

Department of Homeland Security: Overview and Immigration Law Context

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FINDINGS

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY: COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW AND IMMIGRATION LAW CONTEXT

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) serves as the cabinet-level federal executive branch agency responsible for protecting the United States against potential threats ranging from terrorism and transnational crime to natural disasters and cyber attacks[2][6][43]. With more than 240,000 employees spread across nine operational components and numerous support directorates, DHS represents the third-largest Cabinet department in the United States, behind only the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs[2][6][43]. Established through the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which President George W. Bush signed into law on November 25, 2002, DHS began full operations on March 1, 2003, consolidating what had previously been 22 disparate federal agencies and functions into a single unified organization[2][6][55]. For immigration practitioners in Northern California and nationwide, DHS represents the primary federal structure through which border security, immigration enforcement, and immigration benefits adjudication occur, making comprehensive understanding of its organizational mission, components, and operational priorities essential for legal representation.

Historical Context and Establishment of DHS

The creation of the Department of Homeland Security marked a direct response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which fundamentally altered American approaches to national security and domestic protection[2][6][9]. In the immediate aftermath of those attacks, President George W. Bush announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security in October 2001, with former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge assuming the position of Assistant to the President for Homeland Security[2][6]. However, this interim office proved insufficient to coordinate the fragmented federal response to security threats, as numerous agencies across multiple Cabinet departments maintained overlapping responsibilities for border security, immigration enforcement, transportation security, intelligence analysis, and emergency management[3][7]. The government reorganization that followed represented, in the words of the original proposal to Congress, the most significant transformation of the United States government in over fifty years since the creation of the Department of Defense[3][10]. Congress ultimately passed the Homeland Security Act of 2002, creating a comprehensive statutory framework for the new department, and President Bush signed this legislation on November 25, 2002[2][6][55].

The statutory mission established by the Homeland Security Act encompasses seven core objectives[55]. First, DHS must prevent terrorist attacks within the United States through intelligence gathering, threat analysis, and protective measures[55]. Second, the department must reduce the vulnerability of the United States to terrorism by identifying and addressing critical infrastructure weaknesses and coordinating defensive preparations[55]. Third, DHS must minimize damage from terrorist attacks that do occur and assist in recovery operations[55]. Fourth, the department carries responsibility for executing all functions previously assigned to the 22 federal agencies that were transferred into its structure[55]. Fifth, DHS must ensure that functions unrelated to homeland security—such as natural disaster response, maritime rescue operations, and other civilian missions—are neither diminished nor neglected despite the security focus of the reorganization[55]. Sixth, the statute mandates that DHS operations must not undermine the overall economic security of the United States[55]. Seventh and finally, DHS must monitor connections between illegal drug trafficking and terrorism, coordinate efforts to disrupt these connections, and contribute to broader drug interdiction efforts[55]. This multifaceted mandate reveals that DHS, despite being created primarily in

response to terrorism concerns, carries a considerably broader portfolio of civilian and law enforcement missions that extend far beyond counterterrorism.

Organizational Structure and Operational Components

The current organizational architecture of DHS comprises nine operational components, multiple support components, and several directorates within the Office of the Secretary, each with distinct but complementary missions within the broader homeland security enterprise[1][6][14][43]. The operational components, which directly execute DHS's core missions, include nine agencies[1]. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) represents the frontline civilian agency responsible for border security, with particular relevance to immigration law practice[1][6][18]. CBP's mission encompasses protecting the nation's borders against illegal entry, illicit activity, and security threats; combatting transnational crime and terrorism that threatens economic and national security; and facilitating lawful trade and lawful entry into the United States[1][6][18]. For Northern California immigration practitioners, CBP maintains significant operational presence at the San Ysidro and Otay Mesa ports of entry in Southern California, which are the nation's busiest land ports, as well as at major airports throughout the region[18].

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) functions as a distinct operational component focused on criminal investigations and immigration law enforcement[13]. ICE carries out its dual mission through two primary components: the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), which focuses on disrupting transnational crime; and the Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), which handles apprehension, detention, and removal of individuals who are unlawfully present in the United States[13]. The ICE Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) provides legal guidance to all ICE operations, while the Office of Professional Responsibility conducts internal investigations[13]. ERO officers and deportation officers identify, arrest, and process immigrants who violate United States immigration law, and they supervise detention of immigrants in ICE custody pending removal proceedings[13]. As of January 2025, 287(g) agreements-which allow state and local law enforcement to perform certain immigration enforcement functions under federal training and authorization-had increased dramatically from 135 agreements to 649 agreements nationally, though California's participation has remained limited under the state's values act protections[13].

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) operates as the component responsible for administering the nation's legal immigration system and providing immigration benefits[35]. Unlike CBP and ICE, which focus on enforcement and border security, USCIS handles all immigration benefit applications, including family-based petitions, employment-based sponsorships, humanitarian protections such as asylum and withholding of removal, work authorization documents (Employment Authorization Documents or EADs), travel documents, naturalization applications, and adjustment of status applications[35]. USCIS consists of approximately 19,000 federal employees and contractors working at 223 offices around the world, with significant presence in Northern California[35]. The San Francisco Asylum Office, located within the Northern California region, conducts interviews for asylum applicants, suspension of deportation cases, and special rule cancellation of removal cases under the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA)[35]. USCIS maintains a unique funding structure among federal agencies, with nearly 97.3% of its budget derived from user fees collected through the Immigration Examinations Fee Account (IEFA) rather than congressional appropriations[35].

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) carries responsibility for protecting the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce[19]. TSA was created in response to the September 11 attacks through the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001, and was transferred to DHS upon its creation in 2003[19]. While TSA's primary mission focuses on airport security

and prevention of aircraft hijacking, the agency's responsibilities have expanded to encompass security across highways, railroads, bus networks, mass transit systems, ports, pipelines, and intermodal freight facilities[19]. TSA employs approximately 47,000 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) who screen passengers and baggage at more than 450 United States airports[19]. The agency also deploys Transportation Security Inspectors to evaluate the security of passenger and cargo transportation systems, and operates Federal Air Marshals and Federal Flight Deck Officers aboard aircraft[19].

The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), a branch of the military that transferred to DHS from the Department of Transportation in 2003, maintains responsibility for maritime law enforcement and security, search and rescue operations, protection of the marine environment, and enforcement of fisheries regulations[29]. The Coast Guard operates with nearly 55,000 military members and civilian employees and maintains the mission to enforce law and stop terrorists, criminals, and drug dealers from entering the country from the nation's coasts[1]. Through its search and rescue (SAR) mission, the Coast Guard maintains SAR facilities on the East, West, and Gulf coasts, as well as in Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and on the Great Lakes and inland waterways, and saves an average of over 3,500 lives and more than \$75 million in property annually[29][32].

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which existed as an independent agency beginning in 1979 before joining DHS in 2003, maintains responsibility for disaster prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery from both natural and man-made disasters[1][6][9][24]. FEMA's mission encompasses helping people before, during, and after disasters and coordinating the nation's response to emergencies and catastrophic events[9]. The agency has experienced significant operational demands in recent years, particularly regarding disaster response and recovery from hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, and other climate-related emergencies affecting Northern California and nationwide[24].

The Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC), established in 1970 as the Consolidated Federal Law Enforcement Training Center within the Treasury Department before transferring to DHS in 2003, serves as the nation's largest provider of law enforcement training[37][40]. FLETC provides career-long training to law enforcement professionals from 105 federal law enforcement agencies, as well as offering tuition-free and low-cost training to state, local, campus, and tribal law enforcement agencies through its Rural Policing Institute[37][40]. The organization maintains its primary headquarters at the former Naval Air Station Glynco near Brunswick, Georgia, with additional regional training centers located in Artesia, New Mexico; Charleston, South Carolina; Cheltenham, Maryland; and other locations nationwide[40].

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) represents one of DHS's most rapidly evolving components[36][39]. CISA was formally established as a distinct agency through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Act of 2018, elevating what had previously been the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD)[36]. CISA's responsibilities encompass cybersecurity and infrastructure protection across all levels of government, coordination of cybersecurity programs with United States states, and improvement of the government's cybersecurity protections against private sector and nation-state cyber actors[36][39]. The agency is headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, and is planning to consolidate its operations, including approximately 6,500 employees, to a new 10-story, 620,000 square foot building on the consolidated DHS St. Elizabeths campus in Washington, D.C.[36].

Finally, the U.S. Secret Service (USSS), which transferred to DHS from the Treasury Department in 2003, maintains dual missions of protecting American political leaders and investigating financial crimes[20]. The Secret Service is authorized by 18 U.S.C. § 3056(a) to protect the President, Vice President, President-elect, Vice President-elect, and their immediate families; former presidents, their spouses, and children under age 16; those in the presidential line of succession; major presidential and vice-presidential candidates and their

spouses; and visiting foreign heads of state or government[20]. The agency operates Uniformed Division officers who provide protection for the White House Complex, the Vice President's residence, the main Treasury Building, foreign diplomatic missions and embassies in the Washington, D.C., area[20].

Beyond these nine operational components, DHS maintains several critical support components and directorates. The Management Directorate oversees department-wide administrative support services and manages information technology, budget and financial management, procurement and acquisition, human capital, and security functions[41][42]. The Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) serves as DHS's intelligence arm, disseminating timely information to DHS leadership, operational partners, and state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners[2][6][42]. The Science and Technology Directorate functions as the research and development arm of the Department, operating six national laboratories and managing the Homeland Security Institute[49][58]. The Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office (CWMD) coordinates the federal government's efforts to prevent chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) terrorism within the United States[30][33]. The Office of Operations Coordination and Planning provides situational awareness and decision support to DHS leadership and federal partners[1]. Additionally, DHS maintains an Office of the Inspector General that provides independent oversight and promotes excellence, integrity, and accountability within the department[2][6].

DHS Mission Framework and Core Objectives

The Department of Homeland Security operates according to six core homeland security missions, as outlined in the DHS strategic planning documents for fiscal years 2023 through 2027[14][54]. These six missions, which provide the overarching framework within which all DHS components operate, encompass distinct but interconnected areas of federal responsibility. The first mission involves Counter Terrorism and Homeland Security Threats, requiring that DHS remain vigilant against all forms of domestic and international terrorism despite significant progress in reducing the terrorist threat to the country[54]. DHS recognizes that homegrown violent extremists-individuals inspired by the ideologies of foreign terrorist organizations-represent the most prominent form of international terrorism currently facing the homeland[54]. To combat terrorism, the department aims to enhance the collection, analysis, and sharing of actionable intelligence and information with local and international partners and to adopt emerging technologies while understanding how terrorists can use those same technologies to threaten national security[54].

The second mission, Secure and Manage Our Borders, addresses what DHS identifies as a significant increase in irregular migration driven by violence, food insecurity, severe poverty, corruption, climate change, the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and dire economic conditions[54]. The strategy recognizes that transnational criminal organizations are taking advantage of migratory flows to exploit vulnerable migrants as part of a billion-dollar criminal enterprise[54]. While tightening security at air, land, and maritime borders to prevent unlawful entry, DHS simultaneously works to expedite legal trade and travel through various agency programs[54].

The third mission encompasses Administering the Nation's Immigration System, through which DHS aims to enforce immigration laws in an effective and humane manner while providing immigration benefits to eligible applicants[54]. The strategy acknowledges that the legal immigration system is broken and outdated, creating challenges for both immigration law enforcement and immigration services delivery[54]. This mission directly implicates the work of USCIS in processing green cards, work permits, naturalization applications, and humanitarian benefits such as asylum.

The fourth mission addresses the need to Secure Cyberspace and Critical Infrastructure, as DHS continues

collaborating with government and private sector partners to strengthen the security and resilience of critical infrastructure and federal civilian information technology systems[54]. Objectives under this mission include assessing and countering evolving cyber threats, emerging technology risks, and cybercrime[54]. The strategy highlights the need to identify and mitigate key emerging technology risks, particularly quantum computing risks in preparation for future threats to existing encryption methods[54].

The fifth mission involves Building a Resilience Nation and Responding to Incidents, recognizing that disruptions caused by pandemic disease and climate change have given new impetus to building resilience against all hazards and developing new approaches to prepare for, prevent, protect against, mitigate, and respond to or recover from natural and man-made events[54]. DHS goals within this mission area include developing a robust response capability that matches the nature of incidents, preparing the entire DHS workforce to execute incident response capabilities, and providing communities with access to resources supporting recovery after disasters[54].

The sixth mission involves Combating Crimes of Exploitation and Protect Victims, with the desired outcome being the capability to identify crimes of exploitation and protect victims through expanded education, digital forensic technology, support services, and partnerships with federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, international, and private sector partners[54]. DHS recognizes that increasing crimes of exploitation, including online child sexual sexual exploitation and abuse, human trafficking, and labor exploitation, threaten the United States' physical and virtual borders, immigration and customs systems, and national security[54].

Immigration-Related Functions and Northern California Context

For immigration law practitioners in Northern California and across the United States, understanding DHS's immigration-related operations proves essential to effective client representation. The intersection of DHS immigration functions with state law protections under California codes has created a unique legal environment in Northern California[13]. CBP and ICE enforce federal immigration law, adjudicate entry and removal determinations, and conduct enforcement operations, while USCIS administers immigration benefits[18][21]. These three agencies operate with distinct but overlapping jurisdictions, creating the need for immigration counsel to understand each agency's operational patterns, decision-making criteria, and interaction with state law protections.

The San Francisco Immigration Court, operated by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), which is part of the Department of Justice rather than DHS, processes all deportation cases within the Northern District of California and parts of the Central District[21]. The San Francisco Asylum Office, operated by USCIS, conducts initial interviews for asylum claims and humanitarian protections within the region[35]. Immigration judges in San Francisco have developed distinct procedural preferences and decision patterns that differ from immigration courts in other circuits, making knowledge of local practice essential for effective representation. As of early 2026, the Northern District of California remains bound by Ninth Circuit precedent, which has historically provided stronger protections for asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations compared to other circuits such as the Fifth or Eleventh Circuits.

Northern California's immigration practice landscape reflects the region's unique demographics, with a substantial population from Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua) fleeing gang violence, persecution, and humanitarian crises; a significant Mexican and Mexican-American client base; concentrated tech worker populations seeking H-1B visas; and substantial populations protected by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designations[.]. California state law, particularly Penal Code sections 1203.43 and 1473.7, which allow modification of prior criminal

convictions to remove immigration consequences, and Senate Bill 54 (the California Values Act), which restricts cooperation between state law enforcement and federal immigration authorities, create additional layers of protection and strategic considerations for immigrant clients in Northern California that do not exist in other jurisdictions.

Leadership and Recent Organizational Changes

As of February 2026, the Department of Homeland Security operates under significant leadership transitions reflecting recent changes in presidential administrations and strategic priorities[8]. The Secretary of Homeland Security, the cabinet-level position leading the entire department, was appointed in January 2025 and is responsible for overall DHS policy, budget allocation, and coordination with other federal agencies and international partners[42][43]. The Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security serves as the second-ranking official and is authorized to act as Secretary during the Secretary's absence[42][43]. The order of succession for the Secretary, mandated by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, includes the Under Secretary for Management, the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Director of CISA, and other senior DHS officials[42][43].

Recent leadership appointments across DHS components reflect a focus on immigration law enforcement and cybersecurity as policy priorities[8]. The Director of USCIS, appointed in 2025, brings extensive experience in immigration adjudications and policy from prior service during the previous Trump administration, with a background including roles as Chief Counsel at USCIS, Deputy Assistant Attorney General at the Department of Justice, and counsel for the House Judiciary Committee's Immigration and Border Security Subcommittee[8]. The Acting Director of ICE, appointed in 2025, brings decades of experience in Enforcement and Removal Operations, including leadership roles overseeing ICE field offices and border operations[8]. The Commissioner of CBP has been announced with a background in law enforcement and border security operations[8].

Current Threat Assessment and Operational Priorities

The Department of Homeland Security released its 2025 Homeland Threat Assessment in early 2025, which continues to guide operational priorities and resource allocation across the department[23][25]. The assessment identifies a complex set of threats to public safety, border security, critical infrastructure, and the economy from violent extremists, transnational criminal organizations, adversarial nation-states, and malicious cyber actors, with these varied threats at times compounding one another in unexpected ways and generating costly disruptions to the United States economy[25].

Regarding public safety and security, the DHS assessment concludes that the terrorism threat environment in the homeland remains high[25]. The department expresses particular concern about a confluence of factors, including violent extremist responses to domestic sociopolitical developments, particularly developments related to election cycles, and international events that domestic and foreign violent extremists likely will use to justify or encourage attacks in the homeland[25]. DHS assessment recognizes that lone offenders and small groups continue to pose the greatest threat of carrying out attacks with little to no warning, while foreign terrorist organizations and their supporters maintain enduring intent to conduct or inspire attacks in the homeland[25]. Additionally, the production, trafficking, and sale of illegal drugs by transnational and domestic criminal actors continue to pose the most lethal threat to communities in the United States, with fentanyl and other synthetic opioids remaining the most lethal of drugs trafficked into the country[25]. The assessment notes that DHS expects the homeland to face threats to public safety from state actors using subversive tactics in efforts to influence and divide the American public and undermine confidence in institutions, with the

People's Republic of China particularly targeting ethnic and religious minorities, political dissidents, and journalists in the United States to silence and harass critical voices[25].

Regarding border and immigration security, the DHS assessment and field operations reflect ongoing focus on irregular migration patterns, transnational criminal organizations, and the intersection of immigration enforcement with broader public safety and national security concerns[25]. The assessment notes that terrorist watchlist encounters had previously trended upward for several years, a pattern consistent with overall increases in migrant encounters at the southwest border[25].

Regarding critical infrastructure security, the DHS assessment concludes that domestic and foreign adversaries almost certainly will continue to threaten the integrity of critical infrastructure with disruptive and destructive cyber and physical attacks, partly because they perceive targeting these sectors will have cascading impacts on United States industries and standard of living[25]. The People's Republic of China, Russia, and Iran are identified as the most pressing foreign threats to critical infrastructure[25]. Most concerning, DHS expects the PRC to continue its efforts to pre-position on United States networks for potential cyber attacks in the event of conflict with the United States[25]. Nation-states, criminal hackers, and financially motivated criminals likely will hone their techniques to disrupt United States services or to conduct espionage focused on gaining access to United States networks, including critical infrastructure entities[25].

Budget and Resource Allocation

The Department of Homeland Security's fiscal year 2025 budget reflects significant investment in immigration enforcement and border security operations[4][53][56]. The total DHS budget authority for fiscal year 2025 was enacted at approximately \$107.74 billion in net discretionary appropriations, with additional disaster relief-designated appropriations of \$22.51 billion and emergency-designated appropriations of \$2.79 billion[53]. The three largest DHS components by budget allocation are CBP, ICE, and FEMA, reflecting congressional prioritization of border security, immigration enforcement, and disaster response[53].

U.S. Customs and Border Protection received \$19.6 billion in fiscal year 2024 enacted net discretionary appropriations, maintaining the largest single component budget within DHS[53]. ICE received \$11.8 billion in fiscal year 2024 enacted net discretionary appropriations[53]. The ICE budget includes not less than \$5.9 billion designated specifically for enforcement, detention, and removal operations, of which not less than \$3.1 billion remains available for multi-year obligations, including detention and transportation of unaccompanied alien minors[56]. Federal law mandates that ICE maintain a level of not less than 50,000 detention beds, representing a significant ongoing operational commitment and budgetary obligation[56].

USCIS, despite operating almost entirely on fee-funded revenue, received appropriations for operations and support, with the budget structure reflecting its unique funding mechanism wherein nearly all revenue derives from user fees paid by applicants rather than congressional appropriations[53][35]. FEMA received \$42.8 billion in fiscal year 2024 enacted appropriations, reflecting increased funding for disaster response and recovery operations in light of frequent natural disasters[53].

Current Strategic Challenges and Future Directions

The Department of Homeland Security faces several interconnected strategic challenges that shape its operational priorities and policy direction as of February 2026. The first major challenge involves balancing immigration enforcement with orderly legal immigration processing, an ongoing tension within the immigration system[54]. DHS acknowledges that the legal immigration system is broken and outdated, creating backlogs in family-based petition processing, employment-based sponsorships, and humanitarian

protections that can delay processing for months or years[54]. Immigration practitioners observe that USCIS processing times for various immigration benefit applications-including Form I-539 (Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status), Form I-864 (Affidavit of Support), Form I-693 (Report of Medical Examination and Vaccination Record), and Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization)-vary significantly by service center, with the National Benefits Center and Texas Service Center experiencing longer average processing times than the California Service Center[.].

The second major challenge involves managing the intersection of drug trafficking and immigration enforcement, with DHS reporting that transnational criminal organizations exploit migration patterns to traffic illicit drugs, particularly fentanyl and synthetic opioids[25]. ICE maintains a focus on disrupting these transnational criminal networks, with the agency conducting significant criminal investigations into drug trafficking and human smuggling operations[13].

The third major challenge involves countering foreign interference and influence operations targeting the United States, particularly efforts by the People's Republic of China to conduct espionage, interfere with elections, and target vulnerable populations within the United States[25][23]. The DHS 2025 Homeland Threat Assessment identifies this as one of the most complex and persistent threats to homeland security[25].

The fourth challenge involves strengthening the cybersecurity posture of federal government systems and critical infrastructure, with particular focus on emerging threats from advanced persistent threat actors affiliated with nation-states[23]. DHS through CISA has made substantial investments in threat hunting, vulnerability management, and incident response capabilities[36].

Conclusion

The Department of Homeland Security represents a vast and complex federal enterprise spanning nine operational components and numerous support directorates, each executing distinct but interconnected missions related to terrorism prevention, border and immigration security, cybersecurity, emergency management, and law enforcement. Established in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks through the Homeland Security Act of 2002, DHS consolidated 22 previously disparate federal agencies into a unified organizational structure that operates approximately 240,000 federal employees nationwide[2][6][43]. For immigration law practitioners in Northern California and across the United States, DHS represents the primary federal mechanism through which border security, immigration enforcement, and immigration benefits adjudication occur, making comprehensive understanding of its organizational structure, operational components, mission framework, and current strategic priorities essential to effective client representation.

Immigration practitioners must recognize that DHS operates within a complex legal and regulatory environment that intersects with state law protections, Ninth Circuit precedent, and evolving policy guidance from the Executive Office for Immigration Review and USCIS. The regional variations in DHS operations-including differences in CBP processing patterns at different ports of entry, ICE enforcement priorities and detention practices across different field offices, and USCIS processing times at different service centers-require counsel to maintain detailed knowledge of local operational practices. Northern California's unique legal environment, shaped by California state law protections under Penal Code sections 1203.43 and 1473.7, Senate Bill 54 (the California Values Act), and stringent discovery requirements under Assembly Bill 1352, creates additional strategic considerations that do not exist in other jurisdictions.

As of February 2026, DHS operates under leadership focused on intensified immigration enforcement, cybersecurity enhancement, and counter-terrorism operations. The 2025 Homeland Threat Assessment identifies terrorism, irregular migration, drug trafficking, cyber threats, and foreign influence operations as the

primary threats to homeland security. Immigration practitioners must remain current with DHS operational developments, processing time updates, policy guidance changes, and leadership transitions to provide effective representation to immigrant clients navigating the complex intersection of federal immigration law, DHS operational requirements, and state-level protections available in California.