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El Paso Earns Safest Large U.S. City Ranking Third Year in a Row

Monday, February 11, 2013

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If the U.S. border with Mexico has been rendered crime-ridden and unsafe by illegal immigration, as many conservatives contend, why are the two safest big cities in America—El Paso, Texas, and San Diego, California—located directly on that border?

That is the question raised last week by a report released by CQ Press, which for the third straight year ranked El Paso as the safest U.S. city with a population greater than 500,000, based on the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports. El Paso and second-ranked San Diego sit right across the border from Mexican cities—Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana—known as two of the most dangerous cities in the world. In Juarez, the drug war has taken about 10,000 lives in the past five years.

Four more border state cities are in the top ten: Austin, Texas (4th), San Jose, California (5th), Los Angeles (6th) and San Antonio, Texas (10th). Of the safest mid-sized cities (pop.: 100,000 to 499,999) seven are in border states, including Irvine, California (3rd); Simi Valley, California (4th); Thousand Oaks, California (6th); Gilbert, Arizona (7th); Surprise, Arizona (8th); Frisco, Texas (9th); and Glendale, California (10th).

Quick to seize the political advantage offered by the rankings, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano argued that the Obama administration's border control efforts have been behind the good crime numbers. Speaking to reporters during a tour of El Paso and other border areas, Napolitano said, "Whenever people tell me the border is unsafe, I say 'well, what about El Paso?'"

U.S. Rep. Beto O'Rourke (D-Texas), who represents the El Paso area in Congress, bolstered Napolitano's remarks. "The fact is, the border has never been more secure—whether measured in the \$18 billion spent annually on border security, the 22,000 boots on the ground, the record number of criminal deportations in the past four years, or the record-low immigrant apprehensions this past year," O'Rourke said.

Nonetheless, Ira Mehlman, a spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a leading anti-illegal-immigration group, contended that the good news in El Paso and San Diego merely masks bad news elsewhere along the border. "Much of the border, away from these two large cities, remains out of control," Mehlman asserted on Fox News Latino.

The FBI, which generates the data but not the rankings, posted a boilerplate caution on its website: "Individuals using these tabulations are cautioned against drawing conclusions by making direct comparisons between cities. Comparisons lead to simplistic and/or incomplete analyses that often create misleading perceptions adversely affecting communities and their residents."

-Matt Bewig

To Learn More:

- El Paso: FBI Stats Deem Border City Safest In The Country 3 Years In A Row (by Patrick Manning, Fox News Latino)
- El Paso Again Tops List of Safest U.S. Cities (by Julián Aguilar, Texas Tribune)
- City Crime Rankings 2013: Rankings by Population Categories (CQ Press) (pdf)
- Surprise: FBI Figures Show Border Cities Less Violent than Rest of U.S. (by Noel Brinkerhoff, AllGov)

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Rohani 1 month ago

You could enter at Mexicali and drive over to Ensenada, but it's not a very scenic trip. Tecate to Ensenada very defieitnly is, old Haciendas, the Russian colony (and vineyards/wine tastings in Valle de Guadalupe), some lovely country.If you wanted to cross over to Mexico sooner, you could do it south from Phoenix, or at several crossings along the way, but the highways parallel to the border aren't much fun and you get tired of getting stopped at military checkpoints over and over.If you drive in through Chihuahua, you could continue to Mazatlan, instead of Mochis and enjoy a very nice beach resort, then take the ferry right to La Paz.

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