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## Obama Administration Officials Release Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy

Nogales, AZ—Today, Gil Kerlikowske, Director of National Drug Control Policy joined Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner Alan Bersin, and other public health and safety officials to release the *2011 National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy*—a key component of the Obama Administration’s unprecedented efforts to enhance security along the Southwest border. The strategy outlines Federal, state, local, tribal, and international actions to reduce the flow of illicit drugs, cash, and weapons across the border, and highlights the Obama Administration’s support for promoting strong border communities by expanding access to drug treatment and supporting programs that break the cycle of drug use, violence, and crime.

“The demand for illegal drugs in America is a driving factor for violence, addiction, and crime on both sides of our border,” said Kerlikowske. “Federal, state, local, tribal, and international efforts to reduce the threat of drug trafficking along the Southwest border are paying off, but we cannot let up. We must continue to dismantle the transnational criminal organizations that prey upon our communities while also supporting programs and initiatives that reduce drug consumption in the United States and Mexico.”

“Disrupting the flow of illegal drugs across our borders is critical to our nation’s safety and security,” said Secretary Napolitano. “Through this strategy, the Obama Administration will continue to strengthen our coordinated efforts to interdict drug traffickers and disrupt their links to terrorism and organized crime.”

“Drug trafficking cartels are responsible for some of the most devastating violence and criminal activity along the Southwest border and beyond, penetrating into communities large and small throughout this country. To be effective in fighting these criminal organizations, we must aggressively employ all of our international, Federal, state, local and tribal resources, and the strategy unveiled today is a critical piece of this Administration’s comprehensive efforts to dismantle these cartels,” said Attorney General Holder. “Through this strategy and the coordinated efforts with our law enforcement and other partners, we can continue to target these organizations, disrupt domestic transportation and distribution cells, and seize as many of the organization’s assets as possible.”

“Targeting, disrupting and dismantling Mexican drug cartels and their trafficking organizations operating on both sides of the border is a top priority for DEA” said Michele M. Leonhart, Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration. “The *National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy* strengthens collaboration with our American and Mexican partners as together we seek to reduce drug addiction, secure our border, and bring these traffickers and their leaders to justice.”

The *National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy* increases coordination and information sharing between Federal, and state and local law enforcement agencies, and calls for continued close collaboration with the Government of Mexico in their efforts against the drug cartels—highlighting national efforts to

interdict the southbound flow of weapons and illicit currency and reduce the demand for drugs. The Director of National Drug Control Policy will oversee the implementation of the strategy, in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement, and the Department of Justice, Office of the Deputy Attorney General. The strategy will be implemented in coordination with other border related efforts, including the Merida Initiative, led by the State Department, and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) ongoing Southwest border security efforts.

Under the Southwest Border Initiative the Obama Administration has deployed unprecedented amount of personnel, technology, and resources along the Southwest border—nearly doubling the number of Border Patrol agents from approximately 10,000 in 2004 to over 20,700 today, screening of 100% of southbound rail shipments, and for the first time providing critical surveillance capabilities to personnel on the ground through unmanned aerial systems that cover the Southwest border from California to Texas. Over the past two and a half years, DHS has seized 75 percent more currency, 31 percent more drugs, and 64 percent more weapons along the Southwest border as compared to the last two and a half years during the previous administration. Additionally, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has allocated nearly 29 percent of its domestic agent positions to the Southwest border, while U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) increased its Federal agents on the border, and the Department of Justice (DOJ) has secured a record number of extraditions from Mexico: 94 in 2010 compared to 12 in 2000 and trained over 5,400 Mexican prosecutors and investigators.

The *National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy* is an integral component of the Administration's broader national drug control policy. This policy includes a renewed commitment to reduce the demand for illegal drugs at home through a balanced approach that provides increased support to prevention, treatment, and other programs.

For a full copy of the *2011 National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy* click [here](#).

For more information on national efforts to reduce drug use and its consequences visit [www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov](http://www.WhiteHouseDrugPolicy.gov)

*The Office of National Drug Control Policy seeks to foster healthy individuals and safe communities by effectively leading the Nation's effort to reduce drug use and its consequences.*

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