

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING HIGHWAYS:  
EXAMINING NODAL POINTS AND POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO  
REDUCE HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT SMUGGLING

by

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## **DEDICATION**

For William C.

None of my journey would have been possible without you. Wherever you are, I hope  
you are proud.

“If you can get to me, I can get you out.”

Always,

Roe

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
NGO	Non-government Organization
SIA	Special Interest Alien
SNA	Social Network Analysis
TCO	Transnational Crime Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## **ABSTRACT**

National legislation requires America's federal law enforcement officers to disrupt transnational trafficking and smuggling of persons. However, ineffectiveness and episodic targeting has resulted in feeding into the smuggling and trafficking illicit economy. Continued migration from South and Central Americans, as well as Mexicans, across the Southwestern Border of the United States prove a lack of security. This thesis questions how trafficking and smuggling land routes function as a subgroup system of human trafficking and migrant smuggling illicit networks, if there is overlap between smuggling and trafficking land routes, and whether key nodes can be identified for better application of interventions. Using NVivo qualitative analysis software, the study examined 16 U. S. court cases of human traffickers and smugglers and 4 interviews of in the field border security experts. Combining an NVivo analysis with scholarly journal articles, government reports, and media coverage shows how smuggling and trafficking routes operate, identifies 4 leverage points for intervention success, and provided strategies for combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks.

## I. INTRODUCTION

It was the story that made headlines across the United States during late July 2017: nine adult, illegal immigrant males were found dead in a semi-truck parked in the lot of a Walmart in San Antonio, Texas (Bacon, 2017). By the time local law enforcement arrived, dozens of the estimated one hundred travelers, two of them school age children, were suffering from heat-induced ailments (Bacon, 2017; Yan & Jackson, 2017). Of the twenty-nine remaining passengers, twenty of them gained hospital admittance for an “extremely critical or serious condition” (Bacon, 2017). With border security being a forefront topic in the United States, citizens could not help but wonder how these individual managed to cross the border without suspicion (Yan & Jackson, 2017).

When questioned by the police, one passenger disclosed that he received instructions to pay smugglers \$5,500 upon arriving in Texas from his home in Aguascalientes, Mexico (Bacon, 2017). He discussed how he and a group of individuals crossed the United States/Mexico border by raft and walked for a day until they were picked up and loaded into the trailer (Bacon, 2017). Soon other passengers began to discuss the routes that led from Aguascalientes to the semi-truck in Laredo. One passenger revealed that he and twenty-three passengers stayed in a stash house in Laredo, eleven days before getting into the trailer (Bacon, 2017). Finally, surveillance footage from Walmart showed a smuggling gang retrieving individuals from the trailer, prior to law enforcement’s arrival. Those still healthy fled into nearby woods (Bacon, 2017).

However, this story is not a rare occurrence (Fernandez, Kulish, & Anasagasti, 2017). For human cargo transport, tractor trailers are considered a privilege. As the

summer heat becomes unbearable in the Rio Grande Valley border sector, the risk of death via heat stroke or dehydration by crossing on foot increases (Fernandez, Kulish, & Anasagasti, 2017). However, instead of being a deterrent for migrants wanting to illegally cross the Rio Grande Valley border, the heat motivates migrants to find alternative routes of transportation instead of foot travel (Fernandez, Kulish, & Anasagasti, 2017). In the months of June, July, and August 2017, a combined number of 21,574 illegal migrants were apprehended (CBP, 2017). However, October, November, and December of 2017 each saw over 22,000 illegal immigrant apprehensions per month (CBP, 2017).

In the past two decades, human trafficking and smuggling of people entering the United States has grown exponentially, especially children. In the summer of 2016, for example, 20,455 unaccompanied minors crossed into the United States illegally (United States Custom and Border Protection, CBY Enforcement Statistics, 2018). Some of those juveniles smuggled in were as young as 4 to 5 years of age. In July 2017, 147 Central American migrants, 48 of whom were children, were rescued by Mexican authorities after the group was found deserted in the wilderness after the semi-truck transporting them had wrecked (Fernandez, Kulish, & Anasagasti, 2017). Generally, younger children are accompanied by an adult, who is seldom a relative (Chan, 2016). Furthermore, over 7,200 people have died trying to cross the U. S./Mexico Border from 1998-2017 (U.S. Border Patrol, 2017). In July 2017, a human trafficking or migrant smuggling bust seemed to happen every day.

Many of the children smuggled and trafficked are used by the Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) and International Crime Organizations (ICOs) to traffic drugs

and/or brought north in the human slave trade (workers, sex trade, criminal enterprise, and other exploitive practices). Children smuggled and trafficked come from virtually every country in South and Central America, with the clear majority coming from Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Mexico. Children come north for a variety of reasons; some are sent by impoverished parents living in barrios or slums to provide a more economic opportunity, some are recruited by street gangs, some are recruited by DTOs, some are forced, and some are runaways.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines trafficking in persons as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (United Nations Office on Drug and Organized Crime, 2016). It is important to note that human trafficking is different than migrant smuggling. Human trafficking contains three main parts: act, means, and purpose (United Nations Office of Drugs and Organized Crime, 2016). The UNODC defines migrant smuggling as “procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident” (United Nations Office on Drug and Organized Crime, 2016). Migrant smuggling lacks the coercion that human trafficking contains. Regarding smuggling networks, migrants willfully participate in the smuggling process. However, human trafficking and migrant smuggling do mix together and share some overlap. Migrants who willfully pay smugglers for their services risk extortion from smugglers, drug trafficking operations (DTOs), and transnational crime organizations (TCOs). Once the migrant is extorted the crime label switches from migrant smuggling to human trafficking. Furthermore, human trafficking and migrant smuggling share similar means



of transportation and land routes to accomplish the end goal of illegal entry into the United States. This thesis aims to explore the amount of overlap that is prevalent in the illicit human cargo world regarding land routes, specifically from South America to across the United State/ Mexico southwestern border. From the established staging and transit countries, key nodes were determined, and recommendation strategies will be offered to combat illegal immigration.

The UNODC for human trafficking and migrant smuggling definitions are used in this study. Due to the multiple factors encompassed in both trafficking and smuggling, the criminal justice system has formulated all-inclusive definitions for legislation and policy (Pharoah, 2006). Known as the “Trafficking Protocol,” the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, specifically uses broad definitions to include all potential violations and activities that are a part of the human trafficking process (Van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017). Furthermore, the broad definition plays in favor of the criminal justice system, allowing law enforcement to charge each person who is a part of the trafficking (or smuggling) process with some aspect of the crime (van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017). Victim testimonies proved helpful insight necessary to prosecute traffickers and smugglers. UNODC’s *Evidential Issues in Trafficking in Person’s Cases* (2017), victim testimonies are often the most substantial piece of evidence when convicting traffickers during trial. Without the victim testimony, eye witness testimony, or a confession, it is hard to distinguish who is guilty of trafficking and smuggling, how and where trafficking and smuggling took place, what modes of transportation where used, and what other criminal acts were forced upon victims, such as forced labor or rape.

## **A Supreme Lack of Information**

Isle van Liempt stated: “When it comes to academic theory, it could be said that the topic of human smuggling remains a neglected area. Most research in this field consists of single case studies: few cross-comparisons are made vis-a-vis types of smuggling or on a country-to-country basis, and there is a fundamental lack of hard evidence to substantiate most aspects of the smuggling process” (van Liempt, 2007, p. 13). There is little research available on human trafficking and smuggling from South and Central America. While the U. S. Department of State’s *Trafficking in Person’s Report* (2017) indicates that Thailand, India, Philippines, Dominican Republic, and Haiti are countries that originate human trafficking victims. Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras are three countries that demonstrate (arguably) the most relevant geographic path to the United States and act as staging or transit countries during the Northward journey. Research from Ugarte, Zarate, & Farley, 2008 indicate that approximately one-third of people trafficked into the United States come from Latin America and enter through the U. S./Mexico border.

The UNODC further concludes that for such a global consequential phenomenon that there is a serious dearth of research in attempts to understand the problem (UNODC, 2016). The UNODC (2016) concluded that what little research there was suffered from unreliable data, non-applicable theoretical frameworks, disparities in information collected in terms of quality, and unbalance coverage. Bensman (2015) found that research on long-distance smuggling of violent Islamic terrorists or “country of interest” migrants was non-existent. Gilman, Goldhammer and Weber (2011) reported that other global spanning smuggling lacked rigorous examination because the illegal activities did

not fit traditional research paradigms used by academics and even journalists. The only available research study that systematically examines highways, leverage points, nodes, staging areas and hubs of smuggling operations and organizations was done by Bensman (2015), and his study only examined Special Interest Aliens (SIAs), not persons from originating and transit countries in Central and South America.

### **Trafficking and Smuggling as Complex Systems**

Human trafficking and migrant smuggling are processes, rather than single events, increasing the complexity of these two systems (van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017). Systems are sets of things interconnected in ways that produce their patterns of behaviors (Meadows & Wright, 2008). “The complexity of human trafficking results from the interaction of a range of factors which include the nature of the crime (process not event), range of perpetrators (from single perpetrators to large international organizations), the seemingly endless ways in which humans are exploited (e.g., sex, labor, domestic, baby farms, organs etc.) and the variety of contextual factors (social, economic, cultural etc.)” (van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017, p. 219). Complexity science transforms large network systems into several smaller network systems to identify critical networks, interactions, and actors (Johnson, 2011). Complex networks fall into two main categories: mechanical and social. Social networks focus on relationships between individuals (nodes) and ties (links) (Kadushin, 2011). The relationships of social networks can be made up of information exchanges, tangible goods (cargo) or relational feelings about others (Kadushin, 2011). Human trafficking and migrant smuggling systems operate as complex social network systems. Furthermore, Bensman (2015) suggests that patterns and vulnerabilities can be discovered by

examining the outcomes of the relationships between nodes and links. According to Meadows and Write, systems can “change, adapt, respond to events, seek goals, mend injuries, and attend to their own survival in lifelike ways” (Meadows & Wright, 2008, p. 12). Meadows and Wright (2008) state new factors or additions are known as positive or negative feedback in systems. Feedback take places as information and communication is supplied back into the system (van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017). Negative feedback results as the removal of communication with in the system, subdual of activities, and halt of change with a system (van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017). Positive feedback incites existing activities, strengths change with a system, and boosts communications (van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017). As negative feedback is introduced into the human trafficking or migrant smuggling system, such as preventive measures, the systems have two options: self-repair/self-organize or perish (Meadows & Wright, 2008). Systems are thus evolutionary and adapt to disruptions or changes, as feedback is received, clearly evidenced by drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and other criminals changing their operations in response to border security operations.

There is not one standard template design for surveying the systemic relationships of human trafficking or migrant smuggling systems. Some researchers have used social network analysis (SNA), the process of mapping relationships between links and nodes, to examine complex social systems. The science of applying this process requires a high volume of detailed information that is not often available or easily gathered (Bensman, 2015). The science of social network analysis networks is a young field and crammed with disagreements among experts (Bensman, 2015). In 2010, master’s student Rebekah Dietz from the Naval Post Graduate School used SNA to break down three types of

unlawful networks (a terrorist network, a proliferation network, and a narcotics network). By using case studies, Dietz (2010) set out to determine how these networks compared or contrasted regarding typologies, sources, motivations, characteristics, and patterns of funding (Dietz, 2010). Nancy Roberts and Sean Everton (2011) took a slightly different approach when using SNA in their research. Instead of using SNA for military purposes, they promoted for the use of SNA as an intelligence analysis tool that can be used to craft alternatives to combat terror attacks (Roberts & Everton, 2011). However, SNA did not explain how these networks operate. Confusion in SNA literature showed dissimilar views over how exactly to define the nature and structure of individual networks or how the illicit networks should be unassembled (Dietz, 2010). Roberts and Everton (2011) failed in clearly defining and labeling proper relationships that were critical to the terrorist network in their study. Their analysis showed that subgroups appeared to be a key factor in the terrorist system, but their use of SNA failed to determine the relationship between the sub group and the overall network due to a lack of information (Roberts & Everton, 2011). Furthermore, once SNA comes across incorrect or inconsistent data, the analysis cannot move on (Dietz, 2010). As well as failing to move forward, SNA fails to consider evolving network dynamics and vague boundaries (Dietz, 2010).

The substantial lack of research regarding SNA as a template to deconstruct trafficking and smuggling routes stands out. For social network analysis to be useful in deconstructing human tracking systems and migrant smuggling systems, SNA models would have to be constructed by an individual case basis. As proven by researchers there is often not enough detail or intel to build an SNA model (Dietz, 2010; Roberts & Everton, 2011).

However, that does not mean that social network analysis cannot play a role in the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking. SNA and systems theory can help policy makers comprehend that complex organizations, like human trafficking and migrant smuggling, react both predictably and unpredictably to new preventions and pressures. For the purpose of this thesis it is understood that human trafficking and migrant smuggling networks are complex systems. Human trafficking and migrant smuggling routes are a subgroup the overall complex system.

### **The Game of Geopolitics**

Geography plays a key factor in the business of migrant smuggling and human trafficking, especially in land routes used to transnationally traffic or smuggle individuals. Most individuals trafficked into the United States using the Southwestern Border originate from South America or Central America; those that are smuggling from other places often use South and Central American smuggling and trafficking routes to reach the United States (Bensman, 2015). Land routes bottleneck at specific junctions, especially those headed north from South America, making them the only possible option for land travel. Some are coerced or tricked into being trafficked into the United States. Others grow up in the barrios of places like Ecuador or Guatemala. Parents of these children spend their life's wages to have their children smuggled in to the United States by way of the Texas/Mexico border. Some children are simply given money by their parents and told which direction to run, leaving it up to the child to complete his or her mission by his or herself. Traffickers and smugglers will use whatever means of transportation necessary to accomplish their mission. Some travel by land utilizing major

road ways, railroads, and backroads. Trains and trucks are common modes of transport. However, as seen in San Antonio, not everyone survives the journey.

Geopolitics, defined as the study of power rivalries over territories play a large role in the success of smuggling and trafficking systems, as well as the development of successful preventions (Payne, 2004). Geopolitics has helped to “contextualize the conflict in foreign places between individuals who seek to cross borders and states that seek to stop them” (Bensman, 2015, p. 27). According to Klaus Dodd (2007), a country’s geopolitical structural design consists of two crucial concepts: territorial rule constructed by the border patrols of that nation and a respect for international laws, treaties, and relationships within those nations. These two key components allow different states or non-states to control the intersections of these lands. The regulation of land allows for the establishment of solid physical borders between citizens and foreigners (Dodds, 2007).

To move smuggled and trafficked persons from South America to the Southwestern border of the United States, trafficker and smugglers use Ecuador, Brazil, Columbia, Panama, Guatemala, and Mexico. The paths traffickers and smugglers use to traverse across these countries are not chosen at random. Instead geopolitical factors, such as passive governments unconcerned with migration pattern and corruptibility of law enforcement officials influence smuggler or trafficker’s decision to use that country as a land route (Bensman, 2015). For example, the Darien Gap acts as a geopolitical factor aiding in trafficking and smuggling due to its lack of border security by either Columbia or Panama. However, to make the journey north by land, traffickers must cross through the gap. Without the resources to combat Transnational Crime Organizations within the gap, the lack of security facilitates trafficking and smuggling.

To combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling systems, United States law enforcement, policy makers, and intelligence services must recognize how other governments consider criminal systems within their countries (Bensman, 2015). Globalization begs the question, “How can law enforcement compete with such a booming illicit economy?” Jennifer Sims (2005) argues that policy makers must pay attention to four specific factors: the accelerated mobility of people, information, capital, and the persisting conflict and war among states. According to Sims (2005), the protection of the United States rests on the shoulders of foreign governments.

### **The Economy of Human Cargo**

In the underworld of smuggling and trafficking, knowledge is power. Deploying uninformed strategies at globally reaching problems, such as human trafficking and migrant smuggling feeds the continuous cycle of rising trafficking and smuggling prices, profits, and incentives (Naim, 2005). Surge pricing is alive and well, and the illegal trade economy is using it to make billions off of trafficked and smuggled persons (Bensman, 2015; Naim, 2005). The economics of these dark networks is a simple concept. When law enforcement operations remove smugglers, traffickers, and contraband, prices and profits rise and reward continuation (Bensman, 2015).

However, research has shown that smuggling numbers can be reduced using emphatic deterrence. Marc Rosenblum (2012) concluded that when U. S. Customs and Border Protection used harsh legal consequences on apprehended migrants, such as criminal prosecutions, remote relocations to somewhere in Mexico, and administrative reporting that could prevent a migrant from entering the country legally for up to five years, rates of smuggling significantly fell. Not all border security researchers share the



same sentiment for harsh border protocols. Peter Andreas, a political science professor at Brown University, has often criticized strict border security protocols.

Andreas (2013) mentions that consequences of strict immigration enforcement has led to a codependent relationship between migrants and smugglers. The stricter immigration laws become the more risk is added to the journey. However, migrants are not deterred from wanting into the United States. Instead, stricter law increases the amount of dependency the migrant has on the smuggler. Gillman, Goldhammer, and Weber (2011) concur with Andreas' views that strike, punish, kill policies are inadequate solutions to illegal immigration problem. Strike, punish, kill policies focus is directed at the actions of migrant smugglers and human traffickers. Furthermore, Gilman, Goldhammer, and Weber (2011) suggest that this focus should switch from the behaviors and actions of smugglers and traffickers to the systems in which smuggler and traffickers operate. While some researchers argue that smuggling is a more elusive and sophisticated network than human trafficking, the realization is that both billion-dollar systems are run efficiently as businesses. Smugglers and traffickers are individuals who have perfected their craft. These are people who know the way around border security precautions, which holes they can slip through, what paper work can be faked, and which officials will take bribes to look the other way. Trafficking and smuggling are billion-dollar industries. Capture is not just risking jail time; it is risking a loss of profits.

### **Human Trafficking, Migrant Smuggling, and the War on Drugs**

As stated by the U. S. Department of State (2018) human trafficking has zero regard for laws or boundaries, and the process spans so many jurisdictions that it

demands a range of perspectives from numerous disciplines, not just the criminal justice field (Laczko, 2007; van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017). The human trafficking process is a melting pot of social, political, cultural, and economic ingredients; a “deep and dense sociological abyss” where secondary victimization, cultural and lingual barriers, and the failure of intelligence sharing add on to the already unruly list of complexities (Kingshott, 2015; Moloney, 2015; van der Watt & van der Westhuizen, 2017). Often described as transnationally reaching, sophisticated networks, like migrant smuggling and human trafficking can quickly evolve when pressured to exploit an opportunity (Carrera & Guild, 2017), making these networks slightly unpredictable. In an interview with Natalia Mendoza, Stephanie Leuturt of LAWFARE, discusses the development of migrant smuggling in Altar, Sonora, Mexico. Mendoza credits economics, the militarization of the war on drugs, and the rise of mafia bureaucracy for the success of smuggling drugs and human cargo in Altar (Leuturt, 2018). In 2005, there was no sense of lastingness encircling the illegal activity in Altar (Leuturt, 2018). Drug traffickers worked as independent contractors and often bounced between illegal and legal means of making profits (Leuturt, 2018). However, the rural lifestyle that Altar was known for was becoming unmaintainable. As economic hardship threatened the lifestyle the people of Altar loved, drug smuggling became an option for those trying to avoid city migration. It was an easier transition than one would imagine. The people of Altar had firsthand knowledge of the land, current and potential routes, where the drugs could be stored, and where planes could land without being seen (Leuturt, 2018).

Mendoza discusses that the idea of smuggling allowed Altar citizens to maintain self-sufficiency (Leuturt, 2018). However, by 2009 the militarization of the war on drugs

led to increased violence surrounding smuggling of human cargo (Leuturt, 2018). The structure of smuggling shifted from independent contractors to a criminal enterprise focused on maintain professionalism and centralization (Sanchez & Zhang, 2018), a claim supported by the data collected by the UNODC (2017). With this new organizational structure came full-time employees who were paid continuous fees on a scheduled basis. This once rural town became a cartel territory that now sustained an armed professional militia used to collect the fees from smugglers wanting to pass through Altar's smuggling routes (Leuturt, 2018). It was not long until someone realized that if drugs trafficked through Altar without detection, then the possibility was high that humans could as well. The smuggling of migrants is what established Altar as a significant source of profit for smugglers and traffickers (Leuturt, 2018). By 2010, large droves of undocumented migrants were using Altar smuggling routes as a form of passage (Leuturt, 2018). Migrant corpses, in conjunction with journalists covering the stories, led to unwanted publicity for drug traffickers who were also using the routes. From this friction, drug traffickers decided to control aspects of migrant smuggling. The solution put in place was a simple one: sicarios, hitmen from the local mafia, began charging fees to undocumented migrants that wanted to use Altar's drug trafficking routes as passage. With this newfound control, drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) had the opportunity to make even more money with migrant smuggling and human trafficking than the drug trade would allow (Sanchez & Zhang, 2018).

Not everyone believes the existence of this hierarchical takeover of migrant smuggling by DTOs. Similar to other traits of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, data on how involved drug trafficking organizations are is scarce (Sanchez & Zhang,

2018). In a recent study, Sanchez and Zhang (2008) interviewed twenty-eight migrants that had successfully crossed the U. S. Southwestern Border illegally. Using the results of the qualitative study, Sanchez and Zhang (2008) argue that there is no DTO takeover on the U. S./Mexico border. They concluded that smuggling and drug trafficking are still two separate illicit networks and operate as such (Sanchez & Zhang, 2008). It is argued that migrant smuggling is an atmosphere mixed of dependency and survival and that migrant smuggling is not solely conducted by clandestine operations or those just seeking to quickly turn a profit, but a mixture of those two components (Vogt, 2016; Sanchez & Zhang, 2018). There is no proof for a case of criminal merging of drug trafficking, human trafficking, or migrant smuggling. The need for survival drives migrants to participate willingly in DTO operations (Sanchez & Zhang, 2018). Sanchez and Zhang (2018) touch on a factor forgotten in the numbers and statistics of migrant smuggling—the free will of the migrant choosing to be smuggled. The results of their study indicated that migrants who refused to take part in DTO operations were often threatened, although not physically assaulted.

### **9/11, Policy, and Border Security**

To the American public, the face of illegal immigration and the face of terrorism do not look like relatives (Bensman, 2007). With most individuals arrested for illegal entry being of Mexican or Central American descent, the American public struggles to see illegal immigrants as anything other than America's southern neighbors from Mexico (Bensman, 2007). However, the threat of terrorists crossing American borders is real. Some authors have discussed how terrorist organizations are funding other activities with the profits made from migrant smuggling and that migrant smugglers have even gone as

far as smuggling terrorists into the United States (Bensman, 2015; Shelley, 2014; Walt, 2015). Deemed “special interest aliens” (SIAs), individuals from 43 “countries of interest” in North Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East have concerned counterterrorism authorities for the last seventeen years (Bensman, 2015). These 43 countries share the common trait of having terrorist organizations operate within their borders. SIAs are traveling from countries that the United States has labeled as a terror threat. These highlighted countries are places where radical Islamic movements call home, where Islamic extremists have bombed U. S. interests, or where state sponsors of terror reside (Bensman, 2007). Once captured, SIAs are subjected to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) interrogations, detention holds, and federal prison terms.

In a four-part series written for the *San-Antonio Express-News*, Bensman (2007) tells the story of Aamar Bahnan Boles, a young Iraqi man who was smuggled to the Texas/Mexico border. Discovered by a smuggler in an Al Nawateer restaurant located in Damascus, Syria, Boles had grown tired of his job in one of the many garment shops. He was one of the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians driven from their homes by Islamic extremists. Sitting alone at his plastic table, Boles was approached by a Syrian man promising him a way out of his current misery. For a price, this man could transport Boles to the United States border. Fearing that the man was a Mukhabarat agent, Boles explained that he did not have the large sum required. The smuggler proposed a different solution. For \$750 the Syrian could locate a visitor visa from the Guatemalan government in Jordan. The Syrian smuggler then informed Boles that he would then be on his own but promised the journey would be easy. It would be a quick flight from Moscow to Cuba, then into Guatemala. However, it was not until a year later that Boles crossed the

Rio Grande River in an inflatable tube and climbed up the Texas river bank, forty miles outside of Brownsville.

Due to events like the incident described above, the increased threat of terrorism, the rise in crime, and increased drug use, border security has been a heavily discussed and debated topic for the past decade. The thought that terrorists could strike once again on the American home front is a potential risk that has influenced immigration reform and policy. September 11, 2001 changed the United States' view of immigration. A 2009 memo to President George W. Bush titled "Immigration Reform Legacy" by Ryan Bounds, the president's domestic policy advisor on immigration shows the interruption 9/11 had on previously discussed immigration plans with Mexico.

"The prospects for a deal with Mexico were upended by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Although both presidents remain supportive...an agreement of the kind of discussion earlier in 2001 was much lower on the list of priorities and no longer viable in any event. Instead, the national focus with respect to immigration issues immediately shifted to tighter borders and more robust enforcement.... The Bush administration was committed to ensuring that our immigration policies and practices do not allow terrorists to enter or remain in the United States." (Bounds, 2009)

The face of illegal immigration has evolved to include features of those from South Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. The current Rio Grande river bank is lined with motion sensors, lights, cameras, and is constantly scrutinized by U. S. Border Patrol agents, a precaution put in place hoping to stop all types of illegal immigration. When it comes to migrant smuggling, foreign governments must implement strategic vetting controls within their own borders to stop terrorist from using their countries as rest stops on the way to the United States border. However, the reality is that terrorists are finding a way into this human pipeline, and where there is one, there could be many.



Figure 1. 43 Countries of Interest in Middle East, Africa, and Asia (Bensman, 2015, p. 12)

## Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine smuggling and trafficking highways and identify nodes (central or connecting point), staging areas (places where traffickers or smugglers smugglers stash illegal immigrants for weeks or months at a time), and hubs (the effective center of an activity, region, or network) used in the smuggling and trafficking of humans, particularly children, from originating countries (the home country of the migrant), transit countries (countries in which the migrant must pass through to make the journey north), and end-points (the final destination of migrants) within the United States. Analyses of the northward journey will enable the systems of human trafficking and smuggling to be examined, which can help predict future smuggling and trafficking behavior. Examining this system in the context of complexity theories can help identify

ways in which the highways, nodes, staging areas and hubs can be altered and modified to hopefully reduce human trafficking and human smuggling (Johnson, 2011). Critical actors, artifacts, networks and interactions can be identified to disrupt the relationships inherent in a system and positively impact the reduction in human smuggling and human trafficking.



### III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this thesis was to attempt to deconstruct human trafficking and migrant smuggling networks from South America to the United States southwestern border using publicly accessible data. I further examined key nodes, or factors, in which human trafficking or migrant smuggling networks depended. Furthermore, these nodes, once identified, could allow for law enforcement, social service, or aid organization interventions. Using qualitative analysis and the processes described in this chapter, this thesis presents common characteristics, methods, and traits of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, the discussion of four key geographic node points, and seven potential strategies to disrupt the relationships inherent in human trafficking and migrant smuggling systems and positively impact the reduction in human smuggling and human trafficking. The ideas offered regarded the establishment of programs in the law enforcement, political, social, educational and religious organizational realms that can be put in place to eliminate or significantly reduce human smuggling and human trafficking. As previously mentioned, the definitions for human trafficking and migrant smuggling, provided by the United Nation Office of Drugs and Organized Crime, are used in the thesis. In the world of criminal justice, it is often difficult to distinguish between the two because of the similar characteristics the two definitions share. Figure 1, from the UNODC's Assessment Guide to the Criminal Justice System, outlines the differences between human trafficking and migrant smuggling. (United Nations Office on Drug and Organized Crime, 2012 p. 22).

	Trafficking in persons (adults)	Trafficking in persons (children)	Smuggling of migrants (children and adults)
Material elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act</li> <li>• Means</li> <li>• Exploitative purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act</li> <li>• Exploitative purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act: Procurement of illegal entry of a person</li> <li>• Purpose: For financial or other material benefit. Relationship usually ends after the border crossing</li> </ul>
Consent of the trafficked or smuggled person	Irrelevant once the means are established	Irrelevant. Means do not need to be established	Smuggled person generally consents to the smuggling (though consent may be retracted of the person may be misinformed)
Victim's age	Over 18	Below 18	Irrelevant
Transnationality	Not required	Not required	Smuggling involves illegal border crossing and entry into another country, or border and illegal stay
Involvement of an organized criminal group	Not required	Not required	Not required
Mental element	Intention	Intention	Intention

Figure 2. Definition Differences between Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (United Nations Office on Drug and Organized Crime, 2012)

This thesis used unstructured court case data from human trafficking and migrant smuggling cases prosecuted within the United States. The focus was traffickers and smugglers who had made the journey far enough north to be apprehended by United States law enforcement officials. A total of 16 court cases from 2001 to 2014 were examined. Official government reports, scholarly articles, newspaper articles, and books were used to supplement the court records and enhance the contextual accuracy of this thesis. All data used in this thesis is accessible in the public arena. As will be discussed in more detail in the following sections, all the court case data was imported into the

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software know as NVivo. Data was then organized and analyzed to find commonly occurring themes, methods, and traits to determine specific cities used, in what country victims originated, modes of transportation used, and how smuggling and trafficking networks operated based on the frequency of recurring themes. The most commonly noted themes, variables, and traits will be further organized by how critical they are to the organization's continued operation. For this study, critically is defined as the degree to which human smuggling and human trafficking seemed to depend on any given variable or sets of variables (Bensman, 2015).

## **Data Collection**

### **U. S. Court Prosecution Records**

Primary data collection came from publicly available court cases from PACER, a court case database, to examine how smuggling and trafficking networks are constructed and operated. This research attempted to quantify key drivers and factors in the establishment and use of leverage points, nodes, staging areas and hubs in smuggling and trafficking highways to provide a framework by which suggestions can be made regarding disrupting and altering these critical junctures. Primary data was collected and analyzed from court documents via PACER (Public Access to Electronic Records), the United Nations reports, and documents on human smuggling and human trafficking (i.e. newspaper/magazine/television news reports and case studies, data from the National Center for Missing and exploited children, and scholarly articles). UNODC (2017), in fact, reported the most reliable and accurate information available concerning human smuggling comes from court prosecution records. The chart in Table 1 breaks down the

court cases by prosecuting state and case number for the 16 court cases examined in this thesis. All cases spanned from 2002 to 2014. Court records that contained procedural motions or which did not contain sufficient descriptive content were not included in this analysis. However, if the document had the potential to give insight into human trafficking or a migrant smuggling route, it was examined in the PACER system, then downloaded. It is important to mention that out of the 16 cases listed, most of them had co-conspirators. However, the co-conspirator cases were not included in the NVivo analysis to avoid biasing the sample. A few cases were supplemented with media coverage to fill in any holes that were not covered in the available court documents from PACER.

Table 1. Court Cases Examined

<b>STATE</b>	<b>CASE NUMBER</b>
<b>ARIZONA</b>	12-10586
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>	3:07-cr-00035
<b>FLORIDA</b>	12-80100
<b>FLORIDA</b>	13-11625
<b>FLORIDA</b>	13-14845
<b>FLORIDA</b>	2:01-cr-14019
<b>FLORIDA</b>	2:07-cr-00136
<b>IOWA</b>	4:12-cr-00085
<b>NEW MEXICO</b>	1:12-CR-01085
<b>NEW YORK</b>	1:02-cr-00523
<b>NEW YORK</b>	1:08-cr-00349
<b>OKLAHOMA</b>	5:09-cr-00064
<b>TEXAS</b>	6:05-cr-00240
<b>TEXAS</b>	7:03-cr-00341
<b>VIRGIN ISLANDS</b>	3:12-cr-00036
<b>WASHINGTON</b>	3:07-cr-05556

### **Validation through Supplemental Material**

Government reports, interviews and media coverage provided critical supplementation to the results produced by the court case analysis. Media coverage shed

insight into illicit migration patterns that the court cases noted, but for which they did not provide enough detail. Books on the topics of smuggling and trafficking gave credence to economic evolution and historical evolution of border security on the southwestern border but were not inputted into NVivo. The UNODC *Trafficking of Persons Report* (2016) gave a global overview of trafficking precautions from each country in that belongs to the United Nations. The U. S. Department of State produces an annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* that clumps countries into a tier level system: tier 1, tier 2, tier 2 watchlist, and tier 3 (U. S. Department of State, 2017). Countries that do not meet the minimum standards for the “elimination of trafficking” are removed from tier 1 status (U. S. Department of State, 2017). The countries that do not meet the minimums, but are continuing to move in a forward, positive direction are considered tier 2 (U. S. Department of State, 2017). Countries that move backwards from previous progress end up on the tier 2 watchlist, and countries that do not make any effort to meet the criteria categorized as tier 3 (U. S. Department of State, 2017).

Four interviews were conducted with law enforcement professionals with backgrounds in border security, human trafficking, or smuggling. The interviews were semi-structured asking the basic uniform questions: (1) Are migrant smuggling and human trafficking routes the same? and (2) Are there any key geographic factors in routes from South America to the U. S. U. S. Southwestern border, etc.? The interviews were semi-structured to allow the interviewer to ask questions that specifically pertained to the interviewee. The interviews essentially came to the same conclusions and repeated the same material that had been discussed by other interviewees. Further interviews were not

necessary due to a saturation of material discussed, meaning that the answers given were in depth enough to not warrant another interview.

## **PROCEDURE**

The procedures described in this next section took place after the court cases were downloaded and the supplemental materials were stored in an organized fashion. Records from the court cases were downloaded from Pacer, converted to PDFs, and stored on a hard drive. The court materials were organized by defendant name. Using an NVivo tool, the court case folders were then imported into NVivo's internal database, in alphabetical order, so they could be analyzed and referred to as needed. Government reports and newspaper articles were downloaded from an electronic source, imported into NVivo, and sorted alphabetically by state. The data were then analyzed to identify human trafficking or human smuggling organizations, most commonly occurring themes, variables, and traits to determine how they operated based on a frequency of their occurrences in the data. Following analysis of published publicly available literature, interviews, conducted by phone or in person, were arranged with law enforcement personnel with knowledge and experience working on border security, human trafficking, or migrant smuggling cases. The purpose of these four interviews was merely to fill gaps concerning critical juncture in human smuggling and trafficking highways. Agencies that participated were Travis County, Houston Police Department Human Trafficking Unit, Border Patrol, and Texas Department of Safety. Interviews were semi-structured. General questions included items such as: are human smuggling and human trafficking routes the same, where money was exchanged either between persons being smuggled and smugglers or smuggler to smuggler, where a trafficking organization passed the

smugglers to a different organization, where transportation modes change, what businesses/homes/structures were used to keep smugglers for a time period, where drugs were given or forced upon smugglers. The interviews were converted into Word documents, imported into NVivo, and sorted alphabetically.

Name	Codes	References	Modified On	Modified By	Classification
Allred, Delva	4	4	6/20/2018 5:12 PM	ARF	
Bonfigli, Encarnacion-Perez	2	3	6/20/2018 5:12 PM	ARF	
Garcia et al	4	16	6/20/2018 5:13 PM	ARF	
Gonzalez-Perez	3	5	6/20/2018 5:12 PM	ARF	
Jensen	3	15	6/20/2018 5:12 PM	ARF	
Kusanovic	4	8	6/20/2018 5:13 PM	ARF	
Leon-Aldana et al	4	16	6/20/2018 5:13 PM	ARF	
Levarity	3	4	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
Lopez	2	3	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
Maddox et al	3	4	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
Maldonado	6	10	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
Mireles	1	1	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
Navarrete	3	6	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
Ortega	1	1	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
Ramos et al	4	5	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
Soto-Huamantla et al	4	14	6/20/2018 5:14 PM	ARF	
ICE Operation in plain sight	4	8	6/20/2018 5:16 PM	ARF	
US Customs and Border protection container initiatives	0	0	6/20/2018 5:16 PM	ARF	
US Customs and Border protection initiatives	0	0	6/20/2018 5:17 PM	ARF	
undoc assessment guide to the criminal justice response to smuggling	0	0	6/20/2018 5:17 PM	ARF	
UNDOC: role of corruption in migrant smuggling 2017	0	0	6/20/2018 5:17 PM	ARF	
UNDOC TIP evidence issues	0	0	6/20/2018 5:17 PM	ARF	
UNDOC TIP Recruitment practices	0	0	6/20/2018 5:17 PM	ARF	
Department of state trafficking in persons report 2017	0	0	6/20/2018 5:18 PM	ARF	
border patrol strategic plan 2012-2016	7	32	6/20/2018 5:18 PM	ARF	
Terror and the Mexico border	0	0	6/20/2018 5:25 PM	ARF	
Human smugglers cash in on Central American migration to U	0	0	6/20/2018 5:25 PM	ARF	
Passage through Mexico	0	0	6/20/2018 5:26 PM	ARF	
Latin American program trafficking in persons	0	0	6/20/2018 5:28 PM	ARF	
Deadly human trafficking business on Mexico	0	0	6/20/2018 5:30 PM	ARF	
The Corridor of Death	0	0	6/20/2018 5:30 PM	ARF	
Coyotes: ten things to remember	9	22	6/20/2018 5:32 PM	ARF	
Human smuggling across the southern border	0	0	6/20/2018 5:33 PM	ARF	
Master Ties: Texas' Hub for Human Smuggling	0	0	6/20/2018 5:35 PM	ARF	
Routes to the US	0	0	6/20/2018 5:38 PM	ARF	

Figure 3. Data Storage in NVivo  
This captured screen shot reflects a view of the inputted data

## IV. ANALYSIS

### Human Trafficking Overview

The easiest way to differentiate human trafficking from human smuggling is the use of force, coercion, or fraud to traffic an individual across the border. The analysis of the court cases showed that often threats of abuse, verbal abuse, and physical abuse were the most used forms of coercion in the court cases. Often individuals were promised illegal migrant jobs and wages to convince them to cross the border. These individuals were often smuggled across and then told that they had to work off their smuggling debt. For example, Simon Banda-Mireles smuggled over 100 undocumented migrants from Mexico to work in his restaurant locations in New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia (*U. S. v. Mireles et al*, 2008; U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2011). Banda-Mireles was an illegal immigrant himself, adopting the name Jorge DeLarco upon his illegal entrance into the United States. Mireles paid his workers a subminimum wage to have a commercial advantage over his business rivals (U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2011). Robert Doyle Maddox and Angela Galeana de Maddox from *U. S. v. Maddox et al* (2005), agreed to smuggle a 12 year-old girl from Guerrero, Mexico into the United States to babysit their children. They made a deal with the girl's mother, agreeing to pay her ten dollars for the girl and send fifty dollars a month for the girl's services (*Plainview Daily Herald*, 2006). In return the girl was forced to do all of the Maddox's domestic work and care for their small children. The Maddox's denied her schooling (*Plainview Daily Herald*, 2006). Angela Maddox was abusive towards the 12 year old, as she slapped and kicked her, and tried to force her to drink water from the toilet (*Plainview Daily Herald*, 2006).



The paying of substandard wages is not an unusual occurrence in human trafficking cases. Often, the low wage salaries are a motivating factor for United States business owners to reach out to immigrants and offer them passage into the United States. The low wages allow for the business owners or pimps to make sure their victims cannot quickly pay off any smuggled “debt” victims owe from their journeys northward. This, in return, allows for traffickers to maintain control over their victims. Having nothing of their own, no home and very little money, victims are often dependent upon their traffickers. The traffickers power lies in this dependency.

Sexual abuse was not an overarching theme in this analysis, especially regarding the court cases. Most of the human trafficking court cases used in this thesis focused on forced labor coercion. Sexual abuse was mentioned in *U. S. v. Soto-Huarte* (2003). Juan Carlos Soto, from January 3 through February 6, 2003, sexually abused an immigrant known as RAL through force, threats, and brandishing a pistol. However, RAL was not trafficked into the United States for the just the use of sex acts. RAL was also forced to clean trailers and was expected to do whatever was asked of her. However, sexual abuse and rape are sometimes a part of the journey northward. In Falfurrias, Texas residents are no strangers to the sexual violence that takes place in their own backyards. On Thanksgiving 2013, ranch manager Wyatt Holleck found a dead woman tied to a tree trunk (Johnson, 2014). Her pants and underwear had been pushed down around her ankles (Johnson, 2014). A Honduran identification card had been placed in the sand right next to her head, identifying her as a migrant. Reporting the dead found on his property is a job requirement that Wyatt did not sign up for, but it is often the reality that ranchers

down on the border in Texas must face daily as illegal immigrants make the deadly journey to cross private property to avoid the Texas “second border” (Interview 4).

This information raises the question, “Why do migrants allow themselves to be put in these types of situations?” From the NVivo analysis it was apparent that desire for economic opportunity and improved quality of life were both motivating factors. The media coverage reports that violence in migrant homelands, for example gang violence in Ecuadorian barrios, has cause migrants to seek asylum in the United States. However, this opens the door for traffickers to sweep in and take advantage of migrants. Some traffickers come up with elaborate schemes. For example, in *U. S. v. Kusanovic* (2009), the defendant enticed several Chilean women to fly to Mexico and be smuggled across the U. S. southwestern border using the promise of high paying jobs and a better life. The defendant provided them with fake registration receipt cards (“green cards”) and counterfeited social security cards.

In terms of how human trafficking systems operate the court case analysis showed a few different trafficking approaches. For the majority of the court cases, those seeking migrants for forced labor arranged for the migrants to be smuggled across the border for a certain fee. The smuggler either worked for the trafficker who arranged the border crossing or was an unidentified party not discussed in court case documents. For some of the cases, the smuggler would accompany the migrants to a specific place where they could then walk to the destination or have another person guide the rest of the journey until destination was reached. For a few court cases the traffickers simply just crossed the border with the migrant hidden in the car. One common factor from the NVivo analysis showed that more than one individual is most likely involved in the trafficking scheme

whether it is couples working together (*U. S. v. Maddox et al.*, 2005) or relatives working together (*U. S. v. Navarrate et al.*, 2007; *U. S. v. Ramos et al.*, 2001). Some traffickers contract smugglers to bring their human cargo across the border, while other incorporate smugglers into their trafficking business. Nicknames were also a small trait that reoccurred in the analysis.

### **Human Smuggling Overview**

According to the UNODC definition of human smuggling, coercion is not a factor. Immigrant looking to be smuggled into the United States share the same hopes of those that end up trafficking with in America's borders: a hope for a better life. However, it costs to come into the United States. Prices vary, but it is around \$1,500 to \$2,000 to be smuggled across the United States/Mexico Border (Personal interview number 4, 2018). In *U. S. v. Leon-Aldana et al.* (2006), migrants paid anywhere from \$1,500 to \$3,000 dollars just to be trafficked from cities close to the United States border. However, for those coming from farther away, such as Guatemalans or Chileans, the price can easily reach more than \$5,000 to \$10,000 dollars each (Associated Press, 2014). Several factors go into the overall cost of smuggling someone across borders; bribes for border patrol or officers, lodging, payment for the smuggler, and a tax imposed at the United States/Mexico border by the cartels (Personal interview number 4, 2018). From June to October 2013, over 57,000 unaccompanied minors, mainly from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, were apprehended at the United States/Mexico border (Associated Press, 2014). Smugglers are capitalizing on the violence in gang-ridden cities of Central and South America (Associated Press, 2014).

The court cases analyzed showed mainly adult smuggling victims from all parts of the world. In *U. S. v. Lopez* (2013), the defendant attempted to smuggle 34 Cuban migrants into Boynton Beach, Florida. In *U. S. v. Levarity* (2014), the defendant attempted to smuggle eight Jamaican nationals, three Haitian nationals, one Brazilian national, and one Bahamian national. As seen in the trafficking court cases, Mexican, Guatemalan, Chilean, and Honduran immigrants were all smuggled across the border for traffickers.

Overall, there are three main smuggling structures: full-service, partial service, or limited service (Bensman, 2018). Full service smugglers offer “full service, pre-organized, ‘stage to stage’ guided travel from home country to destination country” (Bensman, 2015, p. 48). Partial service smuggling involves assisting “self-propelled individuals for one or more guided journey stages, brokering introductions to other organizations, or facilitating a key enabling service such as fraudulent documents acquisition” (Bensman, 2015, p. 49). Limited service smugglers market a single key enabling service (Bensman, 2015). Most court cases showed limited service smuggling. For example, in *U. S. v. Leon-Aldana* (2006), the defendant “Dona Gloria” used Augustin Alonso-Terrero to smuggle undocumented immigrants into the United States. Alonso-Terrero would be told at which hotel in Tijuana, Mexico the migrants were waiting and would escort them all the way to the Woodman address in San Diego, California. Migrant smuggling is a complex structure. The guides that work at the border are only the middle men in the chain of supply. “Honchos,” who are in charge of the entire operation, call the shots from afar and only pocket a fraction of what the migrant is charged. However,

when the illicit trade economy is over six billion dollars, a fraction of the pay is not looking too bad.

### **Routes, Overlap, and Leverage Points**

The court case and secondary data analysis showed that even though human trafficking and migrant smuggling are two separate crimes, the air, sea, and land routes taken to commit those crimes are similar. In all the conducted interviews, each law enforcement official concluded that the same routes used for trafficking and smuggling human cargo are often used for drug cargo in South America, Central America, and especially in Mexico. Some smuggling routes used by SIAs been mapped out. However, since SIAs are known to travel with Mexican, Central American, and South American migrant groups, the conclusion can be made that these routes are already being used to move human cargo made up of people from Mexico, Central, and South America. However, the court case and secondary data analysis saw an inclusion of more cities to those already identified. Table 2 displays staging, transit, or destination state, country or city for human trafficking or human smuggling that was identified in the NVivo analysis.

Table 2. Staging, Transit, or Destination State, Country or City for Human Trafficking or Human Smuggling

<b>CITY</b>	<b>STATE/COUNTRY</b>
Buenos Aires	Argentina
San Pedro River	Arizona/Mexico border
Amado	Arizona
Highway 92	Arizona
Nogales	Arizona
Patagonia	Arizona
Phoenix	Arizona
Sasabe	Arizona
Andros	Bahamas
Bimi	Bahamas
Great Isaac Cay	Bahamas

Belize City	Belize
Nuestra Senora de la Paz	Bolivia
Rio Blanco	Brazil
Rio De Janeiro	Brazil
San Paulo	Brazil
San Paulo	Brazil
San Diego	California
La Miel/Sapzurro	Colombia
Turbo	Colombia
Bogota	Columbia
Chigorado	Columbia
Equito	Ecuador
Quito	Ecuador
Corinto	El Salvador
Le Hechadure	El Salvador
San Pedro	El Salvador
San Salvador	El Salvador
Sula	El Salvador
Collier County	Florida
De Soto County	Florida
Del Roy Beach	Florida
Lake Placid	Florida
Miami	Florida
Palm Beach County	Florida
Champerico	Guatemala
El Ceibo	Guatemala
Hildago	Guatemala
Ocon	Guatemala
San Jose	Guatemala
Tecun Uman	Guatemala
Suchiate River	Guatemala/Mexico border
	Honduras
Story County	Iowa
Apizaco	Mexico
Arriaga	Mexico
Cancun	Mexico
Celaya Queretaro	Mexico
Chahuities	Mexico
Chetumal	Mexico
Chiapas	Mexico
Ciudad Acuna	Mexico
Ciudad Hidalgo	Mexico

Ciudad Juarez	Mexico
Coatzacoalcos	Mexico
Cordoba Orizaba	Mexico
Cuernavaca	Mexico
Huehuetoca	Mexico
Huixtia	Mexico
Irapuato	Mexico
Ixtepec	Mexico
Ixtex	Mexico
Lecheria	Mexico
Matamoros	Mexico
Matias Romero	Mexico
Medias Aguas	Mexico
Mesilla	Mexico
Mexicali	Mexico
Monterrey	Mexico
Nuevo Laredo	Mexico
Oxaca	Mexico
Panque	Mexico
Piedras Negras	Mexico
Puebla	Mexico
Reynosa	Mexico
Saltillo	Mexico
Satillio	Mexico
Sonoran Desert	Mexico
Tamaulipas	Mexico
Tampico	Mexico
Tapachula	Mexico
Tenosique	Mexico
Tierra Blanca	Mexico
Tijuana	Mexico
Albuquerque	New Mexico
Chaparral	New Mexico
Las Cruces	New Mexico
Alleghery	New York
Cheektowaga	New York
Dunkirk	New York
Fredonia	New York
Penas Blancas	Nicaragua
Mentor	Ohio
Willowick	Ohio
Oklahoma City	Oklahoma

Otis	Oregon
Meteti	Panama
Paya	Panama
Yavizza	Panama
Bradford	Pennsylvania
Lima	Peru
Waterboro	South Carolina
Alamo	Texas
Brooks County	Texas
Brownsville	Texas
Carrizo Springs	Texas
Dimmit County	Texas
Edinburg	Texas
El Paso	Texas
Encino	Texas
Falfurrias	Texas
Harlingen	Texas
Hebbronville	Texas
Highway 281	Texas
Highway 83	Texas
Houston	Texas
Laredo	Texas
McAllen	Texas
Mission	Texas
Rio Grande Valley	Texas
Roma	Texas
San Antonio	Texas
South Padre Island	Texas
Starr County	Texas
Victoria	Texas
St. John	Virgin Islands
William Island	Virgin Islands
New Martinsville	West Virginia
Wheeling	West Virginia

### **Role of the Coyote**

Most illegal immigrants enter the United States with help of a “coyote”. Being a coyote is a high risk, high reward business and one that strict border protocols in the United States has made migrants dependent upon (Andreas, 2013; Associated Press,



2014). Though smuggling operations are decades old, the influx over the last five years of unaccompanied minors and children from Central American, mainly from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras has brought them back into the spotlight (Associated Press, 2014; Interview 4). However, coyotes are not just native to Mexico. This sector of business operates at all borders in world. Coyotes know the land better than anyone else. They are also organized and adaptive. In Panama, coyotes recently cut a fresh path north due to violence on the established drug trafficking routes (Vick, 2018). Death is bad for business.

In 2013, arrests of migrants on the U. S. southwestern border dropped from 1.1 million annually to 415,000 (Associated Press, 2014). To reboot business, rumor has it that coyotes spread a whisper campaign telling migrant children they would be allowed to stay in the U. S. (Associated Press, 2014).

A Guatemalan smuggler makes his Central American immigrants fake Mexican identity cards and has them learn the first stanza of the Mexican national anthem before he officially hands them over to another smuggler (Associated Press, 2014). This way if they are caught, they will only be sent back to Mexico (Associated Press, 2014). There has been a debate on where coyotes are part of drug trafficking operations. However, the secondary analysis showed that coyotes act as third party contractors, hired by whoever needs their services. Though immigrants can look up the smuggling route you need on Google, it is a far more dangerous trek by yourself (Lakhani, 2016). Often “coyotes” and their clients are connected through social networks (Personal interview number 1, 2018). Family and friends help connect “coyotes” and clients (Associated Press, 2014). However, in some places, such as Altar, Mexico, the coyote must be improved by the

cartel to do business in that sector (Weden, 2016). For migrants the coyote acts as the compass; without him or her, migrants would be lost (Associated Press, 2014). The court case analysis did not by name discuss coyotes. However, for the cases in which the smuggler was not a part of the human trafficking network, but a third-party vendor the use of a coyote can be assumed, based off of the knowledge from analysis of the interviews and media coverage.

### **The Power of the Transnational Crime Organizations**

The cartels control the Northeastern section of Mexico (Personal interview number 2, 2018). Each border town on the U. S. Southwestern border acts as a plaza controlled by the Mexican Cartels (Personal interview number 1, 2018; Personal interview number 4, 2018). The Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas are transnational crime organizations that control most of the territory on the Mexican side of the southwestern U. S. border (Personal interview number 2, 2018; Personal interview number 4, 2018). In 2012, as part of his plea deal, Rafael Cardenas Vela, nephew of former Gulf Cartel leader Osiel Cardenas Guillen, went into detail about his time as plaza boss for the cartel. Plaza bosses are “the lead representative for the Gulf Cartel in a particular region or town and are in charge of maintaining control of the region for to ensure the safe passage of the Cartel’s narcotics” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014). It is the Plaza Boss that taxes those who want to smuggle or traffic goods in those regions (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014). The Plaza Boss is in charge of bribing all law enforcement and government officials in that region (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014). Vela managed San Fernando, Rio Bravo and Matamoros, Tamaulipas, where he was in control of bribery, recruiting members, and taxing illicitly traded goods (Federal Bureau of Investigation,

2014). Vela taxed a flat ten percent fee from all smugglers to work in the Rio Bravo plaza; charging two hundred to three hundred dollars for Mexican immigrants, five hundred to seven hundred dollars for Central Americans and around \$1,500 dollars for Europeans or Asians (Associated Press, 2014). However, the cartel makes an example of those who do pay (Personal interview number 1, 2018; Personal interview number 2, 2018; Personal interview number 4, 2018). The illicit activity that is encouraged by the Plaza Boss often influences the legal retail in town. For example, some shops in Altar, Mexico, are geared toward migrants needs and provide camouflage, sand-colored clothing, and anti-snake bit kits (Weden, 2016). In Altar specifically, no one gets in or out without the approval of the cartel (Weden, 2016). In Altar, the Plaza boss charges a tax of \$700 dollars tax plus \$4500 to travel with the “coyote” that is appointed by the cartels (Weden, 2016).

### **Travelling the Route North**

There are two sectors of countries that play a key role in smuggling and trafficking migration patterns. The first is the initial landing or staging country. Staging countries are places where migrants linger for days, weeks, or even months at a time, waiting for supplies, the next coyote to reach them, or for suspicion to die down. Initial starting or staging countries for the journey north for some starts in South America. Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela are well known staging countries (Bensman, 2015; Personal interview number 2, 2018). Transit countries are places where migrants are constantly on the move. However, if necessary, some transit countries, such as Mexico or Ecuador, can act as staging countries. It all depends on what the smuggler thinks is best. Transit countries are Colombia, Costa Rica,

Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela (Bensman, 2015; Personal interview number 2, 2018; Personal interview number 4, 2018). Though most migrants that be smuggled across the border originate from countries above South America, with the exception of SIAs, routes in South America are used by human traffickers from Russia, the Ukraine, and Asian countries hoping to profit from the sex trade (Personal interview number 2, 2018). Each of the following nodes is critical to the Northward journey. The court case analysis showed which home countries migrants are coming from. The secondary analysis of the interviews, journal articles, and media coverage allowed for a solidification of the land routes migrants are using to travel North. The secondary data analysis revealed 4 nodes that are imperative to the journey north.

### **Node 1: Ecuador**

The country of Ecuador has one of the most lenient visa policies to date. By June 2008 Ecuador had officially discarded any form of travel visa, opening its borders to anyone wishing to visit (Bowditch, 2009). Migration sky rocketed, especially from China (Bowditch, 2009). Most Americans assumed that because Ecuador is thousands of miles away from the United States, these visa policies would not affect America. The world community knows that Ecuador's immigration policy is lax and often rely on Ecuador as key step in on the pathway to the United States. The Chinese national that had landed within Ecuador's borders had the destination of the



Figure 4. Map of Ecuador (lonely planet, 2018)

United States within their sights. Like several other migrants before them, these Chinese nationals hoped to tap into Ecuador’s human smuggling networks to reach the U. S. southwestern border. While the court cases did not shed light on Ecuador’s immigration situation, the rest of the secondary data did. In 2011, as part of Ecuador President Rafael Correa’s crack down on police corruption, President Correa offered citizenship to immigrants who were living within Ecuador’s borders at that time (InSight Crime, 2011). According to the U. S. State Department, Ecuador falls into the tier 2 category in the Trafficking in persons, meaning that the country does not meet the minimum requirements for the elimination of human trafficking, but is making significant efforts to do so (U. S. Department of State, 2017). However, just as smugglers, especially SIAs attempt to game the asylum system, smugglers and traffickers will take full advantage of this new deal, especially if they are facing arrest. Ecuador does not have the strict border

protocols of the United States, nor a proper vetting system. Furthermore, Ecuador is accessible by air, land, and sea, making it easily accessible to almost all populations, especially SIAs.

## Node 2: The Darien Gap



Figure 5. The Darien Gap (Pauker, 2016)

There are several different modes of transportation that can be used to reach the destination country. However, most immigrants migrating from South America to Central America will choose to risk their lives walking through the jungle in hopes of making it to the United States (Virgin, 2018). The Darien Gap is 106 kilometers of jungle and acts as the geographical separator between Panama and Colombia. It is one of the most dangerous jungles in the world, separated by the Chucunaque River that also runs through Colombia. Most who traffic through the jungle are called “Hormaguitas,” or ants, because they travel in groups, most of the time wearing backpacks loaded with cocaine (Virgin, 2018). Over 65,000 transnational immigrants have crossed into Panama by sea, land, or air (Virgin, 2018). Panama is fully aware of the new migration patterns that have developed with its borders, but the governments officials are also aware that for most migrants the destination is not Panama, it is the United States. Regardless of the media

coverage and reporting of trafficking and smuggling, there is a lack of military and law enforcement presence (Bensman, 2015). However, for Central Americans, before they can get to the United States, they must first cross the Mexico border.



Figure 6. Wanted Poster for a Known Smuggler in Darien Gap Area (Karsten, 2015)

### Node 3: Mexico and the Beast

The Mexico/Guatemala border is porous and lightly patrolled, making smuggling relatively easy (Villegas, 2014). La Bestia (The Beast), freight trains are the most used modes transportation by traveling migrants. Central Americans require a passport to visit Mexico. With Mexican law enforcement watching roads, airports, and bus stations the cargo trains became the logical option for migrants without visas (Villegas, 2014). Many smugglers take their clients to Mexico City, from Chiapas or Oaxaca states (Associated Press, 2014). La Bestia's route splits east to west. Those who follow the western route end up in California, Arizona, and sometimes El Paso (Personal interview number 4, [insert date]). Those who follow the route east often end up in Texas, specifically the Rio

Grande Valley sector (Personal interview number 4, [insert date]). There are no passenger cars, so migrants must ride atop the moving train, risking injury or death. The Salvatrucha Gang violently controls the southern migration route in Mexico (UNODC, 2012; Villegas, 2014). The recent reopening of the train route from Tapachula to Arriaga has allowed Central American gangs to gain a more dominant presence in Chiapas. In partnership with organized crime groups, such as Los Zetas, Central American gangs get to control a territory along The Beast's route (Villegas, 2014). Migrants must pay either tariffs to the gangs that control the Beast's Routes or bribes for officials to look the other way (Villegas, 2014). Though the migrant's journey can originate anywhere on the rail line, Tapachula in the state of Chiapas and Tenosique in the state of Tabasco are the closest to the Guatemalan journey. Migrants change train lines along the way to reduce the risk of being caught and to grab supplies and food at civil-society run shelters (Villegas, 2014). Once they near the United States' border, migrants leave the train and pay a "coyote" to lead them the rest of the way. However, it is interesting to note that La Bestia Train routes are not utilized by SIAs during their journey to the United States border. This particular transportation mode is used mainly by migrants from Mexico, Central America, and South America.



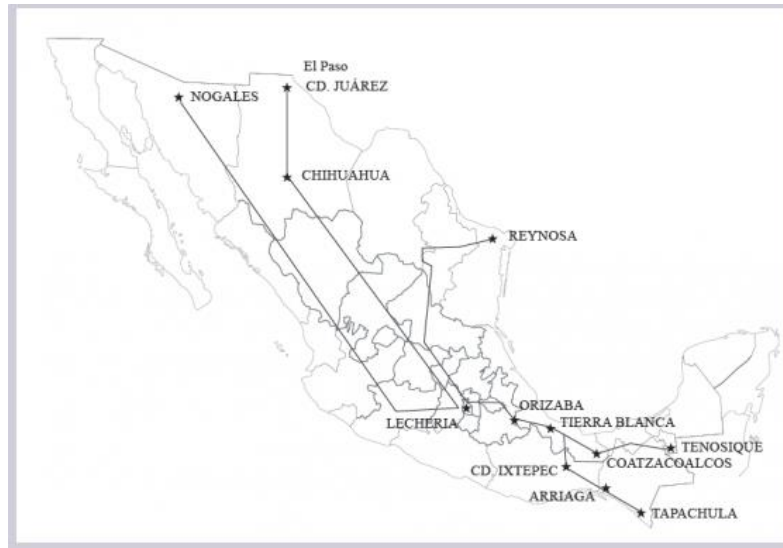


Figure 7. La Bestia Train Routes (Cruz, 2013)

#### **Node 4: United States and Mexico Southwestern Border**

In 1993-1994 the new motto for border security became “prevention through deterrence” (Andreas, 2013). Under this new initiative, the focus was not on those already within the United States borders illegally, but instead on a strategy from keeping immigrants from illegally entering the country. Physical barriers, legal sanctions, and surveillance equipment were deployed as part of the new border security strategy. By September 1993, El Paso saw the implantation of Operation Hold-the-Line which called for the addition of 450 border patrol agents, many paid overtime, to cover the 20-mile border at the El Paso (Andreas, 2013). As predicted, the El Paso border saw reduction in illegal entry attempts. Officials, wanting to replicate the results, launched Operation Gate, covering the fourteen western miles south of San Diego (Andreas, 2013). However, trafficking and smuggling systems evolved to counter these initiatives. While the numbers showed a plummet in EL Paso, the New Mexico and Arizona borders saw an increase in traffic. The Imperial Beach sector of Operation Gate resulted in a lower amount of arrests on that border, but an increase in arrests in remote areas east of San

Diego (Andreas, 2013). However, neither operation fully deterred trafficking or smuggling, it simply misplaced it to a different, less protected area, the Rio Grande Valley.

The southwestern border of the United States is a strategically problematic area to police (Associated Press, 2014). In 1997, Operation Rio Grande began. Flood lights, twenty-foot watch towers, low light video cameras and high powered infrared systems now lined the Rio Grande border (Andreas, 2013). The United States Border Patrol and the military's Joint Task Force Six combined efforts to pave 240 miles of roadway, construct a dozen helicopter pads, and place 50 high intensity lights in the Laredo area (Andreas, 2013). Border Patrol increased port inspectors from 1,117 to 1,865 and reinforced stringent penalties on those trying to cross illegally in hopes of reducing port of entry traffic (Andreas, 2013). However, for all the money and effort placed in border security, illegal immigrants were still flooding the country in this area. A 1997 report of the Binational Migration Study concluded that more migrants were using professional smugglers than before (as cited in Andreas, 2013). This fact gave explanation to why most migrants were succeeding in their attempts to cross (Andreas, 2013). These initiatives did not build the coyote and transnational crime organization business; these enterprises already existed. However, thanks to these strict border protocols, migrants wanting to illegally cross became dependent on coyotes and TCOs to successfully do so.

Licit trade also played a factor in border security. Ports of entry allowed in imported and exported legal goods, that both the United States' and Mexico's economies depended on. The daunting task of having to decide what looked like legal cargo and what looked like illicit cargo fell heavily on the shoulders of Border Patrol Agents

(Andreas, 2013). Giant backscatter X-ray machines were installed at all ports of entry for vehicles to drive through (Andreas, 2013). The purpose was to confiscate illicit items without stopping the flow a legal commercial traffic (Andreas, 2013).

In the U. S. Border Patrol Strategic plan for 2012-2016, two main goals were outlined. The first goal was to secure America's borders between ports of entry against all threats (U. S. Customs and Border Protection, n.d.). The second was to strengthen the border patrol to succeed in its border-security mission (U. S. Customs and Border Protection, n.d.). With pressure from the U. S., Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto began the Southern Border Program (Programa Frontera Sur) in 2014 increasing enforcement efforts (Asmann, 2017). However, there were 11.3 million unauthorized immigrants in the U. S. in 2016 and more than 8 million unauthorized migrants in the United States work force, represented mostly in farming and construction companies (Krogstand, Passle, & Cohn, 2017). Boom or bust, the United States is still a better economic alternative than home countries of migrants.



Figure 8. Cartel Influence in Mexico (Stewart 2017)

With the growing threat of terrorists using the Mexican border to cross into the United States, American civilians, especially those living close to the border, are increasingly taking matters into their own hands. Tim Foley leads an organization called Arizona Border Recon located in Sasabe, Arizona. His organization secures the border using surveillance equipment and armed, civilian patrols (Richey, 2011). American Border Patrol, another civilian group, sponsored an effort to show just how easy it would be to smuggle a nuclear device over the border. Starting at the San Pedro River Mexican border, a group member walked four miles into Arizona along an active smuggling route to a pick-up point near the bridge at Highway 92. The group then proceeded from the pick-up point to a federal building. No one stopped, questioned, or even saw them (Richey, 2011).

## V. STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are six key transit countries that traffickers and smugglers, traveling by land, must pass through to reach the United States southwestern border: Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, Columbia, Guatemala, and Mexico. For Russian sex traffickers, Asian forced labor victims, and SIAs the journey often starts in Brazil and migrates northward. However, for the migrants identified in the court cases and the majority of the journal articles and media coverage, most home countries were located in Central America. This thesis found fear of violence, desire for economic opportunity and quality of life as motivators for migrants to depart on the journey northward. Furthermore, this thesis concluded that due to increased border security regulations, migrants have become dependent upon professional smugglers or “coyotes” to the United States southwestern border. With these facts established, this thesis seeks to provide guidance for law enforcement and policy makers to implement strategies to deter migrants, smugglers, and traffickers from embarking on the journey north.

As a means of controlling human conduct and enforcing societal rules, criminal justice strategy dates back as far as 2000 BC (Hess & Orthmann, 2012). As an example, the king of Babylon, Hammurabi, set up rules, offences, and punishments for his kingdom based upon the fundamental principle “the strong shall not injure the weak” (Hess & Orthmann, 2012). His legal principle of *lex talionis*, an eye for an eye, has survived decades to become a common practice throughout history. However, sometimes the best solutions to transnational problems are not to take from each other, but instead work together. Joint task forces made up of state, local and federal agencies have become one common approach to counter human trafficking and smuggling internationally has

been to form and depend on joint task forces made up of state, local, and federal agencies, including law enforcement, social service providers, and mental health provider (Bello & Olutola, 2018; Clawson, Dutch, & Cummings, 2006). For example, the U. S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons was established to coordinate the United States fight against human trafficking both internationally and across the U. S. government in conjunction with other law enforcement institutions (Bello & Olutola, 2018). It is important to note that central American, South American, and Mexican immigrants seeking asylum to work in American labor markets do not easily qualify on the basis of racial, religious, or political persecution (Bensman, 2015). Currently most migrants seek amnesty from drug cartels, corrupt government officials, transnational crime organizations that seek to do them harm, economic opportunity, and desire a higher quality of life (Kulish, 2018). U. S. Border Patrol agents cannot immediately deport immigrants from countries that do not share a land border with the U. S., therefore many migrants believe they have a much better chance of staying in the states if they go through the legal channels of requesting asylum (Johnson, 2014). To lock into place the programs recommended in this chapter, the United States should establish or increase humanitarian aid, economic opportunities, and security measures in Latin America and Mexico. The successfulness of these proposed programs rests not only on the United States' shoulders, but on consensual collaboration. Latin American countries and Mexico must want to stop illegal immigration, police corruption, and fight for control against TCOs. These programs require a certain level of willingness and commitment for follow through from friendly

governments. This chapter solely focuses on smuggling and trafficking of victims from South America, Central America, and Mexico.

### **Fighting Corruption, Protecting Victims, and Boosting the Economy**

#### **1) Fund the creation or expansion of anti-corruption movements within Latin America countries**

In Ecuador, NGOs indicated that corruption and complicity of government officials regarding trafficking was ongoing (U. S. Department of State, 2017). In Guatemala, three government officials were charged with abuse of power, noncompliance with their duties, and mistreatment of minors (U. S. Department of State, 2017). In Columbia, trafficking victims were reluctant to report any exploitation by traffickers or testify due to a fear of reprisals or lack of trust in the criminal justice system (U. S. Department of State, 2017). Furthermore, in May of 2017, a Columbian judge convicted twelve people, nine immigration officers and two police officers, for their involvement with a criminal network engaged in drug smuggling and human trafficking (U. S. Department of State, 2017). For migrants to want to stay in their home country, they must feel safe within its borders. Corruption of police and government officials plays a significant role in citizens' perceptions and feelings about their home state and has impacted victims' willingness to report cases of trafficking and testify (U. S. Department of State, 2017). It is important to remember that traffickers have an overbearing influence on their victims and will use this influence as a control mechanism (Bello & Olutola, 2018). This influence can manifest in multiple ways: through faked friendships, victims becoming romantically involved with their traffickers, coercion and force, and threats.

Most immigrants have family members remaining in their home countries whom can be the subject of targeted violence. Traffickers often threatened these family members, so immigrants will comply with requests.

These factors help explain why victims are not always willing to cooperate with the police interrogation or report trafficking activities (Bello & Olutola, 2018). Corrupt border patrol agents and consultants are also used by smugglers to provide traveling documents for quick border crossing. Mexican visas are highly sought after to reduce the travel distance within Latin America and its associated costs and physical difficulty (Bensman, 2015). Visas are sold from Mexican embassies in other countries to whomever will pay the named price. Mexican authorities have taken steps to fire and prosecute some consular employees caught taking bribes (Bensman, 2015; U. S. Department of State, 2017). However, Mexican consulate offices, especially those located in middle eastern countries, remain vulnerable to corruption. How can individuals feel safe in their homes when they constantly see corruption outside their front doors? The answer is, they cannot. This is why the United States must help fund anti-corruption movements and be active in the selection process of new non-corrupt police officers, border and customs officials, and government officials. Corruption currently exists in Latin American countries. Allowing the same corrupt officials to pick new replacements will only reinforce ongoing complacent and corrupt behavior.

**2) Funding the creation and expansion of non-corrupt border and customs personal for the Columbia/Panama border**



Securing borders is a top priority in the fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Brazil, Bolivia, Panama, Ecuador, and Guatemala did not meet the minimum requirements in several key areas of the Trafficking in Persons Report by the United States Department of State (U. S. Department of State, 2018). Columbia, Chile and Guyana did meet all criteria to reach a tier level 1 status in the *United State Department's Trafficking in Person's Report*. The placement of a country in Tier 1 states that the country is has met the minimum requirements from the U.S. State Department to eliminate human trafficking (State, 2018). Due to corruption, lax border security, and the prominence of TCOs in Latin American countries, the United States must provide expertise, training, and funding to secure Latin American borders, as well as its own.

The Darien Gap that serves as the Columbia/Panama border is a key node, especially for traffickers and smugglers coming from Ecuador and Brazil. Analysis of secondary data (i.e. journal and newspaper articles) showed an enormous lack of border security, no military or police are present for several miles on either side of the border. For smugglers and traffickers, this no man's land is the perfect travel path. With no eyes watching, smugglers and traffickers are free to cross without ramifications or concerns of local immigration policy thanks to resource shortages and official passivity (Bensman, 2015). Furthermore, Columbia cannot conduct vehicle or passenger inspections at land border crossings and only uses biometric screening at international airports (Bensman, 2015). Of all the borders that are crossed, this one is not a cause of concern in the eyes of illicit trade. Crossers are detained only at the end of their journey. Thanks to Panama's catch, rest, and release policy migrants often are given food, water, and temporary reprieve before being given legal documents to continue their journey (Bensman, 2015).

Even though it is common knowledge that this node is a heavily used pathway by smugglers and traffickers, neither country has taken steps to make changes. The United States partner with Panama and Columbia to create non-corrupt border and customs personal to patrol the Darien Gap. The Darien Gap for some traffickers in the first step in the journey to the U. S. Proper border security will make the journey northward much more difficult that it has previously been.

**3) Funding the creation or expansion of victim protection services with a useable referral system and more victim shelters with each Latin American country**

In the United States Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report* (2017) urged all Latin American countries to continue to build their resources for human trafficking victims. Victims' lack of faith in the criminal justice system is warranted due to how little governments do to protect their victims. The issue of victims' identification and protection is pivotal to a successful and credible justice system (Bello & Olutola, 2018). Adequate shelters victim shelters for counseling and confidence building are a necessity for victims to have the strength to testify against their abductors and other traffickers during trial (Bello & Olutola, 2018). Guatemala requires judges to make all referrals to public or private shelters, and in 2016 they referred 256 trafficking victims (U. S. Department of State, 2017). However, there are only three government shelters in Guatemala, leading to overcrowding issues. In March of 2017, 41 girls died when a fire broke out in a government ran shelter for children (U. S. Department of State, 2017). The

courts had previously ordered authorities to improve the conditions of the shelter. However, government complacency led to no action being taken (U. S. Department of State, 2017). After a lack of action, residents of the shelter set fire to mattresses to protest living conditions, and physical and sexual abuse (U. S. Department of State, 2017). However, some children were unable to escape because they were kept under lock and key (U. S. Department of State, 2017). Furthermore, one victim disappeared completely after the fire. In publicizing the child's disappearance, the Guatemalan government managed to reveal a secure shelter's confidential location, putting multiple victims in danger (U. S. Department of State, 2017). In Ecuador, authorities regularly refer victims to one in five government ministries or NGOs who provide shelter and assistance (U. S. Department of State, 2017). However, lack of specialized shelters continues to be an issue. NGOs continuously reported that victims often sought an NGO-provided or private legal assistance due to limited and poor quality legal assistance (U. S. Department of State, 2017). It is vital that the United States provide funding and expertise for building and developing new shelter programs. Victims may find it difficult to trust law enforcement officials with the details of their experience (Bello & Olutola, 2018). Shelters provide a safe place for victims to tell their stories and begin to heal. During that healing period, shelters offer remedial and confidence building training for witnesses and their protection during the trial sessions. Victim services are critical factor to successfully prosecuting human trafficking or smuggling cases. Victim testimony is often the one key piece of evidence that makes trafficking or smuggling charges stick (United Nations Office on Drugs and Organized Crime, 2017).

#### **4) Funding and developing opportunities for economic growth in Latin American countries**

It is no secret that the economies of Latin American countries are turbulent. Quality of life is low in Latin American countries due to limited health care, a lack of economic opportunity and growing amounts of violence (Kulish, 2018). The Latin American economy is an export-based business whose most popular exports happen to be drugs, forced migrant labor, and child sex trafficking (Andreas, 2013). Those leaving barrios in hopes of greater quality of life and higher paying wages often turn to smuggling and trafficking to reach the United States because of the lack of resources in Latin America.

Latin American faces “tragedy of the commons” (Hardin, 1968, p. 1423), an economic problem where resources are manipulated forces the demand for resources to outweigh the actual supply (Ivestopedia, 2018). Imagine a grazing ground for cattle surrounded by the six farmers who share the pasture. As each farmer sees the wealth of resources from the cow, farmers begin to add more and more cattle, acting in their own self-interest. The cattle begin to suffer do to a lack of food from the exploitation of the grazing pasture. Eventually, the grazing pasture no longer can be grazed, and the lack of food causes the cows to starve. This is a prime example of “tragedy of the commons” at work (Hardin, 1968). Real world examples of the “tragedy of the commons” include the Grand Banks fishery, which collapsed of the fishing economy in the 1960s due to overly competitive fishing between competing parties, and the Gulf of Mexico dead zone, where over farming of fertile Mississippi land led to heightened levels of fertilizer and chemical

runoff into the river during rainy season causing a zone in the Gulf of Mexico where zero life can be sustained (Ivestopedia, 2018). The reality for Latin American countries is that resources are being exploited by TCOs, DTOs, corrupt police, and passive government officials. Each party acts in their best with no concern for how other populations within the countries will suffer. The question the United States faces is, as a global superpower, at what point do the country step in an offer aid to help rebuild the Latin American economy?

The United States has a history of helping rebuild war devastated countries. A prime example of the United aiding countries in need is the United States' relations with Vietnam. The partnership of the United States and Vietnam has developed through the 2013 U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership and the 2015 Bilateral Joint Vision Statement (United States Department of State, 2017). The partnership between the U.S. and Vietnam "underscores the enduring U.S. commitment to the Asia-Pacific and provides a mechanism to facilitate cooperation in areas including political and diplomatic relations, trade and economic ties, defense and security, science and technology, education and training, environment and health, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, war legacy issues, protection and promotion of human rights, people-to-people ties, and culture, sports, and tourism" (United States Department of State, 2017). So far United States assistance has allowed Vietnam to sustain a high level of economic success through consolidation of goods, grow the independence of Vietnam's legislative and judicial branches of government, successfully implement labor laws, and improve the country's health and education system (United States Department of State, 2017). The

Fulbright University system registered its first cohort in Fall of 2017 and so far over 21,000 Vietnamese students study in America (United States Department of State, 2017).

Private businesses have also been known to aid in building the economies of foreign countries. In the early 1920s, American industrialist Henry Ford created an empire. His car assembly line allowed for production of the Model T to be faster than ever before making the company a global success (Reed, 2016). However, to Ford his greatest achievement was not the industrialization of car manufacturing but the treatment of his staff (Reed, 2016). In an article detailing Ford's persona, Drew Reed (2016) stated: "Ford believed fair treatment would make his workers more responsible citizens and, in the process, solidify a client base for manufacturers." Setting his sights on the Amazon Jungle of Brazil, Ford drafted plans for Fordlandia (Reed, 2016). However, while Fordlandia looked good on paper, it had one fatal flaw. Ford attempted to project his own Ethos onto a group of people who already had developed their own ethics, morals, and norms. Ford's downfall he wanted Fordlandia residents to conform to his habits and beliefs.

It is important to note that plans as grand as the two discussed thus far, sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. While the United States relationship with Vietnam has helped the country to prosper, Ford's need to foster his own beliefs resulted in rebellion from his workers. This thesis does not endorse the forcing of one's ethos, norms, and mores onto another population. However, the initial idea of purchasing land in a Latin American country by a private enterprise for a factory and setting it up as a town is not a poor idea. In fact, this idea brings together all aspects of rebuilding services citizens need to thrive in their home country's: aid organizations, social services, private organizations,

and law enforcement. A factory of some sorts would provide new jobs in a turbulent economy setting. Steady pay and work would allow migrants the opportunity to make money and pay off debt or begin to save. The company could even provide a federal credit union or bank on site for migrants to open accounts, secure funds, or build credit.

On site housing is an upgrade from barrios. One, two, and three-bedroom apartments with running clean water, concrete floors, and basic appliances would allow workers to maintain sanitary conditions. In return, this reduces the spread of infections and illness, improving quality of life and life expectancy. Furthermore, the company could provide onsite health care through the hiring of one to three health care professionals and building a clinic. The clinic would supply medical treatment and act as a pharmacy distributing shots and medicine as needed. This allows for the distribution of health care to have a broader reach.

A school would be accessible for the sons and daughters of workers. Teachers could be recruited using Teach for America, a non-profit organization that places teachers all over the world in less-fortunate environments to teach or could be recruited from local schools. Workers or adult family members could attend night classes, as well, to better their educations. Students wishing to extend their education can apply for an F-1 visa and legally enter the United States after being accepted into a college program.

A mess hall would provide three square meals a day to workers and family members. Hunger is a prevalent problem, especially in barrios. The mess hall prevents members of the community from going hungry. An onsite general store will also provide items needed such as clothing, food, and cleaning supplies. The factory company could

partner with Sams or Cosco to have a store placed within the community. The store would also provide jobs for those not working for the factory.

Corruption in Latin American police departments was consistently discussed in the secondary data analysis. Furthermore, the police units in Latin American countries are lacking the unit numbers to handle the crimes with which they are already dealing. Private security would have to be brought in from the United States to keep TCOs from coming into the community. Each member of the private security team must be vetted for past corruption instances.

This factory would essentially act as a suburb community in the middle of Latin America by providing education, medical assistance, food and housing, and the opportunity to earn a steady wage. This factory would provide a way for a higher quality of living to be established in Latin American countries. No longer would migrants have to look elsewhere for work. No longer would migrants have to rely on illegally crossing borders in order to send money back home to their loved ones. Instead, both the Latin American countries and the United States' economies benefit from this plan. Latin American economies are given a boost thanks to the jobs and goods provided. The United States economy receives a reduction of illegal migrant workers. This strategy can start small. One pilot project in one community. Once the strategy is successfully implemented in one country, projects can branch out to different countries.

### **Securing the Borders**

Securing borders is a top priority in the fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Brazil, Bolivia, Panama, Ecuador, and Guatemala did not meet the minimum requirements in several key areas of the Trafficking in Persons Report by the



United States Department of State (U. S. Department of State, 2018). Columbia, Chile and Guyana did meet all criteria to reach a tier level 1 status in the *United State Department's Trafficking in Person's Report*. The placement of a country in Tier 1 states that the country is has met the minimum requirements from the U.S. State Department to eliminate human trafficking (State, 2018). Due to corruption, lax border security, and the prominence of TCOs in Latin American countries, the United States must provide expertise, training, and funding to secure Latin American borders, as well as its own.

### **Summary of Strategies Conclusion**

The court case analysis sheds light on the fact that illegal immigrants who are caught and deported are not hesitant to reenter the United States. Deportation has become this never-ending cycle of caught, deported, reentered (Personal interview number 4, 2018). Border Patrol has quadrupled in size (Root, 2018). As border security efforts have increased, those wishing to enter illegally are almost fully dependent on a smuggler to get them across, which in return elevates the smuggling economy (Andreas, 2013). Deportation is no longer a deterrence but is, instead, a slight obstacle. Even with the Trump Administration establishing a zero-tolerance policy on the United States Southwestern border, migrants are still willing to illegally enter the United States (Kulish, 2018). Parents often head north to find work to save enough money to send for their children. Smugglers and traffickers are both willing to exploit the need for families to be reunited and rising gang violence in victims' home countries (Associated Press, 2014; U. S. Department of State, 2017).

As the secondary data analysis showed, even though the United States has increased border security efforts for the last couple of decades, as part of his presidential campaign, Donald Trump promised a wall dividing the U. S. and Mexico at the southwestern border. The left was outraged, the right was a little outraged, but willing to cope, and those fed up with illegal immigration into the United States were thrilled to finally have a hard-core solution to the porousness of the southwestern border. As of March 23, 2018, President Trump has secured \$1.57 billion dollars for the border wall (Siegel, 2018). However, this is not the first time in United States history that we have seen some type of structure being placed on the border as a deterrence strategy. As previously mentioned, fencing projects were initiated to deter drug-laden vehicles from entering the U. S. at unauthorized check points (Andreas, 2013).

In an interview with Fox News, White House Chief of staff John Kelly stated, “There are places where, geographically, a wall would not be realistic. There are other parts of the southwest border that are so wild and untamed that there is no traffic that goes through them. There are other places we think about 800 miles additional wall to include the 600 that’s already in place—the fencing—that would suffice” (Siegel, 2018). The Chief of Staff is not mistaken. Due to the soil density around the Rio Grande a wall would not be sustainable (Personal interview number 2, 2018). A feasible wall would have to cut through land owned by U. S. farms and ranchers (Personal interview number 2, 2018). This is a double-edged sword. On one side, ranchers and farmers no longer must patrol their own lands or worry about the destruction of property. On the other side, ranchers and farmers would be losing profits. Ranchers have been watching migrants come north for decades now. For the people of Falfurrias, Texas it is not uncommon for

migrants to knock on the doors asking for food, water, and directions to Houston (Johnson, 2014).

If the United States compensated fairly for the land being taken, ranchers and farmers would be more enticed to accept the deal (Personal interview number one, 2018). Most ranchers have grown annoyed with constantly picking up trash left behind by those crossing into the country illegally and fixing broken PVC pipes that travelers have opened up to access clean water (Johnson, 2014). Also, as the secondary data has showed smuggling and trafficking routes are continuously evolving, and desperation is a ruling mindset for immigrants trying to cross the border illegally. It would be rash to disregard a possible point of entry simply because it appears wild and untamed. In Texas, during 2014, 238 people died trying to cross desert in south Texas (Johnson, 2014). In south Texas, most ranchers will not eat wild hog due to the likelihood that the animal's last meal was human flesh (Johnson, 2014). To most smugglers and traffickers, wild and untamed is a selling point. If the United States applies a prevention to a different sector, the migration flow could potentially end up routing through the wild and untamed space previously mentioned. Trafficking and smuggling missions are already a gamble; traffickers and smugglers will not think twice about rolling the dice. The United States and Mexico must find a way to close these gaps in the border, and, interestingly enough, a wall is not looking half-bad. However, the wall will not end illegal immigration into the United States, it will simply reroute smuggling and trafficking networks elsewhere.

The court cases and the secondary literature continuously show migrants who have been deported only to try to cross the border for a second, third, or fourth time. Coyotes, knowing how easily re-entry is, teach their clients the Mexican national anthem

in hopes that border patrol will assume they are Mexican immigrants and simply deport them back to Mexico. Therefore, the current deportation practice is essentially not working as efficiently as it should be. To migrants, deportation is an inconvenience that can possibly happen, not a deterrent. It constantly refeeds the smuggling network. Cities used to drop of deportees are often hubs for forced labor criminal activity (Correa-Cabrera, 2017). Instead of placing migrants in places for them to seek help, often migrants face extortion and end up in human trafficking (Correa-Cabrera, 2017). Figure 9 below shows cities that have coerced migrants into forced labor.

Furthermore, the routes dictated in Figure 10 line up with the routes of La Besita, the Mexican freight trains that migrant travel on. It has already been discussed that multiple shelters line these migrant routes. It seems that it is more beneficial to disperse deported migrants across the shelters, where they can receive aid, lodging, and clothing instead of just returning them to a random city.



Figure 9. Forced Labor Destination in Central America and Mexico (Correa-Cabrere, 2017, p. 9)

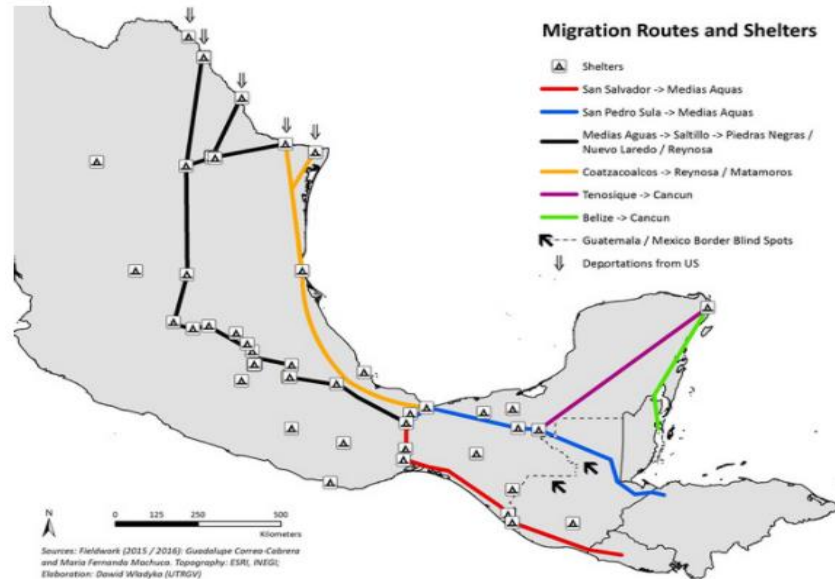


Figure 10 Migration Routes and Shelters (Correa-Cabrera, 2017)

In his thesis, Todd Bensman (2015) discusses the usefulness of “network warfare” to collect intelligence on SIAs. Originating from Jennifer Sims, the strategy of “network warfare” requires small teams of intelligence operatives to move quickly to collect information enabling preemptive action and direct hits at valuable leverage points. From the analysis of secondary data, this strategy would also be useful in collecting and gathering intelligence on coyotes. Though the coyote is not the leader of the smuggling or trafficking network, he is still a key player. He or she acts as the compass, guiding migrants to the destination they desire. Without a compass, migrants would be lost long before they reached the southwestern border (Associated Press, 2014). Coyotes often work as independent contractors; locals who know the ends and outs of the land, which cartels to avoid, and which ones require migrants to watch their backs (Associated Press, 2014). The illicit trade economy combined with increased border security precautions have made migrants and traffickers dependent upon coyotes to safely and secretly cross the southwestern border. Migrants will pay anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to illegally

journey across Latin American smuggling routes to arrive in Mexico, with the cash covering everything from paying off government officials, gangs that operate the trains, and drug cartels that control the routes north (Associated Press, 2014). It is imperative that ICE or other federal agencies develop a unit to strictly focus on coyotes' behavior, patterns, and tricks of the trade. Without the coyote, the smuggling cannot be as efficient or successful. If identifying markers can be determined, federal agencies can use them to intercept coyotes and prosecute them for their crimes. Intelligence on coyotes would be useful in establishing a strategic plan to combat illegal immigration into the United States.

However, the reality for the United States is that border security is not solely a task for law enforcement or policy makers. This summary strategy recommends a "meeting of the minds" of sorts. Economists, practitioners, United States aid organizations, academics, U.S. State Department, federal law enforcement, and a non-profit such as the Rand Corporation, are needed to develop one unified strategy. There is currently little unification in border patrol or border policy. Regarding law enforcement, DHS and Border Patrol operate by different rules and allowances while patrolling the border. Furthermore, United States policy makers lack unification resulting in the country being torn between separating or not separating migrant families as they cross the border. To successfully combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling networks from illegally bring migrants into the United States, the United States must develop a unified plan that encompasses social services, law enforcement, private enterprises, and policy.

## VI. LIMITATIONS

Though this thesis aimed to provide a complete overview of human trafficking and migrant smuggling network routes and key factors in the efficiency of these land routes, it is not without limitations. First, locating solely human trafficking or human smuggling cases proved to be a significant challenge. As seen in the analysis section, there is often a large overlap between trafficking and smuggling. Migrant smuggling can evolve into human trafficking if coercion is used anytime during the journey north. Often in the court case files charges of a violation of 8 U. S. Code § 1324, bringing in and harboring an alien, and 18 U. S. Code § 1589, forced labor, are issued. Court cases are not simply labeled human trafficking case or migrant smuggling case. Second, the databases in which court case numbers were located were lacking information to locate the cases using PACER. Often, case name, date, and court in which the case was heard are necessary to find the court case documentation in PACER. Databases that did contain trafficking and smuggling court case information were poorly organized or lacked the necessary information to find the court case in PACER. Third, not all court cases in PACER had equal documentation. While PACER contained court transcripts for some trafficking and smuggling trials, most cases did not contain transcript testimony. Each court case used in this thesis had at least one attempt of crossing a transnational border or enough information for the researcher to gather which city or area the victims had crossed through. On two attempts the researcher reached out to the U. S. Attorney's Office to receive cases numbers to search in PACER and was informed that the office did not have any to offer. However, the U. S. Attorney's Office was helpful in other aspects during this study. Furthermore, the topics of human trafficking and human smugglings are often

one's of comfortability. People often do not want their names associated with their thoughts on the subject because of the violent climate that is associated. Newspaper articles and the interviews provided the best insight into the inner sanctum of trafficking and smuggling. However, all interviewees were kept confidential to protect those from any form of backlash.



## VII. CONCLUSION

As a child, I grew up listening to my great grandfather tell stories about the ranch in Alice, Texas. It had become a priority for him every weekend to make sure that four sheds dispersed throughout the property were full of gallons of clean water and canned goods. Unlike some of the other ranchers in the area, my great grandfather refused to turn a blind eye to whom or what was coming across his land. However, Granddad did not want to look illegal immigration in the face. Having considered himself an upstanding citizen, Granddad did not want to become a part of the crime. He simply wanted to make sure that there were enough supplies on the property to help anyone in trouble. It was none of his business how they got there. "You always have to help those in need," he would tell me.

However, by the late 1980s the sheds were torn down. As the militarization of the war on drugs led to an increase in violence throughout all smuggling and trafficking networks, the ranch in Alice, Texas had been subject to vandalism and constant destruction. Fences had been torn down by illegal immigrants trying to get through the property, releasing prize winning cattle and cutting horses. Granddad had become livid with those demolishing his property. He called it a lack of respect. As a rancher, the livestock was his livelihood. Granddad built higher fences, but those did not deter illegal immigrants from cutting across his property. Eventually, Granddad did what most ranchers in current Brooks County have had to do, he and the ranch hands placed ladders on fences that had received the most destruction, in hopes of circumventing the problem. However, rumors of dead bodies showing up on other ranches in the area raised a red flag for my family. A year after the new ladders had been built, my great grandmother demanded they live in the house in Wharton, Texas full time.

Just like my great grandfather protecting the borders of his property, the United States has evolved the country's border security operations over the years. However, illegal immigration has not ceased. Instead smuggling and trafficking networks have become a \$6.6-billion business. The stricter border security becomes, the more dependent migrants become upon smugglers. The NVivo analysis gave light to the dark illicit trade network. Sixteen court cases spanning 2002-2014 proved that there are those out there who are still willing to risk the journey.

For the smuggling business, deportation is not a deterrent, it is a process that speeds up the time in which the migrant can try once more to cross illegally into the United States. Ecuador's open border policy has become a welcomed oasis for SIAs and Russian, Ukrainian, and Asian sex traffickers. The Darien Gap with little military presence or monitoring has become a trafficker's and smuggler's paradise. Mexico and the Beast have been transporting illegal Central American migrants for decades. However, the rising presence of Central American gangs in Mexico forging alliances with Mexican transnational crime organizations gives cause for alarm, especially regarding the exploitation of migrants. Despite increased border security regulations, the United States southwestern border is still porous. "Coyotes" have built a lucrative business on finding the cracks in the border and exploiting them.

Illegal immigration is not just a border security problem, but an economic as well. The United States economy has become dependent upon cheap labor. As the United States economy continues to boom, migrants will continue to try come to the U. S. (Personal interview number 4, 2018). Human trafficking and migrant smuggling systems are complex social networks; when feedback is introduced these networks evolve. Human

trafficking and migrant smuggling routes are a subgroup of the complex human trafficking and migrant smuggling networks. While the building of fences in El Paso, Nogales, and San Diego reduced illegal crossings at those ports of entry, illegal border crossings sprung up in places less secure. Border security will continue to be an issue for years to come. The strategy recommendations offered in this thesis hoped to shed light on ideas that could be beneficial. If the United States wishes to reduce its illegal immigration numbers, then the country has to turn its attention to the routes in which migrants are using to get here. Diplomatic pressure may be necessary, but overall this project requires joint cooperation. Social Services, law enforcement, church organizations, aid organizations, private organizations, policy makers and government officials must all have a role in unifying a solution to effectively combat the illegal immigration problem.

In Webb County, a sign hangs in the local medical examiner's office (Fernandez, 2017). It reads: *Mortui Vivis Praecipant*. Let the dead teach the living. Destroyed fences, water pipelines, and burglaries are a constant reminder for the residents of South, Texas that border security precautions are not fool proof and can be unknowingly circumvented. The migrant bodies found scattered along trafficking and smuggling routes, discussed in media coverage and personal interviews are proof that the journey northward can be a deadly one.

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