



Bulletin

March 25, 2022

The War in the **Ukraine** is having consequences at our border. With over 3 million Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Europe and many of those trying to reach the United States, thousands are making their way to Mexico through Cancun and Mexico City, with California as a final destination. Ukrainians are now walking up to the U.S. border at the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa ports of entry. After some initial obstacles at our ports, they are being admitted as asylum seekers so long as they show valid documentation. This has created some resentment from NGOs and immigration groups who support asylum seekers from other parts of the world.

With the increasing possibility of **Title 42** being lifted in April, refugees from multiple countries will want to pressure authorities on both sides of the border to act quickly to facilitate their entry into the United States. Title 42 is a clause in the 1944 Public Health Services Law that gave the U.S. Surgeon General, later the **Centers for Disease Control** and Prevention, the authority to determine if a disease in a foreign country can cause a serious threat of spreading in the U.S. by people or property entering the country. The clause has been used prevent admission into the U.S. for the last 2 years.

Pressures from migrants at the border affect the day-to-day commutes of eligible travelers, making their trips longer and even more dangerous. Customs, immigration, state and local authorities from both sides have opened a serious dialogue to prevent escalation of violence or scuffles at the ports, disrupting daily commuters. Offering migrants food and shelter and organizing them in a way that does not disrupt our ports is a good start.

The ***El Tercer País*** book relaunch last week was a resounding success. The first of the binational events that took the book to new heights was at **UCSD's downtown campus** on Market Street. The new 4-story building is truly a well-planned addition to UCSD's community outreach, a strategic decision that will connect this great university to the rest of San Diego and to Baja California.

Before an audience of 150 guests, **UT San Diego** reporter and border expert **Wendy Fry** interviewed author **Michael S. Malone** in the first hour. Michael did not disappoint. It turns out that a Bay Area reporter-turned-author-turned investor knows more about our border and its people than most people I know. Michael had three key insights: we must work to change our image to reflect a thriving and dynamic binational powerhouse, we must create a strong entrepreneurial culture and we need to make sure capital is available to support entrepreneurs to create a real cross-border entrepreneurial ecosystem we can brand to the world.

I was fortunate to participate in the “Where do we go from here?” panel that **Alan Bersin** so aptly moderated. I thank my colleagues **Mary Walshok, Alejandra Mier y Teran, Michèle Morris**, and Michael Malone for their opinions and conversation.

Day 2 of the book tour took us to the Tijuana “**Club de Empresarios**” breakfast and discussion with the likes of **José Galicot, Alan Bersin, David Pérez Tejada** (representing the State Government of Baja California), City of **Imperial Beach** Councilmember **Paloma Aguirre**, Michael Malone and **James Clark**.

The third leg of the book’s outreach was at **CETYS Universidad**, where **Chancellor Dr. Fernando León García** welcomed guests, and where Alan Bersin once again moderated a “Where do we go from here?” panel with **Paty Hernández** of the **Tijuana EDC**, **Eduardo Cabrera** of the **Smart Border System**, and **Flavio Olivieri** of **Border Fusion** and **Tijuana Innovadora**.

Many thanks to **Sophia Eichner** for her precision in coordinating the San Diego event and **Laura Araujo** for her organization of the Tijuana events. Laura has been a steady and quite effective binational leader and advocate for many binational connections in her career.

I had a very informative visit to the Port of Ensenada last week. **Captain Manuel Fernando Gutiérrez Gallardo** was our gracious host. The Port is taking steps to connect with the **Port of San Diego** in a much more intentional and practical way by doing all it can to make a ferry between Ensenada and San Diego possible. The possibility seemed remote just six months ago, but through the support of the Baja California State Government, there is a great possibility for this connection to happen.

Many Ensenadans and Southern California tourists frequently remind us that they do not want to spend 2 hours on the road to the border and then another 2-3 hours just to cross it. Why not provide them a 2-hour direct trip from port to port, bypassing Tijuana and in the process helping to reduce congestion at the ports of entry? There is much more to come from this opportunity.

The **International Affairs Board** for the **City of San Diego** had its retreat on March 17th. I have been on the board since the fall of last year. The group works with the **Office of the Mayor** to build on its status as a world-class city to become a global city by 2030. The City builds its world-class status in five key ways. Two of the critical ones are **economic opportunity** which is about expanding opportunities for international trade and foreign direct investment while promoting economic equity. The second way is **international engagement** which translates into city diplomacy focused on commercial, cultural, and political objectives.

I met with an **Israeli delegation** last week to discuss the Smart Border Coalition and common points of interest in mobility technology, water treatment and capital sources for cross-border projects. I thank **Miri Ketayi, Director of Israel and Overseas for Jewish in San Diego** (www.jewishsandiego.org), who has been the key coordinator for this and similar visits.

I appreciated listening to **Moran Zilbershtein, Consul Head of Economic and Commercial Mission West Coast USA** for the **Government of Israel**, on opportunities for engagement with firms, foundations, private capital and business association eager to strengthen ties between CaliBaja and Israel.

One of the best examples of collaboration is **SouthUp** (<https://southup.org/>) an accelerator near the Gaza strip funded with San Diego money. Kudos to **Gil Shwarsman, CEO**, for getting this organization up and running.

I also want to recognize **ThermoFisher Scientific** for its incredible facilities in Carlsbad. I was part of a group of people from Mexico's main genetics and pharmaceutical company associations along with State of Baja California representatives. At one point, and if I understood correctly, 60% of the enzymes used in worldwide Covid-19 vaccines were being produced in this facility!

The **Mexican Consulate in San Diego** led by **Consul General Carlos González Gutiérrez**, coordinated these meetings as part of its effort to have a Mexican pavilion at the upcoming **BIO Conference** (<https://www.bio.org/events/bio-international-convention>) in San Diego, the largest of its kind in the world.

The final meeting was a luncheon at **Procopio** (<https://www.procopio.com/>) attended by two dozen binational leaders, Mexican biotech leaders, **Biocom California Institute** (<https://www.biocom.org/>) executives and Procopio attorneys specializing in biotech.

The **CaliBaja Crosser Experience Group** continues to meet and has sent out three important letters to the **Department of Homeland Security/CBP**, our **Congressional Delegation** and **Vice President Harris**, calling their attention to and asking for concrete responses by the time we arrive in Washington, D.C. next week as part of the yearly delegation led by the **San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce**.

As leading advocates for the binational community, dedicated to growing cross-border relationships, commerce and trade in the San Diego and the Baja California region, we believe that the way ports are managed requires a revamp.

- We urge them to identify current and future staffing funding needs to guarantee an efficient, reliable, and secure border that facilitates trade and tourism while also prioritizing national security.
- We let them know it is critical to implement key performance indicators (KPI) for CBP that allow proper tracking and measurement of port of entry efficiencies. We believe there must be a balance between the agency's security mission and eligible traveler need for efficiency.
- We say that it is equally important to understand the traveler crossing experience when it comes to their interactions with CBP officers at booths and at secondary, as this is the first interaction travelers have when entering the country.
- Finally, because we understand the value of technology and infrastructure in facilitating a more secure and efficient crossing experience, we urge them to work with us to develop programs that will create new approaches for risk assessment at land ports.

The letter to Vice President Harris is more emotionally charged, asking for White House involvement with DHS to make sure our border is given the attention and solutions it needs.

As a reminder from our last bulletin, Mexican Chef **Pati Jinich** is preparing a food/border narrative extravaganza this fall, when a cohort of Tijuana and San Diego friends hopes to bring her here to record her highly successful "La Frontera" program which aired nationally on PBS in 150 cities last year and had over 1.3 million views in its first showing. That show was about border culture and food from **El Paso/Juárez to Laredo/Nuevo Laredo**.

This time, the show will feature the Western border, focusing on **CaliBaja** (please see <https://patijinich.com/>). The show will use "breaking bread" to discuss, describe and debate the great stories we have and the future we want. If anyone is interested in being a sponsor or contributing to this noble production, please let me know.

Pati has won the prestigious **James Beard Award**, recognizing culinary professionals in the Unites States, 3 times and is a *New York Times* best-selling author, among many other accomplishments.

The Surfrider Foundation (<https://www.surfrider.org/>) reached out to the State Government of Baja California to find out ways in which it can have an influence on water treatment, distribution and education projects in Tijuana. The Foundation has multiple efforts going all over the United States, designed to end water pollution, protect the oceans, give people beach access, mount coastal preservation efforts and clean water projects.

Though the group has a strong presence in the U.S., being one of the organizations that filed a lawsuit against the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC, <https://www.ibwc.gov/home.html>) several years ago for continuing to allow pollution of beaches at Imperial Beach, they require connections with NGOs in Mexico to understand water from a binational perspective.

Both **David Pérez Tejada** of the **Baja California Binational Affairs Office** and I met with **Trisha Mejía, Campaign Manager** for **Clean Border Water Now**.

The **Smart Border Coalition Board Meeting** at **Quartz Hotel** in Tijuana featured some familiar faces making a big splash in how we governments get things done. **Secretary of Economy and Innovation Kurt Honold** spoke about the variety of infrastructure projects the State is working on including a ferry to transport people and vehicles from Ensenada to San Diego and a trolley that would take Tijuans to the San Ysidro Port of Entry where they would cross the border using a CBX-like facility.

These projects are undergoing feasibility studies. They are part of the State Government's mobility innovation efforts. Honold described the Governor's desire to connect in an unprecedented way to California, creating a binational team consisting of **David Pérez Tejada** as **Binational Affairs Director** and yours truly as **Director of International Projects in the Office of ProBaja** in California.

For her part, **Supervisor Nora Vargas** described the many initiatives she has led, including air pollution control efforts between the **California Air Resources Board** and the **San Diego County Air Pollution Control District**; a binational water management task force; and vaccination efforts at El Chaparral. Vargas has been very consistent with a message about social equity and environmental justice. She comes off as a true defender of those who are continually left behind in South County because of their socio-economic status, education level or ethnicity.

We also listened to an interview I had with **Alan Bersin**, former “Border Czar” under President Biden, one among many of his significant roles in government and education. Alan has a way with words. He is quite articulate and speaks thoughtfully. He delivered a message about what needs to happen in terms of the way people cross the land ports of entry, tying it to a new way of addressing frequent “known” crossers at our ports. If we know that over 70% of all travelers cross the border 5-7 times each week, why would they be subject to the same kind of scrutiny than someone who crosses once every year?

Bersin spoke about virtually moving back the **Ready Lane** concept to vet travelers using pre-clearance technology available today. This could happen by asking travelers to reserve their spot in line so long as they supply their information before they drive to the border.

What’s more, out of all the data we would have we could segment travelers into new groups of crossers, e.g., workers, students, shoppers, perhaps replacing the All-Traffic, Ready Lane and SENTRI lane types!

Many thanks to our **California Legislature** and **CalEPA** hosts for the dialogue we had about the use of new funds in the California budget to improve water management in watersheds in Baja California. Sacramento gets it. Several Assembly members including **Eduardo García**, **José Medina** and **Chris Ward** have realized that through funding and collaboration we can help our cause.

Mexicali’s New River is a highly polluted watershed and so is the Tijuana River. Doing prevention work only on the U.S. side of the border will not get to the root cause. Challenges like water and air must be solved bi-nationally.

I’d like to salute the efforts the **Center for US-Mexican Studies** and the **Institute of the Americas** have made to support the relaunch of the **Commission of the Californias** (COMCAL). Directors **Rafael Fernández de Castro** and **Richard Kiy** command a great deal of respect. Their creativity and openness will help empower COMCAL to new heights.

COMCAL was conceived in 1964 as a mechanism by which the three Californias would have substantive dialogue and cooperation in the areas of public health, transportation and infrastructure, economic development, tourism, education, emergency services, agriculture, and the environment.

I have been tasked to coordinate this new phase in the California-Baja California-Baja California Sur relationship. Part of the coordination involves aligning state governments, but it is only by seeking the cooperation of civil society and academia that COMCAL will be truly successful.

Our **Stakeholders Working Committee Meeting** on March 3rd featured **Jorge Goytortúa**, CEO of Cross Border Xpress, **Miguel Aguiñiga**, Tourism Secretary of Baja California, **Liane Randolph**, Chair, California Air Resources Board (CARB), and **Michèle Morris** and **Carlos Cristiani** of the World Design Capital Coordinating Group.

Goytortúa described the significance of traffic through the Tijuana airport and CBX's role in putting the airport in fourth place nationally in terms of number of passengers. CBX on its own would be the 8th largest airport in Mexico! He also spoke about the importance of the new processing center and gate areas which will thoroughly enhance the CBX and airport experience.

Secretary Aguiñiga sees the potential of the new processing facility to allow global travelers to visit either Tijuana or San Diego and only going through one customs and immigration check instead of two. Imagine you are in Panama and take a flight to San Diego but land in Tijuana and present your documents once with CBP, bypassing Mexican immigration.

Liane Randolph shared CARB's interest in taking up the issue of long lines at the border and the pollution vehicles generate, giving the topic of air pollution the importance it deserves. **Michèle Morris** and **Carlos Cristiani** capped off the meeting with an explanation about next steps for the World Design Capital Coordinating Group. The effort now goes into hard core planning and action starting as soon as 2023 in preparation for 2024.

Our next online **Stakeholders Working Committee** meeting will convene on May 12th from 9:00a.m. to 11:00a.m. at the UCSD Downtown Campus. This will be in-person only. Please register at <https://www.smartbordercoalition.com/meetings/stakeholders-working-committee-meeting-22>.

Sincerely,

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