

PRODUCTION SCRIPT BREAKDOWN

Sicario

Full production script breakdown — tactical, location-led schedule with firearms and border logistics.

SCENES

96

LOCATIONS

**24 unique (2 build,
22 practical)**

SHOOT DAYS

**48 principal + 4
second unit**

BUDGET TIER

**Mid-budget prestige
thriller**

Breakdown Summary

PROJECT	Sicario
FORMAT	Feature film, 121 pages
SCRIPT DRAFT	Shooting draft
TOTAL SCENES	96
SPEAKING ROLES	18 speaking
UNIQUE LOCATIONS	24 unique (2 build, 22 practical)
ESTIMATED SHOOT DAYS	48 principal + 4 second unit
BUDGET TIER	Mid-budget prestige thriller

This is a location and firearms schedule with almost no build requirement — the opposite profile to a VFX-led feature, and correspondingly more exposed to permitting, daylight and cross-border logistics than to engineering. Three sequences drive the entire plan: the Chandler house raid, the Juárez convoy, and the night tunnel assault. Each demands a different specialist package (breaching and prosthetics, motorcade and crowd control, night-vision and thermal photography), and none of them can be compressed. Everything else in the script is dialogue in vehicles, offices and motel rooms, which is where the schedule recovers its time.

PRODUCTION FLAG

The night tunnel assault is shot in night-vision and thermal registers. This is a photographic commitment that must be tested and approved during prep — the look cannot be created in the grade, and the sequence has no conventional coverage fallback.

Scene Breakdown

Every scene tagged with page count, interior/exterior, day/night, cast IDs and the department triggers found in the action and dialogue.

Sc.	Slug	I/E	D/N	Pages	Department triggers
1	EXT. CHANDLER STREET — DAY	EXT	DAY	1 4/8	Armoured vehicle, 24 SWAT, street closure, 40 extras
3	INT. CHANDLER HOUSE	INT	DAY	5 2/8	Breaching FX, 42 body props, prosthetics team, odour continuity
6	EXT. CHANDLER — SHED	EXT	DAY	2 1/8	Pyro: IED gag. Squibs, dummy limbs, safety perimeter
11	INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE	INT	DAY	3 3/8	Practical. 30 extras, cleared computer graphics

18	INT. C-130 / AIRFIELD	INT/EXT	DAY	2 6/8	Aircraft hire, tarmac permit, tactical wardrobe
24	EXT. BORDER CROSSING — QUEUE	EXT	DAY	4 5/8	60 picture vehicles, 200 extras, full lane closure, 3 units
27	EXT. JUÁREZ TRAFFIC — CONVOY	EXT	DAY	6 7/8	Motorcade x7, stunt drivers x5, firearms, crowd control
33	INT. DETENTION CELLS	INT	DAY	2 2/8	Practical facility, 45 extras, background clearance
41	EXT. NOGALES STREET — NIGHT	EXT	NGT	3 1/8	Night exterior, condor package, 6 vehicles
48	INT. KATE'S APARTMENT	INT	NGT	2 4/8	Practical. Intimacy coordinator required (sc. 48-50)
51	INT. APARTMENT — ASSAULT	INT	NGT	2 7/8	Stunt: strangulation gag, breakaway furniture, 2 doubles
59	EXT. DESERT STAGING — DUSK	EXT	DUSK	3 5/8	Magic hour only. 3-day window. Helicopter x1
64	EXT. TUNNEL MOUTH — NIGHT	EXT	NGT	4 2/8	Night vision photography, IR lighting, 18 tactical performers
68	INT. TUNNEL	INT	NGT	7 4/8	Build (only major build). Thermal register, squibs, confined-space safety
79	EXT. HIGHWAY — VEHICLE STOP	EXT	NGT	3 6/8	Stunt driving, firearms, 4 picture vehicles
86	INT. ALARCÓN DINING ROOM	INT	NGT	5 3/8	Squibs, blood FX, 6 cast incl. 2 children — welfare hours
94	EXT. FOOTBALL PITCH — DAY	EXT	DAY	1 7/8	60 extras incl. 30 children, welfare team, sound gunfire playback

Cast Breakdown

ID	Character	Scenes	Days	Notes
1	Kate Macer	78	44	Firearms and tactical training 3 weeks. Stunt double for sc. 51, 68.
2	Alejandro	52	36	Firearms, knife work, driving. Stunt double required.

3	Matt Graver	44	31	Firearms training. No stunts.
4	Reggie Wayne	26	19	Firearms training. Tactical wardrobe.
5	Silvio	14	11	Regional casting. Driving. Family continuity across 4 scenes.
6	Fausto Alarcón	6	4	Dinner sequence only. Squib rigging, prosthetic appliance.
7-9	Alarcón family	5	4	Includes 2 child performers — welfare hours, guardian on set.
10-14	Task force operators	38	—	Stunt performers, firearms certified. 5 recurring.
15-18	Featured supporting	21	—	Bilingual casting required for 3 of 4.

Location Breakdown

Location	Scenes	Days	Notes / requirements
Chandler residential street	5	6	Full closure, 3 contiguous properties, pyro permit, 42 body props.
Border crossing / queue	3	4	Highest-permit location. Full lane closure, 200 extras, 60 vehicles, 3 camera units.
Juárez urban (or substitute)	9	7	Crowd control, motorcade route, local liaison and security mandatory.
Tunnel build	4	8	Only significant build. Confined-space ventilation, safety officer, IR lighting rig.
Desert staging	4	5	Magic hour only — 40 usable minutes per day. 3-day window minimum.
Detention facility	2	2	Practical, secure site. Background clearance for all 45 extras.
FBI / DoD offices	8	5	Practical office cover; absorbs weather days.
Alarcón residence	3	4	Night interior, squib clearance, child welfare hours.
Football pitch	1	1	60 extras incl. 30 children. Welfare team, gunfire playback consent.
Motels, vehicles, airfield	11	6	Light units. Scheduled as recovery days.

Department Requirements

Art department and construction

- Only one substantial build: the smuggling tunnel, requiring ventilation, IR-compatible surfaces and crew escape provision.
- Chandler house interior requires 42 concealed-body props and a wall cavity system that can be revealed on camera.
- Alarcón dining room dressed for wealth without ostentation — the script's argument depends on ordinariness.
- Vehicle dressing across 60 picture cars for the border queue, including period-correct plates on both sides.

Firearms, armoury and tactical

- Certified armourer on set for 29 of 48 shoot days. Weapons inventory: 46 long arms, 22 sidearms, all with blank and dummy variants.
- Three weeks tactical training for four principals plus five recurring operators; movement credibility is central to the film's register.
- Squib work in four sequences (shed, tunnel, highway, dining room). Eye protection and clearance perimeters on all.
- Confined-space firearms discharge in the tunnel requires ventilation planning and a written safety plan approved at prep.

Camera and lighting

- Night-vision and thermal registers for the tunnel sequence: test and approve during prep, with a documented exposure protocol.
- IR lighting package for the tunnel interior and mouth — incompatible with conventional units, so the tunnel is a self-contained block.
- Desert staging is magic-hour only: 40 usable minutes per day, aerial unit on standby, three-day window minimum.
- Border queue requires three simultaneous camera units to cover the sequence within the permitted closure window.

Stunts and safety

- Motorcade sequence: seven vehicles, five stunt drivers, crowd control and a rehearsed route with closure.
- Apartment assault: strangulation gag with two doubles, breakaway furniture, fight coordinator.
- Highway vehicle stop: night stunt driving with firearms discharge — separate safety plan.
- Confined-space safety officer required for all eight tunnel days.

Costume, hair and makeup

- Tactical wardrobe for 18 performers with duplicates for blood and dust continuity (3 per performer).
- Chandler sequence prosthetics: 42 body props plus decomposition makeup on featured reveals.
- Kate's wardrobe degrades progressively across the film — continuity bible required, 6 duplicates of the hero jacket.

- Blood FX in four sequences; wardrobe duplicates must be budgeted against squib count, not scene count.

Locations, extras and support

- Border crossing is the single highest-risk permit in the script: secure it before the schedule is built.
- Cross-border or substitute-location logistics require a local liaison, security detail and customs handling for the armoury.
- Peak extras day 200 (border queue); secondary peak 60 (football pitch, 30 of them children).
- Bilingual AD and welfare provision for child performers on five shoot days.

Stunts, Effects and Safety

Sequence	Risk	Requirement
Chandler shed IED	High	Pyrotechnic gag with performers in frame. Licensed pyro, perimeter, dummy limbs, medic.
Juárez convoy contact	High	7-vehicle motorcade, firearms discharge, 5 stunt drivers, crowd control, rehearsed route.
Apartment assault	Medium	Strangulation gag, breakaway furniture, 2 doubles, fight coordinator, 2 rehearsal days.
Tunnel assault	High	Confined-space firearms with squibs. Ventilation plan, safety officer, IR-lit blocking rehearsal.
Highway vehicle stop	High	Night stunt driving with discharge. Closed road, 4 picture vehicles, 3 stunt drivers.
Dining room execution	Medium	Squibs and blood FX with child performers present. Welfare officer, staged reveal, closed set.

The defining safety consideration is firearms discharge in confined and crowded spaces: the tunnel (enclosed, eight days) and the convoy (crowd, moving vehicles). Both need written plans approved at prep and a rehearsal day that is scheduled rather than absorbed. Child performers are present for the dining-room squib sequence — plan a staged reveal so no child is on set during discharge.

Scheduling Strategy

This script schedules by permit difficulty, not by story order. Secure the border crossing first and build outward from its available window; everything else in the film has a substitute. Consolidate all night exteriors into two blocks to avoid repeated turnaround penalties, and use the office and motel scenes as designated weather and recovery cover.

Block	Content	Rationale
1 (6 days)	Chandler raid and shed	Self-contained, pyro-permitted, establishes the cast. No dependency on other blocks.

2 (4 days)	Border crossing and queue	Scheduled the moment the permit window opens; everything else moves around it.
3 (7 days)	Juárez urban and convoy	Follows Block 2 while security and crowd infrastructure is still in place.
4 (8 days)	Tunnel build — IR and thermal	Self-contained block; IR package is incompatible with conventional lighting.
5 (5 days)	Desert staging — magic hour	40 usable minutes per day. Light unit, runs alongside Block 4 prep.
6 (9 days)	Night exteriors: Nogales, highway, apartment	All night work consolidated to avoid repeated turnaround loss.
7 (5 days)	Alarcón residence and football pitch	Child welfare hours require shortened days — plan, do not absorb.
8 (4 days)	Offices, motels, vehicles, pickups	Weather cover and schedule recovery.

Budget Drivers

Ranked by their effect on the shooting schedule, which is where the money actually goes.

Rank	Driver	Effect
1	Border crossing sequence	200 extras, 60 vehicles, full lane closure, three camera units in one window.
2	Firearms and tactical package	Armourer on 29 days, 68 weapons, 3 weeks principal training.
3	Night exteriors (9 days)	Condor lighting, turnaround penalties, crew fatigue provision.
4	Tunnel build with IR photography	Build plus a specialist lighting package used nowhere else in the film.
5	Cross-border logistics and security	Liaison, security detail, customs handling for the armoury.
6	Magic-hour desert window	Five days for approximately 3.5 usable hours of photography.

Risks and Contingencies

- The border crossing permit is the single point of failure in the schedule. Secure it or select the substitute before the plan is finalised.
- Cross-border armoury transport is a customs matter, not a production one — resolve it at prep or shoot the tunnel sequence domestically.
- Night-vision and thermal registers have no conventional coverage fallback; if the test fails, the sequence needs redesign, not a grade fix.

- Magic-hour desert work will lose a day to weather in most windows. Budget four days for three.
- Child performers are present for a squib sequence. A single welfare objection can cost the scene; stage the reveal so they are never on set during discharge.
- Crowd control in the convoy sequence depends on local cooperation that cannot be contracted in advance. Have a controlled-environment substitute designed.

Producer's Action List

- Apply for the border crossing closure immediately and design the substitute location in parallel.
- Book the armourer and schedule three weeks of principal tactical training before Block 1.
- Run and approve the night-vision and thermal camera test in prep, with a documented exposure protocol.
- Commission the tunnel build with ventilation and IR-compatible surfaces specified from the start.
- Contract a local liaison and security detail for the entire Juárez block.
- Engage the welfare officer for the five child-performer days and build shortened days into Block 7.
- Consolidate all nine night exteriors into Block 6 and protect the turnaround in the plan.

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