**Head/Title:** “Crossing the Line at the Border,” two-part series

**Lead reporter:** John Carlos Frey

**Outlet Name:** The Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute in partnership with Need to Know on PBS

**Video links:**

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/need-to-know/security/video-first-look-crossing-the-line/13597/>

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/need-to-know/video/video-crossing-the-line/14291/>

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**Brief summary:**

In 2007, seeking to beef up border security, the Bush administration set out to double the size of the US Border Patrol, deferring background checks and relaxing training regimens to do so. In two years, the agency hired 8,000 new agents, making Customs and Border Protection (CPB) the largest law enforcement agency in the country. “Crossing the Line at the Border” exposed the brutal human price of creating an undertrained and unaccountable agency. The investigation uncovered the tasing and beating death of an undocumented immigrant, Anastasio Hernandez Rojas, by Border Patrol agents while he was in restraints. It also uncovered a pattern of cruelty by border agents, including actual torture of detainees.

**<250 Word on Impact:**

Within hours of the April broadcast, Hernandez’s killing became national news, covered nationally and internationally by outlets including the (London) *Daily Mail*, CNN Mexico, Reuters, the *New York Daily News*, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, ABC, and CNN. An op ed by Frey appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*. Frey and an eyewitness were interviewed on CNN’s Starting Point, MSNBC’s NewsNation with Tamron Hall, NPR’s The Takeaway, Democracy Now!, and more. The advocacy group Presente.org launched a national petition drive demanding justice for Rojas’ family, which has received over 36,000 signatures.

In early May, human rights groups had organized rallies in eight American cities. A few days later, Rep. Silvestre Reyes wrote a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder calling for an investigation into civilian deaths at the hands of the Border Patrol. Hernandez’s mother traveled to Washington, DC, to meet with members of Congress about the case, a development that was covered in the *Washington Post* and elsewhere. The following day, sixteen members of Congress wrote letters to Eric Holder and the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security, citing the broadcast and demanding that Hernandez’ killing be investigated.

By July, a US attorney had convened a federal grand jury to consider criminal charges in the case. By October, an Inspector General’s investigation was underway. And in December, Customs and Border Protection announced that the incident had prompted the agency to launch a full-scale internal review of use of force by its agents.