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DHS Announces Update on Major Law Enforcement Operation in Puerto Rico

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DHS Press Office

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico— Today, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Acting Director John Sandweg, the Puerto Rico U.S. Attorney Rosa Emilia Rodriguez-Velez, and Puerto Rico Police Department Superintendent Hector Pesquera provided an update of Operation Caribbean Resilience— which is part of a larger comprehensive effort by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that began in the summer of 2012 to reduce violent crimes and homicides on the island, in collaboration with local law enforcement in the region, focused on disrupting and dismantling criminal organizations. Over the last 12 months, the Department has leveraged assets and personnel from ICE, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and U.S. Coast Guard. The operation has resulted in the arrest of more than 320 criminals, the seizure of more than 170 firearms and 8,000 rounds of ammunition, over \$155,000 in cash, and a wide range of illegal narcotics including cocaine, heroin, marijuana, ecstasy, Percocet, and Oxycodone.

“No one entity can tackle transnational criminal enterprises alone—it requires a layered, multi-agency approach,” said Acting Director Sandweg. “Through our joint efforts, under Operation Caribbean Resilience, we have not only made the streets of Puerto Rico much safer, but also improved security in the mainland United States.”

Operation Caribbean Resilience is a joint initiative led by ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), with support from CBP, USCG, TSA, the Puerto Rico Department of Justice, Puerto Rico Police Department and the Municipal Police Departments of San Juan, Ponce, and Toa Alta.

Collectively, DHS has augmented local enforcement efforts with the deployment of additional HSI special agents, CBP air and marine assets, and U.S. Coast Guard interdiction teams. CBP’s Caribbean Air and Marine Branch (CAMB) played a major role in deterring illegal activity in the region through the coordinated use of integrated air and marine forces to detect, interdict, and prevent the unlawful movement of people, illegal drugs, and other contraband in the area. The U.S. Coast Guard has increased its patrol boat presence around Puerto Rico in the Mona Passage and the eastern approaches of the U.S. Virgin Islands; and TSA has increased its Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) operations throughout Puerto Rico.

The success of Operation Caribbean Resilience, combined with the additional support from DHS, will be utilized through the next phase of enhanced public safety support to combat violent crime in Puerto Rico. DHS plans to use the intelligence gathered from the recent arrests to target the criminal organizations that are fueling the violence in the streets of Puerto Rico. DHS will continue to coordinate with interagency partners in Puerto Rico, including the U.S. Department of Justice and the Puerto Rico Department of Justice to address violent crime on the island.

For more information, please visit www.dhs.gov.

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