



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on February 10, 2022

Cartels Use Social Media to Recruit American Teens as Smugglers

The open-border policies of the Biden administration continue to bear toxic fruit. Smugglers, who proliferate at the southern border, are actively recruiting teenagers to drive illegal immigrants, the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) revealed.

According to a Wednesday [CBP press release](#), transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are turning to social media to recruit minors for their smuggling operations. That ongoing trend was identified by the Rio Grande Valley Sector (RGV) Border Patrol, which encountered the largest number of illegal aliens in the past year. Per [Border Report](#), RGV agents encountered 549,077 migrants — a 508-percent increase from fiscal 2020. The sector also had one-third of all encounters in fiscal 2021 on the southern border, per the [CBP year-end figures](#).



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In addition to that, RGV agents seized more than 11,000 pounds of narcotics in 2021, which is approximately 43 percent of all narcotics seized by the U.S. Border Patrol across the nation between ports of entry.

The press release goes on to note, “With an increase in illicit activity, TCOs require more manpower to carry out their operations. Social media has become an avenue for human smugglers to target juvenile drivers.”

The cartels lure teens with the promise of easy cash and assure them that because they’re juveniles, they won’t face severe consequences if they’re caught by the police or Border Patrol. The young recruits are also told that if they flee, the agents likely won’t chase them because that would create a highly dangerous road situation.

The CBP warning continues,

The result is an increase in erratic driving by inexperienced drivers, often observed exceeding posted speed limits, and driving against oncoming traffic. The use of social media has allowed local smugglers to expand their network’s reach. New recruits are not only from the Rio Grande Valley. Authorities have arrested drivers from San Antonio, Houston, and other areas, some as young as 13-years old.

Since October 2021, RGV agents have engaged in nearly 100 vehicle pursuits in order to stop human- and drug-smuggling attempts. In fiscal year 2021, RGV agents reported 257 vehicle pursuits. Most of them, the CBP noted, involve vehicles loaded with migrants well over the manufacturers’ intended



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passenger limit in order to maximize monetary gain.

The CBP encouraged all locals to “take a stand against crime” and report suspicious activities directly to the CBP hotline.

“This is an alarming trend, because many of these teenagers underestimate the severity of the crime. Not only can they be prosecuted and sent to jail, but they also endanger lives through their actions. I encourage parents to talk to their children and educate them on the potential consequences and dangers of this trend,” said RGV Chief Patrol Agent Brian S. Hastings.

Reymundo Del Bosque, the sheriff in Zapata County, Texas, elaborated on the cartels’ assumption that the youngsters won’t get the same treatment as adult criminals.

“Our juveniles are the ones driving, the ones in car chases, because the federal government is not charging them at all,” he told [The Washington Times](#). “We have juveniles driving through our town, and trafficking, being solicited through social media to pick up the bodies.”

It is well-known and documented that smugglers are actively utilizing social-media platforms to advertise their “services” to potential illegal aliens (see [here](#), for example).

Per *The Washington Times*, social media “helps recruit foot guides to sneak migrants over the border, stash house operators to hold them while they pay off fees and wait for a good chance to bust through the ring of Border Patrol highway checkpoints near the border, and drivers to get them deeper into the U.S.”

WhatsApp, Facebook, and Snapchat appear to be the most popular among the criminals, with TikTok, Telegram, and Craigslist being used a bit less often, the outlet explained. WhatsApp became the most popular since it is a free, encrypted messaging service that only requires WiFi or cellular data to communicate with others.

In Arizona, the Border Patrol reported in late January that smugglers were using online video-game chatrooms to recruit young drivers.

According to [local media](#), “Anybody that’s 16 and over that already has a driver’s license is a target to get recruited for doing smuggling,” said Jesus Vasavilbaso, Border Patrol spokesperson for the Tucson sector.

“We’re also seeing quite a bit, kids using their parent’s cars or sometimes their grandparents’ cars and unfortunately we have to seize that vehicle once it’s utilized for smuggling,” he added.

Vasavilbaso recommended that parents and caregivers look for “red flags” that would signal that their children could be recruited by smugglers, such as new clothes and expensive items that parents didn’t buy.

The U.S. Border Patrol reported more than 1.6 million encounters with illegal aliens along the U.S.-Mexico border in the 2021 fiscal year, “more than quadruple the number of the prior fiscal year and the highest annual total on record,” [according](#) to Pew Research.

The Biden administration [has been delaying](#) release of the official report on Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) arrests and deportations for Fiscal Year 2021.



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