

The United States Department of Justice: Overview of Structure, Mission, and Operations

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February 3, 2026

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FINDINGS

THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE: COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF STRUCTURE, MISSION, AND OPERATIONS

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Executive Summary

The Department of Justice of the United States stands as the federal government's principal legal enforcement agency, operating under a foundational mission established in 1870 and refined through successive administrations.[1][3] With more than 115,000 employees distributed across more than 40 separate component organizations, the DOJ maintains a vast network of field offices spanning all fifty states, territories, and more than fifty countries worldwide.[1] The department operates through carefully structured divisions and agencies that collectively manage federal criminal prosecution, civil litigation, law enforcement operations, national security threats, environmental protection, and administrative justice matters. This report provides a comprehensive examination of the DOJ's organizational architecture, operational divisions, core missions, and current structural positioning as of early 2026, offering guidance to practitioners, government officials, and the general public who interact with or require understanding of this critical federal institution.

The Department of Justice Mission, Values, and Foundational Authority

Historical Establishment and Constitutional Foundation

The Department of Justice originated through Congressional action within the Judiciary Act of 1789, which established the position of Attorney General and vested this official with responsibility to furnish legal advice to the President and government departments.[3] The department itself was formally established by statute in June 1870, with the Attorney General designated as its head.[3] This founding structure reflects a constitutional recognition that the federal government requires centralized legal expertise and enforcement capacity to administer federal law uniformly across the nation. The positioning of DOJ within the executive branch, with the Attorney General reporting directly to the President while maintaining professional independence in prosecutorial decisions, represents a carefully calibrated institutional balance between political accountability and prosecutorial discretion grounded in law rather than policy preference.

The Tripartite Mission Framework

The DOJ operates under a clear tripartite mission statement that has endured across political administrations and ideological shifts.[1][3] The stated mission is to "uphold the rule of law, to keep our country safe, and to protect civil rights." [1][3] This formulation reflects three distinct but interrelated governmental obligations: first, the procedural commitment to ensure that law is applied uniformly and fairly according to its terms without regard to political influence or personal preference; second, the protective obligation to prevent and respond to threats to national security, criminal enterprise, and violence; and third, the affirmative duty to remedy discrimination and enforce the constitutional guarantees of equal protection and individual rights.[1][3][6] These three pillars inform decision-making across all DOJ components and theoretically

provide a coherent framework for reconciling competing priorities when resource allocation or strategic emphasis must be determined.

Core Institutional Values

Beyond the mission statement, the DOJ has articulated core values that theoretically guide the conduct of its 9,200 attorneys and broader workforce.[8] The department emphasizes independence and impartiality, committing to follow facts and law "wherever they may lead, without prejudice or improper influence." [1][3][8] This value reflects a commitment to prosecutorial discretion based on merit rather than political consideration-though practical implementation of this principle has varied across administrations and remains subject to legitimate debate about what constitutes appropriate policy prioritization versus improper politicization.[1][8] The second core value articulated is honesty and integrity, requiring that DOJ employees adhere to "the highest standards of ethical behavior" befitting the nation's principal law enforcement agency.[1][3] A third value emphasizes respect for differences in people and ideas, requiring fair treatment and dignity regardless of protected status or viewpoint.[1][3][8] Finally, the DOJ identifies excellence as a value, committing to provide "the highest levels of service to the American people" while acting as "a responsible steward of the taxpayers' dollars." [1][3][8] These values, while aspirational in character, establish an institutional baseline for professional conduct and inform disciplinary standards administered through the Office of Professional Responsibility.[3][27]

Organizational Architecture and Leadership Structure

The Attorney General and Executive Leadership

The Attorney General of the United States serves as the head of the Department of Justice and reports directly to the President.[1][3] The Attorney General is the chief law enforcement officer of the United States and exercises broad delegated authority to direct and manage all DOJ components, set enforcement priorities, and establish legal positions on matters of national importance.[3][55] The Attorney General is assisted by a Deputy Attorney General and an Associate Attorney General, each of whom exercises delegated authority over distinct portfolios within the department.[2][8] The current Attorney General, as of September 2025, is Pamela Bondi, as documented in official organizational charts signed by her in that month.[5][8]

The Deputy Attorney General serves as the second-ranking official within the department and typically provides overall supervision and direction to organizational units of the Department.[2][8] The Deputy Attorney General advises and assists the Attorney General in formulating and implementing departmental policies and programs and exercises supervisory authority over major law enforcement and investigative agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Bureau of Prisons, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Attorneys, and U.S. Marshals Service.[2][8]

The Associate Attorney General occupies the third-ranking position and advises and assists the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General regarding civil justice, federal and local law enforcement, and public safety matters.[2][8] The Associate Attorney General typically supervises components addressing civil rights enforcement, environmental and natural resources litigation, and related civil justice functions.[2][8]

The Office of the Solicitor General

The Office of the Solicitor General holds a distinctive and critically important position within the DOJ

organizational structure, representing the federal government before the United States Supreme Court in virtually all cases in which the United States is a party.[44][47] The Solicitor General is the fourth-highest-ranking official in the Department of Justice, appointed by the President and reporting directly to the Attorney General.[47] The Solicitor General determines which cases the government will pursue for Supreme Court review, the positions the government will advance before the Court, and whether the government will participate as *amicus curiae* in cases in which it is not a party.[44] The United States is involved in approximately two-thirds of all cases the Supreme Court decides on the merits each year, demonstrating the significance of this office.[44] The current Solicitor General is D. John Sauer, as of April 4, 2025.[47] The Solicitor General's office also reviews cases decided adversely to the United States in lower courts to determine whether appeal is warranted and, if so, what litigation position should be taken.[44] This gatekeeping function gives the Solicitor General extraordinary influence over the development of federal law and the strategic positions the government advances in appellate litigation.

Major Organizational Components: Law Enforcement Agencies

The Federal Bureau of Investigation

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, as the primary investigative agency within DOJ, occupies a central position in federal law enforcement operations.[25][28] The FBI's mission is to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution of the United States, operating as a national security and law enforcement agency that collects, analyzes, and shares intelligence in all of its functions.[25][28] The FBI pursues a dual mandate: enforcing federal law and protecting national security.[25] This dual function has evolved significantly over the FBI's history, with the agency shifting from a traditional prosecution-focused posture toward an intelligence-driven, threat-disruption model.[25]

The FBI's current mission priorities, as of 2025-2026, include protecting the United States from terrorist attacks; protecting the nation against foreign intelligence operations, espionage, and cyber operations; combating significant cybercriminal activity; combating public corruption at all levels; protecting civil rights; combating transnational criminal enterprises; combating major white-collar crime; and combating significant violent crime.[25][28] The FBI operates field offices in all major cities and maintains international legal attaché offices in more than fifty countries, enabling coordination with foreign law enforcement and intelligence services.[1] The FBI's legal mandate derives from Title 28 of the United States Code, Section 533, which authorizes the Attorney General to appoint officials to detect and prosecute crimes against the United States, with additional specific investigative authorities granted by statute for particular crime categories.[28]

The Drug Enforcement Administration

The Drug Enforcement Administration operates as an independent agency within the DOJ dedicated to enforcing controlled substance laws and regulations.[37][40] The DEA's mission is to enforce the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States and bring to the criminal and civil justice system those organizations and principal members involved in growing, manufacturing, or distributing controlled substances destined for illicit traffic in the United States.[37][40] The DEA's primary responsibilities include investigation and prosecution preparation for major violators of controlled substance laws operating at interstate and international levels; investigation and prosecution of criminals and drug gangs perpetrating violence and terrorizing communities; management of national drug intelligence programs in cooperation with federal, state, local, and foreign officials; seizure and forfeiture of assets derived from or intended for use in illicit drug trafficking; enforcement of controlled substance manufacturing, distribution, and dispensing

provisions applicable to legally produced substances; coordination with state and local law enforcement on mutual drug enforcement efforts; and coordination with foreign governments in programs designed to reduce illicit drug availability through non-enforcement methods.[37]

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, commonly known as the ATF, focuses on violent crime prevention driven by illegal firearm use, explosives, and arson.[8][39][42] The ATF protects American communities by confronting violent crime through identification and dismantling of illegal firearms traffickers who fuel violence by arming prohibited persons, gang members, drug cartels, illegal aliens, and terrorist organizations.[8][39][42] The ATF concentrates on identifying and dismantling these trafficking networks through advanced Crime Gun Intelligence, including the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), firearms tracing, and touch DNA analysis in partnership with state and local law enforcement to investigate, identify, and prosecute violent offenders.[8][39]

The United States Marshals Service

The United States Marshals Service, one of the oldest federal law enforcement agencies, maintains multiple distinct operational portfolios.[20][23][38][41] The Marshals Service has been responsible for protecting the federal judicial process since 1789, serving as the enforcement arm of the federal courts.[38] Current Marshals Service responsibilities include judicial security (protecting federal judges, jurors, and other members of the federal judiciary and ensuring safe and secure judicial proceedings); fugitive apprehension (locating and apprehending fugitives for federal crimes and, when requested, state and local fugitives); prisoner operations (managing detention of individuals remanded to Marshals custody); prisoner transportation through the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System; asset forfeiture (serving as primary custodian of seized property for the federal asset forfeiture program); and support for missing child programs in partnership with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.[38]

The Marshals Service currently leads 56 local fugitive task forces, most operating as full-time efforts.[20][41] These task forces combine federal marshals with state and local law enforcement personnel, creating permanent and ad-hoc task forces in response to cases posing immediate threats to public safety.[20][41] The Marshals Service has the broadest arrest authority among federal law enforcement agencies, enabling it to pursue federal fugitives across jurisdictional boundaries.[38]

The Federal Bureau of Prisons

The Federal Bureau of Prisons operates as the custodial component responsible for managing federal offenders sentenced to terms of imprisonment.[3][6][43][46] The BOP operates over 100 facilities across the nation and is responsible for ensuring that federal offenders serve sentences in facilities that are safe, humane, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure.[6][43][46] The BOP is also tasked with providing reentry programming to ensure successful return of incarcerated persons to the community, recognizing that most incarcerated individuals will eventually be released and require rehabilitation services to reduce recidivism.[6][46] The BOP additionally maintains responsibility for the District of Columbia's sentenced felon inmate population, representing a unique state-level responsibility within a federal agency.[6]

Litigating Divisions: Civil and Criminal Justice

The Criminal Division

The Criminal Division has developed, enforced, and supervised application of federal criminal laws not specifically assigned to other components for more than one hundred years, often in partnership with the 93 United States Attorneys Offices.[7] The Criminal Division's mission is to serve the public interest through vigorous, fair, and effective enforcement of criminal statutes and related civil statutes; to exercise general supervision over federal criminal law enforcement with the exception of statutes specifically assigned to other divisions; and to build capacity of foreign rule of law counterparts.[7][8] The Criminal Division formulates and implements criminal enforcement policy, provides advice and assistance on criminal matters to the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, federal prosecutors, law enforcement and investigative agencies, and other DOJ components, and provides leadership to federal, state, and local law enforcement counterparts as well as international partners.[7]

The Criminal Division comprises 16 sections and offices, each addressing distinct areas of federal criminal law and enforcement.[7] These include the Appellate Section (representing DOJ interests in the U.S. Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal on criminal law matters); the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (identifying and prosecuting child sexual predators and preventing child victimization); the Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section (preventing, investigating, and prosecuting cyber and intellectual property crimes including cryptocurrency-related crimes, ransomware, and digital piracy); the Fraud Section (investigating and prosecuting complex white-collar crime, financial fraud, healthcare fraud, and foreign corruption); the Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section (investigating and prosecuting human smuggling, human trafficking, forced labor, human rights violations, and certain international violent crimes); the Money Laundering, Narcotics and Forfeiture Section (pursuing criminal prosecutions and asset recovery involving drug trafficking and money laundering); the Public Integrity Section (investigating and prosecuting corruption of elected and appointed officials at all government levels and federal election crimes); the Tax Section (enforcing nation's tax laws through criminal litigation); and the Violent Crime and Racketeering Section (disrupting and dismantling regional, national, and international gangs and organized crime groups).[7]

The Criminal Division also maintains several specialized offices promoting consistency in federal prosecutions.[7] The Capital Case Section promotes consistency and fairness in death penalty applications throughout the United States.[7] The Office of Enforcement Operations provides investigative and prosecutorial support and legal advice regarding sophisticated and sensitive investigative tools.[7] The Office of Policy and Litigation develops, reviews, and evaluates national crime, sentencing, and corrections policy and legislation.[7]

The Civil Division

The Civil Division represents the United States, its departments and agencies, Members of Congress, Cabinet officers, and federal employees in civil and criminal matters within its scope of responsibility.[10] The Civil Division's mission encompasses defending against challenges to federal programs; ensuring the federal government speaks with one voice regarding legal interpretation; preserving Congressional intent; advancing government credibility before courts; and protecting the public fisc (U.S. Treasury).[10] The division operates through several program areas addressing distinct litigation domains including commercial litigation, enforcement and affirmative litigation, federal programs litigation, and tort claims.[10]

The Civil Rights Division

The Civil Rights Division, created in 1957 by enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1957, works to uphold civil and constitutional rights of all persons in the United States, particularly vulnerable populations.[45] The division enforces federal statutes prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, sex, disability, religion,

familial status, national origin, and citizenship status.[45] The Civil Rights Division operates through multiple sections addressing voting rights, education, employment, housing, public accommodations, federal coordination and compliance, police conduct, and specific protected categories.[45]

Specialized Litigating Divisions

The Environment and Natural Resources Division stands as the nation's environmental lawyer and the largest environmental law firm in the country.[13][16] The ENRD enforces civil and criminal environmental laws including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and hazardous waste statutes, while also protecting the nation's natural resources and handling cases relating to tribal rights and resources.[13][16] The division is organized into sections addressing environmental crimes, enforcement, defense, property acquisition, wildlife and marine resources, natural resources, tribal resources, and appellate matters.[13]

The Antitrust Division promotes economic competition through enforcement of and providing guidance on antitrust laws and principles.[14][17] The Antitrust Division conducts investigations and litigates cases involving allegations of anticompetitive conduct, merger challenges, and related competition law matters.[14][17]

The Tax Division enforces the nation's tax laws through both criminal and civil litigation, promoting voluntary tax compliance, maintaining public confidence in the tax system's integrity, and developing sound tax law.[21][24] The Tax Division works closely with the Internal Revenue Service and cooperates with the Securities and Exchange Commission on matters involving corporate fraud and integrity.[21]

National Security and Intelligence Operations

The National Security Division

The National Security Division occupies the highest strategic priority within DOJ structure, reflecting the department's commitment to counterterrorism and national security protection.[9][12] The mission of the National Security Division is to protect the United States from threats to national security by pursuing justice through the law.[9][12] The NSD's organizational structure is designed to ensure coordinated prosecution and law enforcement efforts working together with intelligence community attorneys, thereby strengthening federal government national security effectiveness.[9]

The NSD manages multiple operational areas including terrorism prevention and prosecution, espionage and counterintelligence operations, export controls and sanctions enforcement, classified information protection, Foreign Agents Registration Act enforcement, and foreign intelligence surveillance operations under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.[9] The NSD coordinates counterterrorism enforcement nationally through collaboration with the FBI National Security Branch, intelligence community agencies, and 94 United States Attorneys Offices, developing national strategies for combating emerging and evolving terrorism threats including cyber-based terrorism.[9] The division supervises the National Security Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council (ATAC) program, maintaining essential communication networks between DOJ and USAOs for rapid information transmission on terrorism threats and investigative activity.[9]

The NSD represents the United States before the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court of Review to obtain authorization under FISA for intelligence collection activities.[9] The division provides legal advice to intelligence community agencies on FISA interpretation and FISA-related legal procedures while overseeing certain foreign intelligence activities to ensure

compliance with constitutional requirements, statutes, FISC orders, and Executive Branch policies protecting individual privacy and civil liberties.[9]

Support, Administrative, and Specialized Components

The Executive Office for Immigration Review

The Executive Office for Immigration Review, operating under delegated authority from the Attorney General, adjudicates immigration cases by fairly, expeditiously, and uniformly interpreting and administering the nation's immigration laws.[1][2][5][6][55] EOIR conducts immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings through Immigration Courts and the Board of Immigration Appeals.[1][3] The advancement of fair, expeditious, and uniform application of immigration laws is a stated priority for DOJ, recognizing that EOIR's ability to process cases in timely fashion directly affects the Department of Homeland Security's capacity to remove removable aliens expeditiously and use detention resources efficiently.[6] EOIR maintains specific locations within Northern California including San Francisco Immigration Court locations and a Concord hearing location.[1][6]

The Office for Access to Justice

The Office for Access to Justice operates as a standalone agency within DOJ that plans, develops, and coordinates implementation of access to justice policy initiatives of high priority to the Department and Executive Branch.[57][60] Reestablished in October 2021, the office addresses the access-to-justice crisis in criminal and civil legal systems.[57][60] The mission is to help the justice system efficiently deliver outcomes that are fair and accessible to all, irrespective of wealth and status, while improving the federal government's understanding of and capacity to address urgent legal needs of communities across America.[8][57][60]

The Office for Access to Justice works according to three guiding principles: Expanding Access by increasing legal assistance and public defense availability; Accelerating Innovation by supporting research, data, and innovative strategies to improve fairness and efficiency; and Safeguarding Integrity by promoting policies and reforms improving accountability, fiscal responsibility, and legal system integrity.[57][60] The office leads the Federal Government Pro Bono Program, an interagency effort encouraging federal government attorneys and legal staff to engage in pro bono work, and administers the Access to Justice Prize competition promoting innovative solutions to address the access to justice crisis.[57]

The Community Relations Service

The Community Relations Service operates as the Department's "Peacemaker" for community conflicts arising from identity-based disputes, serving this function for over 60 years.[31][34] Established by Title X of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the CRS brings diverse community stakeholders together to resolve disputes arising from discriminatory practices based on race, color, or national origin.[31][34] The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 expanded CRS jurisdiction to provide reconciliation services for communities facing tension from alleged hate crimes committed on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.[31]

The CRS mission is to provide violence prevention and conflict resolution services to resolve and prevent community-level disputes, operating as a neutral, impartial party without prosecutorial, investigatory, or law enforcement authority.[31][34] CRS works directly with state and local government units, private and public organizations, civil rights groups, law enforcement, and community leaders to support efforts resolving

conflicts and preventing violence.[31][34] CRS conciliation specialists and regional directors are located throughout the United States, building trust-filled relationships with local community leaders and using proven dispute resolution practices to lead collaborative problem-solving addressing conflict roots.[31][34]

The Office of Legal Counsel

The Office of Legal Counsel, often described as "the Attorney General's lawyer," provides legal advice and assistance to the President and executive agencies on constitutional and statutory questions affecting operations of the executive branch.[32][35] OLC's principal duty is assisting the Attorney General in their role as legal advisor to the President and Executive Branch agencies, with substantial resources devoted to providing legal advice to the White House, Attorney General, and other agencies on legal issues of vital national concern.[32][35] OLC exercises the Attorney General's delegated authority under the Judiciary Act of 1789 to provide controlling advice to executive branch officials on questions of law.[32][35]

OLC must provide candid, independent, and principled advice even when inconsistent with policymakers' aims, reaffirming longstanding principles guiding OLC work in providing formal written opinions and legal guidance.[32][35] The office reviews for form and legality all Executive Orders and substantive proclamations and memoranda to be issued by the President, as well as all proposed orders of the Attorney General and regulations requiring Attorney General approval.[32]

The Office of Professional Responsibility

The Office of Professional Responsibility, established in 1975 in response to professional misconduct associated with the Watergate scandal, ensures that DOJ attorneys perform duties in accordance with high professional standards expected of the nation's principal law enforcement agency.[27][30] OPR's primary mission is conducting investigations of allegations of professional misconduct against DOJ attorneys relating to the exercise of authority to investigate, litigate, or provide legal advice, including misconduct allegations against DOJ immigration judges.[27][30]

OPR receives and reviews allegations of professional misconduct, reviews judicial findings of misconduct or criticism of DOJ attorneys, conducts preliminary inquiries and full investigations when warranted, reports findings to the Professional Misconduct Review Unit, refers matters to appropriate component heads for corrective action, and when authorized, reports findings to state attorney disciplinary authorities.[27][30] The office receives and reviews retaliation allegations against individuals who disclose information regarding attorney or law enforcement misconduct, ensuring employees are protected from reprisal when reporting misconduct.[27][30]

The Office of the Inspector General

The Office of the Inspector General promotes integrity, efficiency, and accountability within DOJ by investigating alleged violations of criminal and civil laws by employees and conducting audits and inspections of programs.[2][49] As of early 2026, the OIG maintains ongoing audit work addressing numerous DOJ components including investigations of confidential human source policies, DEA registration processes, FBI DNA database operations, FBI contract awards, FBI special deputations, BOP unmanned aircraft mitigation, federal information security compliance, and annual financial statement audits.[49]

The Executive Office for United States Attorneys

The Executive Office for United States Attorneys provides executive and administrative support for the 93 United States Attorneys located throughout the 50 states, District of Columbia, Guam, Marianas Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.[15][18] The mission of EOUSA is providing general executive

assistance and supervision to the 94 Offices of United States Attorneys and coordinating the relationship between the United States Attorneys and DOJ organizational components and other federal agencies in Washington, D.C.[15][18] EOUSA provides advice and support regarding U.S. Attorney appointments, manages USAOs' appropriation including budget authority and personnel resources, analyzes statistical data, and provides reports and recommendations on USAO work and resources.[15]

EOUSA formulates, implements, and administers bureau-level human resource policies for USAOs, manages integrated information technology systems, evaluates USAO performance, provides advice on legal programs and initiatives, provides legal advice on disciplinary and performance matters, centralizes equal employment and complaint processing programs, responds to FOIA and Privacy Act requests, provides congressional relations guidance, and oversees the Office of Legal Education developing and conducting training for DOJ attorneys and personnel.[15] The current Director of EOUSA is Francey Hakes.[18]

The Justice Management Division

The Justice Management Division strengthens DOJ capacity to achieve its goals and objectives, maximizes return on program investments, and delivers quality services relating to organization, management, and administration.[8] JMD provides advice and counsel to senior management regarding all administrative functions of the department.[8]

Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Operations

The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces

The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces represents the centerpiece of the Attorney General's strategy to combat transnational organized crime and reduce illegal narcotics availability nationally using a prosecutor-led, multi-agency approach.[50][53] Established in 1982 in response to cocaine epidemic concerns, OCDETF leverages resources and expertise of multiple cabinet department partners in concentrated, coordinated, long-term enterprise investigations.[50][53] The mission is reducing drug supply and diminishing associated violence and transnational organized criminal activities presenting greatest threats to public safety, economic security, and national security.[50][53]

OCDETF comprises representatives from the FBI, DEA, IRS, ATF, Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Customs Service, and Coast Guard, with Department of Defense tracking capability available in certain regions.[50] The program is organized geographically into nine regions, each with an Advisory Council and Coordination Group setting policies and priorities, with District Coordination Groups reviewing cases for OCDETF designation at the district level.[50]

OCDETF manages semi-annual formulation of the Attorney General's Consolidated Priority Organization Target (CPOT) List identifying "command and control" elements of the most prolific international drug trafficking and money laundering organizations nationally.[50] The program also requires identification of major Regional Priority Organization Targets as part of annual Regional Strategic Plan processes.[50] From program formation through 2006, OCDETF operations led to more than 44,000 drug-related convictions and seizure of over three billion dollars in monetary and property assets.[50]

As of 2025-2026, OCDETF structure is undergoing significant reorganization, with the program being dissolved as a stand-alone component in DOJ's fiscal year 2026 reorganization and budget, with resources being redistributed into component budgets and many OCDETF cases and functions transferred to newly

created Homeland Security Task Forces.[50]

Project Safe Neighborhoods

Project Safe Neighborhoods is a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and communities they serve to reduce violent crime and gun violence and make neighborhoods safer.[11] The program represents a strategy strengthening federal law enforcement priorities based on core principles including fostering trust and legitimacy in communities, supporting community-based organizations preventing violence, setting focused and strategic enforcement priorities, and measuring results.[11] PSN represents part of Operation Take Back America, a nationwide initiative marshaling full DOJ resources to repel illegal immigration invasion, achieve total elimination of cartels and transnational criminal organizations, and protect communities from violent crime perpetrators.[11]

Grant Programs and Community Support

The Office of Justice Programs

The Office of Justice Programs awards billions of dollars annually to support public safety and justice activities in communities nationwide.[19] OJP funds supporting infrastructure, law enforcement hiring, victim assistance, training and technical assistance, research, and programs improving criminal, civil, and juvenile justice systems across federal, state, local, and tribal jurisdictions.[19][22]

The COPS Office Grants Program

The Community Oriented Policing Services Office, established in 1994, has invested over twenty billion dollars in policing since inception.[33][36] COPS awards grants enabling state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train law enforcement officers while promoting effective, collaborative policing practices.[33][36] The COPS Office operates as the leading proactive policing experts at DOJ, addressing emerging community challenges while enhancing officer and community safety through grant resources supporting comprehensive programs including community policing development, accreditation, de-escalation and crisis response training, anti-methamphetamine programs, anti-heroin task forces, school violence prevention, and specialized law enforcement initiatives.[33]

Current Structural Developments and Future Directions

As of early 2026, the Department of Justice undergoes significant organizational reassessment reflecting changed priorities and resource allocation strategies. The proposed dissolution of OCDETF as a standalone program, with redistribution of resources to component budgets and transfer of cases to Homeland Security Task Forces, represents substantial structural reorganization affecting long-standing cooperative arrangements and enforcement coordination mechanisms.[50] These changes reflect Executive Branch priorities establishing Operation Take Back America as the organizing framework for federal law enforcement response to immigration enforcement, cartel dismantling, and violent crime reduction.[11]

The department maintains commitment to its tripartite mission of upholding the rule of law, ensuring national security, and protecting civil rights, but the relative emphasis and resource allocation among these objectives shifts according to administration priorities and Congressional funding decisions. The current structural configuration emphasizes enhanced coordination between immigration enforcement and domestic criminal

law enforcement through creation of Homeland Security Task Forces, reflecting a policy determination that these enforcement domains should be more tightly integrated than the previous OCDETF structure provided.

Conclusion

The Department of Justice represents one of the largest and most complex organizational entities within the federal government, combining prosecutorial authority, law enforcement operations, legal representation for the United States, national security operations, civil rights protection, and administrative justice functions within a single institutional structure. The department's more than 115,000 employees distributed across more than forty component organizations and field offices spanning the entire United States and numerous foreign countries execute missions ranging from Supreme Court litigation to community violence prevention, from counterterrorism operations to environmental law enforcement, from federal criminal prosecution to civil rights protection.

Understanding the DOJ's organizational structure, mission framework, and operational components is essential for practitioners engaged with federal legal matters, whether involving immigration proceedings before EOIR, federal criminal prosecutions, civil litigation against or on behalf of the United States, or coordination with federal law enforcement agencies. The department's historical commitment to the rule of law, independence and impartiality, honesty and integrity, and respect for all persons, while imperfectly realized in practice, provides an institutional baseline distinguishing federal law enforcement and prosecution from approaches emphasizing political or policy objectives over legal principle.

The current 2026 reorganization initiatives reflect deliberate policy choices to reorder enforcement priorities and restructure long-standing task force arrangements, demonstrating that institutional structure is not immutable but rather reflects contemporary policy determinations. Practitioners and stakeholders should monitor ongoing developments in this reorganization process and maintain awareness of how changes in structure, resource allocation, and priority designation affect the practical operation of DOJ components affecting their practice areas and client interests.[1][3][6][8][50][53]

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