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U.S. Southwest Border Security Initiatives

This report lists some of the various projects, programs, and activities undertaken by the U.S. government to enhance security at the U.S.-Mexico border and to combat transnational contraband trafficking. Since the March 2009 announcement of a Southwest Border Security Initiative by the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. government has stepped up efforts to strengthen security along its Southwest Border out of concern for increasing drug trafficking violence afflicting northern Mexico. These efforts aimed to halt the flow of drugs, cash, and guns between both countries that is responsible for much of this violence. This report is based entirely on U.S. government documents, and we have made no assessment of these initiatives. This compilation groups such initiatives by agency.¹

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)²

The ONDCP is charged with overseeing executive-level anti-drug efforts and ensuring proper coordination of these efforts with local, tribal, and state authorities. In June 2009, the ONDCP announced a National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy with the goal of “substantially reduc(ing) the flow of illicit drugs, drug proceeds, and associated instruments of violence across the Southwest Border.” Several federal agencies are responsible for implementation of the new initiative which has the following objectives:

- * Enhance intelligence capabilities associated with the Southwest Border
- * Interdict drugs, drug proceeds and associated instruments of violence at the ports of entry, between the ports of entry, and in the air and maritime domains along the Southwest Border
- * Ensure the prosecution of all significant drug trafficking, money laundering, bulk currency, and weapons smuggling/trafficking organizations
- * Disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations
- * Enhance counterdrug technologies for drug detection and interdiction along the Southwest Border
- * Enhance U.S.-Mexico cooperation regarding joint counterdrug efforts

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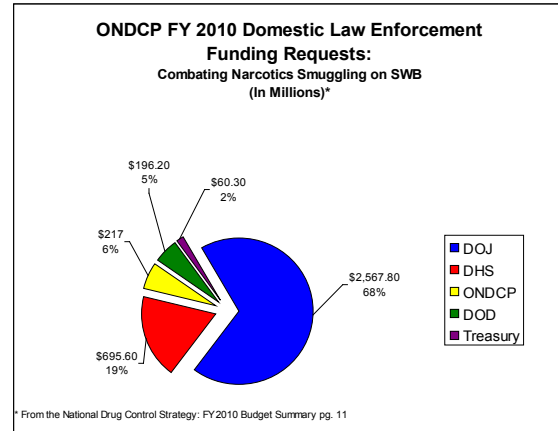
ONDCP Multi-Agency Initiatives

The following are ongoing and proposed initiatives outlined in the ONDCP National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy. These strategies represent the collaborative work of several U.S. Government Agencies and Departments overseen and coordinated by the ONDCP.

*Re-establish Interagency Working Group on Intelligence Coordination (IWG-IC) to help coordinate and integrate intelligence resources across agencies. Enhance intelligence coordination and sharing among Federal Law Enforcement agencies and "centers" such as the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), with local state and tribal law enforcement, and help integrate intelligence programs and activities³

*Improve use of advance passenger and cargo information as well as commercial and law enforcement databases. Improve and integrate border databases such as Customs and Border Protection's Automated Targeting System. Use programs like DHS Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism to secure global supply chains,

ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL DRUG INTELLIGENCE CENTER, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT MEXICAN AND COLOMBIAN DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS GENERATE, REMOVE, AND LAUNDER BETWEEN \$18 AND \$39 BILLION IN PROCEEDS⁴



develop secure cargo containers, and establish standards for cargo security

*Sustain the air and marine presence along the Southwest Border. Develop centralized law enforcement planning, intelligence, and operational fusion center at the CBP Air and Marine Operations Center (AMOC). Modernize sensors and other collection mechanisms such as AMOC's Air Defense System Integrator which receives data from both air and ground units. Establish a Common Operating Picture (COP), a real-time database of air and maritime threats

*Expedite expansion of U.S. law enforcement liaison presence in Mexico. Ensure state and local investigators have the necessary clearances. Use joint coordinated efforts among U.S. law enforcement agencies and the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations. Increase capacity of U.S. Attorneys Offices to handle SWB drug investigations and prosecutions

*Enhance the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDEF) operations to

U.S. Southwest Border Security Initiatives

ON APRIL 1, 2009, DHS SECRETARY JANET NAPOLITANO ANNOUNCED THAT MORE THAN \$400 MILLION IN AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT FUNDING WOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE SOUTHWEST BORDER, INCLUDING \$269 MILLION FOR PORT AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN CA, NM, TX, AZ. \$42 MILLION WILL GO TOWARDS NON INTRUSIVE INSPECTION EQUIPMENT AT SWB POE'S ⁴

target bulk cash movements. Enhance bulk currency interdiction capacities and increase interior enforcement of targeting bulk cash. Target illicit money services businesses (MSBs), encourage sharing of financial investigative info through OCDETF Fusion center, target illicit use of electronic payment devices. Apply the Department of Treasury's OFAC Kingpin Act in SWB region

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

On March 24, 2009, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano announced a Southwest Border Security Initiative to boost agency manpower at the border, expand the use of state-of-the-art biometric and vehicle scanning technologies at crossing points, and to enhance outbound inspections to combat arms smuggling. The announcement came at a time of heightened concern of the increas-

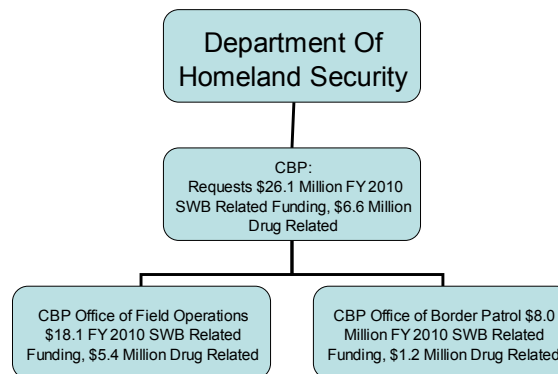
ing drug trafficking violence in Mexico and on acknowledgements by U.S. officials that U.S. inputs, such as cash, guns, and other resources, have fueled the violence in Mexico. The initiative complements existing DHS border-security initiatives. The following lists principal elements of the Southwest Border Security Initiative and suggests areas DHS intends to strengthen. Also included are descriptions of other existing and ongoing DHS border-enforcement actions:

Southwest Border Security Initiative⁶

I. *Increasing Personnel at the U.S.-Mexico Border*

*Increase by 360 the number of DHS agents and officers deployed to the U.S. Southwest

*Double the number of agents from 95 to 190 who are assigned to Border Enforcement Security Taskforces (BEST)



The above organizational chart outlines requests for FY2010 funding which is related to the Southwest Border (SWB). The figures provided have been taken from the ONDCP's National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy Appendix B: Resources, which provides specific information on resources being requested by departments and agencies to support the National Counternarcotics Strategy. Shown above are the requests for SWB funding for FY 2010 by the Department of Homeland Security. DHS has requested funding for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). CBP has requested \$26.1 Million in SWB funding, \$6.6 Million of which is Drug Related. ICE has requested \$70 Million in SWB funding, \$27.9 Million of which is Drug Related.

*Triple the number of intelligence specialists working at the U.S.-Mexico border

*Increase by 50 percent, from 24 to 36, the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents at U.S. consulates in cities near the U.S.-Mexico border, such as Ciudad Juárez, Chih., and Hermosillo, Son.

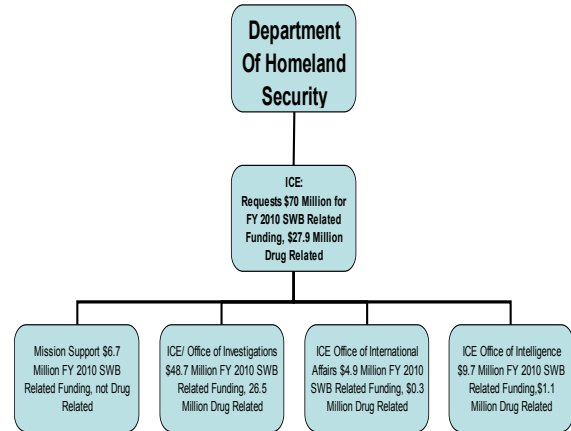
*Double the number of ICE agents assigned to the “Criminal Alien Program, Violent Criminal Alien Sections” adding 50 officers and agents. The program works to expedite the identification, processing for removal, and prosecution of recidivist criminal aliens

*Quadruple the number of agents designated as Border Liaison Officers (BLOs) between Mexico and the United States from 10 to 40. BLOs work to identify and combat cross-border criminal organizations with a focus on coordination between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies. Currently, BLOs are stationed only at San Diego and San Antonio, but with the expansion in the number of agents, Phoenix, El Paso, and Laredo will also have BLO representation

*Add 100 Border Patrol agents at Southwest Border ports of entry to conduct outbound cargo and personal vehicle inspections

*Assemble 12 new canine teams that are “cross-trained” to stop illicit outbound flows of both currency and weapons

*Assemble three mobile response teams comprising each of 25 CBP officers and charged with fighting arms and cash smuggling. Teams will be deployed for short operations along the southwest border, will providing an increased federal



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enforcement presence at the southwest border, and will be tasked with conducting inspections of outbound individuals and vehicles

II. *Modernizing and Expanding Technology and Operations at Ports of Entry*

*Expand the use of biometric ID technologies to help better apprehend undocumented aliens wanted on criminal charges in the United States

*Implement outbound scanning of all rail shipments

*Create eight new Law Enforcement Tactical Centers to enhance coordination and information-sharing between Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel and local law enforcement

U.S. Southwest Border Security Initiatives

DHS SECRETARY NAPOLITANO RECENTLY ANNOUNCED \$50 MILLION IN RECOVERY ACT FUNDING TO ACCELERATE SBINET SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY AND ASSOCIATED COMMAND AND CONTROL CAPACITY

*Update technology to scan license plates of personal and other vehicles at 52 of 110 outbound lanes

*Through Operation Stonegarden, direct \$60 million to state, local, and tribal authorities to secure U.S. borders in 13 Border States and Puerto Rico. In 2009, approximately three-quarters of this funding will go to the four U.S.-Mexico Border States, Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas⁸

III. *Assembling the Southwest Border Task Force*

DHS has created a Southwest Border Task Force consisting of border-region stakeholders, local and tribal authorities, business leaders, and other prominent voices closely involved in border policy-making. For a complete list of members, go to: http://www.dhs.gov/files/committees/gc_1244205126515.shtm.

Other and Existing DHS Initiatives

I. *Fighting Arms Trafficking*

*Operation Armas Cruzadas: Launched in

June 2008, this joint U.S.-Mexico initiative is aimed at "identify(ing) and disrupt(ing) trans-border weapons smuggling networks."⁹

II. *Enhancing Intergovernmental Security Cooperation*

*Border Enforcement Security Taskforces (BEST): Created in January 2006, the taskforces bring together federal, state, local, and tribal authorities to investigate cross-border criminal activity. In 2009 11 BEST units will be in operation along the southwest border¹⁰

*DHS Secretary Napolitano recently announced \$50 million in Recover Act funding to accelerate SBInet surveillance technology and associated command and control technologies in AZ¹¹

Department of Justice (DOJ)¹²

Through its many agencies, the Department of Justice oversees counternarcotics operations aimed at degrading the activities of trans-national drug trafficking organizations, including those of the Mexico-based Juárez, Gulf, and Sinaloa cartels. Agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, as well as the Department's Special Operations Division, conduct various kinds of counternarcotics actions. The following is a brief description of existing DOJ pro-

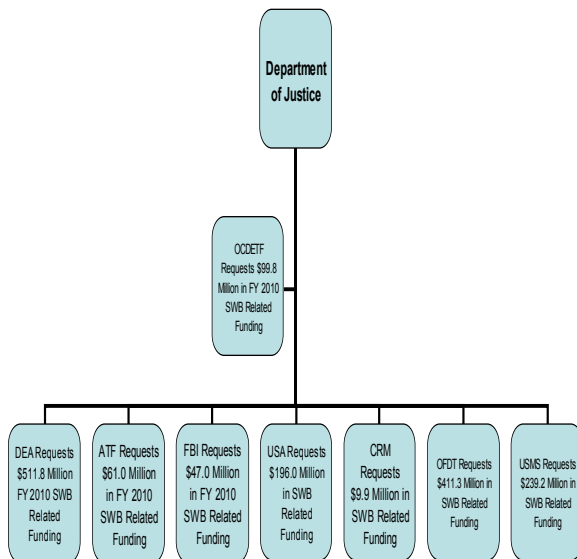
grams, future initiatives and goals, and past accomplishments.

I. Conducting Counternarcotics Operations and Investigations

*Operation Xcellerator: From May 2007-February 2009, this multi-agency and international effort targeted the powerful Mexico-based Sinaloa cartel. This operation has culminated in the arrests of alleged Sinaloa Cartel Members and heads of cells who resided within the United States.

*Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF): These taskforces aim to degrade the operations of major drug trafficking organizations, prioritizing those groups that have the most adverse impact on the United States.

*Consolidated Priority Organization Target (CPOT): DOJ analysis of the “most wanted”



international drug kingpins, helping to prioritize the organizations and leaders whose operations have the most negative impact on the United States. Of 55 worldwide narcotics “cartels,” 20 are Mexico-based enterprises.

*Project Reckoning: Begun in September 2008-present, targets the Mexico-based Gulf Cartel. The operation has yielded the following results: 600 arrests in the United States and Mexico, including three alleged leaders of the Gulf Cartel: (Ezequiel Cardenas-Guillen, Heriberto Lazcano-Lazcano and Jorge Eduardo Costilla-Sanchez), the confiscation of 20 metric tons of cocaine and similarly large quantities of marijuana and methamphetamine, and the seizure of hundreds of firearms and \$76 million in cash.

*Drug Flow Attack Strategy (DFAS): This multi-agency initiative was designed to disrupt the flow of drug money and precursor chemicals between source zones and the United States by attacking the supply chains, transportation logistics, and financial infrastructures of drug trafficking organizations.

Update: In 2009, the DFAS was expanded to include four new mobile enforcement teams at the U.S.-Mexico border and specifically charged with disrupting methamphetamine trafficking.

*OCDETF Southwest Region Gatekeeper Initiative: This initiative is designed to degrade the operation of the so-called “gatekeepers” who control access to the lucrative corridors and conduits that traffickers use to move contraband.

II. Fighting Arms Trafficking

*Project Gunrunner: Aimed at curtailing outbound flows of contraband weapons from the United States to Mexico, Project Gunrunner has been in operation since 2006. The program oversees special agents charged with full-time investigation of firearms trafficking, including investigating Federal Firearms Licensees (FFLs) who are located along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Update: One-hundred additional ATF agents have been deployed to the southwest border to halt the outbound flow of contraband arms; \$10 million has been directed from recent economic stimulus legislation (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) to fund the hiring of 37 ATF agents for new Project Gunrunner teams in three cities near border and to staff special agents at U.S. consulates along border (Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana).

*E-Trace: An investigative tool to disrupt firearms trafficking at the southwest border. After a weapon has been seized, information such as its make, model, and serial number are entered into the E-Trace system, which enables investigators to identify important details related to the purchase and/or repurchase of the weapon, such as the identity of the buyer and of the merchant. A Spanish-language version of E-Trace is under development to assist Mexican investigators in determining the source of weapons seized at crime scenes¹³

III. Stopping Illicit Financial Transactions and Halting Bulk Cash Smuggling

*Bulk Currency Money Laundering Initiative: This initiative targets bulk currency shipments in the U.S. Southwest and aims to halt the concentration of bulk shipments at locations within the United States, as well as to impede the outbound flow of drug trafficking proceeds. It is an OCDETF strategic initiative and involves a number of agencies from within the DOJ as well as from the Department of the Treasury.

References:

1. Much of the information for this compilation came from the congressional testimony of R. Gil Kerlikowske, Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Lanny A. Breuer, Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice (DOJ), William Hoover, Assistant Director for Field Operations, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), Anthony P. Placido, Assistant Administrator and Chief of Intelligence, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Alan Bersin, Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Special Representative for Border Affairs, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Kumar Kibble, Deputy Director, Office of Investigations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Todd C. Owen, Acting Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Office of Field Operations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and J. Robert McBrien, Associate Director for Investigations and

- Enforcement, Office of Foreign Assets Control, Department of the Treasury. Their testimony was taken on July 9, 2009, before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Statements are available at the following link: <http://oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=2531>.
2. Please see National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy, http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/swb_counternarcotics_strategy09/index.html
 3. National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy pg. 6-7
 4. Please see National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy, http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/swb_counternarcotics_strategy09/index.html
 5. National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy pg. 9
 6. Administration Officials Announce U.S.-Mexico Border Security Policy: A Comprehensive Response & Commitment http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Administration-Officials-Announce-US-Mexico-Border-Security-Policy-A-Comprehensive-Response-and-Commitment/
 7. See "Testimony of Todd Owen" at <http://oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=2531>
 8. "Secretary Napolitano Announces \$60 Million in Operation Stonegarden Grants for U.S. Border States" http://www.dhs.gov/ynews/releases/pr_1244070019405.shtm
 9. See http://www.ice.gov/investigations/national_security/cpi.htm and <http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/newsreleases/articles/080609houston.htm>
 10. Testimony of Kumar C. Kibble, Deputy Director, Office of Investigations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs and the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, "Law Enforcement Responses to Mexican Drug Cartels" http://www.dhs.gov/ynews/testimony/testimony_1237397860176.shtm
 11. National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy pg. 14
 12. Testimony of Lanny A. Breuer, Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice; William Hoover, Assistant Director for Field Operations, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Department of Justice; Anthony P. Placido, Assistant Administrator for Intelligence, Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Department of Justice; before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, "The Rise of Mexican Drug Cartels and U.S. National Security"
 13. See "Testimony of William Hoover" at <http://oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=2531>

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