

DHS Announces Task Forces to Combat Cross-Border Crime at the Southwest Border

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Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff announced today the creation of new Border Enforcement and Security Task Forces, as part of the Department's Secure Border Initiative aimed at increasing control over our borders. These task forces will be nationally-integrated teams with federal, state, and local representation specifically directed at cross-border criminal activity.

"These new task forces will take a comprehensive approach to dismantling criminal organizations that exploit our border," said Secretary Chertoff. "The task forces will be charged with sharing information, developing priority targets, and carrying out coordinated law enforcement operations that will enhance border security."

"We are very pleased to join DHS in this initiative," said Attorney General Gonzales. "The complexities surrounding the security of our borders require innovative partnerships and strategic thinking. The intelligence-driven enforcement teams announced today exemplify the type of collaboration needed to be successful in securing our borders."

The Border Enforcement and Security Task Forces build on the Department's experiences fighting violent cross-border crime in Laredo, Texas, during Operation Black Jack. Operation Black Jack has been a focused effort to coordinate Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigations, Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Marshals Service, and other state and local law enforcement agencies, with significant support from the United States Attorney's Office and the District Attorney's Office. Operation Black Jack has already resulted in the arrest of 26 individuals and the seizure of more than \$1 million in U.S. currency, 19 assault rifles, 300 pounds of marijuana, and 330 pounds of cocaine.

Operation Black Jack has benefited from information assembled by multiple agencies to go after organized cross-border criminal activity. Like Operation Black Jack, additional task forces will be co-located, intelligence-driven enforcement operations, placed in areas where significant border security vulnerabilities exist, and where measurable results can be achieved.

Border Enforcement and Security Task Forces will focus on every element of the enforcement process, from interdiction to prosecution and removal, with the goal of eliminating the top leadership and supporting infrastructure that sustains these cross-border organizations. They will leverage federal, state, tribal, local, and intelligence entities to focus resources on identifying and combating emerging or existing threats.

The next Border Enforcement and Security Task Force will be stood up in Arizona, after DHS conducts a threat assessment of that area. DHS will conduct similar assessments as it establishes additional task forces and will constantly measure results in order to refine and focus our enforcement actions.