

# OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ISSUES AND TRENDS

## **External Factors: Conditions in the United States and the World**

Terrorism continues to be the most serious threat to the security and safety of the United States and the American people. Not only are international terrorist organizations a threat to this Nation, but domestic extremist groups, militias, and other home-grown threats are as well. Although there have been no large-scale terrorist attacks within the United States since September 11, 2001, there have been arrests of terror suspects, some of whom live here. Hostile terrorist organizations continue to threaten America and its citizens, both here and abroad.

The United States continues to face other threats to its citizens' safety and security. Violent crime maintains a continuing presence across the Nation and often is associated with drugs. Mexico-based drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), in particular, have become more violent. At the same time, they have become one of the greater organized crime threats to the United States. Meanwhile, transnational organized crime and cybercrime threaten to exploit U.S. energy and other strategic sectors. Intellectual property (IP) crime, both domestic and international, continues to pose serious and increasing threats to American innovation and business development.

Since the Department's FY 2007-2012 *Strategic Plan* was published, the United States has experienced the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Although the Nation now is emerging from the worst

aspects of the crisis, economic crime continues to pose a serious threat to the vitality of its economy. Abuses involving financial fraud schemes, such as mortgage lending and security fraud, foreclosure rescue scams, reverse mortgage schemes, and bankruptcy schemes pose grave threats to fragile housing markets and recovery efforts, while health care fraud drives up the cost of health care for all Americans. Moreover, the nearly \$4 trillion the Federal Government committed to various rescue programs has been targeted for fraud and corruption.

High numbers of children continue to be victimized by child prostitution, child pornography, and sex tourism. The elderly also continue to be victimized, both physically and financially. Native Americans generally experience violent crime at far greater rates than other Americans, particularly American Indian and Alaska Native women – in some tribal land counties, murder rates against Native women are more than 10 times the national average. Basic law enforcement protections that Americans take for granted are seriously lacking in some tribal communities.

In addition to the above challenges, there always are additional external factors, beyond the Department's control, that might affect its ability to achieve its goals. Among those are:

*Terrorism and the changing political environment.* Foreign political movements, whether state-sponsored or the work of particular groups or individuals, may use

terror to achieve their aims and target U.S. persons or interests at home or abroad.

*Technology.* Advances in high speed telecommunications, computers, and other technologies are creating new opportunities for criminals, new classes of crimes, and new challenges for law enforcement. Growing dependence on technology is creating an increasing vulnerability to illegal acts, especially white collar crime, drugs, and terrorism.

*Economy.* The amount of regulation and the pace of economic growth and globalization are changing the volume and nature of anti-competitive behavior. The interconnected nature of the world's economy is increasing opportunities for criminal activity, including money laundering, white collar crime, and alien smuggling, as well as the complexity and scope of civil justice matters.

*Government.* Changes in the fiscal posture or policies of state and local governments could have dramatic effects on their capacity to remain effective law enforcement partners. For example, the ability and willingness of these governments to allow federal use of their jail space affects achievement of detention goals. Furthermore, issues of criminal and civil justice increasingly transcend national boundaries, requiring the cooperation of foreign governments and involving treaty obligations, multinational environment and trade agreements, and other foreign policy concerns.

*Social-demographic.* The United States is an increasingly multi-cultural and multi-racial society. The extent to which societal attitudes and practices reflect a continuing commitment to tolerance, diversity, and equality affect the scope and nature of DOJ's work. Achieving the Department's

goals depends on strong institutions – families, schools, neighborhood groups, and others – that inspire trust, build community, promote civic and individual responsibility, and help secure voluntary compliance with the rule of law.

### **The Attorney General's Priorities**

As the Department evaluates these and other issues it faces and looks toward the future, it will focus on four priority areas, defined by the Attorney General, to fulfill its core mission to protect the American people. DOJ will strive to:

- **protect Americans from terrorism and other threats to national security, both at home and abroad;**
- **protect Americans from violent crimes that have ravaged too many communities, devastated too many families, and stolen too many promising futures;**
- **protect Americans from financial fraud that devastates consumers, siphons taxpayer dollars, weakens markets, and impedes ongoing economic recovery; and**
- **protect those most in need of help – children; elderly persons; victims of hate crimes, human trafficking, and exploitation; and those who cannot speak out or stand up for themselves**

These four priorities will guide the Department's work and will shape its legacy. As progress is made in each area, the Department will continue to act as a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars, and it will look for new ways to align operations,

maximize resources, and amplify its work by building and strengthening partnerships.

### **The Years Ahead**

The United States is faced with enemies who seek to strike at American interests and harm American people, both here and abroad. Using every available resource and appropriate tool, DOJ will continue to disrupt terrorist plots, thwart potential attacks, and prosecute those who seek to harm this Nation and its people. The Department will pursue emerging threats around the world and at home and enhance its ability to collect and analyze actionable intelligence. DOJ will engage in outreach efforts to all communities in order to prevent terrorism before it occurs. It will be vigilant, not only against international terrorist organizations, but also against domestic extremist groups, militias, and other home-grown threats.

The Department will strengthen violent crime prevention by continuing to attack the gang-, gun-, and drug-fueled violence that menace our communities. Through intelligence-driven, threat-based prosecutions and international law enforcement partnerships, DOJ will focus on dismantling criminal organizations, putting them out of business. DOJ will fight to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and those who are not allowed to possess them lawfully.

The Department will support law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line each day to keep communities safe. Although violent crime rates are down nationwide, more work remains to be done. During early 2011, line-of-duty law enforcement deaths spiked. Thus, the Department will continue making investments to provide life-saving

equipment, training, and information-sharing capabilities to the men and women in the field.

DOJ will invest in scientific research to make certain that it is both tough and smart on crime, and that its decisions are economically sound. Today, 1 in every 100 American adults is incarcerated, and two-thirds of those who transition out of jails and prisons eventually are rearrested. Helping young people avoid lives of violence and crime and providing support to those who have served their time and are struggling to rejoin and contribute to their communities is not just a proven public safety approach; it is an economic imperative and a moral obligation.

The impact of financial crime is not confined to Wall Street. Often the victims of fraud have worked hard and played by established investment rules, only to see their retirement and life savings vanish at the hands of white-collar criminals. The Department will continue to investigate financial crimes and ensure that those who commit them are made to pay the price by serving long sentences and making restitution to taxpayers and victims. DOJ also will work to bring Health Care Fraud Prevention and Enforcement Action Team (HEAT) task forces to new problem areas, and to expand other successful programs that will maximize both efficiency and impact. Senior Department leaders will continue to meet with victims, medical providers, business leaders, and key government and law enforcement partners around the country to identify the most effective ways to prevent and combat financial fraud.

The Department will work to ensure that children have healthy environments and safe places to live, learn, and play. DOJ will

protect seniors from abuse and young people from experiencing – and witnessing – violence. The Department will enforce civil rights laws to guarantee that in workplaces and military bases; housing and lending markets; voting booths, border areas, and boardrooms; and in schools and places of worship, all Americans are protected.

The tasks at hand now and in the future are daunting, but critical, to ensure the continued prosperity of the Nation. Although the Department’s mission never

changes, its priorities and goals reflect the significant challenges facing the Nation today and anticipated in the years ahead, and take into account the need for flexibility to meet an ever-changing legal landscape.

Therefore, the Department’s *Strategic Plan*, outlined in the following pages, is adaptable. It has an emphasis on broad initiatives and strategic goals that support the Attorney General’s priorities and can be adapted quickly to address new legal challenges.