



## Heading 'em off at the El Paso

This Bronco is the objective in an international roping contest. The marijuana-

laden Ford Bronco, abandoned in the Rio Grande River at El Paso, Tex., is

roped at each end in a tug of war between U.S. authorities and Mexicans.

The Mexicans finally yielded jurisdiction in the case. — AP photo

# U.S. wins a tug of war on borderline decision

EL PASO, Tex. (AP) — Proponents of cooperation between the United States and Mexico in the fight against illegal drug traffic never envisioned a marijuana-laden vehicle in the middle of the Rio Grande River.

Just such a vehicle was the object of a literal tug of war Thursday as automotive

tow trucks on both sides of the river tried to pull a Ford Bronco out of the river mud. The river serves as the international boundary.

The episode began when two El Paso policemen saw the Bronco settling in the mud after it was abandoned during an attempt

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# Tug . . .

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to dash across the almost dry river bed just west of downtown El Paso.

The occupants of the vehicle had crawled out and retreated to Mexico.

The two officers radioed for assistance. It came in the form of a tow truck, additional local police and agents of U.S. Customs, U.S. Border Patrol and the Drug Enforcement Agency.

A Customs Service helicopter also appeared.

Meanwhile, a wrecker arrived on the Mexican side of the river and attached a cable to the rear of the Bronco. An American cable was hooked to the front of the vehicle. Both sides tugged.

The Americans called for another tow truck.

The struggle continued and spectators gathered on both sides of the border to watch the contest.

"I suppose possibly there was some question of jurisdiction," said Lewis Jones, chief inspector of Inspections and Control for the Customs Service. "But the vehicle was headed in our direction.

"Our people had judged it was on our side and they (the Mexicans) had thought it was on theirs.

"They finally agreed they would relinquish their claim. It was real interesting for a while."

Jones said he did not know if the tow truck on the Juarez side of the river was being used by Mexican authorities.

"We seldom have problems with the Mexican officials," Jones said.

The Bronco with its Texas license plates and 550 pounds of marijuana was finally pulled free by a heavy duty tow truck, the third to appear to help the Americans.

Jones said the vehicle was confiscated. Its ownership was being investigated.