

FACT SHEET
Second Meeting of the U.S.-Mexico High-Level Security Dialogue
October 13, 2022

Today, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Attorney General Merrick Garland, Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, and other U.S. government representatives met with Mexican counterparts to discuss implementation of the **U.S.-Mexico Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health, and Safe Communities**.

The Bicentennial Framework, adopted at the inaugural meeting of the High-Level Security Dialogue in October 2021, continues to guide our bilateral security cooperation. The United States and Mexico remain committed to transforming our cooperation to better **protect** the health and safety of our citizens, **prevent** criminal organizations from harming our countries, **pursue** criminals, and bring them to justice. Today, we committed to continue working together across all three goals to protect human rights in accordance with our international obligations, share information and best practices, prosecute those who violate our laws, and evaluate the impact of our efforts.

The Biden-Harris Administration took several domestic actions since October 2021, to implement our Bicentennial Framework goals. In April, the Administration released its National Drug Control Strategy, which focuses on two critical factors in the overdose epidemic: untreated addiction and drug trafficking. In June, President Biden signed the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*, the first major gun safety legislation the U.S. Congress has passed in nearly 30 years, which created a firearms trafficking criminal statute for the first time. On July 12, Presidents Biden and President Lopez Obrador committed to a multi-year joint border infrastructure modernization effort, noting that the *U.S. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* includes \$3.4 billion to undertake 26 major modernization projects that include enhanced security features on the United States' northern and southern borders.

Highlighted below are examples of successes achieved under each goal of the Bicentennial Framework since its adoption in October 2021. The United States commits to continue advancements over the next year.

GOAL 1: PROTECT OUR PEOPLE - The United States and Mexico seek to build sustainable, healthy, and secure communities to benefit citizens of both nations.

Public Health

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), awarded nearly \$1.5 billion to support states, tribal lands, and territories' efforts to address the opioid crisis and support individuals in recovery. The grant programs provide funding to increase access to treatment for substance use disorder, remove barriers to public-health interventions like naloxone, and expand access to recovery-support services.





- In 2022, a total of 745 community coalitions in all 50 states received over \$93 million through the Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Program. The DFC Program supports communities as they mobilize individuals and organizations to prevent youth substance use.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched four complementary education campaigns that provide information on the prevalence and dangers of fentanyl, the risks and consequences of mixing drugs, the life-saving power of naloxone, and the importance of reducing stigma around drug use to support treatment and recovery.
- The Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and HHS co-hosted, with Mexico, three experts' roundtables on addiction prevention and treatment. INL provided training on evidence-based prevention and treatment of drug-use disorders in support of Mexico's National Strategy to Prevent Addictions. INL launched, with Mexico, the National Network on Drug Information to support consolidation of an early warning system for emerging drugs, and improved information collection on drug use through the *Red Nacional de Información sobre Drogas*.
- INL support helped expand Mexico's state level courts' access to alternative sentencing programs for low-level drug offenders. Six Mexican states have now adopted court models that refer these offenders to treatment. These models coordinate justice and public health efforts to decrease violence, criminal recidivism, and drug consumption in Mexico. Nine more states are planning to launch treatment courts.

Safe Communities

- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) partnered with state and local governments to scale evidence-based violence prevention methods in Mexico, including strengthening alternative civic justice systems to better support at-risk youth, preventing violence escalation, and reducing recidivism in 60 municipalities. In the first year of the Framework, USAID implemented problem-oriented policing strategies to reduce crime in five municipalities and provided psychosocial therapy, life skills and vocational training, and employment placement for 3,000 at-risk youth.
- INL trained more than 10,000 Mexican police officers and emergency call center operators to respond to gender violence crimes between 2019 and 2022 and supported the development of specialized police units focused on preventing femicides. The Government of Mexico and INL hosted the first National Women and Security Conference to raise the profile of women in Mexico's security and justice sectors and support participants' efforts to reduce gender-based violence in their communities.

Human Rights

- The United States and Mexico partnered to address human rights priorities, including protecting journalists and identifying victims of forced disappearances. USAID partnered with the Secretariat of Interior's National Human Rights Defenders and the Journalist Protection Mechanism to provide integrated protection to 1,600 threatened individuals. USAID also partnered with the federal Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Freedom of





Expression (FEADLE) to investigate and prosecute 21 cases of violence against journalists. Since 2020, U.S. forensics assistance helped the National Search Commission, National Human Identification Center, Coahuila Regional Identification Center, Attorney General's Office (FGR), and state governments recover 1,238 DNA samples, generate 1,066 family reference samples, and identify 81 victims.

Reduce Homicides and High-Impact Crimes

- U.S. partnership with Mexican federal and state justice actors helped to increase justice system efficiency, accredited corrections facilities, strengthened defense and victim services, and advanced priority prosecutions. For example, five Mexican states adopted criminal prosecution policies, defined with civil society and the private sector, to address specific crimes, from femicides to extortion. In those states, interagency task forces decreased impunity for target crimes, courts introduced innovations to manage caseloads, and the Mexican government gathered data to improve the quality of pre-trial evaluation and supervision services.
- INL and the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) worked with Mexico's forensics laboratories to increase their capacity to support the investigation and prosecution of high impact crimes. Since the program's inception, 135 laboratory units in 23 states and FGR have achieved international accreditation.

GOAL 2: PREVENT TRANSBORDER CRIME - The United States and Mexico seek to diminish the capacity of Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) and prevent trafficking of drugs, arms, wildlife, and people, as well as human smuggling.

Combating TCOs

- President Biden announced two Executive Orders to counter TCOs and illicit drug trafficking, first by formally establishing the U.S. Council on Transnational Organized Crime, and second, by modernizing and expanding the U.S. Government's ability to target drug trafficking organizations, their enablers, and financial facilitators through sanctions and other related actions.
- Between May 1 and September 2, 2022, the FBI along with local and state law enforcement partners arrested nearly 6,000 alleged violent criminals and gang members, seized more than 2,700 firearms connected to criminal conduct, and disrupted nearly 845 and dismantled 105 violent gangs and criminal enterprises. Mexico arrested several prominent cartel leaders, "plaza bosses," and operatives in 2022, including: co-founder of the Guadalajara Cartel and FBI most-wanted criminal fugitive, Rafael Caro Quintero, Cartel de Noreste (CDN) Leader Juan "El Huevo" Gerardo Treviño Chávez, Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) Plaza Boss in Colima Aldrin Miguel "El Chaparrito" Jarquín Jarquín, and CJNG co-founder and top Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) target Erick "el 85" Valencia Salazar.
- In August, the Justice Department's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training (OPDAT), using INL funding, in coordination with the FBI's Legal





Attaché program, DEA, and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), hosted an organized crime workshop in Guadalajara, Jalisco for 50 federal prosecutors from high priority Mexican states.

Synthetic Opioids

- Customs and Border Protection (CBP) significantly increased the amount of fentanyl seizures along the U.S. Southwest Border, seizing an average of more than 800 pounds of fentanyl each month in fiscal year 2021, more than twice as much as fiscal year 2020 and four times the amount seized in 2019.
- DEA's Operation Overdrive, an initiative aimed at combatting the rising rates of drug-related violent crime and drug poisoning deaths plaguing American communities, is operational in 57 locations across the United States. In 2021, DEA seized more than 20.4 million fake pills and 15,000 pounds of fentanyl powder, equating to approximately 440,000,000 deadly doses of fentanyl, enough to supply a potentially lethal dose to every member of the U.S. population.
- Mexico expanded its chemical watchlist from 14 to 72. The list helps security officials identify which inbound chemical shipments warrant additional scrutiny.
- INL sponsored two exchanges with more than 250 forensic chemists from the U.S. and Mexican governments to advance understanding and identification of fentanyl precursors and synthesis; a series of fentanyl awareness trainings for law enforcement and courier facility operators to reduce personnel contamination and death; high-hazard clandestine laboratory identification and destruction training; and a workshop for Mexican prosecutors and chemists on presenting evidence of fentanyl and precursors at trial.
- INL donated protective equipment to specialized units to investigate and safely dismantle clandestine labs and 13 additional specialized detection canines to state and federal entities. INL-donated canines in Mexico helped seize more than 75,000 fentanyl pills from January to August 2022, and more than 172,000 fentanyl pills since 2019.
- The United States and Mexico committed to an action plan focused on synthetic drugs as we increase our efforts to tackle the fentanyl threat.

Arms Trafficking

- The United States passed the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*(SCA) on June 25. This Act provided the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) with new authorities to combat firearms trafficking along the U.S. southwest border and elsewhere.
- The Department of Justice announced multiple convictions for arms trafficking including: ○ April 2022: The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Arkansas announced a 12-year prison sentence for Andrew Scott Pierson for his role in a conspiracy that resulted in the trafficking of firearms to Mexican cartels.





- May 2022: The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas announced the conviction of three individuals for their roles in a Cartel del Noroeste weapons money laundering scheme.
 - May 2022: The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia announced that Othon Marban, Sr., and Othon Marban, Jr., pleaded guilty to conspiracy to transfer firearms to an out-of-state resident, in connection with their attempted trafficking of approximately 50 guns to Mexico.
 - August 2022: The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas announced the conviction of Osiel Cárdenas Salinas, Jr., for attempting to purchase assault rifles to export into Mexico. Cárdenas is the son of former head of the Gulf Cartel Osiel Cardenas-Guillén.
 - September 2022: The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas announced the **first** conviction under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act firearms trafficking statute of an individual who pleaded guilty to trafficking handguns into Mexico. At the time of his arrest, authorities discovered 17 firearms hidden in his car while traveling south towards the port of entry in Laredo.
- ATF significantly increased its ability to interdict firearms and stop firearms traffickers through Operation Southbound, ATF's whole-of-government enforcement strategy that incorporates information sharing and the use of its Firearms Trafficking Task Forces to identify, disrupt, and dismantle firearms trafficking networks supplying firearms to TCOs.
 - INL and ATF trained 775 forensic experts and investigators from federal and state law enforcement agencies on firearms and explosives identification, as well as more than 119 forensics experts and investigators from federal and state law enforcement agencies on eTrace. ATF and INL have steadily built Mexico's eTrace capacity, resulting in a nearly 40 percent increase in the number of firearm traces submitted by Mexico from 2017 to 2022, enhancing parallel firearms trafficking investigations.
 - Operation Without a Trace spearheaded a campaign via the ICE tip-line aimed at eliciting information from the public regarding firearms trafficking in July 2021. HSI and CBP jointly pushed out messaging at ports of entry, checkpoints, and private shipping and transportation businesses. From October 2021 to August 2022, the tip line received 60 tips, including four tips related to ongoing HSI investigations and one tip that initiated a new investigation that led to an arrest.

Human Smuggling

- In coordination with the Department of Homeland Security, Mexico's Attorney General's Office (FGR) prioritized and actively investigates the most dangerous and prolific human smuggling networks operating in Mexico, which supported FGR in obtaining 29 arrest warrants, and arresting 19 suspects over the past year. Additionally, HSI and FGR committed to significantly increase the size of the HSI-FGR Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit (TCIU), which investigates human smuggling, human trafficking, and narcotics and arms trafficking cases, among other crimes.



- The Department of Justice announced the creation of Joint Taskforce Alpha (JTFA) in April 2021 to prioritize efforts to combat human smuggling and human trafficking. Since its creation, JTFA increased coordination and collaboration among the Justice Department, DHS, and other interagency law enforcement participants together with foreign law enforcement partners in Mexico and Central America; targeted those organizations who have the most impact on the United States; and coordinated significant smuggling indictments and extradition efforts in U.S. Attorneys' Offices across the country and with foreign counterparts. To date, JTFA's work with its partners resulted in criminal charges and over 100 domestic and international arrests against leaders, organizers and significant facilitators of human smuggling activities, several dozen convictions, significant prison sentences and substantial asset forfeiture. JTFA's successes relating to smuggling activity involving Mexico include:
 - March 2022: The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced the takedown of a human smuggling organization operating in Arizona and Sonora responsible for smuggling large numbers of individuals from Mexico, Central America, and South America into Arizona. This operation, which involved extensive cooperation with Mexico, led to the arrest of six members of the organization who will be prosecuted by Mexican authorities. Throughout the investigation, the DOJ has successfully prosecuted nine U.S.-based co-conspirators.
 - September 2022: DOJ announced the arrest of eight individuals in four states who were indicted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas and the Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division for their role in a prolific human smuggling organization that facilitated the unlawful transportation and movement of migrants within the United States. The migrants or their families allegedly paid members of the smuggling organization to help them travel illegally to and within the United States.

Secure Modes of Commerce

- Mexican Customs (ANAM) and the CBP National Targeting Center (NTC) signed a memorandum of understanding to increase information sharing on foreign air cargo shipments entering Mexico.

GOAL 3: PURSUE CRIMINAL NETWORKS - Disrupt TCO financial networks and reduce their ability to profit from illicit activities both transnationally and in cyberspace.

Cyber

- In August, the U.S.-Mexico Working Group on Cyber Issues convened its first bilateral cyber dialogue since the establishment of the Bicentennial Framework. The meeting advanced bilateral cooperation on cyber issues in line with our shared commitment to an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet and a stable cyberspace.
- INL sponsored trainings with the Department of Justice on obtaining and presenting digital evidence in organized crime cases, and on cyber-criminal investigations to over 150 participants.

Extraditions





- Mexico extradited several prominent cartel leaders, “plaza bosses,” and operatives to the United States:
 - Mario Cárdenas Guillén, former head of the Gulf Cartel was surrendered to the United States on May 17, 2022. According to the indictment, beginning in 2000 and continuing through 2012, Cárdenas Guillén allegedly conspired with others to possess more than five kilograms of cocaine, which he intended to distribute to others.
 - Adan Casarrubias Salgado was surrendered to the United States on May 26, 2022. The indictment alleges Casarrubias Salgado distributed multiple kilograms of heroin in the Chicago area in 2014 and transferred hundreds of thousands of dollars in proceeds back to Mexico.
 - Carlos Arturo Quintana was surrendered to the United States on August 18, 2022. Quintana is alleged to be a prominent member of the Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization (VCFO). The VCFO is a transnational criminal enterprise based in Chihuahua, Mexico, responsible for smuggling tons of narcotics into the United States.

Combatting Illicit Finance

- In May, the United States and Mexico convened the Strategic Dialogue on Illicit Finance (SDIF) to disrupt money laundering and the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT). The U.S. delegation to the SDIF, led by the Department of the Treasury, included partners from the DOJ’s Criminal Division, Civil Rights Division, along with the FBI and DEA. Participants discussed how to move forward on major issue areas such as narcotics smuggling, evolving illicit finance threats, human smuggling, trafficking, corruption, and digital assets. The group committed to establish a working group on anti-corruption, focused primarily on a high-level strategic response to public corruption and continue expanding information-sharing.

Targeted Financial Measures:

- The Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated 26 individuals and 17 entities pursuant to Executive Order (EO) 14059, Imposing Sanctions on Foreign Persons Involved in the Global Illicit Drug Trade signed by President Biden in December 2021. Many of the sanctions implemented under this EO have targeted individuals and entities engaged in, directly or indirectly, fentanyl manufacturing and trafficking.
 - On February 17, OFAC designated Sergio Armando Orozco Rodriguez (a.k.a. “Chocho”) for acting on behalf of CJNG by facilitating various illicit activities in Puerto Vallarta. This action resulted from collaboration between OFAC, the Government of Mexico, and other U.S. agencies.
 - On July 11, OFAC designated Obed Christian Sepulveda Portillo for trafficking high-caliber firearms from the United States to Mexico on behalf of CJNG. This action resulted from the collaboration between OFAC, HSI, and the Government of Mexico.

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