



Rep. McSally, others ask: Where is DHS border study?

The Department of Homeland Security has produced a detailed border security study but won't explain why the agency won't release it.

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The Department of Homeland Security has produced a border security study that calculates the chances of undocumented migrants being caught by the Border Patrol.

But critics say the study hasn't been released for political reasons because it shows the chances are less than those promoted by the Border Patrol.

"This is one of the top public policy issues for this very important presidential election," said Jessica Vaughan, policy studies director at the Center for Immigration Studies, which pushes for more border and immigration enforcement. "It appears that the interdiction rates are much lower than what the Border Patrol leadership has been telling the public."

Top Border Patrol officials have testified to congressional lawmakers that 80 percent of undocumented migrants detected by Border Patrol agents or by sensors, surveillance cameras and other technology are apprehended.

However, the Border Patrol's so-called Interdiction Effectiveness Rate "fails to take into account the illicit flow that goes undetected, which we know is substantial," U.S. Rep. Martha McSally, R-Ariz, wrote in a Sept. 21 letter to DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson.

A separate study, by the Congressional Research Service, indicates the effectiveness rate is closer to 50 percent, she wrote.

McSally, chairwoman of the House subcommittee on border and maritime security, asked Johnson to release the report to lawmakers by Sept. 30.

DHS contracted the Institute for Defense Analysis to produce the survey. It was released to DHS leaders in May but has not been made public, she said.

Marsha Catron, a DHS spokeswoman, said in a statement that any claim that DHS is suppressing the report for political reasons "is false."

The work is still being refined "to ensure the new measures are accurate and reliable," she said.

The DHS report uses internal CBP data collected from ports of entry, between ports, and maritime operations, plus data from migrant surveys conducted in Mexico, according to Bryan Roberts, a research economist and former DHS assistant director who worked on the IDA study.

Roberts independently presented his version at the Cato Institute in September based on published Border Patrol apprehension data and the same migrant survey data.

His study calculates that people who cross the border illegally have a 52 percent probability of being caught, up from about 12 percent in 2005, but below the Border Patrol's 80 percent interdiction rate.

He declined to discuss the IDA study or speculate why DHS officials have not released it.