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Fact Sheet: Secure Border Initiative



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The Secure Border Initiative (SBI) is a comprehensive multi-year plan to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff has announced an overall vision for the SBI which includes:

- More agents to patrol our borders, secure our ports of entry and enforce immigration laws;
- Expanded detention and removal capabilities to eliminate "catch and release" once and for all;
- A comprehensive and systemic upgrading of the technology used in controlling the border, including increased manned aerial assets, expanded use of UAVs, and next-generation detection technology;
- Increased investment in infrastructure improvements at the border – providing additional physical security to sharply reduce illegal border crossings; and
- Greatly increased interior enforcement of our immigration laws – including more robust worksite enforcement;

Staffing

Under SBI, our goal is to have operational control of both the northern and southern borders within five years.

- The President recently signed the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill into law, which included an 11% increase for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, bringing total funding to more than \$7 billion – funds that will enable us to increase our physical presence at the border by hiring an additional 1,000 Border Patrol agents. With these new hires, Border Patrol will increase by nearly 3,000 agents since 9/11.
- The Homeland Security Appropriations Bill also includes roughly \$3.9 billion in total funding for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) this fiscal year, a 9% increase over last year. Included are significant funding increases for ICE criminal investigators, detention beds, fugitive operations teams, and Immigration Enforcement agents.
- The increased funding will allow ICE to add roughly 250 new criminal investigators to better target the human smuggling organizations and other criminal groups that exploit our nation's borders. It will also allow ICE to add 400 new Immigration Enforcement Agents and 100 new Deportation Officers.

Detention and Removal

The vision for re-engineering the detention and removal process is to create an efficient system that will always have available detention capacity and a streamlined process to minimize the length of detention prior to removal of the alien.

- **Detention Capacity:** The Homeland Security Appropriations Bill contained funds that will enable us to add 2,000 new beds, bringing the total number of beds up to about 20,000. This action alone will allow us to remove thousands of illegal immigrants from our country. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is committed to developing innovative approaches to further expand our detention capacity, including exploring new partnerships with state and local governments.
- **Expedited Removal (ER):** DHS currently has the legislative authority to place certain classes of aliens into ER if they were apprehended nationwide within 2 years of entry. By policy, DHS has chosen to exercise this authority at all Ports of Entry and between Ports of Entry only along the Southwest border for aliens apprehended within 100 miles of the border and within 14 days of entry. DHS is reviewing options to expand ER further.

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Technology and Infrastructure

DHS will field the most effective mix of current and next generation technology with appropriately trained personnel. Our goal is to ultimately have the capacity to integrate multiple state of the art systems and sensor arrays into a single comprehensive detection suite.

- **Improved Technology:** DHS will improve security in the areas between ports of entry by integrating and coordinating the use of technology including more Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), aerial assets, Remote Video Surveillance camera systems, and sensors. DHS will create an integrated border security system, with awards beginning in fiscal year 2006 and deployment beginning in fiscal year 2007.

DHS obtained a Predator B UAV to enhance our ability to secure the southwest border, and we are taking opportunities to partner with the Department of Defense to utilize advanced but proven military technologies to help us with our border security mission.

- **Enhanced Infrastructure:** DHS will expand infrastructure systems throughout the border where appropriate to strengthen our efforts to reduce illegal entry to the United States-exemplified by Secretary Chertoff's announcement to waive certain legal requirements necessary to ensure expeditious completion of the 14-mile Border Infrastructure System near San Diego, California.

As in San Diego, DHS will improve border infrastructure in certain areas by increasing physical layers of security, building access roads to enable Border Patrol to speed response efforts, installing stadium style lighting to deter border crossers, and providing surveillance cameras to monitor incursion along targeted areas of the border.

Interior Enforcement

DHS will strengthen interior enforcement efforts to target those who enter illegally by unequivocally enforcing our laws and making sure that removal is achieved.

- **Workplace Enforcement:** DHS will implement an employer self-compliance program that will link government and business in a united effort to reduce the employment of unauthorized aliens in specific industries. The partnership will assemble a "best practices" methodology that employers will use to minimize certain known vulnerabilities in the legally required employment eligibility verification process. The employers will assist DHS by using their corporate and industry leadership to influence competitors, vendors, and contractors to adopt the best practices methods to ensure all businesses dealing with participating corporations are in compliance with legal hiring requirements.

DHS will seek to strengthen current worksite enforcement regulations to place an affirmative duty on employers to make inquiries on information suggesting that their employee is not authorized to work.

- **State and Local Partnerships:** DHS employs existing 287(g) authority to work with Corrections Departments of selected states, authorizing correctional officers to identify, process, and begin removal proceedings for incarcerated criminals before they are released. This facilitates their expeditious removal from the United States when their sentence ends. Currently, 287(g) programs have been established in Alabama, Florida, Arizona, and certain counties in California. DHS is also exploring using these partnerships as force multipliers in fugitive operations as well.
- **Criminal Alien Program (CAP):** CAP seeks to identify and remove all incarcerated criminal aliens from the United States. Key to this effort is identifying and screening foreign born aliens incarcerated in federal, state and major metropolitan jails and placing them into immigration proceedings prior to their release. The goal for CAP, with appropriate resources, is to screen 90% of all foreign born aliens in state and federal jails by FY09. Additionally, by FY10, a large percentage of aliens in major metropolitan jails will also be screened.
- **Fugitive Operations:** Currently, there are more than 450,000 absconders, and that number is growing at a rate of 40,000 per year. DHS will expand the national fugitive operations program so that in 10 years, DHS will eliminate the fugitive absconder population assuming appropriate resources. To achieve this goal will require the establishment of 100 fugitive operations teams nationwide (up from the current 44) as well as increased efficiencies in the program.

International

Border-related crime affects communities on both sides of our land boundaries, and a

shared approach is imperative to disrupting criminal groups and saving lives. SBI will be implemented in a way that entails an appropriate dialogue with the Governments of Mexico and Canada.

DHS will also work with other foreign governments to ensure they provide timely travel documents in order to remove the backlog of their nationals in our detention facilities.

We will also ensure we maintain a productive dialogue in order to safely and quickly repatriate migrants back to their nations at the same rate at which they are arriving.

- **Country Clearances:** Working with the Department of State, DHS is in the process of streamlining country clearances and internal U.S. government process changes that could cut several days from every escorted deportation.
- **Repatriation:** DHS has begun to aggressively examine this process with foreign governments to ensure better coordination with other nations in regard to our repatriation efforts. Often individuals who are removable remain in detention facilities because the foreign country has failed to provide a travel document in a timely fashion.

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