



Department of Justice

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NORTHERN BORDER COUNTERNARCOTICS STRATEGY MEETING WITH ONDCP

Richard S. Hartunian, the United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York, convened a meeting of regional law enforcement leaders with White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Deputy Director Benjamin B. Tucker on May 2nd - 3rd in Massena and Lake Placid concerning development of a northern border counter-narcotics strategy. The meeting was prompted by the Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act of 2010, which was signed into law in January and requires the Office of National Drug Control Policy to develop and submit to Congress within 180 days a northern border counter-narcotics strategy.

Federal agencies participating in the meeting included the Drug Enforcement Administration; Homeland Security Investigations (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), the Border Patrol, the Coast Guard, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Customs and Border Protection Office of Field Operations, the Customs and Border Protection Office of Air & Marine, and the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. State agencies participating included the New York Department of Public Safety, the New York State Police, the New York Office of Homeland Security, the New York Division of Criminal Justice Services, and the New York National Guard Counterdrug Detachment. The Chiefs of Police for the St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Police Department and Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service participated, as did the Franklin County District Attorney, Jefferson County District Attorney, and representatives of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Ontario Provincial Police.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), a component of the Executive Office of the President, was established by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. The principal purpose of ONDCP is to establish policies, priorities, and objectives for the Nation's drug control program. The goals of the program are to reduce illicit drug use, manufacturing, and trafficking, drug-related crime and violence, and drug-related health consequences. ONDCP also evaluates, coordinates, and oversees both the international and domestic anti-drug efforts of executive branch agencies and ensures that such efforts sustain and complement state and local anti-drug activities. ONDCP includes the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program, which enhances and coordinates drug control efforts among local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies. Four of the border counties in the Northern District of New York – Clinton, Franklin, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties – are included in the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area.

The Northern District of New York borders Canada for about 300 miles, and includes the St. Regis Mohawk territory, or Akwesasne, where the St. Lawrence Seaway turns north and away from the international boundary, and eight of the eleven ports of entry in New York. A large volume of people and goods pass through the northern border from the major population centers of Canada into the United States. Criminal organizations smuggle drugs by capitalizing on the significant volume of commerce and travel between nations and the remote forests, fields, and waterways straddling the international boundary.

United States Attorney Hartunian thanked ONDCP Deputy Director Tucker for coming to the Northern District of New York and thanked the regional law enforcement leaders for communicating the challenges faced and their ideas for a strategy to meet those challenges. United States Attorney Hartunian said, “We recognize the national significance of northern border security and understand that international drug trafficking destroys lives and communities and provides funds and routes that increase the terrorist threat. Federal, state, local, tribal, and Canadian law enforcement agencies work cooperatively to combat international drug smuggling and trafficking, and these efforts can be enhanced by the sort of national emphasis reflected in the Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy Act. We have had many successful investigations and prosecutions of criminal organizations that smuggled thousands of pounds of high-potency marijuana or thousands of ecstasy tablets into the United States for distribution, and are grateful for the thorough and courageous work done by law enforcement officers along and near the border every day.”

Inquiries may be directed to U.S. Attorney Hartunian or First Assistant U.S. Attorney Grant C. Jaquith at (518) 431-0247.

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