# Archived Content

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## Disguised Illegal Entry Poses Border Security Challenge

Drug smugglers, human traffickers, illegal immigrants and even potential terrorists crossing the United States borders do their best to, literally, cover their tracks. Some examples of these countermeasures include wearing carpet remnants on their feet to make footprints less visible or sweeping the ground with vegetation to disguise tracks.

## U.S. Border Protection Relies on its Agents to Overcome Countermeasures

U.S. Border Patrol Agents (BPAs) identify and track movement of personnel within a given area. This highly specialized tracking skill is known as sign cutting. Tracking people that do not want to be found is a nearly impossible task without proper training, and is extremely difficult even with training. A select few individuals show an aptitude for the sign cutting task and these "expert trackers" excel at tracking, identifying the telltale indicators of movement through the desert on the southern border or wooded areas on the northern border.

## Not All Expert Trackers are Expert Instructors

To bridge the gap between the expert trackers and instructors, S&T's Office for Public Safety Research engaged with stakeholders to better understand their processes. Expert trackers walked the research and development teams through their process at various locations along the U.S. southern border, including: McAllen, Texas; Tucson, Arizona; and San Diego, California.

During a structured interview with the research team, expert trackers identified key cues they use when conducting sign cutting and tracking. One or more evaluators then worked through the details of the tracking task, asking the USBP trainees questions to elicit even more details and information. Through this method, defined as a "cognitive walkthrough," the expert tracker articulates the task in different ways to allow the evaluators to fully understand the task and subtasks from different angles.

S&T and USBP then devised a way for all BPAs to receive training on how to leverage the knowledge, skills and abilities of our nation's expert trackers through both 2-D and 3-D videos in a comprehensive, video-based training package for enhancing sign cutting perceptual and analysis skills.

The expert tracker videos have been incorporated into the new 117-day training program for all newly hired USBP Agents that is rolling out in July 2017. They will also be part of recurring training for the existing USBP workforce as duty assignments shift in response to operational needs.



USBP will use both 2-D and 3-D video tutorials in new-hire and recurrent training.

## Future Developments Aim to put Expert Tracker Training in the Hands of Every Agent

S&T is funding the development of a mobile app that would make expert tracker training available to agents when tracking activities in the field on a smartphone.

## Partner

- Design Interactive, Inc., Orlando, Florida

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