging to someone else was not only the right thing to do, but fun as well.

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From Front Page...

In Place of a Border Wall, Scientists Propose a 2000 Mile Long Alternative Energy Border Wall Park

Border wall debates have raged between political parties and the media in the United States for years. Many Americans are divided over the issue of the U.S.-Mexico border. Yet the heated controversy has generated some innovative solutions from the scientific community. Could science really hold the key to bringing all the sides together while at the same time providing clean sources of energy for all?There are at least two dozen scientists from universities across the United States who think so, but wait until you hear the solution they've dreamt up. Imagine a 2,000-mile-long alternative energy industrial park, 62 miles wide, from sea to shining sea along the U.S. southern border.

The potential envisioned for everything from the economy to fresh water solutions to an abundance of clean energy and, yes, border security present an opportunity worth considering.

"Given that most of the southern border lies in arid or semi-arid regions having high solar irradiation and wind, an energy park along the border is both feasible and desirable," reads a statement by the Future Energy, Water, Industry and Education Park (FEWIEP), the name of the proposed mega project.Solar installations at various points across Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and south of the border would accompany wind

Mexico's federal police stand guard at the U.S.-Mexico border fence as U.S. President Donald Trump visits Calexico, California. U.S.

turbines stationed near both coasts. "Areas of strong winds exist in the Gulf and Baja California regions, which are ideal for wind farms," the report explains. Energy produced via wind turbines can be used to power water desalinization plants to provide valuable fresh water to drought-affected areas that have been living beyond their means in terms of ground water use.

They estimate that "wind power in the Gulf Coast and Baja California to operate reverse osmosis plants may provide 2.3 million acre-feet of water per year [...] enough to satisfy the water needs for all of Texas' manufacturing, mining, livestock, and other power needs." Which could literally cause the desert to bloom, potentially.Reduced tax zone incentives across the 62-mile strip could bring in massive amounts of business from solar energy innovators like Tesla and others. This subsidy cost could be recouped through selling energy or through taxes. An incentivized project of this size could greatly enhance and accelerate the local economy, and create a huge number of jobs—on both sides of the border. More high-paying salaries are also likely to mean increased average quality of life for locals.

In terms of security, the heavily protected area would serve a dual purpose. "The proposed energy infrastructure can be incorporated into and be an integral part of a border security installation, such as a wall or a fence," states the report. "This technological buffer can in turn also help to protect the energy infrastructure and prevent illegal immigration across the border."

At the same time, as parties on both sides of the aisle are starting to see eye to eye on border security, a project like this could tether the far extremes of the "Green New Deal" with staunch nationalists on the right. It could be just the kind of unifier to seal the deal for all parties, left and right, north and south.

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LOCAL & WORLD NEWS

Why gray whales may be starving to death along the California coast...even before three dead whales showed up in the San Francisco Bay Area this week, whale watching organizers knew something was wrong during a recent trip to Baja California, Mexico. "When we got down there the entire story was the whales are late, the whales are late," said Chris Biertuempfel, California's Programs Manager for the Oceanic Society. Biertuempfel said scientists noticed whales were giving birth outside the San Ignacio Lagoon, the spot they usually go to breed. "Their journey this year seems to be taking them longer. The fact that they would get down to Baja and give birth outside of the lagoon, shows that they mistimed the migration.," said Biertuempfel, who has several theories of why that may be happening. He speculates the receding Arctic ice cap may be forcing gray whales to go farther north find food. That means they must travel farther on their migration south to Baja, and if they did not eat enough, they may be simply running out of fatty energy reserves. That view is shared by Mary Jane Schramm of the NOAA Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. "Ordinarily we would see this healthy, very linear migration, not really stopping. Going all the way up to the Arctic," said Schramm as she points to a map of the Pacific Ocean to show the typical migration of gray whales once they give birth in Mexico.

Schramm said gray whales don't usually come into the San Francisco Bay. If they do, that means something is wrong. "It's a desperate move. And it has us alarmed because we've seen this play out before in 1999 and 2000 when we lost 30 percent of their population," said Schramm. Thousands of gray whales died in that period. They had recovered, but Schramm fears something similar may be happening again. The culprit could be climate change. Unlike humpback whales that eat fish along their migration, gray whales are bottom feeders. They eat mudbugs that feed on algae under the Arctic ice to build up their fat reserves and then use that energy for their long migration.

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From Front Page...

5 Misconceptions About The U.S.-Mexico Border

Written By The Los Angeles Times Staff

Will Trump be able to shut down the southern border with Mexico? Will building a wall stop the flow of drugs? Is there an actual crisis at the border?

This article will separate misconceptions from facts.

1. Misconception: Trump says he is going to shut down the border

Fact: It would be nearly impossible to shut down the entire border

President Trump has more than once threatened to close the border with Mexico, with the most recent threat aimed at showing his displeasure over Central American asylum seekers trying to cross into the United States.But last Thursday, a day before traveling to California, Trump said he would give Mexico "a one-year warning" before imposing tariffs on Mexican goods. "If that doesn't work, we're going to close the border," the president said. "I will do it," Trump said. "I don't play games."

But the border is roughly 2,000 miles long, with some type of barrier covering about 650 miles of it. Physically closing the entire border would be logistically impossible. What Trump is probably referring to are the 47 official ports of entry along the southern border.

Closing every port of entry would require more staffing at the border. The Department of Homeland Security has been facing personnel shortages in the thousands, but the administration is reassigning Customs and Border Protection officers from ports of entry to help Border Patrol agents operating primarily between those points. And there are economic concerns. Each day, more than 1 million people and about $1.7 billion in commerce are processed through official ports of entry. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has warned that a shutdown would hurt farmers and manufacturers across the nation, as well as workers and consumers.

Two-way trade in goods between Mexico and the United States has increased from $81.4 billion in 1993 — the year before the North American Free Trade Agreement took effect — to $557.6 billion in 2017. Mexico has remained the United States' second-largest export market since 1995, with exports totaling $242 billion in 2017.The San Diego customs district — which includes the San Ysidro Port of Entry — accounts for 12.1% of all U.S. imports from Mexico, including components for the aerospace industry and avocados.

When the San Ysidro crossing — where some 95,000 people enter in cars and on foot each day — was closed last November for five hours, people were prevented from crossing to shop, work or attend school. San Ysidro shop owners lost an estimated $5.3 million in revenue, according to local officials.If the ports are shut down, the economic impact will have a ripple effect, starting at towns along the border, said Shannon K. O'Neil, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "There's a really direct local effect there."

2.Misconception: Building more wall will prevent drug trafficking

Fact: Most drugs from Mexico come through official ports of entry

The consensus among security and drug trafficking experts is that building a wall itself will have little effect on the illicit drug trade along the southwest border. Most illegal drugs smuggled from Mexico come through legal ports of entry, often disguised as commerce, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Some lawmakers from states hit hard by opioid abuse say they believe a wall will keep drugs out, said Adam Isacson, director of defense oversight at the Washington Office on Latin America."They want more fencing 'cause they believe it's going to keep out things like fentanyl," he said. "But that's just not how it's arriving."

Experts and other lawmakers are concerned that pulling Customs and Border Protection officers from ports of entry could potentially create more opportunities for drug traffickers to get through. Former Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen last week (before her unexpected resignation) acknowledged that traffickers use official crossings and suggested closing the border would stop the flow. "A lot of the drugs do come through the ports of entry," Nielsen said. "If the lane isn't open, then, you know, in some senses the drugs cannot get through in a mass way, because the vehicles won't be getting through."

3.Misconception: More immigrants are illegally crossing the border

Fact: The number of illegal crossings is down – and has been down

The Trump administration is portraying a crisis at the border, but numbers show fewer people have been illegally crossing the southern border compared with longer-term data. Customs and Border Protection data show apprehensions along the U.S.-Mexico border have dropped sharply since a 2000 peak:

In February, Customs and Border Protection arrested 66,450 migrants crossing the border illegally, the largest one-month total in the last decade. The numbers will probably continue to rise because warmer weather brings a seasonal uptick in migration; the agency estimates that number will top 90,000 in March.

In February, Trump declared a national emergency pointing to the border. He later used the figures from that month as justification. But experts point to the long-term decline in border crossings. "Everyone keeps on focusing on the numbers from a year ago and the numbers from last month," said Nora Demleitner, a law professor at Washington and Lee University who specializes in crime and immigration. "When you compare it over a longer time frame, the number is really not that high."

4.Misconception: Most illegal immigration is coming from the Mexico border

Fact: More illegal immigration occurs through people overstaying their visas

For the last 10 years, most illegal immigration has occurred by people overstaying their visas rather than by illegally crossing the border, according to a study published in January by the Center for Migration Studies. In 2016, an estimated 320,000 visitors to the U.S. — 62% of total arrivals — who had temporary visas overstayed them. Over a seven-year period, most of the arrivals who lacked legal status came to the U.S. by air travel. "It is clear from our research that persons who overstay their visas add to the U.S. undocumented population at a higher rate than border crossers," Donald Kerwin, executive director of the center, said in a statement. "This is not a blip, but a trend which has become the norm."

The Department of Homeland Security does not provide comprehensive data for immigrants who legally entered the U.S. then overstayed their visas.

The department's most recent and reliable figure, according to the Government Accountability Office, is that 702,000 visitors who came to the U.S. by air or sea in 2017 overstayed. The Homeland Security report did not have overstay estimates for those who traveled by land or information on overstays from prior years who may still be in the U.S., according to the GAO ."Not only is a wall expensive," Kerwin said, "it fails to address the issue at hand."

5.Misconception: Trump has been securing our border by building more walls

Fact: Not one new linear mile of border wall has been completed under Trump

So far, Trump has been unsuccessful in securing from lawmakers the $5.7 billion he has demanded to finance more than 230 miles of a border wall.Instead, the spending bill passed by Congress and that Trump signed into law to avoid a second shutdown appropriates less than a quarter of that — $1.375 billion for 55 miles of barrier.

Types of barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border

Before that spending agreement, Congress had approved nearly $1 billion to replace more than 50 miles of fencing in California, New Mexico and Texas, the Government Accountability Office reported. Last Thursday, Customs and Border Protection announced in a statement leading up to Trump's recent visit to the southern border that it will begin constructing a 13-mile stretch along the Rio Grande Levee Wall System, a project the president falsely claimed had already begun in February.

Despite opposition from Congress, Trump declared a national emergency in February to "confront the national security crisis on our southern border." The White House said it would pull an additional $6.6 billion, besides the $1.375 billion already provided by Congress in the spending bill, from other federal funding for building or repairing more than 230 miles of border wall. Of that total, about $3.6 billion would come from military construction projects and most of the rest from an account for projects to combat drug trafficking. The Pentagon recently notified Congress it had authorized its first transfer toward wall funding, of $1 billion.Trump acknowledged the process of the declaration — which drew criticism from both Democrats and Republicans — would be unpredictable. Last month, the president submitted an annual budget request to Congress asking for another $5 billion for new border wall.

Reporting by Molly O'Toole, Melissa Gomez, Kyle Kim, Jon Schleuss and Lorena Iñiguez Elebee Graphics by Kyle Kim, Jon Schleuss and Lorena Iñiguez Elebee

Sources: Times reporting, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Center for Migration Studies, the Government Accountability Office, Elisabeth Vallet, University of Quebec-Montreal; Encyclopedia Britannica, Business Insider, Google Earth, OpenStreetMap, Nextzen

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ROSARITO BEACH, BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO---For some people, the scenic 14-mile drive from the US. border to the Rosarito Beach Hotel & Spa is one of the highlights of the visit. Others would rather leave the driving to someone else.

For those in the latter category, a round-trip shuttle service from the San Ysidro border crossing to the hotel is available on weekends.

Offered by TJ Passport service, the shuttle makes several trips on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays between the hotel and the San Ysidro Border Crossing, where passengers are processed through the U.S. Port of Entry before re-boarding their shuttle bus.

One-way cost is $20 or $35 for a round trip, while children less than 9 years old ride for free.

All departure times and more information are on the hotel's website, www.rosaritobeachhotel.com, under the section Shuttle Service. Further details also can be found there, or by calling the shuttle service at 619-428-0011 (from the U.S.) or 664-683-1495 (from Mexico).

The shuttle service provides a convenient travel alternative as the busy summer season approaches. Many other specials and gala events are featured in August and beyond at Baja's largest and most popular beachfront resort. All are listed on the resort's website.

The Rosarito Beach Hotel, which opened in May of 1924, is celebrating its 95th anniversary as it counts down to its centennial in 2024. A section on the resort website, titled Since 1924, features an historic overview and photos.

Readers of San Diego magazine in 2017 selected the Rosarito Beach Hotel as Baja's best. US News & World Report named Rosarito a top spot for outdoor activities, from surfing to fishing to off-roading, biking and hiking.

The Rosarito Beach Hotel & Spa is a totally self-enclosed resort, yet near major attractions including the city's downtown tourist zone, Puerto Nuevo Lobster Village and the Guadalupe Wine Valley.

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From Front Page...

The Border Realities Beneath the Fury

Written by Jean Guerrero for The New York Times

The Trump administration's hard-line immigration policies, and rhetoric, are straining the daily cross-border existence of those in Cali-Baja.

When we think of southwestern borderlands, many Americans think of half-abandoned outposts or quaint small towns with lone desert highways. Others conjure a more menacing, cracked-earth landscape patrolled by cartels. What's often missing from our national immigration narrative is the centrality of complex binational communities like Cali-Baja, home to the country's busiest port of entry and the San Diego-Tijuana metropolitan area. Every day here, about 145,000 people make the commute between the two sprawling cities and their outskirts.

As President Trump reshuffles the Department of Homeland Security to make it "tougher," shrinks the asylum process and shifts resources away from ports of entry toward more barren areas, the San Diego County-Tijuana community — and its multibillion dollar economy — is already bracing. Countless local residents and officials, including San Diego's powerful Republican mayor, Kevin Faulconer, say the abrupt transfer of hundreds of officers from ports of entry has put the daily flow of bodies and goods through checkpoints in slow-motion, interrupting the region's cross-border economy. Wait times frequently exceed five or six hours.

"Having our borders open and fully functioning is not an option, but a necessity," Mayor Faulconer said in a statement, when asked about the extensive delays, which he tersely described as having a "negative impact."

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)— a state regional agency — recently estimated that about $7.2 billion in gross output and more than 62,000 jobs are lost annually because of border traffic. And stoppages have only gotten worse this spring with the manpower shortage, which has led to commercial lane closures.

As Trump renews threats to close the border outright, customs brokers tell me their partners — in cross-border supply chains for aerospace, medical devices and agriculture — are "panicked." Eduardo Acosta, vice president of a major customs brokerage company, says businesses are facing late fees, contract cancellations and assembly line freezes. "All that adds up," Mr. Acosta said. "Twenty percent of cargo being laid over every day." Another executive, Fidel Gutierrez Castro, C.E.O. of G-Global, agreed: "They have us all crazy, making contingency plans." Places like the *El Paso-Ciudad Juárez* area in Texas, while not as heavily transited as Southern California, are also reporting disruptions.

Ports of entry are at the center of hotly debated legal questions about asylum

People outside the border crossing in San Diego

seekers — in the courts and in the media. Last month, nearly 11,000 asylum seekers legally entered the United States through them. About 53,000 families crossed illegally. Those here on the ground know that part of the decade-high surge in illegal crossings is directly linked to the long backlogs at ports of entry. Many migrants who fear for their lives in Mexico, or who don't want to wait, cross illegally to avoid delays at the ports. (For asylum seekers, the wait time is weeks.) And with White House rhetoric painting a bleak picture of a lawless border, more armed militia groups have been heading here to detain these families at gunpoint, long before contacting the Border Patrol.

Disagreement within the Trump administration over how to handle the migrant surge has led to rancor, leaks and recent resignations. But untangling the situation doesn't lend itself to point-blank answers, because ports are also the channels through which socioeconomic life in the region breathes. Daily existence is inextricably binational.

Some Americans live in Tijuana for the affordable housing, and work in San Diego for the better paycheck. Many affluent Mexicans send their children to private schools in San Diego County (which couldn't function without their backing). And Americans go to Tijuana for everything from inexpensive fine dining to affordable elder care.

San Diego is famous for its beaches. Still, local surfers (like me) know that a bit farther south we can enjoy similar, less-crowded waves. A bustling art scene in both cities pulls people in and out, and family on both ends of the border visit each other — for meals, holidays, Mass, care-taking and more.

Although it may feel distant, Mr. Trump once touted the benefits of cross-border life. One of his planned projects, feted a decade ago, would have depended on it. The Trump Ocean Resort Baja Mexico was never built, but in 2007 it was publicized at lavish San Diego parties. About 250 mostly American investors, who were in the market for vacation condos in Tijuana at the time, found themselves hooked.

A California couple I interviewed a couple of years ago, who bought in on the project, remember being partially persuaded by a Trump Organization promo: "One of the things I most love about the project is the fact that it's in Baja, Mexico," Mr. Trump said, with a confident squint. "And Baja is one of the really hot places." They were intent on "creating northern Baja as the new Cabo" in Ivanka Trump's words. She explicitly trumpeted the area's "proximity to San Diego" and attended a promotional party for it at the *L'Auberge* hotel.

When the housing market crashed, the vision of a Trump resort in Tijuana vanished. The Trumps settled under confidential terms. (The couple, among the litigants who sued for fraud, found satisfaction in destroying one of the Trump *piñatas* now widely sold along the border.)

These days, the binational realities of borderlands are rarely acknowledged by this White House's rhetoric. But it's an interdependence I grew up with.

My father, a Mexican immigrant with a green card, would often drive us from San Diego to Tijuana to camp on the coast. I remember family weddings with *mariachis,* lobster by the seaside in Rosarito, freshly made tortillas so soft they melted in my mouth. I remember getting older and sneaking into Tijuana to party at the bars on *Avenida Revolución*. (I remember my mother telling me Mexico could be dangerous; my father leading me to believe I was not as much Mexican-American as I was the dash in between.)

One recent night, I drove to Tijuana for what was supposed to be a quick errand. My car broke down. It was late, my phone was about to die and I didn't have a charger. The city was seeing record violence as beefed-up border security ironically meant American-bound drugs were getting stuck in Tijuana, fueling crime and addiction.I waved down a passing police officer, who tried and failed to jump-start my car. I called my father, hoping he'd be in Tijuana — he lives on both sides of the border. Alas, he was in San Diego, and from the sound of his voice, he had clearly been drinking, a habit of his. As I tried to hang up, he insisted I text him my location, so he could send a cross-border tow truck. Instead, to my horror, he showed up on his motorcycle, wobbly. But handy as ever, he tinkered and fixed my engine within minutes.

It's one of the more darkly amusing, if still dangerous, stories I have of my devil-may-care father. But when he's bingeing he can, like many heavy drinkers, make himself very sick: I try not to think about what would happen if a more permanent set of crossing restrictions prevents me from reaching him during one of his low periods.

There are thousands who have more all-encompassing duties across the border, like a source of mine, based in San Diego County, who has a cousin on dialysis in Tijuana whom she looks after. Health care, child-care and groceries are all mutual markets in these parts.

"It's just very precarious wondering what's going to happen," says Keith Kleinstiver, an American citizen who lives with his husband in Tijuana and works in San Diego. A schoolteacher, he has taken to keeping an "emergency suitcase" in his car in case "it" happens and he gets stuck on the California side.

Now, as Mr. Trump takes a liking to declaring "the country is full," some degree of border closure appears to be a concrete policy goal rather than a showy political taunt. That shift remains in tension, however, with already-appropriated state and federal funds designed to better facilitate legal border crossings — such as the $741 million expansion of the San Ysidro Port of Entry and other entry expansion projects.

Mr. Faulconer, the Republican San Diego mayor, told CNN in February: "I don't talk about building walls. I talk about building bridges and increasing that communication, increasing that flow. And that's really what defines our border region in San Diego."

In 2015, as immigration fears overtook the Republicans' presidential primary, officials in Cali-Baja made such bridge-building literal — opening one that allows airline passengers direct access to the Tijuana International Airport. Security there isn't a problem.

According to Customs and Border Protection's own data, most illegal drugs flow through the ports — hidden in seats, tires and other parts of vehicles. Much of the rest comes through hundreds of urban tunnels built nearby, under existing border barriers.

Experts say investments in greater personnel and technology at the ports of entry could kill two birds with one stone, strengthening enforcement while also decreasing backlogs and inhumane overcrowding. Such a move has the support of Mayor Faulconer; Senator Kamala Harris, the former California attorney general and current presidential candidate; and the centrist San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Still, Mr. Trump hasn't let go of the distorting talking point that drugs and criminals are pouring through more remote stretches of border, and he harps on a wall as the best way to stop them. And with many of the newly empowered House Democrats casting the entirety of Mr. Trump's border security efforts as an abomination, a compromise deal has become a third rail, if not an impossibility, in the coming year as election campaigning takes precedence.

In the meantime, the vast majority of border-crossing residents just living their lives have found themselves caught, quite literally in the middle, idling in the morass.

***Jean Guerrero** is the author of "Crux: A Cross-Border Memoir" and an investigative reporter for KPBS, the San Diego NPR and PBS affiliate.*

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Basketball Across Borders Unites Both Countries

Written by Scott Akanewich

Only 50 miles separates the gym at Pacific Ridge School in Carlsbad and the U.S. border with Mexico.However, for the players on the Firebirds basketball squad, a recent visit to Tijuana and Rosarito for a series of clinics and games was certainly an eye-opener for head coach Chris Burman's club.

The crude outdoor courts in *Colonia Fausto Gonzalez* — on the former site of a Tijuana landfill, surrounded by scores of underprivileged neighborhoods — were just a few of the sights and sounds that provided a dose of reality.Global engagement is one of the primary tenets of the private school's mission statement, so what better way to put it to practical use than a trip south of the border."The main thing is these trips — and our global travel at Pacific Ridge School in general — are much more about connecting, sharing and learning from people than anything else," said Burman, in his fifth season as Firebirds head coach.

"While we hope our guys created some fun memories for and with the kids in Tijuana/Rosarito, it really is most about connecting people, getting to know each other, practicing (and even struggling with) Spanish and having some fun together as a team in a unique place … that really is much closer than one may realize."Each day in Baja California began with a clinic in Tijuana followed by games against local teams in Rosarito in the afternoon.

Senior Tommy Rogers, a team captain, enjoyed what was his second year in a row visiting Mexico."It was just a really cool experience," said Rogers. "It's great to be able to spread the game and connect with kids in another culture."

Of course, in order to connect, the language barrier must be conquered.No worries and good practice, said Burman."Most of our guys are Spanish-language students, anyway," he said. "We just throw them in there with the kids and our players have fun with it, sharing something they're passionate about."

But, make no mistake, the Firebirds' visit wasn't a one-way street, but rather a mutually beneficial experience."As a person, seeing the environment these kids are growing up in makes you want to help," said senior Nick Nielsen. "I really enjoyed coaching the kids."

As far as the basketball is concerned in a place where soccer is king, hoops is certainly secondary, but that doesn't mean there aren't pockets of enthusiasm for the game."There aren't tons of kids who play basketball," said Burman. "But the ones who are dedicated to the game are pretty good."In fact, the Firebirds found themselves trailing in one particular game, 48-44, with only three minutes remaining, but recovered to finish the contest on a 12-2 run and earn a hard-fought victory.

According to Rogers, his and his teammates' on-court experience was a bit sobering as well."The game is definitely played differently and at a different pace," said Rogers. "But a lot of the kids I saw last year have grown and developed as players."Still, the novelty of the visits never gets old — for either group, said Rogers.

"Just the joy and level of excitement it brings to the kids is great," he said. "It's also an amazing opportunity to get to be with our teammates in another environment and see a different side of things."Along with Burman, Rogers and Nielsen, assistant coach Julian Jones also made the trip with players Alex Nalbandian, Ryan Prvanov, Brady Burman, Bird McGuire and Dylan Murphy.

Along with the joy he and his players brought the kids of Baja, it was also an excellent team-building opportunity, said Burman."It's always great to be able to travel with the team," he said. "Especially going someplace so close, but which is so different, and be able to learn about the world."

Scott Akanewich is a freelance writer.

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Opinion: If There's a Crisis on The Border, Why Is San Diego So Safe?

Written by Chris Jennewein for TheTimes of San Diego

Former Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen inspects concertina wire installed by U.S. Marines at the border.

A significant portion of the federal government was recently closed because of President Trump's demand for a border wall to stop what he calls "massive crime." "The most important way to stop gangs, drugs, human trafficking and massive crime is at our Southern Border. We need Border Security, and as EVERYONE knows, you can't have Border Security without a Wall. The Drones & Technology are just bells and whistles. Safety for America!" he tweeted .

That tweet was not fundamentally different from dozens, maybe hundreds, he posted since he began his presidential campaign by labeling Mexican immigrants as "criminals" and "rapists."And he continues to get daily support for this view on Fox News, thanks to the chorus of Lou Dobbs, Laura Ingraham and Tucker Carlson. Recently Carlson, who spent part of his childhood in La Jolla, blasted immigration for making America "poorer and dirtier and more divided."

But if this narrative is correct, why is America's largest border city so safe?

A recent report by New York University's Brennan Center for Justice found that San Diego had both the lowest murder rate and overall violent crime rate of the 30 largest American cities.San Diego ended last year with 1.9 murders per 100,000 residents, compared to 23.1 per 100,000 in Indianapolis and 51.7 per 100,000 in Baltimore. That means a resident of Indianapolis is 12 times more likely to be murdered, a resident of Baltimore 27 times.

If the border crisis is real, wouldn't the crime rate in San Diego reflect that? If illegal immigration is the existential threat that President Trump and conservative Republicans continue say it is, wouldn't there be evidence in San Diego? Wouldn't MS-13 gang members and drug traffickers be shooting people in downtown San Diego? Slashing hard working citizens in San Ysidro? Terrorizing the streets of La Jolla?

Maybe the rusting surplus helicopter landing pads used as a border barrier in the San Diego sector are doing the job. Or Customs and Border Protection personnel have succeeded in apprehending all criminals among the 100,000 people who cross daily at the world's busiest land port.

But interestingly, other border cities are nearly as safe as San Diego. The murder rate in El Paso is 5.5 per 100,000 residents. In San Antonio it's 6.8. And in Phoenix, a little farther from the border, it's 7.8.

Perhaps immigrants with criminal intent don't stop in border cities but immediately head north to cities like Indianapolis and Baltimore, causing the high crime rates reported there. In fact, it seems that the farther you get from the border in America, the higher the murder rate.

A more likely explanation is that the Trump and Fox News narrative is simply a big lie. Immigrants don't increase the crime rate at all, but are simply convenient scapegoats.

President Trump may well eventually get his wall and many Americans may feel safer as a result, but it won't make any difference in America's safest city.

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Trump says Mexico is cracking down on migrants. There, it's a different picture

Written By Patrick J. McDonnell

If the Mexican government is cracking down on Central American migrants — as President Trump recently asserted — there was no evidence of it *Hidalgo* - a remote town in southern Mexico.

Roughly 3,000 migrants, mostly arrivals on recent caravans, had found temporary quarters in a sun-baked sports complex, where residents scramble for shade beneath tents and rough lean-tos crafted from branches and palm fronds.

But they weren't being detained or readied for deportation. Instead, they were being processed for permits that will facilitate travel north to the U.S. border.

"We want our children to have a future without fear of gangs," said Oscar Amilcar, a Salvadoran hunkered down with his wife, two children and migrants from Guatemala and Honduras.

They all planned to resume their journeys soon and present themselves to U.S. border authorities to claim asylum.

It was a far different picture than the one Trump painted earlier this month when he announced he was holding off on his threat to shut the U.S.-Mexico border because Mexican authorities were "apprehending people now by the thousands and bringing them back to their countries."

"Nobody's ever seen anything like it," he said during a visit to the California border city of Calexico.

Closing the border would have severe — and possibly disastrous — economic repercussions for the United States as well as Mexico, and Trump was facing pressure from across the political spectrum to rescind his threat. The purported increase in Mexican enforcement offered some political cover.

Except that it doesn't seem to have occurred.

Mexico has no intention of engaging in mass deportations or moving to stop so-called migrant caravans, said Rocio Gonzalez Higuera, head of migration policy for the human rights branch of the country's Interior Ministry.

"Mexico is implementing a process of orderly, regulated, secure migration, with respect for human rights," Gonzalez said in an interview in *Tapachula*, a migrant hub just north of the Guatemalan border, when asked about Trump's comments.

"What another country decides or says is the responsibility of that country, not ours," Gonzalez said.

According to statistics published by the Mexican government, enforcement actions against migrants have actually slowed somewhat since President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador took office in December.

Deportations were down 16% and arrests 7% for December, January, February & March compared with the same four-month period a year earlier. Figures for April were not yet available.

The reductions came amid decade-high numbers of Central American migrants making their way through Mexico to the United States.

"You have the number of Central Americans arriving increasing almost exponentially, but deportations remaining relatively stable," said Stephanie Leutert, who heads the Mexico Security Initiative at the University of Texas at Austin.

Lopez Obrador made a campaign promise to respect the human rights of migrants, and his government has emphasized assisting them rather than criminalizing them — a posture that has even perturbed some people in Mexico fed up with the illicit migration.

To that end, it has issued skyrocketing numbers of "humanitarian" visas to northbound migrants.

In the first quarter of this year the government provided more than 19,000 such visas — almost one-third more than the total for all of 2018.

The visas allow migrants to cross Mexico to the U.S. border without fear of arrest, and without relying on expensive smugglers.

Soon, Mexican authorities say, Central Americans will be able to apply for the visas in their homelands.

Mexico is especially concerned about protecting the families with children who are increasingly dominating the movement north, said Gonzalez, the migration policy official.

Mexico has long been conflicted on the issue of immigration, and it has not been immune to U.S. pressure over the years.

Since 2015, according to official statistics, Mexico has deported more than 500,000 Central Americans, largely from the so-called Northern Triangle nations — Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador — which are the biggest source of U.S.-bound migrants today.

Still, Mexico lacks the will, and manpower, to seal off its 700-plus-mile border with Guatemala, according to experts and officials.

Mexico's official lexicon is that those detained and repatriated are "rescued" — terminology that reflects the sensitivity of the issue in a country where large numbers of its own citizens have been sent home from the United States against their will.

With Trump in power, the pressure on Mexico perhaps has never been greater.

Mexican policymakers seem caught between Lopez Obrador's humanitarian inclinations and Trump's demands for a crackdown.

"Mexico will have to give guarantees to the White House that it is going to reinforce and harden its migratory policy and retake the control it has lost of the southern border," columnist Salvador Garcia Soto wrote this month in Mexico's *El Universal* newspaper on the eve of Trump's visit to *Calexico*.

The main forces propelling the exodus from Central America — sluggish economies and rampant violence — are unlikely to change anytime soon.

"Mexico's in a hard place because it can't change U.S. immigration policy and it can't change conditions in Central America," Leutert said.

Then there are domestic pressures in Mexico.

Many Mexicans are showing increasing weariness with illegal immigration, grumbling that the government is helping Central Americans more than poor Mexicans.

More than half of respondents to a poll this month in *El Universal* agreed that the Mexican government should act to stop the flow of migrants. Almost 60% said migrants were bad for their communities, compared with 34.2% who responded similarly to the same question in October, when the caravans were in the headlines here. Some reports suggest that deep divisions have emerged within the government about whether to step up enforcement or allow more Central Americans to enter the country.

At the sports complex here in *Mapastepec*, in the Mexican state of *Chiapas*, 90 miles north of Guatemala, it was clear which side is winning out for the moment.

The migrants arrived at the facility after residents of the Mexican town of *Huixtla* — which welcomed caravan travelers last year — rejected their presence.

Now all were waiting to be processed for humanitarian visas allowing them to proceed.

Many were traveling with children. Word has spread to Central American nations that asylum applicants are more likely to be released in the United States if traveling in families.

"We have nothing to look forward to in Honduras," said Deysi Marbeli Ibarra, 21, who held her 14-month-old daughter, Evangelina, on the edge of a soccer field.

She headed north in a caravan last month from Honduras with five other family members, including a sister and a niece.

Ibarra said her family ran a small business in her hometown of *Danli*, and that gangs were demanding weekly extortion payments and threatened her and her family if they did not pay.

Those threats would be the basis for her claim for political asylum in the United States, she said.

A few yards away, in one of the shaded lean-tos, Oscar Amilcar, 40, said he pulled up stakes last month in *Ahuachapan*, El Salvador, leaving with his wife and two children.

The eldest, 16-year-old Marlon, said he felt threatened because he refused to join a local gang.

"If you don't join, they kill you and your family," he said. "I don't want that kind of life. I want to study and make myself better."

***Cecilia Sanchez** in the Mexico City bureau contributed to this report.*

Party Where The Stars Did At The Iconic Rosarito Beach Hotel & Spa 95th Anniversary Celebration is May 17-19

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The May 17 and 18 overnight oceanfront lodging specials are $290 for a standard room in the eight-story Coronado Tower or $360 for a one-bedroom condo suite in the luxurious 17-story Pacific Tower. Each includes an anniversary souvenir plus two adult tickets to the May 18 dinner dance.

Doors to that event in the El Mexicano ballroom will open at 6pm. As well as an abundant dinner buffet, the anniversary party will include a mariachi and folkloric ballet show, dancing and live music.

The anniversary specials are plus tax and subject to availability. Early reservation is suggested and may be made by calling 1-866-ROSARITO or at www.rosaritobeachhotel.com. Two children ages 12 and under can stay free with their parents.

The Rosarito Beach Hotel & Spa also features a new section on its website, www.rosaritobeachhotel.com titled Since 1924, where visitors can view a slideshow of historic resort photos.

The website also lists many spring and summer specials at the resort, plus upcoming events.

The self-contained resort traces its birth back to Sunday July 27, 1924. On that date, an ad in the San Diego Union announced the grand opening of the El Rosarito Beach Resort & Country Club, at the time little more than a modest road house in a lightly populated area.

Millions of people, including world leaders and a galaxy of stars, have visited or stayed at the hotel in its nine decades.

Readers of San Diego magazine selected it as Baja's best hotel of 2017.

With 500 rooms and suites in three oceanfront towers, the Rosarito Beach Hotel offers restaurants, lounges, swimming pools, spa, shops and entertainment within its self-contained grounds.

The hotel is an easy walk to Rosarito's downtown tourism district, plus near major Baja attractions including the Puerto Nuevo Lobster Village, Guadalupe Valley Wine Country, Baja Studios where Titanic was filmed, plus many others.

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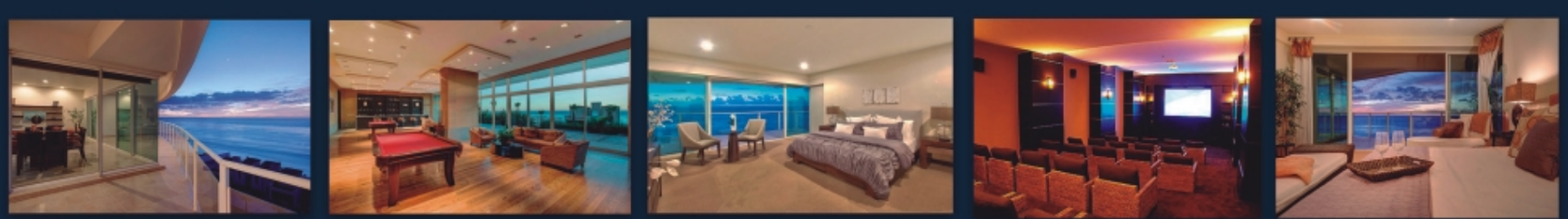

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