



TESTIMONY OF

PAUL A. BEESON
Director
Joint Task Force – West

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Department of Homeland Security

BEFORE

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security

ON

“Defeating a Sophisticated and Dangerous Adversary: Are the New Border Security Task Forces
the Right Approach?”

March 21, 2017
Washington, D.C.

Introduction

Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear today on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department), to discuss how the Joint Task Force-West (JTF-W) — one of three Joint Task Forces established under the DHS Southern Border and Approaches Campaign (SBAC) — is working to address the threats posed by Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) to the safety and security of the United States.

Although I officially assumed my duties as Director of JTF-W in December 2016, I reported to JTF-W Headquarters in San Antonio, Texas, on March 5, 2017. I look forward to working closely with my counterparts, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Vice-Admiral Karl Schultz, Director of the Joint Task Force-East, and Janice Ayala, Director of the Joint Task Force-Investigations, from U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Thanks to the support of Congress, during the past decade DHS has deployed more personnel, resources, technology, and tactical infrastructure to secure our borders than at any other time in history. DHS has harnessed this support to expand the whole-of-government approach to border security – one that leverages the authorities and capabilities of multiple departments and agencies and extends international partnerships – to multiply our efforts to counter the dynamic and sophisticated tactics and techniques that TCOs use to penetrate our border.

The Southwest Border (SWB) of the United States is a highly diverse environment with equally diverse threats to the security and safety of our border communities and communities throughout the United States. TCOs operating along the SWB are engaged in the smuggling and trafficking of aliens, narcotics, weapons, currency, and other illicit goods. The nearly unlimited financial resources generated by TCOs' criminal activities afford them a freedom of action that challenges traditional law enforcement strategies. TCOs are also highly mobile and maintain sophisticated cross-border networks, operating throughout the SWB environments including at and between ports of entry (POE), and in the land, air, and maritime domains.

JTF-W History and Structure

JTF-W, which became fully operational in July 2015, was established as a pilot program as part of the SBAC. The SBAC leverages the range of unique Department authorities, responsibilities, and capabilities to enhance and unify our operational approach to address comprehensive threat environments and complements the biennial national Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy. JTF-W, with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) serving as its executive agent, supports the Department's Unity of Effort initiative, through the integrated Corridor structure, by identifying, disrupting, and dismantling threats posed by TCOs to the SWB of the United States. We coordinate and support integrated counter-network operations against priority TCOs engaged in criminal cross-border activity, employing a whole-of-government approach to deliver the greatest possible consequences against these prioritized TCOs. What is different today is that JTF-W leads the coordination of these efforts in a joint environment. We build on

the collective capabilities of the DHS Components to plan and coordinate operations using the collective strength of the Department, in support of DHS goals. It is in a joint environment such as JTF-W where the full capabilities of DHS can be leveraged and focused to address emerging and priority threats to the Homeland.

The JTF-W Joint Operating Area (JOA), established by the SBAC, includes the land border with Mexico from California to Texas, the land approaches through Mexico to this border, the littorals in the Gulf of Mexico off Texas and in the Pacific Ocean off California, and the airspace spanning U.S. territorial land and waters. JTF-W and JTF-E share Central America as part of their respective JOAs. JTF-W activities are coordinated and conducted through four operational Corridors pursuant to the CBP Commissioner's Integrated Corridor Operations Model memorandum: the South Texas Corridor; the New Mexico/West Texas Corridor; the Arizona Corridor; and the California Corridor. This Integrated Corridor Operations Model facilitates cross-Component coordination, enabling the DHS Components in these Corridors to execute targeted border security operations across the JTF-W JOA against prioritized TCOs in a manner and scope that previously did not exist. Corridor leadership is comprised of senior representatives from each DHS Component within the geographic region, including CBP, ICE, and USCG. By drawing leadership from each DHS Component, JTF-W coordinates through existing command and control structures to synchronize Component efforts, specifically to:

- Integrate and align Component intelligence capabilities to achieve the JTF-W mission;
- Prioritize investigative efforts to disrupt, degrade, and dismantle TCOs and illicit networks;
- Institutionalize and standardize integrated counter-network operations to identify and target TCOs and illicit networks;
- Strengthen international, prosecutorial, and deterrent efforts against TCO enterprises and significant activity impacting the JTF-W JOA; and
- Advance the JTF-W mission through unified communication and messaging efforts.

Since its inception, JTF-W has employed and continues to refine a standardized, DHS-wide counter-network strategy throughout its JOA. JTF-W works to ensure that intelligence is shared, threats and targets are prioritized, and operations are planned and executed jointly by facilitating the coordination and collaboration of the operational Components across DHS, specifically CBP, ICE, USCIS, and USCG. To achieve maximum operational flexibility, JTF-W is currently staffed with not-to-exceed (NTE) and temporary duty (TDY) personnel from these Components. All employed equipment and assets are temporarily realigned from the Components to support JTF-W activities. JTF-W staff from the represented Components coordinate efforts related to intelligence, operations, logistics, administration, and external engagement. JTF-W further supports the efforts of DHS in external outreach and engagement with other federal partners such as Department of Justice, Department of State, and Department of Defense.

JTF-W Efforts to Counter TCOs

The dynamic threats posed by TCOs necessitate a united, comprehensive strategy and an aggressive approach by multiple entities across all levels of government. To combat the challenges posed by TCOs, JTF-W is focused on both long-term investigative operations against

priority TCOs, as well as short-term operations against other associated networks, operatives, and affiliates.

For example, the Threat and Intelligence Priorities Assessment (TIPA) is component-neutral assessment tool that provides a thorough analysis of the threats facing each unique operating environment. This approach enables multiple agencies to examine the same set of threats within and across mission and geographic areas of responsibility. It provides the ability to individually and collectively identify and understand the highest priority threats in the region. This is the first time that these DHS entities along the SWB have utilized one process to produce a joint threat assessment.

JTF-W led the initiative to implement a standardized operational planning process across the SWB Corridors. This process was aligned with the overarching DHS Operational Planning Guidance and the DHS Campaign Plan for Securing the U.S. Southern Border and Approaches. Through this process, JTF-W is able to articulate how strategic goals are being implemented tactically through named operations, targeting prioritized TCOs. An example of this collaboration was Operation OPTAR. In Arizona this past year, DHS Components from the JTF-W Arizona Corridor jointly planned and executed an operation targeting heroin smuggling through the POE. This joint effort resulted in the seizure of almost 5,000 kilograms of drugs, including heroin, cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamines bound for the United States and 12,000 rounds of ammunition and approximately \$80,000 bound for Mexico.

JTF-W is uniquely situated to centralize mission requirements to expand information sharing and Information Technology systems across the Department. While the mission requirements are not new, JTF-W has served as a catalyst for inter-agency information sharing. For example, JTF-W expanded access to traditional Component-centric systems by establishing a true joint environment where enforcement personnel could leverage the breadth of information and authorities of the Department to target every level of these criminal networks. JTF-W will continue to coordinate expanded information sharing capabilities, enhancing operational capabilities and more efficiently leveraging DHS and our partners' resources.

In Fiscal Year 2016, JTF-W and JTF-I identified 19 TCOs prioritized for disruption or dismantlement, using a standardized inter-agency process that did not exist prior to the creation of this task force. This prioritization allowed DHS to focus its enforcement efforts on permanently dismantling these TCOs. JTF-W monitored and evaluated enforcement actions (i.e., civil penalties, arrests, removals, and seizures) to evaluate its effectiveness based on existing DHS performance measures. Of these original 19 TCOs, JTF-W has dismantled four. JTF-W and the JTF-I continue to coordinate with DHS Components to disrupt and dismantle the remaining TCOs that are still active. For Fiscal Year 2017, these processes are being refined, standardized, and institutionalized.

In addition to these longer-term efforts, JTF-W led the coordination and execution of *Operation All In*. This Secretary-approved operation, the first of its kind within the Department, synchronized intelligence-gathering, investigation, and interdiction cross-Component efforts against known human-smuggling facilitators across the SWB and parts of the interior United States. As a result of *Operation All In*, 204 targets with extensive ties to human smuggling

networks, who had been operating up to that point with impunity and profiting financially from this criminal enterprise, were identified and encountered. Based on the initial success of *Operation All In*, the DHS Secretary approved this operational concept as an open-ended, steady-state enforcement effort.

Recognizing that DHS is not alone in the fight against TCOs, JTF-W, through the integrated Corridor structure, actively partners with numerous other federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, as well as international partners. These partnerships are critical to JTF-W's ability to coordinate operations to disrupt and dismantle TCOs engaged in illicit smuggling activities across the JOA. Of note, prosecutors accepted 97% of the *Operation All In* targets that were presented for criminal prosecution at either the federal or state level, demonstrating the high-degree of external coordination between law enforcement and prosecuting attorneys.

In the international arena, JTF-W prioritizes its efforts to advance border and regional security in alignment with DHS's International Engagement Strategy, and supporting the binational programs with the government of Mexico, and in the near future, Central America. These initiatives, which are coordinated through existing mechanisms at the attaché, component, and Department level, advance border security through binational partnerships, foreign country capacity building, and enhanced international engagement.

In addition to these enforcement efforts, JTF-W has leveraged internal and external relationships as part of a public messaging campaign. For example, JTF-W has created an ongoing series of short videos as a cost-neutral effort to deter illegal migration and raise awareness of the atrocities, abuses, extortion, and natural hazards migrants will encounter on their journey. These videos, which are produced internally using organic resources and personnel, received extensive distribution both domestically and abroad. To date, three videos have been viewed 555,000 times via multiple social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and have been broadcast by Univision, Telemundo, and other Spanish-language television outlets.

Next Steps

President Trump recently issued two executive orders¹ that direct additional tools and resources for securing the southern border – to prevent illegal immigration, drug and human trafficking, and acts of terrorism. The executive orders also prioritize enforcement of Federal law in order to thwart TCOs and other groups engaged in illicit activities that present a threat to public safety and national security. Specifically, per Secretary Kelly's February 20, 2017, implementation memo,² JTF-W will plan and implement enhanced counter-network operations directed at disrupting TCOs, particularly those involved in human smuggling. Working with our Federal,

¹ Executive Order 13767: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements, January 25, 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/25/executive-order-border-security-and-immigration-enforcement-improvements>; and Executive Order 13773: Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/09/presidential-executive-order-enforcing-federal-law-respect-transnational>

² Memo: Implementing the President's Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements Policies. February 20, 2017. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/17_0220_S1_Implementing-the-Presidents-Border-Security-Immigration-Enforcement-Improvement-Policies.pdf.

state, and local law enforcement partners, the JTF-W will target individuals and organizations whose criminal conduct undermines border security or the integrity of the immigration system, including offenses related to alien smuggling or trafficking, drug trafficking, illegal entry and reentry, visa fraud, identity theft, unlawful possession or use of official documents, and acts of violence committed against persons or property at or near the border. We will take all appropriate steps to implement the provisions of the President's executive orders, which support the Department's efforts to disrupt and dismantle TCOs that are fortifying their illicit networks in the border region.

Moving forward, JTF-W, through its coordination and collaboration efforts, will support DHS Secretary Kelly's vision for the Joint Task Forces to enhance counter-network operations directed at disrupting TCOs impacting the SWB. Our efforts will remain focused on human smuggling TCOs and illicit networks, while additionally targeting those involved in drug trafficking, currency smuggling, and other related cross-border crimes. Through integration, collaboration, and coordination efforts, JTF-W will prioritize efforts to disrupt and dismantle TCOs and illicit networks presenting the greatest risk to the Homeland.

JTF-W will continue to evaluate, refine, and institutionalize processes and procedures to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. We will expand investigative and operational reach by leveraging domestic and international partners to increase intelligence and information sharing and coordinate law enforcement actions beyond the SWB region. This same approach will be instrumental in enhancing domestic relationships with federal, state, and local law enforcement partners to effectively share information and optimize enforcement actions against those illicit organizations that threaten the security of the SWB and its approaches. This whole of government approach will enable DHS and its partners to attack TCOs and illicit networks at their most vulnerable points, regardless of where they reside.

Conclusion

DHS is committed to mitigating the threats posed by TCOs operating along the SWB. With continued support from Congress, JTF-W will support Component efforts to disrupt and dismantle TCOs by improving the coordination and collaboration with all partners, foreign and domestic. The JTF-W counter-network strategy will expand the enforcement zone from point-of-origin to point-of-destination; including transit zones, the southern border, and the approaches, harnessing the collective capabilities of DHS and its partners through a Unity of Effort.

Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and distinguished Members of Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As I mentioned earlier, DHS is embarking on a new era of joint operational planning and operations. TCOs recognize no borders or authorities. The only way to attack an enemy of this nature is to leverage the collective capabilities of DHS, partner agencies, and governments. JTF-W will continue to employ its counter-network strategy against TCOs and illicit networks to enhance the safety, security, and prosperity of the Homeland. I look forward to your questions.