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## Border Patrol, Drug Runners in Texas Shoot-Out

*Voices Magazine Newswire*

By Jon E. Dougherty

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| **Voices Magazine** / Border Patrol agents exchanged gunfire with suspected drug smugglers near Mission, Texas Wednesday while intercepting some 800 pounds of marijuana.

Border Patrol spokesman Roy Cervantes said the shoot-out occurred around 9:30 a.m. and that no agents were injured. Agents working in the area saw suspicious activity," he said. "They saw individuals leaving the river carrying sacks. They ordered them to stop, and gunshots came from across the river."

*Story continues below*



He went on to say suspects on the U.S. side of the border rammed a patrol vehicle then proceeded to flee the scene, eventually swimming back to Mexico across the Rio Grande River.

The latest shooting incident comes amid increasing violence along the U.S. southwest border.

A report in June by KVOA-TV in Tucson, Ariz. said overall assaults on agents were up 50 percent over 2004, while rammings have climbed 188 percent and shootings are up 122 percent nationwide.

"When our agents try to do a vehicle stop, the criminal element try to run over our agents to evade arrest," says agent Jose Garza. "They're getting frustrated because we're out there. We're encountering them more times."

Also, illegal alien gangs - most related to Mexico's drug lords - have increased violent activity along the border. One such group, comprised of former Mexican army special forces operatives and calling itself the "Zetas," have committed hundreds of murders along the border this year and have expanded their enforcement efforts on behalf of a drug cartel by setting up trafficking routes in six U.S. states, according to Justice Department officials.

At least some of the Zetas are believed to have been trained by U.S. special forces troops.

Even worse for American agents, there may be prices on their heads.

"U.S. law enforcement have reported bounties offered by Los Zetas of between \$30,000 and \$50,000 for the killing of Border Patrol agents and other law enforcement officers," said a Justice Department intelligence memo. "If a Zeta kills an American law enforcement officer and can successfully make it back to Mexico, his stature within the organization will be increased dramatically."

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