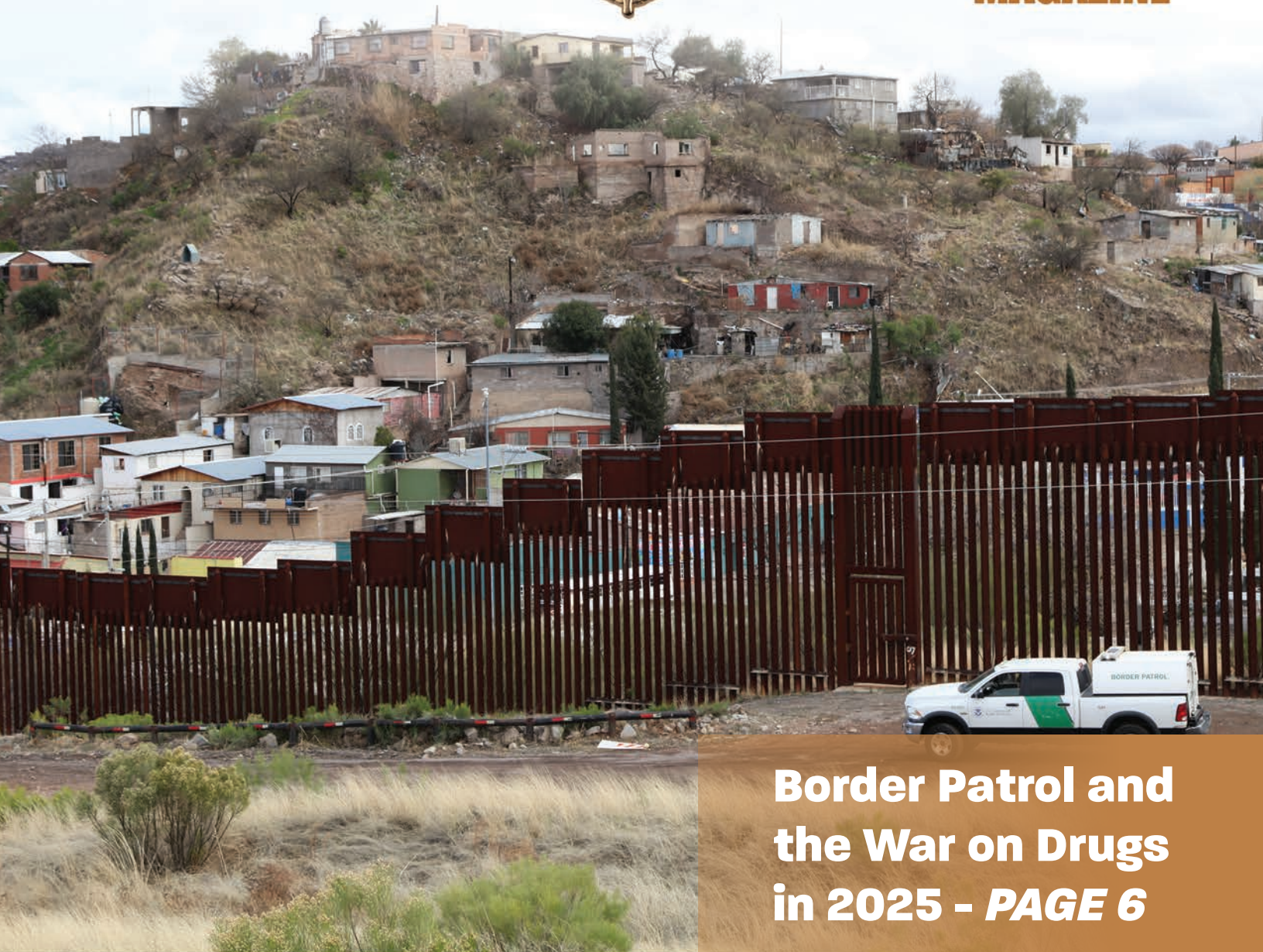




SEPTEMBER 2025 | VOLUME 14 ISSUE 2

NARCOTIC OFFICERS

MAGAZINE



**Border Patrol and
the War on Drugs
in 2025 - PAGE 6**

EMPOWERING LAW ENFORCEMENT: YOUR TRUSTED POLICE MAGAZINE

Our communities rely on dedicated law enforcement officers to keep us safe. These men and women put their lives on the line daily, facing dangerous situations to protect citizens and deserve our unwavering support. Let's show our appreciation for their service. A strong bond between the public and those who serve is vital for a safe and thriving community.

Letter From The Editor...

Welcome to the fall edition of the 2025 Narcotic Officers Magazine, Volume 14 Issue 2. As we transition into another season, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your continued support and dedication. This publication thrives on the commitment of individuals like you, who are passionate about advancing the fight against narcotics and drug-related crime.

In this issue, we delve deeper into the evolving landscape of law enforcement, especially concerning the ongoing challenges posed by drug trafficking and border security. The partnership between law enforcement agencies and community stakeholders has never been more crucial. As highlighted in our featured articles, recent initiatives, such as Operation Pacific Viper and the military's enhanced role along the southern border, underscore the multifaceted approach required to combat the drug crisis effectively.

Empowering Law Enforcement Through Collaboration

The contributions from our community are invaluable. Whether it's sharing stories, strategies, or lessons learned, your experiences help to inform and inspire your peers across the nation. Our magazine serves as a platform for this exchange, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among law enforcement agencies. By supporting each other and sharing best practices, we can enhance our collective effectiveness in tackling narcotics-related issues.

Addressing the Challenges Ahead

As we face the realities of underfunding in many police departments, it is essential to recognize the resilience and creativity exhibited by officers on the front lines. Despite budget constraints, the spirit of service remains strong. This issue includes articles that focus on innovative strategies being employed to ensure public safety and community trust. We must continue to advocate for our officers and seek innovative partnerships that can provide them with the necessary resources.

The Role of Education and Community Engagement

Education remains a pivotal aspect of our mission. Programs like D.A.R.E. are evolving to meet the challenges of 2025 by addressing the impacts of vaping, mental health, and the influence of social media on drug use. By engaging with our communities and fostering open dialogues, we empower future generations to make informed decisions about substance use.

Gratitude for Our Supporters

Lastly, I want to extend my appreciation to our advertisers and sponsors. Your support not only helps sustain this publication but also plays a vital role in funding essential programs that benefit our law enforcement community. Please take a moment to engage with these businesses that demonstrate a commitment to our cause.

Together, we can continue to inspire change and foster safer environments for all. Thank you for being an integral part of this journey.

"In the face of adversity, we find strength; together, we can combat the challenges that threaten our communities."

Matt Neelley
- Editor



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The contents of this magazine and any statements of fact or opinion made by advertisers are not the responsibility of the publisher.

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The Value of Advertising in Narcotic Officers Magazine: A Partnership for Progress

In the ever-evolving landscape of law enforcement, the role of community engagement and support cannot be overstated. One platform that embodies this spirit is the Narcotic Officers Magazine. As a vital resource for law enforcement professionals, the magazine serves not only as a source of valuable information but also as a beacon of collaboration between businesses and officers dedicated to combatting narcotics-related crime.

Empowering Businesses Through Advertising

For businesses that choose to advertise in the Narcotic Officers Magazine, the investment goes beyond mere expense; it is an opportunity to actively contribute to a cause that matters. Each advertisement not only promotes products and services but also plays a crucial role in sustaining the magazine's operations. By funding the publication, advertisers help create a platform that informs law enforcement officers about the latest trends, tools, and tactics in the fight against drug-related crimes.

Moreover, businesses find pride in supporting a publication that is recognized and respected within the law enforcement community. Their contributions aid in funding essential programs that benefit underfunded officers, such as providing safety equipment, supporting K-9 units, and facilitating drug education initiatives. These efforts not only enhance the capabilities of law enforcement agencies but also foster a safer environment for the communities they serve.

Enhancing the Magazine with Officer Contributions

Law enforcement officers and agencies have a unique opportunity to enrich the content of the Narcotic Officers Magazine by sharing their own stories and expertise. Personal narratives, case studies, and educational articles from officers on the front lines provide invaluable insights that can guide and inspire fellow law enforcement professionals.

Submissions can range from innovative strategies in drug enforcement to firsthand accounts of overcoming challenges in the field. These contributions not only elevate the magazine's educational value but also create a sense of camaraderie and shared experience among officers nationwide. When officers share their successes and lessons learned, they empower others to adopt effective practices and foster a collaborative spirit within the law enforcement community.

Upcoming Events and Conferences

In addition to written contributions, the Narcotic Officers Magazine actively promotes upcoming events and conferences that serve both the public and law enforcement officers. These gatherings are instrumental in fostering education, networking, and the exchange of ideas.

From workshops focused on the latest advancements in drug detection technology to seminars that cover legal updates and best practices in narcotics enforcement, these events are designed to equip officers with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively serve their communities. By participating in these events, law enforcement agencies can further enhance their capabilities and ensure they are always prepared to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Conclusion

The partnership between businesses and the Narcotic Officers Magazine is not merely transactional; it is a collaborative effort that uplifts the entire law enforcement community. By advertising in the magazine, businesses take pride in supporting vital programs and initiatives that directly impact officers and their communities. Furthermore, by contributing stories and insights, law enforcement officers can add tremendous value to the magazine, fostering a shared commitment to excellence in narcotics enforcement. Together, we can create a safer future for all.

DOD Systems Bolster Border Security Operations



Aug. 25, 2025 | By Army Pfc. Dominic Atlas, Joint Task Force Southern Border

Along the rugged terrain of the southern border, the Defense Department deploys optic systems to enhance detection and monitoring capabilities in support of U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The Ground-Based Operational Surveillance System (Expeditionary), the Long-Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System, and the M153 Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station are advanced tools and unique military capabilities used by service members assigned to Joint Task Force Southern Border to monitor large areas, detect illegal crossings and strengthen perimeter security in coordination with CBP agents.

Whether elevated on towers, deployed from concealed positions or mounted on armored vehicles, these systems

provide persistent coverage across challenging and often inaccessible landscapes. Each platform offers a unique capability, contributing to the multilayered detection and monitoring strategy in place along the southern border.

Elevated Overwatch and Area Monitoring

The Ground-Based Operational Surveillance System (Expeditionary), is an advanced fixed-position monitoring asset. Mounted on telescoping masts or permanent towers, GBOSS-E integrates electro-optical and infrared cameras, laser rangefinders and ground radar to enable nonstop observation across large sectors of terrain.

From its elevated position, the system allows operators to detect, identify and geolocate movement in open desert and rugged terrain — critical for tracking groups attempting to cross into the U.S. without authorization. What

makes the system unique is that it is an organic asset to military police units.

By employing it in this mission, soldiers are not only enhancing border security but also building readiness by training with and refining the use of their equipment in a real-world environment.

“Integrating the GBOSS-E system into our mission set has enhanced our soldiers’ ability to detect threats from a distance. These systems allow our soldiers to pick up on movement and heat signatures through radar and camera capabilities that enhance monitoring efforts, especially at night and from a distance,” said Army Sgt. 1st Class Sean Marshall, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 759th Military Police Battalion. “In an austere environment like Yuma, [Arizona,] where the desert extends for miles, the GBOSS-E is a force multiplier that enables us to use the terrain to our advantage.”

Border Patrol and the War on Drugs in 2025

In 2025, border patrol's role in the "War on Drugs" is intensifying, with a specific focus on disrupting the trafficking of synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

The current administration has escalated border security measures, deploying military resources and declaring drug trafficking a national security threat.

Operations and strategies

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has rolled out several new initiatives and escalated ongoing operations to combat drug trafficking in 2025:

- Expansion of operations: Several operations targeting fentanyl and other synthetic drugs were expanded in 2025, including Operation Hourglass, Operation Plaza Spike, and Operation Apollo X.
- Whole-of-government approach: CBP is fusing the efforts of various federal, state, local, tribal, and international partners to degrade and dismantle transnational criminal organizations (TCOs).
- Technological innovation: The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is leveraging AI and machine learning at ports of entry to identify suspicious vehicles and passengers for secondary screening.
- Border Patrol checkpoints: The Border Patrol (USBP) conducts complementary operations at checkpoints near the border to stop fentanyl and other illicit drugs.

Drug trafficking trends in 2025

Cartels are adapting their smuggling methods in response to increased border security. Fentanyl and methamphetamine remain key concerns, but authorities are observing new tactics and trends.

- Smuggling methods: In August 2025, CBP noted a trend of smugglers using fake vehicle batteries to conceal narcotics, indicating an evolution in concealment tactics.
- Mexican cartels: The Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation Cartels remain the dominant threats for trafficking synthetic drugs into the U.S..
- Fentanyl seizures: While the annual trend for fentanyl seizures had been rising, authorities seized significantly less fentanyl by mid-2025 compared to the same period in 2024, possibly reflecting changes in smuggling dynamics.

Policy developments and political impact

The federal approach to border security and drug enforcement has become more aggressive in 2025 due to new presidential directives and proposed legislation.

- National emergency declaration: In January 2025, a national emergency was declared at the southern border, with the scope expanded in February to include drug trafficking, specifically fentanyl.
- Militarization of the border: In 2025, the administration has authorized the use of military forces to target Mexican drug cartels, and the Department of Defense (DoD) is drawing up options for military action.
- International pressure: Following a declaration that Mexican cartels and other criminal organizations are terrorist threats, the administration has used diplomatic pressure and tariffs to force Mexico and Canada to secure their borders against

drug smuggling.

Consequences and challenges

The continued focus on interdiction and enforcement presents ongoing challenges for border patrol and other law enforcement agencies.

- Agent safety: The lethality of fentanyl remains a significant risk for CBP agents who may be exposed to the substance during seizures.
- Endless cycle: Border patrol agents express frustration that the arrest and deportation cycle for drug and human smugglers is an endless, ongoing problem.
- Enforcement challenges: Despite stricter asylum rules for migrants crossing the border, smugglers continue to exploit loopholes and prey on individuals, compounding the difficulty of separating drug trafficking from human smuggling.

Types or brands of fentanyl analogs seen at the border in 2025

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) 2025 National Drug Threat Assessment, the primary fentanyl-related threats seen at the border are

illicitly manufactured fentanyl and other synthetic opioids produced by Mexican drug cartels. While pharmaceutical-grade fentanyl exists, the issue at the border overwhelmingly involves substances created in clandestine labs. These illicit substances are trafficked both as powder and as counterfeit pills.

Specific fentanyl analogs identified at the border and on the illicit market in 2025 include:

- Carfentanil: An animal tranquilizer estimated to be 10,000 to 100,000 times more potent

than morphine, and significantly stronger than standard fentanyl.

- Acetyl fentanyl: An analog that is about 15 times more potent than morphine.
- Acrylfentanyl: Another highly potent analog, estimated to be 100 times stronger than morphine.
- Furanylfentanyl: An analog that can be dangerous even in small amounts.

Trafficking and concealment trends

In 2025, border patrol seizures have indicated a decline in fentanyl poundage compared to 2024, but new and innovative smuggling methods persist. A key trend is the concealment of these powerful substances within or disguised as other items.

- Counterfeit pills: Most illicit fentanyl at the border is pressed into pills to resemble legitimate prescription medication like oxycodone, often with “M30”

markings, or anti-anxiety medications like Xanax.

- Disguised containers: Cartels are increasingly hiding narcotics in unexpected locations. In August 2025, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) reported smugglers attempting to conceal drugs inside fake car batteries.
- Powder mixes: Fentanyl powder is frequently mixed with other substances like heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine, increasing potency and danger.

Naming conventions and branding

The “brands” for illicit fentanyl are not consistent, legitimate trademarks. Instead, they are street names used to market and label batches of drugs. Some of the names for fentanyl analogs that have been observed include:

- Apache
- China Girl
- Dance Fever

- Murder 8
- TNT
- Tango and Cash

The challenge of detection

The emergence of new fentanyl analogs presents a continuous challenge for law enforcement and border patrol. New formulations are created to avoid identification by regulators and may not be detected by standard toxicology tests. This creates a “cat and mouse” situation where law enforcement struggles to keep pace with chemists who continually alter drug molecules. To combat this, federal legislation like the HALT Fentanyl Act aims to classify all fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs, making it easier to prosecute traffickers.

OpenAI. (2025). Response generated by AI on the topic of border patrol and the war on drugs in 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/search?q=Border+patrol+and+the+war+on+drugs+in+2025>



D.A.R.E. America: Leading the Charge Against Illicit Drug Use in 2025

D.A.R.E. America, or Drug Abuse Resistance Education, has been a pillar of drug prevention education since its inception in 1983. As we navigate 2025, D.A.R.E. continues to adapt its programs to address the ever-changing landscape of substance use and abuse among youth. By focusing on education, prevention, and community engagement, D.A.R.E. plays a crucial role in combating illicit drug use. Supporting D.A.R.E. America not only helps empower future generations but also strengthens communities in the fight against addiction.

The Evolution of D.A.R.E.

Originally launched in Los Angeles, D.A.R.E. has expanded globally, evolving its curriculum to reflect new challenges. Moving beyond the “just say no” mantra, D.A.R.E. now employs evidence-based strategies that encompass:

- **Mental Health Awareness:** Addressing the connection between mental health and substance abuse.
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Teaching students essential skills for decision-making and resilience.
- **Community Involvement:** Partnering with local organizations and law enforcement to create a comprehensive prevention network.

Current Curriculum

In 2025, D.A.R.E. offers tailored programs for different age groups:

- **Elementary School Programs:** Focus on resilience and making safe choices.
- **Middle School Programs:** Emphasize critical thinking



TEACHING KIDS TO RESIST DRUGS & VIOLENCE

regarding the risks of alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs.

- **High School Programs:** Discuss the legal, social, and health consequences of drug use, including topics like vaping.

Community Engagement

D.A.R.E. America recognizes that effective drug prevention extends beyond the classroom. Their community engagement efforts in 2025 include:

- **Parent Workshops:** Helping parents recognize signs of drug use and communicate effectively with their children.
- **Community Events:** Organizing drug awareness fairs and forums to promote healthy lifestyles and connect families with resources.
- **Law Enforcement Collaboration:** Partnering with local police to train officers in engaging with students and parents effectively.

Addressing Current Trends

As drug trends evolve, D.A.R.E. adapts its approach to meet new challenges. Key focus areas in 2025 include:

- **Vaping and E-Cigarettes:** Developing educational materials on the risks of vaping and nicotine addiction.
- **Mental Health:** Incorporating discussions about mental wellness to help students seek support.
- **Social Media Influence:** Teaching students to critically evaluate online content related to drugs.

Supporting D.A.R.E. America: How You Can Help

Supporting D.A.R.E. America is essential for amplifying its message and expanding its reach. Here's how you can get involved:

1. Educate Yourself and Others

- Stay informed about the dangers of drug use, its impact on youth, and the resources available through D.A.R.E.
- Share information about D.A.R.E. programs with friends, family, and your community.

2. Advocate for D.A.R.E. Programs

- Contact local schools and community organizations to



encourage the implementation of D.A.R.E. programs.

- Attend school board meetings to discuss the importance of drug prevention education.

3. Volunteer Your Time

- Join local D.A.R.E. chapters or organizations that support drug prevention efforts.
- Offer your skills, whether in education, marketing, or community outreach, to help expand D.A.R.E.'s initiatives.

4. Fundraise and Donate

- Organize fundraising events within your community to support D.A.R.E. programs.
- Consider making a direct donation to D.A.R.E. America to help fund educational materials and community events.

5. Engage on Social Media

- Follow D.A.R.E. America on social media platforms and share their content to raise awareness.
- Use your own social media channels to discuss drug pre-

vention and the importance of supporting D.A.R.E.

Success Stories and Impact

D.A.R.E. America measures its impact through studies and surveys. In 2025, notable successes include:

- **Increased Awareness:** Students in D.A.R.E. programs show a heightened awareness of the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- **Reduced Substance Use:** Longitudinal studies indicate that students who complete D.A.R.E. programs are less likely to engage in drug use.



- **Community Support:** Enhanced involvement from parents and community members strengthens D.A.R.E.'s initiatives.

Conclusion

D.A.R.E. America is a vital force in combating illicit drug use among youth in 2025. By adapting its curriculum to address contemporary challenges, engaging communities, and focusing on mental health, D.A.R.E. empowers students to make informed decisions. Supporting D.A.R.E. not only helps protect future generations but also fosters healthier, drug-free communities. Together, we can make a difference by spreading the message of prevention and support.

OpenAI. (2025). D.A.R.E. America: Leading the charge against illicit drug use in 2025. Retrieved 8.27.25 <https://share.google/images/2901w-wWMDrK1jUHb>, <https://share.google/images/uiwtJSWY82sm7NQtz>, <https://share.google/images/CqBu-JPOILkUaE4dEX>

Long-Range Target Detection From Concealed Positions

The Long-Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System provides high-fidelity visual monitoring and long-range target detection from mobile platforms such as the Stryker armored vehicle. By combining thermal imaging, day cameras, GPS, and a laser rangefinder, LRAS3 enables soldiers to observe and identify subjects from several kilometers away while remaining protected under armor and out of sight.

Originally designed as a cavalry asset for reconnaissance teams in forward-deployed environments, the LRAS3 has been in use for decades. With the integration of cavalry elements into infantry formations, the system has transitioned from a specialized tool to one now available at the company level.

Along the southern border, LRAS3 has found a new purpose, providing personnel with long-range detection capabilities to discreetly monitor trails, canyons and key terrain features from standoff positions. Repurposed for homeland security, the system continues to prove its value by supporting CBP operations.

“This system allows a Stryker with a mounted LRAS3 to provide U.S. Border Patrol with the information and location needed to interdict suspected illegal aliens,” said Army 1st Lt. Elias Stephenson, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. “It’s used in areas that have substantial observation capabilities to support the detection capabilities of the system and enable U.S. Border Patrol interdiction.”

Remote Observation With Defensive Capability

The M153 Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station provides operators with long-range observation capabilities. Mounted on Stryker armored vehicles, CROWS allows soldiers to detect and track activity while remaining protected inside the vehicle.

Equipped with stabilized optics, thermal and day cameras and a laser rangefinder, the system is now employed along the southern border strictly as a detection and monitoring asset.

Originally designed to integrate with crew-served weapons in combat zones, the system has been repurposed for homeland security missions to provide personnel with long-range observation capability without its traditional armament. This adaptation highlights its versatility — enabling soldiers and Department of Homeland Security personnel to maintain persistent watch over high-risk border sectors while remaining protected inside their vehicles.

The M153 Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station is a remote camera system on the Stryker that is normally used for the Stryker’s mounted machine gun for targeting in combat.

“For the southern border mission, we don’t have weapons mounted. So, it’s been repurposed to extend our duration for detection and monitoring capabilities. This allows our vehicle commanders to detect individuals at greater distances and enable border apprehensions,” Stephenson said.

Integrated Systems, Unified Mission

Together, GBOSS-E, LRAS3 and

CROWS demonstrate the unique military capabilities that DOD contributes to border security operations. By combining advanced surveillance platforms, specialized training and the ability to operate in austere environments, these systems strengthen detection and monitoring efforts across the southern border.

Their integration also reflects the close partnership between DOD and DHS in protecting national sovereignty and disrupting illicit activity.

As the mission continues, these systems remain vital to detecting movement, monitoring critical areas and supporting soldiers and law enforcement personnel working together to secure the southern border, Stephenson said.

U.S. Department of Defense. (2023, August 23). DoD systems bolster border security operations. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4281750/dod-systems-bolster-border-security-operations/>



Operation Pacific Viper: U.S. Coast Guard Announces Largest Drug Offload in its History

Release Date: August 26, 2025

The Coast Guard achieved its largest-ever drug seizure in a single operation in its history

Monday, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Hamilton* offloaded over 76,000 pounds of illegal drugs, valued at \$473 million, at Port Everglades, Florida as part of Operation Pacific Viper. This offload included approximately 61,740 pounds of cocaine and approximately 14,400 pounds of marijuana.

This is the largest drug offload in Coast Guard history.

This is the first major offload of Operation Pacific Viper, a historic partnership between the Coast Guard and the U.S. Navy that is surging forces to the Eastern Pacific to cut off drugs and human smuggling before they ever reach American shores. As part of this operation, the Coast Guard conducted 19 interdictions in international waters of the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. They are defending the Homeland with overwhelming force.

With a lethal dose of cocaine being as little as 1.2 grams, the amount offloaded by *Hamilton*'s crew is enough to potentially kill 23 million people.

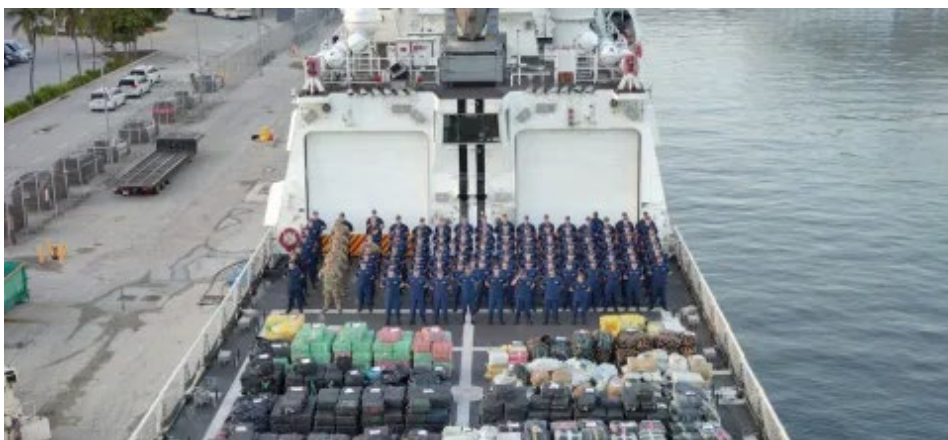
"The Coast Guard continues leading U.S. efforts to control, secure, and defend the U.S. border and maritime approaches," said Admiral Kevin Lunday, Acting Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. "The cutter HAMILTON's record-breaking offload is the latest demonstration of the success of Operation Pacific Viper, the Coast Guard's aggressive operations to defeat drug smugglers at sea in the Eastern Pacific Ocean near Central and South America. We are incredibly proud of our crews who are safeguarding our nation. HAMILTON's success sends a strong signal to the cartels that we own the sea. We will defeat them and protect our communities from the death and devastation from the scourge of illegal drugs."

*"The crew of *Hamilton*, who have been on the ship for over the last two months, personally interdicted over 47,000 pounds cocaine," said*

Rear Adm. Adam Chamie, Coast Guard Southeast District Commander. *"These men and women put themselves in harm's way time and again to stop the bad guys, apprehend the smugglers and seize the drugs. This is grueling and dangerous work, and I am extremely proud of them."*

Operation Pacific Viper is part of a wider effort ordered by President Trump to combat foreign drug cartels in Latin America. This operation is still ongoing, and, under the leadership of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, the men and women of the Coast Guard will continue deploying overwhelming force against the cartels, cutting off the flow of drugs into the United States and put an end to the cartel's reign of terror.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2025, August 26). Operation Pacific Viper: U.S. Coast Guard announces largest drug offload in its history. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/08/26/operation-pacific-viper-us-coast-guard-announces-largest-drug-offload-its-history>



*The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Hamilton* offloads more than 76,140 lbs of illicit narcotics at Port Everglades, Florida, on August 25, 2025. This is the largest cocaine offload to date in Coast Guard history, with the assistance of partner agencies, during counterdrug operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. (Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Taylor Bacon, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters)*



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sampson (DDG 102), USCGC Stone (WMSL 758), USCGC Venturous (WMEC 625), and USCGC Seneca (WMEC 906), transit in formation while conducting operations in the Pacific Ocean. (U.S. Navy Photo by Naval Aircrewman (Tactical Helicopter) 2nd Class Teague Bullard)

Pentagon Provides Update on Southern Border, Recruitment Numbers



July 2, 2025 | By Matthew Olay, DOD News

Approximately 8,500 military personnel attached to Joint Task Force Southern Border continue to enhance U.S. Customs and Border Protection's ability to identify, track and disrupt threats to security at the southern border, the Defense Department announced today during a press conference at the Pentagon.

Since being established in March of this year by U.S. Northern Command, the task force has conducted more than 3,500 patrols, including more than 150 that were jointly carried out with CBP and the Mexican military, said Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell.

"The strong partnership and coordi-

nated efforts between the Department of Defense and Customs and Border [Protection] yielded exceptional results between June 28 and June 30, [2025], with zero 'gotaways' across the entire southern border during that timeframe," Parnell announced.

He added that the U.S. has made "incredible progress," and it will continue to work toward achieving 100% operational control of the border.

In addition to the task force's successful patrols, Parnell said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth recently directed the secretaries of the Navy and Air Force to establish a pair of national defense areas along the southern border.

The Air Force will be responsible for the South Texas NDA, which will en-

compass federal property on and along 250 miles of the Rio Grande.

The Navy will control the Yuma NDA, which encompasses approximately 140 miles of federal property along the U.S.-Mexico border near the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range in Arizona.

"These will be the third and the fourth designated national defense areas along the border and will continue to enhance the department's ability to protect the southern border from unlawful entry," Parnell said.

The first two NDAs established by the DOD earlier this year are in New Mexico and West Texas.

Parnell also noted that the National



Guard continues to play an essential role in protecting the U.S. southern border from illegal entry and maintaining the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of the United States.

He said over 4,200 guardsmen are on state active duty in support of Operation Lone Star, and an additional 70 guardsmen are on state active duty, conducting base camp security at the recently established “Alligator Alcatraz” immigration detention facility in the Florida Everglades.

In addition to supporting border security efforts, Parnell said that approximately 5,000 military personnel, comprising California National Guardsmen and roughly 700 Marines, are currently mobilized to protect federal functions, personnel and property in the greater Los Angeles area.

“These federalized California National

Guard [soldiers] and U.S. Marines have supported more than 170 missions in over 130 separate locations from nine federal agencies, including the Drug Enforcement [Administration], U.S. Marshals Service, [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] and the Department of Homeland Security,” he said.

In other military personnel news, Parnell provided an update on DOD’s recruiting efforts, stating that both the Air Force and Space Force have hit their fiscal year recruiting goals three months ahead of schedule.

“Enthusiasm to serve is at an all-time high,” he said. “Since November 5, 2024, the U.S. military has seen the highest recruiting percentage of mission achieved in 30 years.”

Parnell said the department recently established a task force to sustain the

strong spike in recruiting efforts and numbers in the future, adding that he credits the leadership of Hegseth and President Donald J. Trump for generating excitement among young Americans to serve.

“Leadership matters, and certainly, their leadership and moral clarity as it pertains to certain issues — not just here within the department but all around the world — has inspired people to want to join and serve this country in great numbers,” Parnell said.

U.S. Department of Defense. (2023, June 27). Pentagon provides update on southern border recruitment numbers. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/article/4234168/pentagon-provides-update-on-southern-border-recruitment-numbers/>

Securing the Southern Border: Two Months of Decisive Action



March 13, 2025 | By Army Maj. Wes Shinego, DOD News

In the two months since President Donald J. Trump's inauguration Jan. 20, 2025, the administration has launched a multifront campaign to secure the U.S.-Mexico border, targeting cartels, transnational criminal organizations and illegal immigration.

The 52-day period marks a shift in national security priorities, with the administration designating cartels as terrorist threats, deploying thousands of troops resulting in a 94% reduction of unlawful border crossings. Backed by executive orders, military resources and international cooperation, these efforts signal a change in border enforcement aimed at restoring sovereignty and protecting American communities.

A New National Security Framework

On his first day in office, Trump issued an executive order designating Mexican cartels and transnational criminal organizations as foreign terrorist organizations and specially designated global terrorists, elevating them to the same threat level as ISIS or al-Qaida.

That move, long advocated by national security experts, reframes cartels as existential dangers rather than criminal enterprises. Attorney General Pam Bondi's subsequent Department of Justice memo operationalized this shift, directing prosecutors to pursue terrorism charges under 18 U.S.C. § 2339B alongside traditional drug trafficking and racketeering offenses.

By streamlining processes — suspending National Security Division approvals and fast-tracking terrorism-related warrants — the DOJ has empowered law enforcement to act swiftly against cartel leaders with penalties now including life imprisonment or the death penalty.

That legal overhaul complements a broader strategic pivot. While the administration continues to prioritize near-peer competitors like China and Russia, it has closed the gray area that cartels exploited for decades. The result is a unified approach that marshals the full weight of U.S. national security resources to dismantle these organizations that control over 80% of illegal drugs such as fentanyl entering the U.S. and earn billions from human trafficking.

Military Mobilization and Operational Control

Under Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, the Defense Department has matched this policy shift with unprecedented action. Within 36 hours of Trump's Jan. 20 executive order declaring a national emergency at the southern border, Acting Defense Secretary Robert Salesses announced the deployment of 1,500 active-duty troops, making the total 4,000 alongside 2,500 reservists already in place.

By March 1, 2025, the Pentagon deployed a 4,400-soldier Stryker brigade combat team and a 650-troop general support aviation battalion, bringing Title 10 forces to approximately 9,000. Equipped with Stryker vehicles, Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters, these units enhance detection, logistic and aerial support for Customs and Border Protection.

During Hegseth's visit to the Laredo, Texas, Feb. 3, 2025, he defined "mission accomplishment" as "100% operational control" of the southern border. Troops have installed physical barriers, provided real-time surveillance and freed CBP agents for interdiction, while U.S. Northern Command coordinates a joint task force with DHS.

An agreement with Mexico added 10,000 Mexican troops to patrol their side of the border. Meanwhile, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, will be used to detain criminal migrants. The first detainees are 10 Tren de Aragua members — a newly designated terrorist group — who arrived at Guantanamo Bay Feb. 5, 2025.

Measurable Results

Border Patrol Chief Mike Banks reported March 4, 2025, unlawful crossings have decreased from 4,800 to 285 daily apprehensions. Executive actions, including the closure of the asylum system for illegal entrants and the cancellation of Biden-era policies, have halted migrant releases into the U.S. interior.

Since Jan. 20, 2025, only two migrants have been released from custody — both as witnesses in criminal cases.



Banks credits the "greater punishment, larger deterrent" strategy, bolstered by troop surges and Texas National Guard soldiers deputized as immigration officers.

Reinforcing Legislative Efforts

The administration is also pressing Congress to act. The Halt Fentanyl Act, passed by the House Feb. 9, 2025, aims to permanently classify fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs, though it awaits Senate approval. Proposals to schedule xylazine — a deadly sedative mixed with fentanyl — as a Schedule III substance and designate large-scale fentanyl traffick-

ing as a weapon of mass destruction are gaining traction.

These measures would enhance interdiction and grant agencies like DOD and DEA authority to counter the opioid epidemic as a whole that has claimed thousands of American lives since 2000.

U.S. Department of Defense. (2023, April 27). Securing the southern border: Two months of decisive action. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/article/4119896/securing-the-southern-border-two-months-of-decisive-action/>



2025 NDTA

TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

Overview

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs)—including international drug cartels and other violent criminal groups—threaten the safety of the American people, the national security of the United States, and the safety and stability of the Western Hemisphere. These organizations produce and traffic multi-ton quantities of illicit drugs, routinely engage in acts of violence and extortion, and orchestrate the flow of contraband and people through territories along the U.S.-Mexico border. These organizations launder millions of dollars in illicit proceeds from criminal activities using Chinese money laundering networks (CMLNs), money service businesses (MSBs), front and shell companies, cryptocurrency, trade-based exchanges, and corrupt banking officials – and by simply smuggling bulk cash across borders – all of which compromise the U.S. financial system and undermine economic security. In recognition of the threat posed by these international drug cartels and violent organizations, the United States designated eight TCOs as foreign terrorist organizations.

Designation of six Mexican Cartels and two Violent International Gangs as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs)

On February 20, 2025, the State Department officially designated eight transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) as foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) and specially designated global terrorists (SDGTs): the Sinaloa Cartel (CDS), Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), Northeast Cartel (CDN), The New Michoacán Family (LNFM), Gulf Cartel (CDG), United Cartels (CU), Tren de Aragua (TdA), and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13).

Some of the world's most violent and powerful transnational criminal organizations, who are engaged in activities ranging from drug trafficking, kidnapping, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and weapons trafficking to extortion, bribery, murder, and resource theft, carry these designations. The newly-designated TCOs constitute not only a law enforcement threat but also a national security threat due to their ongoing campaigns of violence and supply of deadly drugs throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Source: U.S. Department of State, February 2025

MEXICAN TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mexican TCOs are among the world's leading producers of illicit drugs, such as fentanyl, methamphetamine, and heroin; they also control the wholesale trafficking of these drugs, and others such as cocaine, into the United States. These TCOs form business relationships with U.S. drug trafficking organizations and violent criminal organizations for the distribution and retail sale of drugs, which drives addiction, overdose deaths, and violence in communities nationwide.

Beyond fueling the drug overdose crisis in the United States, TCOs engage in extreme violence, including murder and intimidation, and hostile takeovers of territory and trafficking routes in Mexico and throughout Latin America. Six powerful Mexican TCOs were designated as foreign terrorist organizations by the Department of State: the Sinaloa Cartel, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, the Northeast Cartel, the New Michoacán Family, and the United Cartels.

SINALOA CARTEL (CDS)

Executive Summary

The Sinaloa Cartel (Cártel de Sinaloa, aka CDS) is one of the world's most powerful drug cartels and one of the largest producers and traffickers of fentanyl and other illicit drugs to the United States (see **Figure 1**). For decades, CDS has smuggled multi-kilogram quantities of illicit fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana into the United States and around the globe. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has identified tens of thousands of CDS members, associates, and facilitators operating worldwide, all working in decentralized networks under the larger CDS umbrella. DEA reporting shows that CDS operates internationally in at least 40 countries, continuously expanding into the lucrative markets of Europe, Asia, and Australia.

On July 25, 2024, the United States arrested Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada-Garcia, a co-founder and leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, and Joaquín Guzmán-López, a founding member of the Sinaloa Cartel's Los Chapitos faction, in New Mexico, just outside of El Paso, Texas. This arrest brought into custody key cartel figures who eluded both U.S. and Mexican law enforcement for years and are considered two of the principal leaders responsible for the production, trafficking, and distribution of fentanyl throughout the United States. The arrest escalated tensions and infighting between the main two factions of the Sinaloa Cartel (Los Mayos and Los Chapitos), which continues today.



Impact to the United States

CDS is one of the most significant threats to the public health, public safety, and national security of the United States. The cartel uses their vast distribution networks to transport drugs into the United States, primarily through ports of entry (POEs) in California and Arizona. CDS associates, facilitators, and affiliates operate in almost all 50 U.S. states, and these thousands of CDS-linked drug traffickers supply illicit drugs and drive violence across American communities. A web of illicit drug wholesalers one step removed from the cartels in Mexico operate in major cities throughout the United States, including Los Angeles, Phoenix, Houston, Chicago, Atlanta, and Miami. These U.S.-based affiliates use social media platforms and encrypted messaging applications to advertise and distribute their deadly products, as well as to recruit couriers and traffickers. They supply networks of local independent drug trafficking groups, street crews, and gangs whose main aim is to get the illegal drugs into the hands of users. Some gang members and independent traffickers are so prolific they have direct contact with CDS-connected wholesalers, allowing them to become regional-level suppliers.

Figure 1. Sinaloa Cartel Dominant Areas of Operation



Criminal Activity

► Illicit Fentanyl and Procurement of Precursor Chemicals

CDS controls and operates extensive, multi-faceted, transnational networks to facilitate the procurement and shipment of precursor chemicals from China and India to synthesize deadly synthetic drugs, including fentanyl, in Mexico-based clandestine laboratories. The cartel uses maritime ports, primarily along the Pacific Coast, to smuggle and import precursor chemicals into CDS-controlled laboratories. These laboratories produce millions of illicit fentanyl pills and thousands of pounds of illicit fentanyl powder every year. Recently, factions of CDS began adding xylazine to batches of fentanyl smuggled into the United States, primarily destined for markets on the East Coast. U.S.-based traffickers also mix xylazine with their fentanyl supply, allowing both groups to stretch fentanyl supplies and generate more revenue.

► Methamphetamine

CDS produces multi-ton quantities of exceptionally high-purity and -potency methamphetamine in clandestine laboratories. According to DEA's Special Testing and Research Laboratory, methamphetamine seized and tested has reached the highest purity and potency ever recorded, with average purity levels reaching nearly 97 percent in 2025. The ample supply, low cost, and high potency has enabled the cartel to expand beyond traditional methamphetamine markets in the western United States into new markets in the eastern United States and setting the stage for

more methamphetamine overdose deaths. Globally, CDS leverages the trafficking and supply of methamphetamine and cocaine to flood lucrative drug markets in Asia, Australia, and New Zealand, where profits for methamphetamine can be more than 100 times higher than in the United States.

► Other Drugs

CDS has long-standing ties with cocaine producers in South America and has cultivated opium poppy for the production of heroin for generations. The cartel has also become involved in the manufacturing and trafficking of “tusi,” a pink-colored drug cocktail consumed mainly in the club scenes of major metropolitan cities in North and South America. Originally a slang term for the synthetic hallucinogenic drug 2C-B, CDS has exploited the branding of tusi to create new mixtures that are combinations of ketamine and other drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine, and/or fentanyl. CDS is capable of importing large quantities of ketamine from China to facilitate tusi production in Mexico.

Other Criminal Activities

As one of the world’s most powerful cartels, CDS engages in a wide range of violent criminal activities to protect their drug operations, spread their illicit influence, and increase revenue. CDS uses actual or threatened violence (e.g., murder, torture, kidnapping) to intimidate civilians, government officials, and journalists. Additionally, CDS engages in many other crimes, including money laundering, extortion, theft of petroleum and natural resources, weapons trafficking, human smuggling, prostitution, and illegal wildlife trade. The illicit proceeds of these peripheral crimes provide resources that make CDS more resilient and increase their ability to expand.

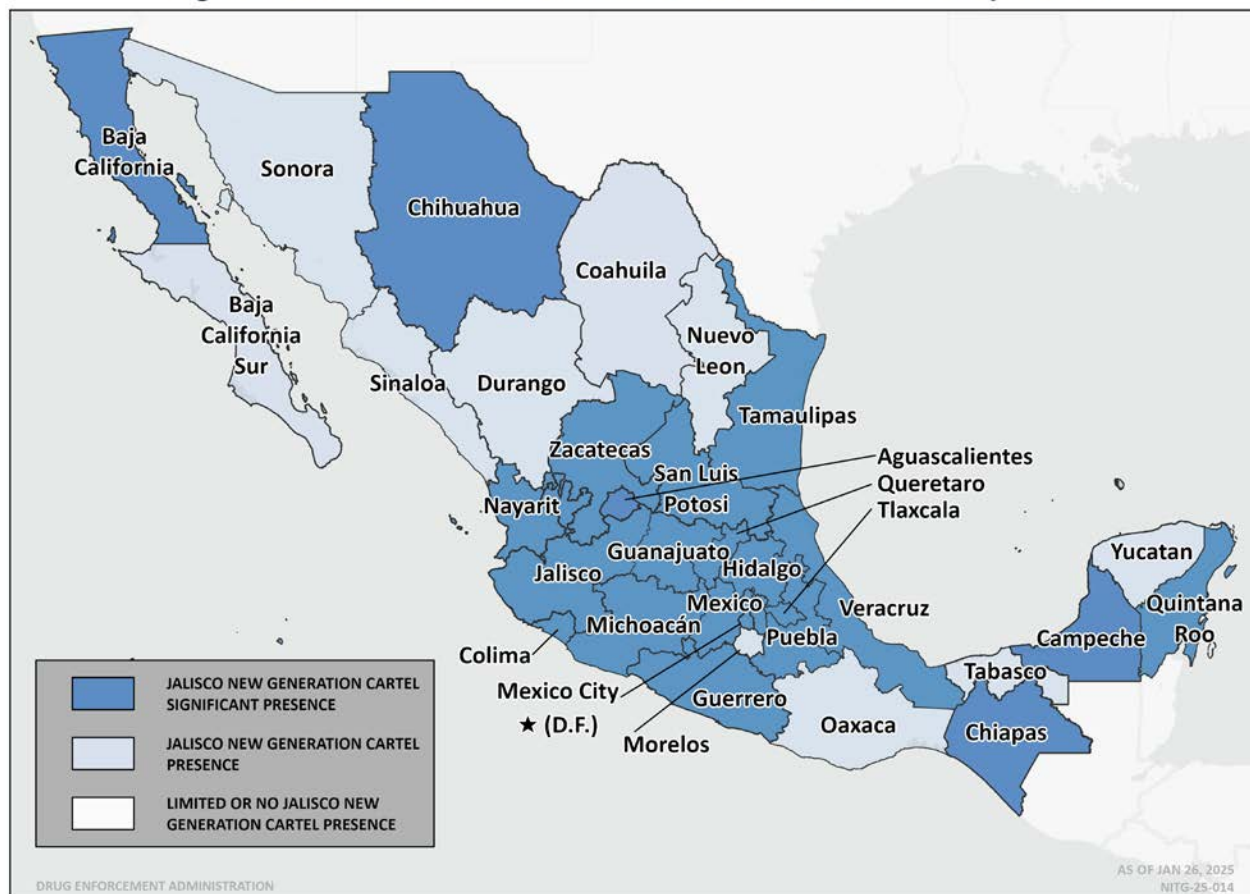
JALISCO NEW GENERATION CARTEL (CJNG)

Executive Summary

The Jalisco New Generation Cartel (Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación, aka CJNG) is one of Mexico’s most powerful, influential, and ruthless transnational criminal organizations and a key supplier of illicit fentanyl to the United States (see **Figure 2**). CJNG has expanded its operations beyond Mexico’s borders, establishing a presence in over 40 countries. The cartel uses its vast financial resources, unique franchise-based command structure, proclivity for violence, and access to corrupt officials to maintain and expand its influence over Mexico’s illicit drug trade. According to Mexican news sources, CJNG could capitalize on the conflict between the Los Mayos and Los Chapitos factions of the Sinaloa Cartel, essentially by choosing sides in favor of their former rivals, Los Chapitos, against Los Mayos. A strategic alliance between CJNG and Los Chapitos has the potential to expand these groups’ territories, resources, firepower, and access to corrupt officials, which could result in a significant disruption to the existing balance of criminal power in Mexico and could serve to increase northbound drug flow and southbound weapons trafficking at the U.S.-Mexico border.



Figure 2. Jalisco New Generation Cartel Dominant Areas of Operation



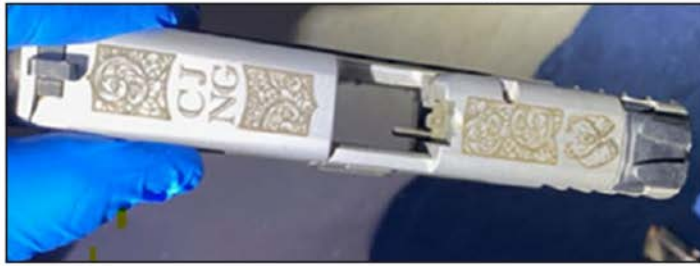
Impact to the United States

CJNG is one of the most significant threats to the public health, public safety, and national security of the United States. The cartel operates clandestine laboratories in Mexico where they manufacture illicit drugs and then utilize vast distribution networks to transport drugs into the United States. CJNG associates, facilitators, and affiliates operate in almost all 50 U.S. states.

Criminal Activity

CJNG is heavily involved in the manufacturing, trafficking, and distribution of illicit drugs, such as fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine. While other cartels approach money laundering in differing ways, CJNG's financial arm, Los Cuinis, features prominently in the leadership structure of the cartel. Los Cuinis leads the cartel's diverse network of money laundering operations and tactics to repatriate global illicit drug proceeds back to Mexico. This group and other CJNG factions use CMLNs, cryptocurrency exchanges, bulk cash smuggling, trade-based money laundering, and other methods for laundering illicit drug-related proceeds.

Figure 3. Seized Pistol with “CJNG” Engraved on the Slide



Source: DEA

Other Criminal Activity

CJNG is likely increasing its involvement in non-drug activities, to include gasoline theft, extortion schemes, infiltrating legitimate industries, taxing human smuggling, and perpetrating real estate schemes—including timeshare fraud—for money laundering purposes. CJNG members increasingly participate in these activities to diversify revenue streams and protect drug trafficking assets from law enforcement seizure.

NORTHEAST CARTEL (CDN)

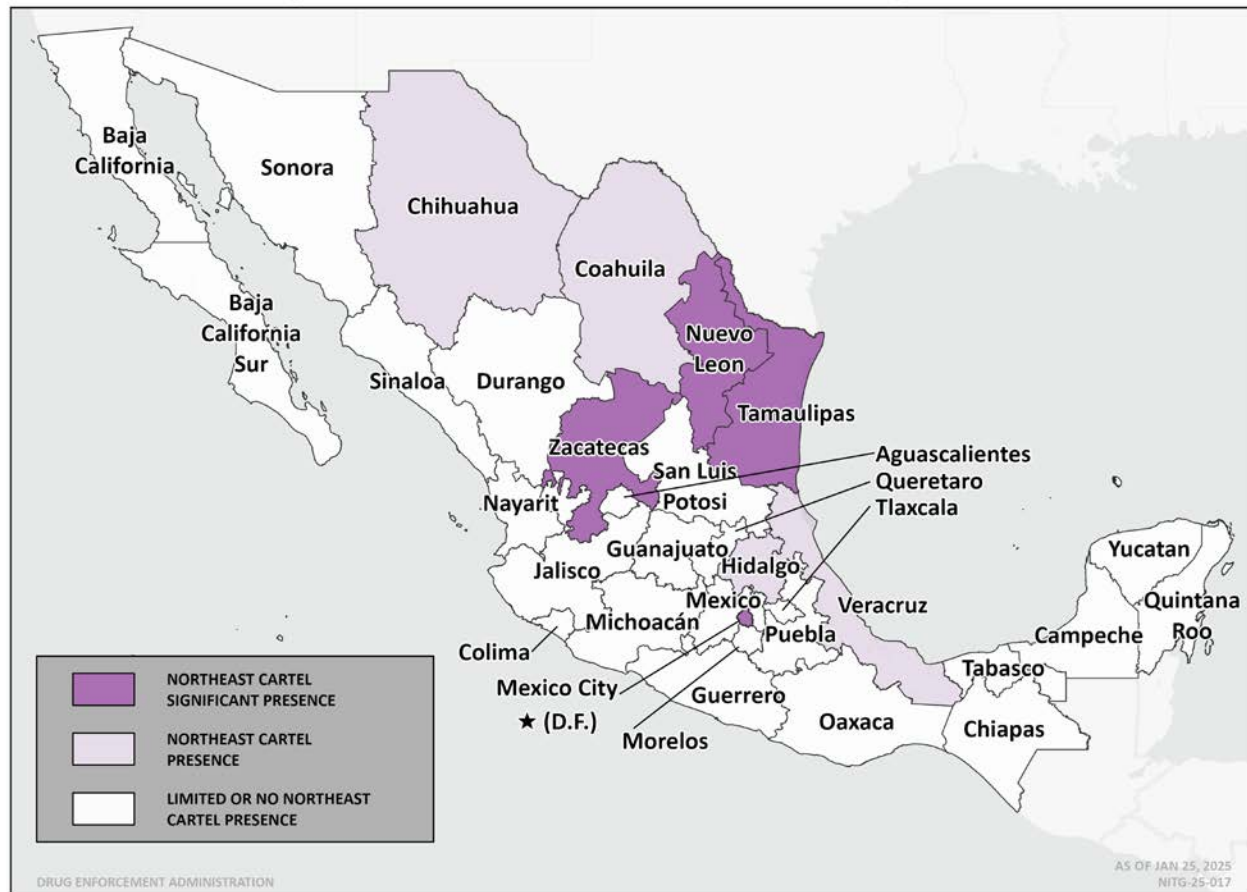
Executive Summary

The Northeast Cartel (Cártel del Noreste, aka CDN) is a large network of compartmentalized cells responsible for fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana trafficking operations throughout the United States and Mexico (see **Figure 4**). CDN has a dangerous reputation, with members regularly engaging in public acts of violence, including assassination, torture, kidnapping, and intimidation. The cartel is responsible for illicit drug shipments crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in southern Texas before moving the drugs to distribution hubs in San Antonio, Austin, and Dallas-Fort Worth. CDN is also involved in large-scale human smuggling operations into the United States, often kidnapping or exploiting migrants for purposes of extortion or forced labor.

Impact to the United States

The Los Mayos faction of the Sinaloa Cartel provides CDN with illicit fentanyl, crystal methamphetamine, and cocaine which CDN then smuggles northbound into the United States. The cartel facilitates the sale and distribution of these drugs using routes under control of the Sinaloa Cartel. CDN's preferred concealment methods for smuggling drugs include personally operated vehicles, drug mules, and tractor-trailer cargo. Additionally, CDN exploits the Omnibus de Mexico (OMEX)—a passenger bus company that operates for the specific purposes of transporting passengers between Mexico and the United States—to smuggle drugs into the United States. CDN associates, facilitators, and affiliates operate throughout Texas, Oklahoma, and Georgia, as well as in the upper Midwest.

Figure 4. Northeast Cartel Dominant Areas of Operation



Source: DEA

Criminal Activity

CDN is involved in a diverse range of criminal activities, including kidnapping, extortion, vehicle theft, human smuggling, money laundering, prostitution, and armed robbery. The cartel is known to extort money from migrants crossing the Rio Grande River in CDN-controlled areas. Elements of CDN, which largely controls the Ciudad Victoria area in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas abutting the southeast tip of Texas, have been known to use their corrupt influence to attempt to bribe state police officers to protect their drug and human smuggling networks. Additionally, CDN has been setting up cash-intensive businesses in Ciudad Victoria to facilitate the cartel's money laundering activities.

THE MICHOACÁN FAMILY (LFM)

Executive Summary

The Michoacán Family (La Familia Michoacána, aka LFM) is an umbrella organization holding territory in the Mexican states of Guerrero, Michoacán, Morelos, and the State of Mexico (see **Figure 5**). LFM formed in 2006 to fight the encroachment of Los Zetas into Michoacán. Since then, LFM has been known for using violence and military-style tactics to fight against other TCOs. LFM

does not currently operate as a large cohesive organization; instead, it exists as a conglomerate of several powerful factions. Factions of LFM traffic methamphetamine, fentanyl, cocaine, and heroin, and maintain control of the Port of Lázaro Cárdenas—one of the largest seaports in Mexico and key for the importation of precursor chemicals from China. Given the distance of LFM's territory from the U.S.-Mexico border, factions of the cartel align themselves with larger organizations to gain access to trafficking routes and POEs at the border. Two significant factions of LFM, the New Michoacán Family and the United Cartels, are among the TCOs designated as FTOs by the U.S. Department of State.

Impact to the United States

LFM associates, facilitators, and affiliates – or those of its “sister” groups, the New Michoacán Family and the United Cartels – operate in about one-third of U.S. states, primarily from Texas northward to the upper Midwest, along the eastern seaboard from Florida to New York, and in California and Oregon.

Figure 5. The Michoacán Family Dominant Areas of Operation



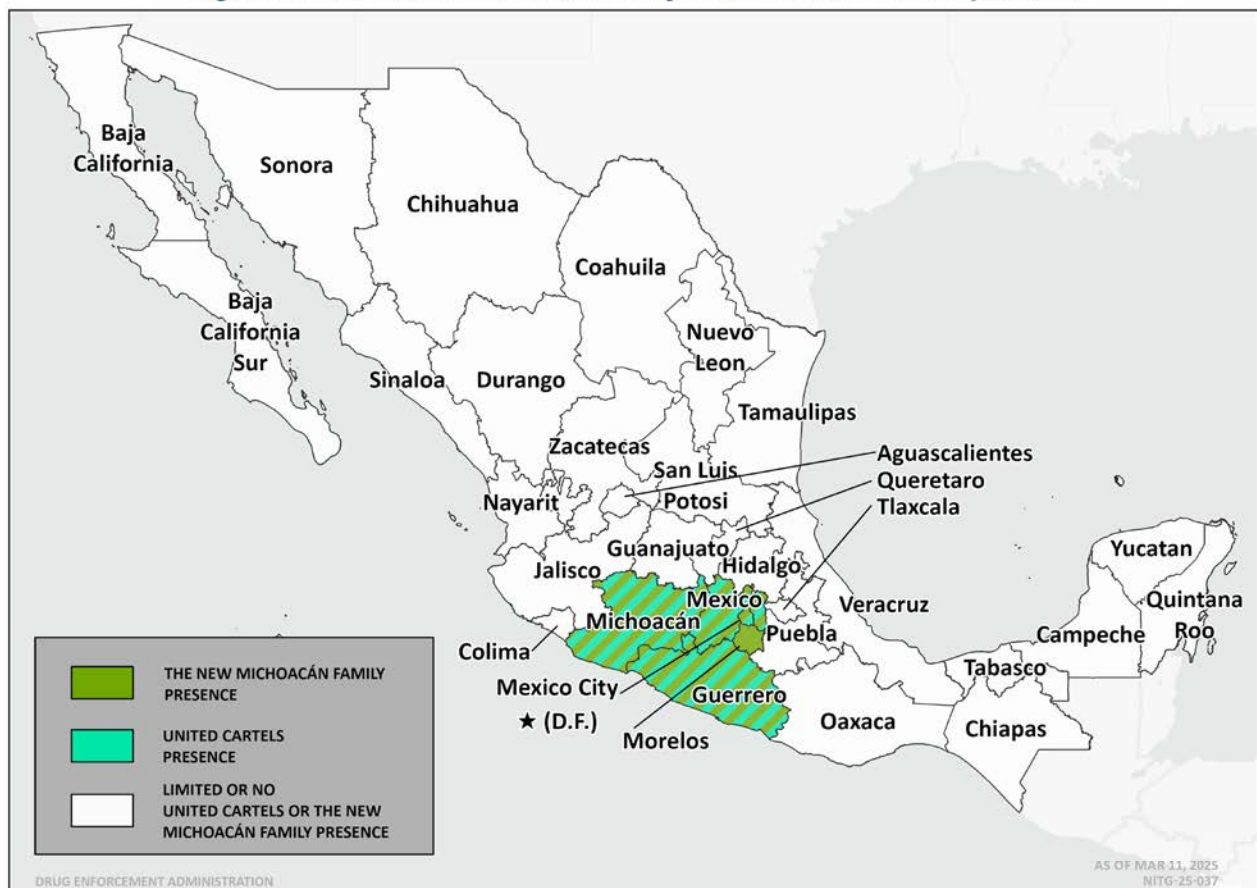
Source: DEA

NEW MICHOACÁN FAMILY (LNFM)

Executive Summary

The New Michoacán Family (La Nueva Familia Michoacána, aka LNFM) is the most powerful faction of LFM. LNFM mainly operates in the Mexican states of Guerrero and Michoacán which includes the Port of Lázaro Cárdenas, one of Mexico's largest seaports (see **Figure 6**). The Port of Lázaro Cárdenas is often contested by CJNG due to its strategic importance as a point of importation for precursor chemicals sourced from China and cocaine arriving from Colombia. LNFM is involved in the trafficking of illicit fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin and has made alliances at different times with CJNG, CDS factions, and the Gulf Cartel to gain access to trafficking routes and POEs into the United States.

Figure 6. The New Michoacán Family Dominant Areas of Operation



Impact to the United States

LNFM is responsible for the transportation, importation, and distribution of multi-ton quantities of methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin into the United States. LNFM frequently uses tractor-trailer cargo to transport illicit drugs from Mexico into the United States, where they use rental homes in different cities as stash houses. The cartel also operates multiple clandestine methamphetamine laboratories in the state of Guerrero, producing ton-quantities of the drug every month. LNFM

traffics this methamphetamine mostly to the Dallas, Texas area – their primary U.S. market – often concealed in shipments of produce. Although their U.S. base of operations is the Dallas area, LNFM associates, facilitators, and affiliates – or those of its “sister” groups, LFM and the United Cartels – operate in about one-third of U.S. states.

Criminal Activity

LNFM launders drug proceeds through the black-market peso exchange (BMPE), bulk cash shipments, and wire transfers through various cartel-affiliated money services business (MSBs). LNFM is also involved in money laundering activities in the United States using unsuspecting legitimate businesses. LNFM smuggles weapons across the Guatemala-Mexico border and is also involved in illegal mining and the extortion of mining companies throughout its territories.

UNITED CARTELS (CU)

Executive Summary

The United Cartels (Cárteles Unidos, aka CU) is a faction of LFM formed from an alliance of multiple criminal groups to combat CJNG in the state of Michoacán. CU's territory largely overlaps that of LNFM (see **Figure 6**). The main objective of the CU is to maintain its stronghold in the southwestern Michoacán municipality of Tepalcatepec, in the Tierra Caliente region, a strategic drug trafficking route. The current composition of CU includes some independent LFM-associated cells, and other small, regional groups such as Cartel del Abuelo, Los Viagras, the Knights Templar (Los Caballeros Templarios), and the White Trojans (Los Blancos de Troya), although the criminal groups fighting under the CU banner have changed many times over the years.

Impact to the United States

CU maintains a strong but exclusive presence in Michoacán due to its deep roots in the area. CU's stronghold in Tepalcatepec is a strategically significant drug trafficking route for moving drugs and precursor chemicals out of Acapulco in the state of Guerrero and the Port of Lázaro Cárdenas in Michoacán. Precursor chemicals and drugs arriving in those areas transit north through CU territory in Michoacán before moving on to Guadalajara and eventually the United States, where CU associates, facilitators, and affiliates – or those of its “sister” organizations, LFM and LNFM – operate in approximately one-third of U.S. states.

Criminal Activity

The ongoing rivalry between CU and CJNG leads to high levels of violence in Michoacán as both sides engage in regular shootouts and displays of military power. This violence has resulted in numerous casualties among civilians, military, and law enforcement. The CU is also known for their extortion of farmers in the Tierra Caliente region. Farmers are threatened with kidnapping or death unless they pay protection money, which sometimes amounts to thousands of dollars per acre. In 2019, U.S. Department of Agriculture inspectors were directly threatened in Ziracuaretiro when a CU-affiliated gang robbed the truck the inspectors were traveling in at gunpoint.

GULF CARTEL (CDG)

Executive Summary

The Gulf Cartel (Cártel del Golfo, aka CDG) has its roots as traffickers of multi-ton quantities of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana from its stronghold in the state of Tamaulipas into the United States (see **Figure 7**). As of 2025, CDG is no longer a unified cartel, having split into multiple factions. The two most powerful factions are Los Metros and Los Escorpiones. These two factions fight each other for control of trafficking routes and territory—especially the Port of Altamira—as well as for overall control of CDG. The Los Metros faction is aligned with CJNG for protection from Los Mayos, CDN, and other CDG factions. The alliance helps facilitate the uninterrupted flow of drugs from both CJNG and Los Metros into the United States. In exchange, CJNG gains access to POEs on the U.S.-Mexico border as well as to the Port of Altamira, which is used to import precursor chemicals. The Los Escorpiones faction is currently fighting CDN and other factions of CDG for control of the Reynosa, Tamaulipas area, while a third, less prominent faction, Los Ciclones, has recently turned to fighting CDN and Los Metros.

Figure 7. Gulf Cartel Dominant Areas of Operation



Impact to the United States

CDG controls significant drug trafficking routes into the Rio Grande Valley area of Texas, transporting illicit fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin. The Los Metros faction has effectively become an enforcement arm of CJNG in northeastern Mexico and assists in protecting and transporting CJNG-owned shipments across the border. In addition, Los Metros traffics cocaine acquired from Colombia and methamphetamine sourced from LNFN across the U.S.-Mexico border, usually in tractor-trailer cargo. CDG associates, facilitators, and affiliates operate in approximately 16 U.S. states, primarily Texas, Oklahoma, California, and the southeastern United States, but also in the upper Midwest, Nebraska, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Criminal Activity

CDG is primarily a drug- and human-smuggling cartel, moving migrants and shipments of fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin into South Texas. CDG generates significant revenue from its migrant-smuggling operations, augmenting their illicit drug proceeds. Much of their money is smuggled back to Mexico in bulk cash, but they also launder money via money exchange businesses throughout the Brownsville, Texas area.

Operation Top Fuel (Liquid Death)

Multiple federal and state law enforcement and regulatory agencies are jointly targeting a Mexican TCO (now designated as an FTO) involved in smuggling methamphetamine, heroin, and black-market oil and gas across the Texas/Mexico border. The investigation has identified multiple cartel leaders who have significant ties to CJNG, CDS, LFM, and CDG. This investigation has discovered that the TCOs are obtaining or stealing, then smuggling, Mexican PEMEX (Petróleos Mexicanos, Mexico's state-owned petroleum corporation) crude oil into the United States for sale to U.S. oil and gas companies, in a sophisticated trade-based money laundering scheme. The investigation has determined that this black-market petroleum smuggling operation is the primary means by which the TCO funds its networks. It is estimated that Mexico is losing tens of billions in tax revenue annually, while simultaneously costing the U.S. oil and gas companies billions of dollars annually due to a decline in petroleum imports and exports during this same period. As a first step in this investigation, on September 10, 2024, the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, in coordination with DEA, sanctioned nine Mexican subjects and 26 entities involved in fuel theft, including a regional leader and founding member of CJNG. This designation was the first major step in disrupting one of the largest funding sources utilized by drug cartels. The focus will now shift to U.S. companies and members involved in facilitating this illicit Mexican petroleum smuggling operation.



OTHER VIOLENT TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

The U.S. State Department designated the violent TCOs Tren de Aragua (TdA) and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) as FTOs. Members of these groups sell illicit drugs at the street level, commit violent crimes, and actively recruit both U.S. citizens and undocumented migrants from South and Central America into their organizations.

TREN DE ARAGUA (TDA)

Executive Summary

Tren de Aragua (aka TdA) is a violent criminal organization founded between 2012 and 2013 in Aragua, a state in north-central Venezuela. The group originally gained power and influence as a prison gang inside the Tocarón prison in Venezuela under the leadership of its founder, and current fugitive, Héctor Rusthenford “Niño” Guerrero Flores. In the United States, TdA mainly operates within Venezuelan migrant communities. TdA facilitates the smuggling of thousands of Venezuelan migrants into the United States and then extorts the migrants, forcing them into prostitution or other crimes to pay off their smuggling debts. TdA members routinely commit assault, robbery, and murder as part of carrying out these extortion rackets. TdA members also conduct small-scale drug trafficking activities such as the distribution of *tusi*. In some areas of the United States, TdA members work for larger criminal organizations, conducting murder-for-hire and working as drug couriers, stash house guards, and street level drug distributors.

TdA members are suspected and/or charged with a variety of crimes including drug trafficking, murder, kidnapping, extortion, migrant smuggling, human trafficking, prostitution, organized retail crime, robberies, and document fraud. TdA conducts human trafficking operations designed to smuggle primarily Venezuelan migrants through Central America and Mexico into the United States. In cities with large Venezuelan populations, TdA members operate violent extortion rackets resulting in assault, murder, and arson. TdA members also engage in organized retail theft, burglary, and street robbery operations that frequently result in violence. Firearms stolen by TdA robbery gangs are routinely distributed to other TdA members to further violent crime. TdA drug trafficking activity occurs mainly at the street level and involves the distribution and sale of *tusi* in specific regional markets.

MARA SALVATRUCHA (MS-13)

Executive Summary

Mara Salvatrucha, better known as MS-13, is an extremely violent international criminal gang founded in Los Angeles, California in the 1980s by El Salvadoran immigrants. The gang is well-established in the United States, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and its numbers have grown to include thousands of members in almost all 50 U.S. states. The brutality and extremity

of their violent crimes have garnered significant law enforcement and media attention. MS-13 members also engage in retail-level drug trafficking, robbery, prostitution, extortion, firearms offenses, and other crimes.

Transnational Criminal Organizations

Drug Enforcement Administration. (2025). 2025 National Drug Threat Assessment. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/2025NationalDrugThreatAssessment.pdf>

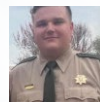
MEMORIAL SECTION



Lieutenant Mark Meadows
Irondale Police Department, AL
EOW: Monday, January 6, 2025
Cause: Struck by vehicle



Police Officer Felicia Dee Reilly
Saint Paul Police Department, MN
EOW: Saturday, March 1, 2025
Cause: Assault



Deputy Sheriff Nathaniel Ansay
Florence County Sheriff's Office, SC
EOW: Tuesday, May 20, 2025
Cause: Automobile crash



Deputy Sheriff Timothy Corlew
Riverside County Sheriff's Department, CA
EOW: Wednesday, January 8, 2025
Cause: Motorcycle crash



Supervisory Special Agent Dennis M. Wagner, Jr.
United States Department of Justice -
Federal Bureau of Investigation, US
EOW: Wednesday, March 5, 2025
Cause: 9/11 related illness



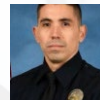
Deputy Sheriff Daniel Weston Sherrer
Morrow County Sheriff's Office, OH
EOW: Monday, May 26, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Deputy Sheriff Jesus Vargas
Brazoria County Sheriff's Office, TX
EOW: Wednesday, January 15, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



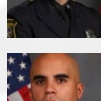
Sergeant Joseph Anthony Azcona
Newark Police Division, NJ
EOW: Saturday, March 8, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Police Officer Samuel Riveros
Baldwin Park Police Department, CA
EOW: Saturday, May 31, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Sergeant Mark Butler
Navasota Police Department, TX
EOW: Wednesday, January 15, 2025
Cause: Vehicular assault



Deputy Sheriff Hector Cuevas, Jr.
San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, CA
EOW: Monday, March 17, 2025
Cause: Automobile crash



Police Officer Timothy Ontiveros
Bloomfield Police Department, NM
EOW: Sunday, June 1, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Border Patrol Agent David Christopher Maland
United States Department of Homeland Security -
Customs and Border Protection - United States
Border Patrol, US
EOW: Monday, January 20, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Sergeant Grant J. Candies
St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office, LA
EOW: Sunday, March 23, 2025
Cause: Vehicular assault



Sergeant Jonathan D. 'J.D.' White
Angleton Police Department, TX
EOW: Sunday, June 1, 2025
Cause: Struck by vehicle



Officer Baldino Morales-Sánchez
Mayagüez Municipal Police Department, PR
EOW: Saturday, January 25, 2025
Cause: Motorcycle crash



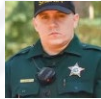
Police Officer Osmar Rodarte
Marysville Police Department, CA
EOW: Wednesday, March 26, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



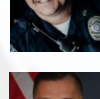
Police Officer Krystal Rivera
Chicago Police Department, IL
EOW: Thursday, June 5, 2025
Cause: Gunfire (Inadvertent)



Officer Jason Roscow
North Las Vegas Police Department, NV
EOW: Tuesday, February 4, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



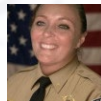
Deputy Sheriff William May
Walton County Sheriff's Office, FL
EOW: Wednesday, April 2, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Lieutenant Eddie Mays
Bernie Police Department, MO
EOW: Thursday, June 5, 2025
Cause: Heart attack



Police Officer Kelvin Patrick
Detroit Police Department, MI
EOW: Thursday, February 6, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Deputy Sheriff Melissa Pollard
Wood County Sheriff's Office, TX
EOW: Wednesday, April 9, 2025
Cause: Automobile crash



Police Officer Gabriel Facio
Apache Junction Police Department, AZ
EOW: Sunday, June 8, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Police Officer Jeremy R. Labonte
Roswell Police Department, GA
EOW: Friday, February 7, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



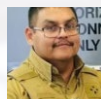
Captain Helio Armando Garcia, III
South Fulton Police Department, GA
EOW: Wednesday, April 16, 2025
Cause: Vehicular assault



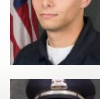
Sergeant Shiou Deng
Los Angeles Police Department, CA
EOW: Monday, June 23, 2025
Cause: Struck by vehicle



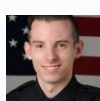
Trooper Kyle McAcy
Nebraska State Patrol, NE
EOW: Monday, February 17, 2025
Cause: Struck by vehicle



Deputy Sheriff Jesse Perez
Dawson County Sheriff's Office, TX
EOW: Tuesday, April 22, 2025
Cause: Accidental



Undersheriff Brandon Gaede
Phillips County Sheriff's Office, KS
EOW: Friday, June 27, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Patrolman Andrew William Duarte
West York Borough Police Department, PA
EOW: Saturday, February 22, 2025
Cause: Gunfire (Inadvertent)



Deputy Sheriff Brandon Ray Sikes
Columbia County Sheriff's Office, GA
EOW: Saturday, April 26, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



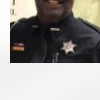
Police Officer Kendall Isaiah Corder
Milwaukee Police Department, WI
EOW: Sunday, June 29, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



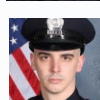
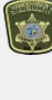
Police Officer Cameron Robert Girvin
Virginia Beach Police Department, VA
EOW: Saturday, February 22, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Special Deputy Sheriff Larry Henderson, Jr.
Hamilton County Sheriff's Office, OH
EOW: Friday, May 2, 2025
Cause: Vehicular assault



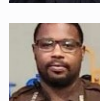
Detention Officer Francisco Paul Flattes
Cherokee County Sheriff's Office, NC
EOW: Monday, June 30, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



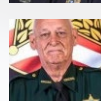
Police Officer Christopher M. L. Reese
Virginia Beach Police Department, VA
EOW: Saturday, February 22, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



Lieutenant Allen 'Noochie' Credeur
Rayne Police Department, LA
EOW: Monday, May 5, 2025
Cause: Gunfire (Inadvertent)



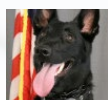
Deputy Sergeant Martin Shields, Jr.
Hinds County Sheriff's Office, MS
EOW: Sunday, February 23, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



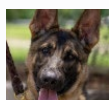
Sergeant Alton Dale Berrian
Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office, FL
EOW: Friday, May 16, 2025
Cause: Heart attack



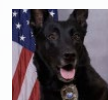
K9 MEMORIAL



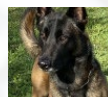
K9 Kaya
Streetsboro Police Department, OH
EOW: Tuesday, January 7, 2025
Cause: Struck by vehicle



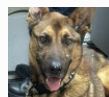
K9 Azi
McKinney Police Department, TX
EOW: Thursday, March 13, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



K9 Kai
Bristol Police Department, TN
EOW: Thursday, April 24, 2025
Cause: Heatstroke



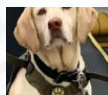
K9 Macho
Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office, LA
EOW: Wednesday, January 15, 2025
Cause: Heart attack



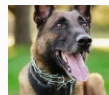
K9 Blitz
Wadesboro Police Department, NC
EOW: Wednesday, April 2, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



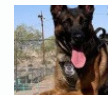
K9 Scout
Suffolk Police Department, VA
EOW: Tuesday, May 27, 2025
Cause: Heatstroke



K9 Roxi
Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office, FL
EOW: Saturday, February 1, 2025
Cause: Vehicular assault



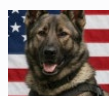
K9 Chico
Boerne Police Department, TX
EOW: Thursday, April 10, 2025
Cause: Struck by vehicle



K9 Rebel
Albuquerque Police Department, NM
EOW: Thursday, May 29, 2025
Cause: Gunfire (Inadvertent)



K9 Preacher
Maine State Police, ME
EOW: Tuesday, February 4, 2025
Cause: Gunfire



K9 Knox
Roanoke City Police Department, VA
EOW: Friday, April 18, 2025
Cause: Vehicle pursuit



A POLICEMAN'S PRAYER

Saint Michael, heaven's glorious commissioner of police, who once so neatly and successfully cleared God's premises of all its undesirables, look with kindly and professional eyes on your earthly force.

Give us cool heads, stout hearts, and uncanny flair for investigation and wise judgment.

Make us the terror of burglars, the friend of children and law-abiding citizens, kind to strangers, polite to bores, strict with law-breakers and impervious to temptations.

You know, Saint Michael, from your own experiences with the devil, that the police officer's lot on earth is not always a happy one; but your sense of duty that so pleased God, your hard knocks that so surprised the devil, and your angelic self-control give us inspiration.

And when we lay down our night sticks, enroll us in your heavenly force, where we will be as proud to guard the throne of God as we have been to guard the city of all the people.

Amen.



Closing Statement from the Editor: Fall Edition 2025 of Narcotic Officers Magazine

As we conclude this critical issue of the Narcotic Officers Magazine, it's important to reflect on the persistent challenges and victories faced by law enforcement in the ongoing battle against narcotics and drug abuse. This edition emphasizes the significance of community collaboration, the urgent fentanyl crisis, and the unwavering commitment of our officers.

Strengthening Community Collaboration

Throughout this issue, we highlight the vital partnerships formed between local businesses and law enforcement agencies. These collaborations not only sustain our publication but also enhance the resources available to officers in the field. Advertisers and community stakeholders play a crucial role in funding essential programs and initiatives, which ultimately foster a safer environment for all. By working together, we can effectively combat drug-related crime and strengthen our communities.

Honoring Our Fallen Heroes

This publication also pays tribute to the brave officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Their dedication and courage serve as a powerful reminder of the risks faced daily by those who protect and serve. As we honor their memory, we must also advocate for the ongoing support and resources necessary to ensure their safety and effectiveness in the field.

Confronting the Fentanyl Crisis

A central theme of this issue is the alarming fentanyl crisis, which remains a significant threat to public health and safety. The articles shed light on the complexities of the fentanyl supply chain and the critical efforts of agencies such as the DEA and U.S. military in addressing this epidemic. With fentanyl being a leading cause of death among Americans aged 18 to 45, it's clear that a united front is necessary to tackle this public health emergency.

The implementation of advanced surveillance systems and military support at the southern border reflects a robust strategy to combat drug trafficking. By enhancing detection capabilities and operational control, we can better protect our communities from the devastating effects of illegal drugs.

A Call for Continued Innovation and Support

Looking ahead, we recognize the ongoing challenges faced by law enforcement agencies, often operating under financial constraints. The articles in this issue advocate for innovative approaches to enhance funding and resources for law enforcement. By fostering dialogue between officers and the communities they serve, we can build a culture of support and appreciation that strengthens our collective efforts in maintaining public safety.

In closing, I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated readers, contributors, and advertisers. Your support is invaluable, and it is through our shared commitment that we can address the complexities of drug-related issues and work towards creating safer communities. Let us remain vigilant, informed, and united in our mission to combat drug abuse and honor those who protect and serve.

“Together, we can create a safer future for all.”

Matt Neelley, Editor
Narcotic Officers Magazine, Volume 14,
Issue 2, Fall 2025

STAY CONNECTED WITH THE HEROES THAT PROTECT US.



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