# Surveillance Reveals Human Smuggler's Tactics Near McAllen, Texas



### Surveillance Footage Captures Human Smuggler Activity Near McAllen, Texas

A recent video captured by Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) drones shows a 16-year-old Mexican smuggler aiding illegal immigrants in crossing the U.S.-Mexico border near McAllen, Texas. The footage reveals the smuggler using a black raft to transport individuals across the Rio Grande, a river separating the two nations. The boat carried a ladder intended to overcome the U.S. border wall, which stands 19-30 feet tall in most places.

Upon reaching the U.S. side, the migrants exited the raft and moved toward the border wall with the ladder. However, state troopers and Texas National Guard members quickly intervened, apprehending the 16-year-old smuggler and five Mexican citizens.

Lt. Chris Olivarez of the Texas DPS highlighted the importance of the DPS Unmanned Aerial System Program in providing support and situational awareness for Operation Lone Star. The state operates a fleet of 300 drones, which have conducted 71,118 border missions to date. Besides assisting law enforcement, these drones are also employed by Mexican cartels for reconnaissance, drug delivery, and executing attacks against rivals and perceived political opponents.

### Cross-Border Conservation Efforts in Jacumé, Mexico

In the Mexican community of Jacumé, approximately 60 miles east of Tijuana, a group of botanists and citizen scientists participated in a Border Bioblitz to document native plants. Led by Sula Vanderplank of Baja Rare, volunteers armed with the iNaturalist app aimed to capture as many species as possible along the U.S.-Mexico border. The data collected could help protect the region's biodiversity, which is often overshadowed by drug trafficking and migrant smuggling issues.

The Bioblitz initiative was sparked by the realization that border wall construction under the Trump administration had disrupted local ecosystems, particularly in Baja California. The Baja California peninsula is home to over 4,000 plant species, with a notable percentage being endemic and several listed as rare.

Jon Rebman from the San Diego Natural History Museum has named 33 new plant species in the region and has successfully rediscovered some species not observed in nearly a century. He collaborates with local botanist Mariana Fernandez, who is advocating for more conservation measures from Baja California authorities and increasing local awareness through educational hikes.

The ongoing efforts align with global conservation goals, such as the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity. This convention aims to protect 30% of essential biodiversity areas by 2030.

These conservation activities occur despite ongoing security concerns and restrictions on cross-border scientific work due to crime and regulatory barriers.