

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY
Office of Public Affairs

April 5, 2013

FACT SHEET: Strengthening Border Security

"I have made securing our Southwest Border a top priority since I came to office. That is why my administration has dedicated unprecedented resources and personnel to combating the transnational criminal organizations that traffic in drugs, weapons, and money, and smuggle people across the border with Mexico."

- President Barack Obama

The Southwest border is patrolled more effectively today than at any other time in history, and seizures of illegal drugs, currency, and weapons are up. Additionally, crime rates in border communities have either remained flat or fallen in the past decade.

Some key highlights of progress:

Securing the Southwest border at and between ports of entry

- During 2009-2012, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) seized 39 percent more drugs, 71 percent more currency, and 189 percent more weapons along the Southwest border as compared to fiscal years (FY) 2005-2008.
- DHS has increased the number of personnel on the ground from approximately 9,800 Border Patrol agents in 2001 to more than 21,000 today, including 2,200 along the Northern Border. Since 2009, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has deployed a quarter of all its operational personnel to the Southwest border region, doubled the number of officers dedicated to identifying, disrupting, and dismantling criminal organizations, and more than tripled deployments by Border Liaison Officers who facilitate cooperation between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement authorities.
- The Southwest Border High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), a part of the National HIDTA Program, has increased law enforcement coordination among agencies at the state, local, tribal and Federal level.

- ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the U.S. Marshals Service have also dedicated unprecedented numbers of Federal agents to the Southwest border.
- Since 2011, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has increased the number of large-scale imaging systems at and between the ports of entry (POEs) along the Southwest border from 137 to 159, and has increased the number of low-energy mobile imaging systems from 52 to 62.
- DHS has assigned 13 of its 34 Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) teams to the Southwest border. Led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the BEST teams incorporate personnel from ICE, CBP, and the U.S. Coast Guard within DHS; the DEA, FBI, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and U.S. Attorney's Offices within the Department of Justice; as well as other key federal, state, local and foreign law enforcement agencies to leverage federal, state, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement resources to combat transnational crime.
- The Border Patrol, in conjunction with the Office of Information and Technology (OIT), has made significant progress in deploying the Cross Border Security Communications Network. This network will allow for seamless communication among CBP's three operational components: Office of Air and Marine (OAM), Office of Border Patrol (OBP) and Office of Field Operations (OFO). Additionally, direct communication between CBP and Government of Mexico (GoM) Civil Authorities will be established at ten sets of U.S./Mexico paired cities.
- On June 5th, 2012, President Obama signed into law the Border Tunnel Prevention Act of 2012 which provides enhanced investigative tools to law enforcement and increased prosecutorial options. The law makes the use, construction or financing of a border tunnel a conspiracy offense, includes illegal tunneling as an offense eligible for wire interception and specifies border tunnel activity as unlawful under existing money laundering provisions.

Enhancing intelligence sharing capabilities along the Southwest border

- The High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program, funded by ONDCP, coordinates Federal, state and local efforts to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations along the Southwest border. The SWB HIDTA Investigative Support Center is an integral component of drug investigation and interdiction along the Southwest border and uses intelligence to support and enhance multi-agency operational efforts through dissemination of actionable intelligence, along with on-going case support, and drug threat analysis enabling law enforcement entities to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations and other associated criminal groups at the highest level.
- Additional intelligence analysts, operations specialists, reports officers and collection-requirements managers have been detailed to the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), a DEA-funded intelligence center that provides Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies information they can use to target smuggling and other criminal activities.
- A Border Intelligence Fusion Section at EPIC has been established as an all-source, all-threats criminal intelligence section to support tactical and operational efforts with fused intelligence and analysis.
- A Joint Collections Management Unit at EPIC has been established to coordinate requests for information and the dissemination of intelligence.
- EPIC has made major enhancements in its ability to connect directly with and share information between state and local law enforcement agencies and DEA's Special Operations Division.
- CBP has created unified commands in Arizona and south Texas designed to increase information sharing with state and local law enforcement agencies, improve border-wide criminal intelligence-led interdiction operations, and address emerging threats.

Bolstering air and maritime domains along the Southwest border

- CBP and its law enforcement partners have increased both the number and capability of air assets operating along the Southwest border to improve detection and response. For the first time, CBP has expanded the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems from California to Texas.

- On February 10th, 2012, President Obama signed into law the Ultralight Aircraft Smuggling Prevention Act of 2012. The law gives law enforcement expanded authority to combat the use of ultralight aircraft to traffic illegal drugs into the United States.
- DHS has enhanced the ability to target go-fast vessels through HSI's BEST program by utilizing a comprehensive approach to identify, disrupt, dismantle and prosecute border-related smuggling and trafficking organizations.

Cutting off the flow of cash supporting Transnational Criminal Organizations

- Since 2011, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Program (OCDEF) has initiated approximately 2500 cases targeting drug trafficking organizations that engage in bulk cash smuggling (BCS). These efforts have resulted in the initiation of 121 cases, indictment of 845 defendants, conviction of 605 defendants, and the seizure of domestic/international assets valued at over \$75 million.
- HSI's Bulk Cash Smuggling Center now works jointly with the National HIDTA's Domestic Highway Enforcement (DHE) Program by sharing criminal intelligence and coordinating bulk cash related interdiction efforts.

Working with Mexico to secure communities on both sides of the border

- Since launching the Merida Initiative in 2008, the United States and Mexico have forged strong partnerships to improve citizen safety in affected areas to fight drug trafficking, organized crime, corruption, illicit arms trafficking, money-laundering, and demand for drugs on both sides of the border.
- Since December 2009, the U.S. and Mexican governments have apprehended more than 40 high value targets. Additionally, the numbers of U.S. defendants extradited from Mexico to the United States are at their highest levels in history.
- In August 2012, the DEA signed a memorandum of cooperation (MOC) with the Government of Mexico to address the continuing problem of illegal methamphetamine production. The MOC will assist in sustaining long-term joint

efforts between the United States and Mexico in battling methamphetamine production.

Historic partnerships with Tribal leadership and law enforcement in Indian Country

- New partnerships between tribal leadership and law enforcement on criminal intelligence-gathering, investigations, prosecutions, and prevention programs have enhanced the ability of all agencies to disrupt and dismantle organizations involved with illicit or violent activities along the Southwest border.
- ICE/HSI operates the Shadow Wolves program in which Native American trackers in the Tohono O'odham Indian Nation interact with the resident tribal members to produce actionable criminal intelligence to support enforcement operations.
- The U.S. Marshals Service has included tribal leadership in fugitive task forces along the Southwest border, particularly in the Districts of New Mexico and Arizona.

Stemming the flow of illegal weapons across the Southwest border into Mexico

- In September 2010, Mexico's Attorney General signed an MOU to trace seized firearms through the Spanish language version of ATF's successful eTrace program. As of December 31, 2012, approximately 350 Mexican law enforcement personnel have received training and access to Spanish language eTrace, and several additional training sessions are planned for 2013-2014.
- Since 2009, ATF has provided training in firearms and explosives identification to 1,568 Mexican law enforcement, military, and intelligence officials, and has trained an additional 345 Mexican officials in Post-Blast investigation techniques and procedures.
- As part of his plan to reduce gun violence, President Obama has called for criminal background checks for all gun sales, improved information sharing between states, and a ban on military-style assault weapons and armor-piercing bullets. The plan also creates serious punishments for unlicensed dealers and so-called "straw purchasers," who re-sell guns after passing the required background check to buy from licensed dealers.

Strengthening public health and safety in border communities

- Crime rates in border communities including Nogales, Douglas, Yuma, and other Arizona border towns have either remained flat or fallen in the past decade, even as drug-related violence has dramatically increased in Mexico. According to FBI Crime Index statistics, violent crimes in Southwest border states have dropped an average of 40 percent over the past two decades, and the top four big cities in America with the lowest rates of violent crime are all in border states – San Diego, Phoenix, El Paso, and Austin.
- As part of its commitment to reduce the demand for drugs in the United States, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has funded 18 Drug-Free Community Support Program coalitions within 100 miles of the border in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. These coalitions provide outreach services to young people in an effort to prevent drug use before it begins.
- The five regions of the Southwest Border HIDTA are working with multiple sectors of the community to increase community based drug education and prevention activities, to include several that have been funded through ONDCP’s Drug Free Communities Support program (DFC).
- Through the Merida Initiative, the United States is supporting a bi-national study to assess the prevalence of substance use disorders and the need for screening and early interventions through primary health care clinics in Tijuana and Los Angeles.

For more information on Obama Administration efforts to bolster border security and create an immigration system for the 21st Century go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/immigration/border-security>

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