

## **Mexico and U.S. to Patrol Border Trouble Spots**

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### **Body**

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After a month of rising vigilantism along the border in Southern California, during which one illegal immigrant was shot and six others held captive by local ranchers, American and Mexican officials are creating a joint law-enforcement operation to protect Mexican aliens and patrol the area.

On Friday, Alan D. Bersin, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of California who is a special representative for Southwest border issues for Attorney General Janet Reno, is scheduled to announce a substantial increase in local, state and Federal agents to patrol a mountainous border area about 25 miles east of San Diego.

At the same time, the consul general of **Mexico** in San Diego, Luis Herrera-Lasso, is expected to announce that **Mexico** has designated a group of agents to work on **Mexico**'s border to protect migrants from violence.

As illegal crossings have increased in the last year, the number of assaults on illegal immigrants have risen sharply.

Mr. Herrera-Lasso said that while preventing crime was a concern for both countries, the Mexican agents would not attempt to prevent Mexicans from crossing the border illegally.

"By no means will they be supporting or acting in complicity with American authorities in those acts that have to do with action against Mexican immigrants," Mr. Herrera-Lasso said in a telephone interview.

Mr. Bersin said that the United States group was being formed because a crackdown on illegal immigration by the United States in the past year had shifted the flow of illegal immigrants from the Imperial Beach area in California -- where migrants could easily reach San Diego in a few hours -- to a mountainous part of San Diego County about 25 miles east of the city.

In that rugged terrain, he said, it can take immigrants days to reach a city, giving the border patrol more time to take them into custody.

United States Government figures show apprehensions in that area have increased as much as 900 percent over the past Federal fiscal year, which ended on Sept. 30, although the number of people detained is still far below the number of apprehensions in the Tijuana, **Mexico**-San Diego area.

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With more Mexicans crossing the border in eastern San Diego county, often called East County, crime against personal property also has increased, Mr. Bersin said.

"The result of that is a very heightened sense of insecurity by residents of East County who in the past were not burdened with aliens and alien smugglers," he said.

In some cases, local residents have taken the law into their own hands. On Oct. 2, Mexican and United States officials said, six illegal immigrants were rounded up in California by residents armed with shotguns and held for a couple of hours until the United States Border Patrol arrived.

On Oct. 17, a Mexican illegal immigrant who was wanted by the local police in connection with a string of robberies was shot and wounded by an American who knew the police were after the man, officials said.

Mr. Bersin said the new patrols should "establish, without doubt in the mind of anyone, be they Mexican alien or U.S. resident, that violence or lawlessness will not be tolerated, either in San Diego County or in Baja California."

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