



Highlights of [GAO-07-997T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In May 2006, the President called for comprehensive immigration reform that included strengthening control of the country's borders by, among other things, adding 6,000 new agents to the U.S. Border Patrol by the end of December 2008. This unprecedented 48 percent increase over 2 years raises concerns about the ability of the Border Patrol's basic training program to train these new agents. This testimony is based on a recent report for the ranking member of this subcommittee on the content, quality, and cost of the Border Patrol's basic training program for new agents and addresses (1) the extent to which the Border Patrol's basic training program exhibits the attributes of an effective training program and the changes to the program since September 11, 2001; (2) the cost to train a new agent and how this compares to the costs of other similar law enforcement basic training programs; and (3) any plans the Border Patrol has developed or considered to improve the efficiency of its basic training program. To address these issues, GAO reviewed relevant documents; observed classroom training and exercises at the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, New Mexico; assessed the methodologies of training cost estimates; and interviewed Border Patrol officials.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-997T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Richard M. Stana at (202) 512-8777 or StanaR@gao.gov.

BORDER PATROL

Costs and Challenges Related to Training New Agents

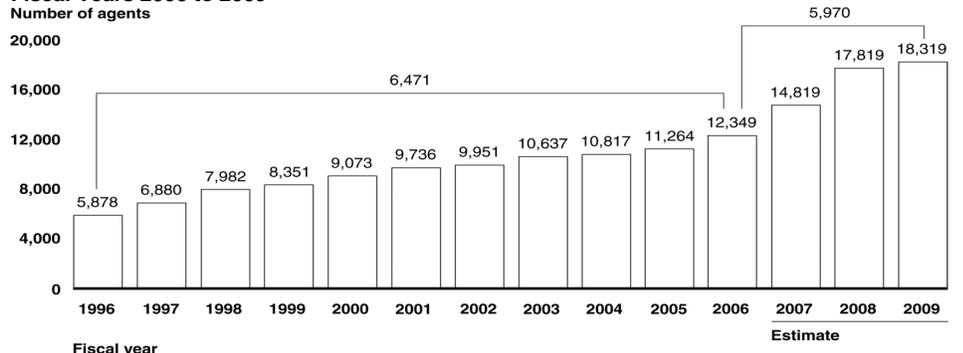
What GAO Found

The Border Patrol's basic training program exhibits attributes of an effective training program. GAO's training assessment guide suggests the kinds of documentation to look for that indicate that a training program has a particular attribute in place. The Border Patrol's training program included all of the applicable key attributes of an effective training program. The core curriculum used at the Border Patrol Academy has not changed since September 11, but the Border Patrol added new material on responding to terrorism and practical field exercises. Border Patrol officials are confident that the academy can accommodate the large influx of new trainees anticipated over the next 2 years.

In fiscal year 2006, the average cost to train a new Border Patrol agent at the academy was about \$14,700. While differences in programs make a direct comparison difficult, it appears that the Border Patrol's average cost per trainee at the academy is consistent with that of training programs that cover similar subjects and prepare officers for operations in similar geographic areas. For example, the estimated average cost per trainee for a Bureau of Indian Affairs police officer was about \$15,300; an Arizona state police officer, \$15,600; and a Texas state trooper, \$14,700.

The Border Patrol is considering several alternatives to improve the efficiency of basic training delivery at the academy and to return agents to the field more quickly. For example, in October 2007 the Border Patrol plans to implement a proficiency test for Spanish that should allow those who pass the test to shorten their time at the academy by about 30 days. The Border Patrol is also considering what training it can shift from the academy to postacademy training conducted in the field, which could further reduce the amount of time trainees spend at the academy. However, Border Patrol officials have expressed concerns with having a sufficient number of experienced agents available to serve as first-line supervisors and field training officers. The Border Patrol also currently lacks uniform standards and practices for field training, and shifting additional training responsibilities to the field could complicate this situation.

Border Patrol Agent Growth, Fiscal Years 1996 to 2006, Compared with Anticipated Growth, Fiscal Years 2006 to 2009



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Customs and Border Protection data.