



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of the Deputy Attorney General

The Deputy Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

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MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

FROM: THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

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SUBJECT: Operation Take Back America

Since January 20, 2025, the Justice Department has taken numerous steps to empower prosecutors and law enforcement operating in Districts around the country to protect their communities from the ongoing threats and risks that the American people elected President Trump to address. The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) and the Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN) Program have long been central to these types of efforts in the field. This memorandum establishes a single initiative, called “Operation Take Back America,” that will use OCDETF and PSN resources to implement core policy objectives established by President Trump and the Attorney General:

Repelling The Invasion Of Illegal Immigration. Executive Order 14159, entitled *Protecting the American People Against Invasion*, describes the invasion of criminal aliens under the previous Administration. Those aliens “present significant threats to national security and public safety, committing vile and heinous acts against innocent Americans,” and have “engaged in hostile activities, including espionage, economic espionage, and preparations for terror-related activities.”

Achieving Total Elimination Of Cartels And Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs). Executive Order 14157, entitled *Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists*, directs the government to “ensure the total elimination” of Cartels and TCOs from the United States.

Establishing Homeland Security Task Forces. Executive Order 14159 also directs the Department of Justice to participate in the establishment of Homeland Security Task Forces in every State. These Task Forces will work to “end the presence of criminal cartels, foreign gangs, and transnational criminal organizations throughout the United States, dismantle cross-border human smuggling and trafficking networks, and end the scourge of human smuggling and trafficking.”

Charging The Most Serious, Readily Provable Offense. In a February 5, 2025 memorandum, the Attorney General established a charging policy around a core principle: in the absence of unusual facts, prosecutors should charge and pursue the most serious, readily provable offense. The memorandum noted the Department’s focus on illegal immigration, human trafficking and smuggling, and crimes by Cartels and TCOs such as Tren de Aragua (TdA) and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13)—including through Joint Task Forces Alpha and Vulcan.

Restoring The Death Penalty. Executive Order 14164, entitled *Restoring the Death Penalty and Protecting Public Safety*, restored the death penalty as “an essential tool for deterring and punishing those who would commit the most heinous crimes and acts of lethal violence against American citizens”—with particular emphasis on capital crimes by illegal aliens and against law enforcement.

I. Creation Of Operation Take Back America

Operation Take Back America requires that OCDETF surge existing resources to address the Justice Department’s core enforcement priorities: stopping illegal immigration, eliminating Cartels and TCOs, and ending illegal trafficking of dangerous drugs and human beings. The performance of Operation Take Back America will be measured, in part, by the ability of OCDETF personnel to use criminal justice tools and resources to help with the removal of criminal aliens and to support other aspects of President Trump’s immigration agenda. The Operation will include investigations and prosecutions relating to immigration enforcement, such as cases involving obstruction of immigration objectives by sanctuary jurisdictions. Operation Take Back America will also include all efforts to target TdA, MS-13, the Sinaloa Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), the Northeast Cartel (Los Zetas), New Michoacán Family, United Cartels, the Gulf Cartel, and any other Cartel or TCO designated pursuant to the process established in Executive Order 14157, entitled *Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists*.

All OCDETF-funded personnel and OCDETF Strike Forces must contribute to Operation Take Back America. OCDETF-funded AUSAs must devote a significant number of their weekly hours to the Operation, and report those hours for tracking purposes. All existing OCDETF National and Regional Strategic Initiatives within the scope of Operation Take Back America shall be consolidated and brought under the Operation. All existing OCDETF operations and investigations that involve the same Consolidated Priority Organization Targets (CPOTs) and Regional Priority Organization Targets (RPOTs) shall be consolidated and brought under the Operation. All of these consolidation efforts shall be completed by two weeks from the date of this memo.

AUSAs and law enforcement participating in Operation Take Back America shall act in accordance with current DOJ guidance regarding charging the most serious, readily provable offense—including capital crimes where available. AUSAs prosecuting cases relating to Operation Take Back America shall seek detention as appropriate to protect the public, including temporary detention of aliens pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3142(d)(1)(B), and pursue appeals of adverse bail determinations.

II. Operation Take Back America Supporting Homeland Security Task Forces

Operation Take Back America will support the Homeland Security Task Forces established in Executive Order 14159, entitled *Protecting the American People Against Invasion*. Each OCDETF Regional Director and Lead Task Force Attorney will be assigned to the local Homeland

Security Task Force, and additional OCDETF-funded AUSAs will support that work on an as-needed basis.

III. PSN Coordination With Operation Take Back America

AUSAs acting as PSN Coordinators in their Districts must fully participate in Operation Take Back America. This shall include coordination with OCDETF to obtain support for federal PSN cases that focus on the Operation's priorities. PSN will also partner with federal, state, and local law enforcement to advance the Operation by establishing protocols that ensure a rapid federal response to incidents within the Operation's scope—including responding and investigating instances of obstruction in sanctuary jurisdictions that endanger the residents of those jurisdictions.

PSN Coordinators shall work with state and local prosecutors and law enforcement to identify cases that should be investigated and prosecuted federally under Operation Take Back America to maximize the cases' impact in support of the Department's priorities. AUSAs working on Operation Take Back America shall conduct monthly meetings with state and local law enforcement to identify and investigate these cases. USAOs are directed to report to EOUSA on a quarterly basis the number of state and local referrals to Operation Take Back America, the number of cases adopted, the number of cases declined, and the rationale for the declination.