

DHS Announces Long-Term Border and Immigration Strategy

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Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff announced today a comprehensive multi-year plan to secure America's borders and reduce illegal migration, entitled the Secure Border Initiative (SBI).

"We will address all aspects of the border security problem across the board – deterrence, detection, response, apprehension, detention, and removal," said Secretary Chertoff. "The goal of SBI is to transform the way immigration issues have been viewed. We will address the challenges in each of these areas with an integrated mix of increased staffing, new technology, and enhanced infrastructure investment, as well as a new regime of regulations and legislative proposals."

Since the events of 9/11, President Bush has placed ever-increasing importance on immigration control, including border security, and has devoted significant resources to the stark challenge of illegal migration. Every day, DHS agencies take significant steps to secure our borders and enforce immigration laws. DHS currently has more than 11,000 Border Patrol agents along nearly 7,000 miles of northern and southern border, an increase of 15 percent over 9/11 levels. An additional 18,000 officers are posted at our Ports of Entry (POE), and over 8,000 agents and officers are working to apprehend criminals, absconders, and other individuals illegally in the United States.

"Despite our substantial progress, we still face a substantial problem. The ability of individuals to enter our country outside legal channels is a threat to our homeland security. Flagrant violation of our borders undercuts the rule of law, undermines our security, and imposes particular economic strains on our border communities," said Secretary Chertoff.

SBI is designed to enable DHS to achieve operational control of both the northern and southern border within five years. Key elements of SBI include:

- More agents to patrol our borders, secure our ports of entry and enforce immigration laws;
- Expanded and more efficient 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

The President recently signed the DHS Appropriations Bill which provides funding for an additional 1,000 Border Patrol agents and includes roughly \$3.9 billion in funding and fees for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement this fiscal year. Included are significant funding increases for ICE criminal investigators, detention beds, fugitive operations teams, and Immigration Enforcement agents.

Detention and Removal

DHS will eliminate completely the "catch and release" enforcement problem. DHS is developing the capability to return every single illegal entrant amenable to removal -- no exceptions. The goal is to achieve significant progress on this capability in less than a year. The detention and removal process will be re-engineered to create an efficient system that will always have available detention capacity, and will have a streamlined process for removal while minimizing an alien's time in detention. This will be achieved through greater efficiencies in the removal process, cooperation with foreign governments, increasing detention capacity and expanding expedited removal.

Technology & Infrastructure

DHS will field the most effective mix of current and next generation technology with trained personnel. Our goal is to ultimately have the capacity to integrate multiple state of the art cameras and sensors into a single comprehensive detection system and expand infrastructure systems throughout the border where appropriate to strengthen our efforts to reduce illegal entry.

Interior Enforcement

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DHS will strengthen interior enforcement efforts to target those who enter illegally by unequivocally enforcing our laws and making sure that removal is achieved. Strong worksite enforcement is key to effective interior enforcement. DHS must be able to ensure that employees are in our country legally and are properly authorized to work.

DHS also plans to strengthen interior enforcement by expanding state and local partnerships with existing state and local law enforcement personnel through the creation of DHS sponsored task forces focused on border enforcement; improving the Criminal Alien Program to identify and remove all incarcerated criminal aliens in federal and state prisons; and increasing Fugitive Operations until all aliens who received orders of removal are actually removed.

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 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.

Temporary Worker Program

SBI will serve as the enforcement complement to the Temporary Worker Program that President Bush proposed last year. The Temporary Worker Program will have the effect of enabling migrants to pursue work in regulated, legal channels – and will increase safety and security by giving us a better idea of who is entering our country and for what purpose.