



THE BUS NO ONE WANTS TO CATCH THE END OF THE ROAD FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

Almost 1 million people attempted to enter the United States illegally in 2008. The motives of the 948,000 individuals apprehended at its borders during that year would have ranged from those looking for a better life to the downright criminal, particularly drug dealers and potential terrorists.

The land and coastal border that encircles the United States stretches almost 102,000 miles. But the 1,993-mile southwest stretch separating it from Mexico is the major focus of attention.

The majority of those detained in 2008 for attempting to enter the United States illegally were apprehended on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Responsibility for preventing unwanted “guests” crossing this divide and trespassing illegally on U.S. soil falls to the Department of Homeland Security’s Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency. As America’s largest uniformed federal law enforcement organization, its role includes the detection and detention of the huge numbers of aliens attempting to circumvent the multi-layered defenses that have been put in place along the border.

Once apprehended, those aliens need to be processed and, in some cases, transported to detention facilities to await judicial review. But in 2006 the well-oiled wheels of the CBP’s patrol operations on the south-west border faced a new challenge when notice was given that the federal agents responsible for this vital cog in the border protection program were to be withdrawn.

Securing Your World



“Over 600 G4S CPOs operate over 100 buses and vans in order to carry the huge numbers of apprehended individuals”

The CBP had two choices: absorb or outsource. It opted for the second course of action and awarded the transportation contract to G4S Secure Solutions (USA), the leading provider of security solutions to the U.S. government. The resulting collaboration between federal agency and private contractor quickly developed into a successful partnership. The decision to outsource was shown to be fully justified when the CBP was able to maintain the level of its protective border services without disruption during the transition to G4S. The contract was renewed for a fourth year in August 2009.

Since its inception in 2003 as the United States' new unified border agency and a member of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), it has been the responsibility of the enlarged Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to “protect the homeland from the entry of terrorists and dangerous weapons, in addition to our traditional missions in indicting the flow of illegal aliens, drugs and illicit goods, while facilitating the flow of legitimate trade.”

On the U.S.-Mexico border, that has already involved erecting more than 600 miles of pedestrian and vehicle fencing in priority areas, with the Obama administration pledging in April 2009 a further \$400 million to upgrade ports of entry and surveillance technology along the sensitive border with Mexico, as well as providing an additional 500 federal agents. The number of Border Patrol agents currently deployed has more than doubled,

to more than 19,000, in the past six years and many spend much of their time scouring inhospitable terrain, including desert and mountainous areas, where illegal aliens risk their lives in an attempt to slip undetected and unrecorded into the United States.

Once detained by CBP, the majority of the detainees are voluntarily returned to Mexico. Others are handed over to another DHS agency, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for further processing. But “handed over” is not as simple as it sounds: it requires a transportation plan capable of collecting the prisoners – the detainees’ official designation – from a variety of points along the border and carrying them to the ICE centers. Later, they need to be transported once more to their point of release, back across the border.

While the post-9/11 reorganization of U.S. government agencies resulted in strengthened measures to counter the threat of terrorism, a redefining of these agencies’ roles and responsibilities presented a new challenge to CBP when it was decided in 2006 to withdraw the federal agents responsible for this vital transportation work. Rather than use its own agents to drive the buses and escort detained illegal immigrants, which would have drastically reduced the number of “badges” on the front line, the CBP decided to outsource the service to an organization capable of providing personnel with similar qualifications to the federal agents who were departing and capable of taking over their duties at very short notice.



That organization was G4S Secure Solutions (USA), which was awarded a base year contract, with four option years up to August 2011, to provide a combination of security officers and secure transportation serving nine locations along the southwest border. It fulfilled government requirements by recruiting personnel and training them to its custom protection officer (CPO) standard, then giving them an additional 208 hours of training to meet the contract's special needs. The men and women who join G4S's CPO division are required to have criminal justice degrees or background and experience in law enforcement and/or elite military units.

The contract was signed on Sept. 1, 2006 and the first bus began operating in mid-October.

"The total timeframe for the handover to G4S was three-to-four months," says Neal Armstrong, deputy director, CBP Transportation Program, "and for a contractor to take over on a site of this size it would normally take a year to process, under normal conditions. It was definitely a very good effort by the government and the contractor to get it in place so quickly."

Today, along the U.S.-Mexico border, a team of more than 600 G4S CPOs operate more than 100 buses and vans in order to carry the huge numbers of apprehended individuals, the majority of whom are Mexican, to the processing centers. During 2007, there were 858,638 apprehensions. With the improved security on the border, that number dropped to 705,005 in 2008.

"This contract is not a bus service, it's a high security transit service," Kevin Johnson, G4S's vice president, Government Services, explains. "The transportation plans, agreed between us and CBP on a monthly basis, require us to be very flexible in our deployment of personnel. Some 70 percent of routes are fixed, defined and consistent while the remainder are for special purposes or operate on an on-call basis and they can be extremely challenging."

These include journeys arranged under the Alien Transfer Exit Program (ATEP) which is designed to safely remove illegal immigrants from the waiting hands of people smugglers who would almost certainly force them to endure, once again, several days in a harsh environment in another futile attempt to cross the border illegally. Instead of returning them to their port of entry, G4S vehicles and escorts transport them for up to six hours and hand them over to CBP personnel who release them back across the border into Mexico at a safe location.

"This wasn't something we anticipated doing in 2006 and consequently, when the government asked us to consider its feasibility, it caused us to step back and look at the logistics with our people," Johnson adds. "I am delighted that our teams have risen to the challenge. And throughout, as they do in all along the border, our CPOs maintain a professional demeanor, as well as dignity and respect for the individuals being escorted, in line with the values of our company and the rules and regulations that Customs and Border Protection require us to follow."

Like it or not, we live in a world of risk. And when we think of risk, most of us tend to focus on the downside. The key to relesing wider benefits for our clients is to always look at the bigger picture and consider solutions that transform performance. To do this, we deliver world class project management that brings together our expertise in logistics, technology, managing the world's biggest force of security personnel, and the knowledge derived from providing security solutions in diverse regulatory environments in 125 countries around the world.

By doing this, we offer governments and businesses secure solutions that deliver more than the sum of their parts.

By seeing the challenges of border protection more holistically, we can maintain and build trust in the security of international borders, reduce operating costs and build reputation by improving the experience of the visitors we serve.

The most secure and beneficial solutions come from understanding the challenges of protecting international borders and the interdependence of the parts. Let us help you to see the opportunities that exist in the challenge of securing your world.

**Transforming challenges
into opportunities.**

