

Operation Gatekeeper: Next Steps
Talking Points for the Attorney General
Meeting with Public Officials and Community Leaders
October 14, 1995

- I thank you all for coming here today to discuss the tremendous achievements that we have made in this first year of Operation Gatekeeper. I am very proud of what we have accomplished.
- Let me begin by putting Operation Gatekeeper in context.
- Our goal is to control illegal immigration so that we can facilitate legal immigration, preserving our country's proud traditions.
- We must transform the border here in San Diego from

a place where crime and smuggling have prevailed -- threatening our local communities -- to a border that facilitates the commercial and legal traffic that will make these communities prosper.

- Operation Gatekeeper is the strategy that will effect this transformation and bring the border under control.

- I want to let our experts here in San Diego -- United States Attorney Alan Bersin, District Director Mark Reed, and Border Patrol Chief Johnny Williams -- give you the details on the progress that we have made in securing the border.

- But first, I would like to alert you to the new initiatives that I will be announcing later this morning.

- With the groundwork laid over the past year, we must now enhance enforcement at Imperial Beach, fortify areas to the east where traffic has increased, and strengthen our ports of entry.

- To strengthen border enforcement at Imperial Beach and eastward, we are providing additional personnel to the San Diego sector.

- Border Patrol agents from around the country are arriving in San Diego as we speak to report for duty on Monday to help address increased pressures in East

County, open the Sunrise Checkpoint in East County, and strengthen border control throughout the San Diego Sector.

- We will increase the strength on the line by the equivalent of 143 agents -- 60 on detail, and 83 provided through increased overtime pay. This enhanced agent strength will serve as an interim measure -- until January 1996 -- while 143 recruits who have already been hired complete their training at the Border Patrol Academy.
- We are urging Congress to pass the President's Budget, which would add 400 new inspectors to improve enforcement and facilitate legal crossings at

our Ports of Entry. A substantial portion of these new inspectors will be deployed right here in San Diego.

We have already tightened enforcement at the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa Ports of Entry by detailing agents from other regions. We will keep these details until new inspectors arrive.

- This additional manpower will raise the likelihood that those who try to enter illegally will be caught. We must also raise the costs of getting across and the consequences of getting caught if we are to succeed in deterring illegal immigration.
- To provide this deterrence, I have decided to establish a permanent Port Court here in San Diego.

- Our Port Court pilot project has proven effective, even while operating out of temporary space with borrowed immigration judges. Building on the success of that pilot, we are constructing a permanent Port Court at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry.
- The permanent Port Court will enable us to take advantage of our additional manpower and IDENT fingerprint technology to track repeat crossers and criminal aliens by ensuring that illegal crossers will face consequences for their actions.
- The new Port Court will rule on the following cases:
- First, we will detain and seek orders of exclusion and

deportation against aliens who try to enter the U.S. by using a fraudulent document.

- Second, we will detain and seek orders of deportation against aliens who enter the United States with minor criminal records or with small amounts of contraband.

- Third, we will detain and seek orders of deportation against aliens repeatedly apprehended by the Border Patrol in the Imperial Beach section of San Diego.

This will significantly enhance our control of Imperial Beach -- the favored route for illegal immigrants and smugglers.

- And, as many of you who have been working with us

already know, we are working hard to find the detention space that we will need to support this enhanced border enforcement.

- Our effective border control strategy has already caused an unprecedented increase in the number of illegal aliens being prosecuted for illegal reentry after deportation and for smuggling violations. This increase has filled the Metropolitan Correctional Center to well beyond capacity. The number of aliens detained for Port Court proceedings has put an added strain on detention space in San Diego.
- We have already begun to address these needs in a number of ways.

- First, the Immigration and Naturalization Service have obtained additional detention space in county jails to detain individuals processed through the Port Court.
- The United States Marshals Service has also obtained county jail space for federal detainees awaiting prosecution. We expect to reach closure next week on an agreement to use 100 beds at Las Colinas jail in exchange for federal funds from the Marshals Service to renovate the facility.
- Second, for the first time ever, we will use detention space provided by the Department of Defense at Naval Air Station Miramar to house illegal aliens detained for federal prosecution.

- Third, I have instructed my staff to work with the Sheriff and other officials from San Diego County to address our long term detention needs. We have formed a federal-county working group that is developing plans for long-term detention options, including for construction of a joint federal-county jail -- an unprecedented proposal.

- Finally, Commissioner Meissner and I have decided that the fight to secure our Southwest border from illegal migration and from crime and drug trafficking can be strengthened by having one person to coordinate the activities of all the Justice Department agencies. We need one person to urge innovation, demand urgency, and help focus the INS, the FBI, the

Drug Enforcement Administration, the Executive Office for Immigration Review, and the United States Attorneys on enforcement strategies that extend across the entire Southwest border.

- Today, I am appointing United States Attorney Alan Bersin as my Special Representative for the Southwest Border. As U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California, Alan Bersin has developed the tough new prosecution programs that have raised the stakes for alien smugglers and criminal aliens. He has helped move us farther and faster in our efforts to curb illegal activities in California. Now he will help us with the entire border -- refining the strategies that are proving so effective here and developing plans for their

implementation in the districts further east.

- These measures to deter illegal entry and control the border will fortify the progress we have already made with Operation Gatekeeper.
- The border has for too long been the province of drug smugglers, alien smugglers, and illegal border crossers. Our goal is to reshape the border for the future: for commercial growth.
- You all know that the international border is a source of tremendous strength and growth for this region.
- To preserve the integrity of the border for commerce

and legal crossers, however, we must restore law and order. We cannot tolerate the uncontrolled border of the past. We must take the necessary steps toward the future, where law enforcement will take control and restore a border that will promote growth rather than crime.

- Operation Gatekeeper is our strategy for achieving this goal, and we are committed to making it work.

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