



Fact Sheet: Southwest Border: The Way Ahead



Release Date: April 15, 2009

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
Contact: 202-282-8010

The United States depends on a secure Southwest border in order to ensure the safety of its citizens and those of Mexico, facilitate legal trade and transit, support lawful immigration and prevent illegal smuggling of guns, drugs, money, and people. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to meet recent increases of cartel violence in Mexico with strong action and solidified coordination with federal, state, local, tribal and Mexican authorities.

DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano announced at the White House last month a major set of Southwest border initiatives designed to support Mexico's campaign against violent drug cartels by limiting the flow of firearms and cash from the United States to Mexico. These initiatives bring more personnel to the Southwest border and place additional technology at strategic locations in order to crack down on the illegal activities that fuel the drug war in Mexico.

DHS has formalized the following operational enhancement plan, building from last month's announcement, which lays out specific information about how each initiative will be implemented. The initiatives will be budget-neutral to the Department, funded by realigning from less urgent activities, tapping available fund balances, and, in some cases, reprogramming to deploy resources where they are currently needed the most.

DHS and the Southwest Border

1. Guard against violent crime spillover into the United States
2. Support Mexico's crackdown campaign against drug cartels in Mexico
3. Reduce movement of contraband in both directions across the border

The exact placement of these increased resources will be determined by shared intelligence and coordinated with all relevant stakeholders: federal, state, local, tribal and international. Specific deployment location information is law enforcement sensitive and is not detailed below to protect operational planning. Furthermore, resources will be supplemented or moved based on continual changes in intelligence information and operational needs. Finally, these deployments parallel the Mexican government's efforts to combat drug trafficking and associated criminal activity. As an example, Mexican officers are embedded in the DHS Border Enforcement Task Forces that are being augmented by this initiative.

Doubling Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) Staffing

- DHS will double the number of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents assigned to BESTs—teams that bring together federal, state, local and Mexican authorities in an effort to increase cross-border crime investigations, arrests and prosecutions at strategic locations along the Southwest border.
- Doubling assignments of ICE special agents to BESTs from 95 to 190 will help to facilitate seamless cross-border enforcement actions. The 95 additional ICE investigators will augment BEST task forces at the following locations: San Ysidro and Imperial Valley, Calif.; Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz.; Deming and Las Cruces, N.M.; and El Paso, Laredo, and Rio Grande Valley, Texas. In addition, to further BEST efforts in Mexico, the Department will assign an additional four agents to the Mexico City Attaché to help coordinate

BEST investigations.

- BEST details have already begun and the additional personnel are currently in place.
- Cost: \$5.7 million

Tripling DHS Intel Analysts on the SWB

- DHS will triple the number of intelligence analysts working at the Southwest border, providing a greater capability to develop pre-operational intelligence reports, strategic intelligence products and post-operational impact assessments—to ensure DHS resources have the maximum impact possible to protect public safety.
- Thirteen U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement analysts are currently assigned to Southwest-border operations. Eight are assigned to BESTs and five are assigned to the Border Violence Intelligence Center (BVIC) in El Paso, Texas.
- ICE will detail 26 additional analysts to the Southwest border—16 will be assigned to BESTs in Imperial Valley, Calif.; Phoenix, Tucson and Yuma, Ariz.; and El Paso, Laredo and Rio Grande Valley, Texas; five will go to the BVIC and five more to ICE Attaché offices in Hermosillo, Juarez, Mexico City, Monterrey, and Tijuana, Mexico.
- Intelligence analyst details have already begun and the additional personnel are currently in place.
- Cost: \$3.3 million

Increasing ICE Attaché Personnel in Mexico by 50 percent

- DHS will increase ICE Attaché personnel in Mexico by 50 percent. This program supports the Mexican government, as well as domestic ICE offices, by pursuing investigations inside Mexico involving money laundering, narcotics or human trafficking, and weapons smuggling.
- Twenty-four ICE Attaché personnel are currently assigned in Mexico. ICE will detail an additional twelve Office of International Affairs personnel to Attaché offices in Hermosillo, Juarez, Mexico City, Monterrey, and Tijuana, Mexico.
- Cost: \$650,000

Doubling Violent Criminal Alien Sections Assignments

- DHS will double the number of ICE Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) personnel assigned to Violent Criminal Alien Sections along the Southwest border. These sections work to expedite identification, processing for removal and prosecution of recidivist criminal aliens.
- Due to the large volume of cases of repeat offenders, namely criminal aliens, doubling Violent Criminal Alien Sections manpower will allow DHS to expand its ability to identify perpetrators, develop casework and prosecute these violators.
- Fifty DRO officers are currently assigned along the Southwest border; ICE will detail an additional 50 officers to support ICE and CBP operations in San Diego, Calif.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and El Paso, San Antonio, and Houston, Texas.
- Cost: \$2.3 million

Quadrupling the Number of Border Liaison Officers (BLOs)

- DHS will quadruple the number of ICE Border Liaison Officers (BLOs) assigned along the Southwest border. These men and women work to identify and combat cross-border criminal organizations with a focus on coordination between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement authorities.
- Ten BLOs are currently deployed along the SWB: five are assigned in San Diego, Calif., and five in San Antonio, Texas. ICE will increase the number of BLOs by designating 30 additional special agents already deployed to the Southwest border to serve in this capacity—resulting in a total of 40 BLOs operating at the border. The additional assignments will be in San Diego, Calif.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and El Paso and Laredo, Texas.
- No cost—existing positions are already in place.

Bolstering Secure Communities Biometric Identification Deployment

- The Secure Communities program uses biometric identification technology to share information between law enforcement agencies in order to focus resources on assisting communities in removal of high-risk criminal aliens.
- Currently, 23 counties in the Southwest Border States of Arizona and Texas use the Secure Communities biometric identification technology. Secure Communities plans to make this capability available to an additional 26 SWB counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas within 90 days.
- ICE will also activate Secure Communities biometric identification technology in Los Angeles County, Calif., Ventura County, Calif., and San Diego County, Calif.. San Diego County is expected to be activated in early May.
- Cost: \$95 million

Implementing 100% Southbound Rail Screening

- Using non-intrusive inspections systems, CBP can screen 100 percent of southbound rail traffic to identify the presence of any contraband, such as weapons or currency. In early March, CBP launched 100 percent southbound rail screening at all Southwest border rail crossings.

Increased Maritime Interdiction Operations

- In response to numerous U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and CPB reports of go-fast boats loitering or moving north along the California Baja, DHS began focused interdiction operations. Additional operations over the past year have successfully stopped drugs and undocumented migrants from entering the U.S.
- **Operation Baja Oleada:** This maritime operation, which began in December 2005, cracks down on illegal migrant and drug smuggling along the California Baja to the arrival zone in northern Baja and San Diego area. The Coast Guard maintains a twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week patrol boat presence and frequently surges additional patrol boats, with air support as available. In FY 2009, the operation has resulted in seizures of four vessels and more than 50,000 pounds of marijuana.
- **Operation Red Zone:** This highly successful interagency operation to detect, deter and disrupt transnational smuggling threats in the maritime approaches to southern California and off Baja California ran from Feb. 1 through March 31, 2009. It involved USCG, CBP, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Navy, local police and Mexican Navy (SEMAR).

Immediate Port of Entry (POE) resources enhancements

- **Mobile X-Rays.** This technology enhances the ability of law enforcement authorities to identify currency and weapons in passenger vehicles that may contain weapons and/or currency. Previously, seven mobile x-ray units were deployed along the Southwest border—four in San Diego, two in El Paso, Texas, and one in Laredo, Texas. Two additional units have recently been moved to Tucson, Ariz., and Laredo, Texas. (Cost: \$30,000)
- **Border Patrol Agents.** One hundred Border Patrol Agents currently stationed in the area will be reassigned from non-critical tasks to augment southbound vehicle and pedestrian inspection operations. More than 16,400 CBP agents currently work between ports of entry along the Southwest border. No personnel will be transferred to implement this initiative. (No cost)
- **Canine Detection Teams.** CBP dual-detection canine teams, which can recognize both currency and weapons, provide enhanced detection capabilities in cargo and vehicles and on passengers. CBP currently uses dual-detection teams along the Southwest border; 7 additional dual-detection canine teams have been deployed, for a total of 12 teams in California, Arizona, and Texas. Up to 15 additional teams will be deployed to locations yet to be determined. (Cost: \$440,000)
- **Mobile Response Teams (MRT).** Mobile Response Teams are deployed for short operations along the Southwest border, providing increased enforcement presence and personnel to conduct additional inspections of southbound individuals and vehicles. Four MRTs, consisting of 25 officers each, are currently available for special deployments along the Southwest border. Twelve additional MRT officers

have already been deployed to Texas and Arizona field offices; 24 more are scheduled to be deployed to the California, Texas and Arizona field offices in early May. Combined with the four existing teams, these 36 officers will comprise eight additional teams for a total of 12. Additional deployments will be determined operationally. (Cost: \$3.2 million)

- **Operation Stonegarden Grants.** DHS designed these grants to enhance cooperation and coordination among federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies in a joint mission to secure the border. On March 24, DHS distributed an informational bulletin to all eligible state and local entities outlining modified grant guidance for the remaining FY 2006-2008 balances (totaling up to \$59 million). The new guidance does not take funding away from any states. Rather, it expands the scope of how the remaining balances can be spent to enhance current state, local and tribal law enforcement operations and assets on the Southwest border. Eligible expenses include activating reserve and part-time law enforcement personnel, deploying existing law enforcement personnel, and covering overtime expenses, travel or lodging for deployment to the Southwest border. Secretary Napolitano waived the 50 percent cap on personnel and operational activity costs for local eligible jurisdictions along the border to provide additional resources where they are needed most.
- **License Plate Readers (LPR).** License plate readers are intended to automatically read vehicle license plates and automate law enforcement queries. Southbound LPR information provides valuable intelligence, enhances domestic and international partnerships and assists with current weapon and currency southbound operations. CBP currently operates 52 outbound LPR lanes at 16 Southwest border crossings. CBP has initiated and expanded outbound operations and is moving quickly to replace the 52 LPRs currently equipped in southbound lanes to improve accuracy rates and enhance capability.

Periodic Evaluation and Review of the SWB Initiative

- DHS will employ an iterative and risk-based decision making process that will guide the nature and makeup of DHS operations on the border. Key considerations will be threats and priorities across of all the Department's missions. Actions and deployments within this initiative will remain flexible in order to respond quickly and effectively to the most current information and intelligence.
- Secretary Napolitano will be regularly briefed regarding DHS operations on the Southwest Border and will conduct quarterly reviews of DHS enhancements.

###

This page was last reviewed/modified on April 15, 2009.