



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON  
**NATURAL RESOURCES**  
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

**To:** Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Republican Members  
**From:** Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Staff,  
Michelle Lane ([Michelle.Lane@mail.house.gov](mailto:Michelle.Lane@mail.house.gov)) and Lucas Drill  
([Lucas.Drill@mail.house.gov](mailto:Lucas.Drill@mail.house.gov)); x5-0500  
**Date:** Monday, July 21, 2025  
**Subject:** Oversight Hearing titled *“Examining the Trump Administration’s Work  
Combating Transnational Cartels in Indian Country”*

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The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will hold an oversight hearing titled *“Examining the Trump Administration’s Work Combating Transnational Cartels in Indian Country”* on **Tuesday, July 22, 2025, at 2:30 p.m. in room 1334 Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Jace McNaught ([Jace.McNaught@mail.house.gov](mailto:Jace.McNaught@mail.house.gov)) by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, July 21, 2025, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

## **I. KEY MESSAGES**

- The House Committee on Natural Resources has repeatedly highlighted the ways in which international criminal cartels, like the Sinaloa and the Jalisco New Generation cartels, target tribal communities—not only along the southern border, but also as far north as Montana and Wyoming—to expand their criminal enterprises.
- The Biden administration embraced radical-leftist, open-border policies, allowing illegal immigration to reach record highs and embroiling the nation in an unprecedented crisis that had an outsized impact on Indian country.
- From the moment President Trump began his second term, he and Congressional Republicans have worked together to secure the border. Through Executive Orders (EOs) and legislation like the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBB), the efficacy of Republican efforts to secure America’s southern border is undeniable.
- President Trump’s EO 14157, “Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists,” equips law enforcement agencies with new tools to prevent international criminal cartels from further harming tribal communities and the United States.

## II. WITNESSES

### Panel I (Administration Witnesses)

- **Mr. Charles Addington**, Principal Director of Justice Services and Law Enforcement for Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC
- **Mr. Justin Garris**, Acting Section Chief, Violent Crimes Unit, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC

### Panel II (Outside Experts)

- **The Hon. Frank White Clay**, Chairman, Crow Tribe, Billings, MT
- **Mr. Joshua Roberge**, Chief of Police, Fort Belknap Law Enforcement, Fort Belknap, MT
- **Ms. Stacy Zinn**, former Resident in Charge, Rocky Mountain Division, Drug Enforcement Administration, Billings, MT
- **Mr. Anthony Hillaire**, Chairman, Lummi Nation, Bellingham, WA [*Minority witness*]

## III. BACKGROUND

### *Looking Back: The Rise of Criminal Cartels Targeting Indian Country Under the Biden Administration*

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) has highlighted that criminal cartels, like the Sinaloa and the Jalisco New Generation cartels, and other notorious criminal organizations, like Tren de Aragua, MS-13, and 18th Street Gang, often target federal lands and Indian country along the southern border.<sup>1</sup> These nefarious organizations target such areas as far north as Montana and Wyoming to expand their criminal enterprises.<sup>2</sup> Cartels and gangs are attracted to federal and tribal land due to higher narcotics prices,<sup>3</sup> vast expanses of rural and frequently unpatrolled terrain, and ongoing jurisdictional challenges that complicate and delay law enforcement responses.<sup>4</sup>

Along the border, cartel-related smuggling activities and associated violence deprive the public of safe access to federal lands and cause significant damage to local environments. Dangerous criminal cartels also have a history of cultivating illegal marijuana on federal lands to help fund

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<sup>1</sup> *Biden's Border Crisis: Examining Efforts to Combat International Criminal Cartels & Stop Illegal Drug Trafficking Targeting Indian Country: Oversight Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Natural Resources*, 118th Cong. (June 4, 2024), <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=416080>; *Biden's Border Crisis: Examining the Impacts of International Cartels Targeting Indian Country: Oversight Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Natural Resources*, 118th Cong. (Apr. 10, 2024), <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=415813>.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., *Biden's Border Crisis: Examining the Impacts of International Cartels Targeting Indian Country: Oversight Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Natural Resources*, 118th Cong. (Apr. 10, 2024) (hearing memorandum), [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing\\_memo\\_-\\_sub\\_on\\_oi\\_ov\\_hrg\\_on\\_cartel\\_activity\\_on\\_tribal\\_lands\\_04.10.24\\_v.2.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing_memo_-_sub_on_oi_ov_hrg_on_cartel_activity_on_tribal_lands_04.10.24_v.2.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Cavazuti, et al., *Mexican drug cartels are targeting America's 'last best place'*, NBC NEWS (Feb. 10, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mexican-drug-cartels-are-targeting-americas-last-great-place-rcna130822>.

<sup>4</sup> *Methamphetamine in Indian Country: An American Problem Uniquely Affecting Indian Country*, The National Congress of American Indians (Nov. 2006), [https://www.justice.gov/archive/tribal/docs/fv\\_tjs/session\\_1/session1\\_presentations/Meth\\_Overview.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/archive/tribal/docs/fv_tjs/session_1/session1_presentations/Meth_Overview.pdf).

other illicit activities.<sup>5</sup> In rural Indian country, drugs can be sold for “20 times the price they get in urban centers closer to the border.”<sup>6</sup> These high prices contribute to increased crime on tribal reservations, as opioid addicts often turn to dealing drugs themselves or committing other harmful crimes, often to further criminal cartel objectives, in their communities to support their expensive habits.<sup>7</sup>

During his tenure, President Biden embraced a radical-leftist, open-border platform by weakening America’s immigration laws and reducing border security through executive action.<sup>8</sup> Illegal immigration reached an all-time high under the former president’s watch, embroiling the nation in an unprecedented crisis.<sup>9</sup> The average number of monthly border encounters during Biden’s presidency was nearly 160,000, while the daily average peaked at 15,000.<sup>10</sup> In total, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) recorded approximately 11 million border encounters during this four-year period.<sup>11</sup>

Unprecedented illegal drug figures accompanied the Biden administration’s staggering border violation statistics. Under President Biden, approximately 64,000 pounds of fentanyl was seized at the southern border—enough fentanyl to kill 14 billion people.<sup>12</sup> During Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, alone, the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ (BIA) Office of Justice Services (OJS) seized 1,097,671 fentanyl pills; 1,846 pounds of methamphetamine; 98 pounds of fentanyl powder; 11,411 pounds of marijuana; 23 pounds of heroin; and 1,418 pounds of cocaine in Indian country.<sup>13</sup> Alarming, these numbers represent only a small fraction of the fentanyl and other dangerous drugs that were successfully smuggled into the United States and Indian country.<sup>14</sup> Despite these astronomical drug numbers, the Biden administration oversaw a mere 113,000 administrative arrests in FY 2024 and willingly released hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens into the United States.<sup>15</sup>

President Biden’s open-border policies also undermined the considerable progress that had been made under the first Trump administration to secure the southern border and protect tribal

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<sup>5</sup> Noel King and Eric Westervelt, *Illegal Pot Operations In Public Forests Are Poisoning Wildlife And Water*, NPR (Nov. 12, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/773122043>.

<sup>6</sup> Lisa Cavazuti, et al., *Mexican drug cartels are targeting America’s ‘last best place’*, NBC NEWS (Feb. 10, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mexican-drug-cartels-are-targeting-americas-last-great-place-rcna130822>.

<sup>7</sup> See *Fentanyl in Native Communities: Native Perspective on Addressing the Growing Crisis: Hearing before the Senate Comm. on Indian Affairs, 118th Cong.* (2023) (Statement of Bryce Kirk, Councilman, Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation), <https://www.congress.gov/118/chr/CHRG-118shrg55193/CHRG-118shrg55193.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Jessica M. Vaughan, *Biden Border Policies Are Working Fine — For the Cartels*, CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES (Feb. 5, 2024), <https://cis.org/Vaughan/Biden-Border-Policies-Are-Working-Fine-Cartels>.

<sup>9</sup> See *100 Days of The Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/04/28/100-days-most-secure-border-american-history>; *Nationwide Encounters*, U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters>; *Southwest Land Border Encounters*, U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION, <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>.

<sup>10</sup> *100 Days of The Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/04/28/100-days-most-secure-border-american-history>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Fentanyl in Native Communities: Examining the Federal Response to the Growing Crisis: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on Indian Affairs, 118th Cong.* (2023) (statement of R. Glen Melville, Deputy Bureau Director for the Office of Justice Services at the Bureau of Indian Affairs), <https://www.congress.gov/118/chr/CHRG-118shrg55193/CHRG-118shrg55193.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> See *100 Days of The Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/04/28/100-days-most-secure-border-american-history>.

communities. In 2018, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the BIA OJS established the DOI Joint Opioid Reduction Task Force in Indian Country.<sup>16</sup> In just the first two years of its existence, the task force successfully led 29 operations across seven states and seized nearly 6,000 pounds of illegal narcotics from tribal communities.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, the massive number of illegal crossings and smuggling at the southern border under President Biden overwhelmed law enforcement agencies and facilitated crime across the United States, including in Indian country. International criminal cartels exploited the “Biden Border Crisis” to spread their wave of violent terror and traffic some of the most dangerous illicit drugs deep into the U.S. and into tribal communities.<sup>18</sup> The cartels targeted Indian country to establish extensive distribution networks for fentanyl and other drugs,<sup>19</sup> leading to an increase in violence, sex trafficking,<sup>20</sup> crime,<sup>21</sup> and drug overdoses<sup>22</sup> in tribal communities. The devastation wrought by these cartel activities—made possible only through reckless, open-border policies—touches every corner of Native communities, “from the young to the old and without regard to gender or any other demographic.”<sup>23</sup>

Recognizing the open border’s disproportionate impact on tribal communities, the Committee’s Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations (Subcommittee) held a hearing, on April 10, 2024, titled “Biden’s Border Crisis: Examining the Impacts of International Cartels Targeting Indian Country.”<sup>24</sup> Tribal leaders provided extensive testimony on the alarming extent of the cartels’ presence in their communities, particularly the establishment of drug trafficking hubs on tribal reservations.<sup>25</sup> The witnesses also described ongoing challenges, including the insufficient

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<sup>16</sup> *Trump Administration Seized More Than 2,600 Pounds of Illegal Narcotics in Indian Country Last Year*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR (Aug. 24, 2020), <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/trump-administration-seized-more-2600-pounds-illegal-narcotics-indian-country-last>.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *See 100 Days of The Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/04/28/100-days-most-secure-border-american-history>.

<sup>19</sup> *Methamphetamine in Indian Country: An American Problem Uniquely Affecting Indian Country*, The National Congress of American Indians (November, 2006), [https://www.justice.gov/archive/tribal/docs/fv\\_tjs/session\\_1/session1\\_presentations/Meth\\_Overview.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/archive/tribal/docs/fv_tjs/session_1/session1_presentations/Meth_Overview.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> *See Arianna Amehae, Filmmaker Warns of Increased Vulnerabilities for Indigenous Women and Girls with Impending Flood of Methamphetamine to Indian Country in 2022*, NATIVE NEWS ONLINE (Jan. 15, 2022), <https://nativenewsonline.net/health/filmmaker-warns-of-increased-vulnerabilities-for-indigenous-women-and-girls-with-impending-flood-of-methamphetamine-to-indian-country-in-2022>.

<sup>21</sup> *Fentanyl in Native Communities: Native Perspective on Addressing the Growing Crisis: Hearing before the Senate Comm. on Indian Affairs, 118th Cong.* (2023) (Statement of Bryce Kirk, Councilman, Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation), <https://www.congress.gov/118/chrq/CHRG-118shrg55193/CHRG-118shrg55193.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> *Fentanyl in Native Communities: Federal Perspectives on Addressing the Growing Crisis: Hearing before the Senate Comm. on Indian Affairs, 118th Cong.* (2023) (Statement of Glen Melville, Deputy Bureau Director, Office of Justice Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs), <https://www.congress.gov/118/chrq/CHRG-118shrg55193/CHRG-118shrg55193.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> *Fentanyl in Native Communities: Native Perspective on Addressing the Growing Crisis: Hearing before the Senate Comm. on Indian Affairs, 118th Cong.* (2023) (Statement of Bryce Kirk, Councilman, Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation), <https://www.congress.gov/118/chrq/CHRG-118shrg55193/CHRG-118shrg55193.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> *Biden’s Border Crisis: Examining the Impacts of International Cartels Targeting Indian Country: Oversight Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 118th Cong.* (Apr. 10, 2024) (hearing memorandum), [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing\\_memo\\_-\\_sub\\_on\\_oi\\_ov\\_hrg\\_on\\_cartel\\_activity\\_on\\_tribal\\_lands\\_04.10.24\\_v.2.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing_memo_-_sub_on_oi_ov_hrg_on_cartel_activity_on_tribal_lands_04.10.24_v.2.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> *Examining the Impacts of International Cartels Targeting Indian Country: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Natural Resources, 118th Cong.* (2024) (statement of Bryce Kirk, Tribal Executive Board Member, Fort Peck Tribes; statement of Jeffrey Stiffarm, President, Fort Belknap Indian Community), [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony\\_kirk.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony_kirk.pdf).

presence of federal law enforcement personnel and resources on tribal reservations to prevent cartel activities and related crimes.<sup>26</sup>

On June 4, 2024, the Subcommittee held a follow-up hearing titled “Biden’s Border Crisis: Examining Efforts to Combat International Criminal Cartels & Stop Illegal Drug Trafficking Targeting Indian Country.”<sup>27</sup> There, the Director of the BIA, and current and former law enforcement officials, including tribal law enforcement officers, testified on the need for increased enforcement operations; various coordination and jurisdictional challenges facing federal, state, and tribal agencies; the spread and depth of criminal cartel activities on federal and tribal lands; and the need for increased law enforcement resources to combat the drugs and crime pouring into the United States from the southern border during the Biden administration.<sup>28</sup>

### ***President Trump and Congressional Republicans Create the Most Secure Border in Modern American History***

From the moment President Trump began his second term, he and Republicans in Congress have worked together to create the most secure border in modern American history.<sup>29</sup> In fact, immediately upon taking office, President Trump issued myriad EOs and proclamations to reestablish America’s sovereignty and the rule of law, and ensure that Americans across the nation could once again live without fearing the “cartels, criminal gangs, known terrorists, human traffickers, smugglers, unvetted military-age males from foreign adversaries, and illicit narcotics” flooding our southern border.<sup>30</sup> These presidential actions include “Declaring a National Emergency at the Southern Border of the United States,”<sup>31</sup> “Guaranteeing the States Protection Against Invasion,”<sup>32</sup> “Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists,”<sup>33</sup> “Protecting the American

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<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> *Biden’s Border Crisis: Examining Efforts to Combat International Criminal Cartels & Stop Illegal Drug Trafficking Targeting Indian Country: Oversight Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Natural Resources*, 118th Cong. (June 4, 2024) (hearing memorandum), [https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing\\_memo\\_-\\_sub\\_on\\_oi\\_ov\\_hrg\\_06.04.24\\_v.2.pdf](https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing_memo_-_sub_on_oi_ov_hrg_06.04.24_v.2.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> *Biden’s Border Crisis: Examining Efforts to Combat International Criminal Cartels & Stop Illegal Drug Trafficking Targeting Indian Country: Oversight Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Natural Resources*, 118th Cong. (June 4, 2024), <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=416080>.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., *100 Days of The Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/04/28/100-days-most-secure-border-american-history>; *DHS Shatters Nationwide Border Records, Once Again Delivering the Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (July 2, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/07/02/dhs-shatters-nationwide-border-records-once-again-delivering-most-secure-border>; *March numbers show most secure border in history - operational control is becoming a reality*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Apr. 1, 2025), <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/national-media-release/march-numbers-show-most-secure-border-history-operational-control>; see also Secretary Noem Commends President Trump and One Big Beautiful Bill Signing into Law: Historic Win for the American People and the Rule of Law, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (July 4, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/07/04/secretary-noem-commends-president-trump-and-one-big-beautiful-bill-signing-law>.

<sup>30</sup> Proclamation No. 10886, 90 Fed. Reg. 8327 (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/29/2025-01948/declaring-a-national-emergency-at-the-southern-border-of-the-united-states>.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

<sup>32</sup> Proclamation No. 10888, 90 Fed. Reg. 8333 (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/29/2025-01951/guaranteeing-the-states-protection-against-invasion>.

<sup>33</sup> Exec. Order No. 14157, 90 Fed. Reg. 8439 (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/29/2025-02004/designating-cartels-and-other-organizations-as-foreign-terrorist-organizations-and-specially>.

People Against Invasion,”<sup>34</sup> “Securing Our Borders,”<sup>35</sup> and “Protecting American Communities from Criminal Aliens.”<sup>36</sup>

Congressional Republicans also worked with the Trump administration to pass the OBBB in July 2025. Among other accomplishments, the OBBB secured a historic \$165 billion of funding for border security, including for completion of the southern border wall, hiring and equipping thousands of additional CBP and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel, launching and operating new border surveillance technologies, expanding criminal alien detention capacity, and increasing coordination among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.<sup>37</sup> This legislative victory builds upon other key Congressional achievements during the 119th Congress, such as passing the Laken Riley Act, which mandates federal detention of illegal immigrants charged with “theft, burglary, assaulting a law enforcement officer, [or] any crime that causes death or serious bodily injury.” The law is named in honor of a Georgia nursing student who was murdered by an illegal alien previously arrested and paroled in the United States.<sup>38</sup>

In the first 100 days of President Trump’s second term, illegal migrant crossings were down by 99.99 percent, encounters with “gotaways” were down by 95 percent, and daily border encounters were down by 93 percent compared to the Biden administration.<sup>39</sup> In June 2025, CBP reported that it “had the lowest number of nationwide encounters in CBP history at 25,243.”<sup>40</sup> That figure was “12% lower than the previous record set by President Trump in February 2025” and “89% lower than the monthly average for years 2021-2024,” when President Biden was in office.<sup>41</sup> Importantly, in June 2025, “for the second month in a row, [U.S. Border Patrol] reported zero releases—reinforcing the Administration’s commitment to ending catch-and-release policies.”<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, under President Trump, fentanyl trafficking at the southern border fell by 54 percent, as 1,500 kilograms of the drug have been seized.<sup>43</sup> More than 6,000 drug traffickers and 151,000

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<sup>34</sup> Exec. Order No. 14159, 90 Fed. Reg. 8443 (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/29/2025-02006/protecting-the-american-people-against-invasion>.

<sup>35</sup> Exec. Order No. 14165, 90 Fed. Reg. 8467 (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/30/2025-02015/securing-our-borders>.

<sup>36</sup> Exec. Order No. 14287, 90 Fed. Reg. 18761 (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/05/02/2025-07789/protecting-american-communities-from-criminal-aliens>.

<sup>37</sup> See *Secretary Noem Commends President Trump and One Big Beautiful Bill Signing into Law: Historic Win for the American People and the Rule of Law*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (July 4, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/07/04/secretary-noem-commends-president-trump-and-one-big-beautiful-bill-signing-law>.

<sup>38</sup> *President Trump Signs the Laken Riley Act into Law*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Jan. 29, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/01/29/president-trump-signs-laken-riley-act-law>; see also Laken Riley Act, S. 5, 119th Cong. (2025) (enacted).

<sup>39</sup> See *100 Days of The Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/04/28/100-days-most-secure-border-american-history>.

<sup>40</sup> *DHS Shatters Nationwide Border Records, Once Again Delivering the Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (July 2, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/07/02/dhs-shatters-nationwide-border-records-once-again-delivering-most-secure-border>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> See *100 Days of The Most Secure Border in American History*, U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/04/28/100-days-most-secure-border-american-history>.

illegal aliens have been arrested,<sup>44</sup> while more than 135,000 illegal aliens have been deported.<sup>45</sup> These numbers include at least 600 arrested or deported members of Tren De Aragua and thousands of MS-13 and 18th Street Gang members who have fled the United States.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, President Trump’s first 100 days in office saw a 317 percent increase in cross-jurisdiction partnership agreements to help fight the cartels, which has had a powerful and immediate impact in removing cartel agents from tribal communities.<sup>47</sup> For example, in April 2025, a federal jury convicted an affiliate of the Jalisco Cartel for trafficking hundreds of pounds of fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine, and cocaine in Washington’s and Montana’s Indian country.<sup>48</sup> The case was prosecuted by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force, which includes federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement.<sup>49</sup>

Accordingly, by realizing the most secure southern border in modern American History, President Trump and Republicans in Congress have made significant and ongoing progress to end the reign of terror imposed by international criminal cartels that have long targeted Native American communities across the country.

### ***Designating Cartels and Other International Criminal Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists***

Beyond his success in securing the border, President Trump has worked to defang the international criminal cartels and other organizations that prey on Indian country. On the first day of his second term, President Trump issued EO 14157, “Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists,” to combat the havoc wreaked by these criminal organizations on Indian country, federal lands, and other communities throughout the United States.<sup>50</sup> This EO made clear that “[i]nternational cartels constitute a national-security threat beyond that posed by traditional organized crime” and that cartels have “engaged in a campaign of violence and terror throughout the Western Hemisphere that has not only destabilized countries with significant importance for our national interests but also flooded the United States with deadly drugs, violent criminals, and vicious gangs.”<sup>51</sup> More specifically, the EO recognizes that criminal cartels “functionally control, through a campaign of assassination, terror, rape, and brute force nearly all illegal traffic across the southern border of the United States” and “threaten the safety of the American people, the security of the United States, and the stability of the international order in the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>52</sup> And though the cartels’ “activities, proximity to, and incursions into the physical

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<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> *Id.*

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

<sup>48</sup> *Washington Jury Finds Mexican National with Ties to the Jalisco Cartel Guilty of Trafficking in Hundreds of Pounds of Fentanyl, Heroin, Methamphetamine, and Cocaine in Eastern Washington and Montana*, U.S. DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION (Apr. 18, 2025), <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2025/04/18/washington-jury-finds-mexican-national-ties-jalisco-cartel-guilty>.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

<sup>50</sup> Exec. Order No. 14157, 90 Fed. Reg. 8439 (Jan. 20, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/29/2025-02004/designating-cartels-and-other-organizations-as-foreign-terrorist-organizations-and-specially>.

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

territory of the United States pose an unacceptable national security risk to the United States” as a whole, the impacts of cartel activities are perhaps most outsized in vulnerable Indian country.<sup>53</sup>

Following the instructions of EO 14157, Attorney General Pam Bondi issued a Department of Justice (DOJ) memorandum titled “Total Elimination of Cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations.”<sup>54</sup> This memorandum outlined the DOJ’s new emphasis on investigating and prosecuting criminal cartels to extinction by expanding the crimes with which cartel affiliates are charged, removing bureaucratic impediments to aggressive prosecutions, and increasing cooperation among federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, considering EO 14157, the U.S. Department of State formally designated numerous criminal cartels, including the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels that threaten Indian country, as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs).<sup>56</sup> These designations unlock new investigative and prosecutorial tools for law enforcement agencies. Importantly, FTO and SDGT designations block cartels and their affiliates from accessing the U.S. financial system and prohibit anyone from transacting with cartels or cartel affiliates.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the designations create new criminal and civil liabilities, including litigation risks, not only for the cartels themselves, but also for those who do business with the cartels and cartel agents. In fact, “[p]roviding material support to FTOs is a crime punishable by civil and criminal penalties, including up to life in prison.”<sup>58</sup> Moreover, “[u]nder American law, material support can include anything from providing transportation or communications equipment to funds or financial services,” and federal law enforcement agencies are empowered to investigate, prosecute, and sanction cartels and their affiliates anywhere in the world.<sup>59</sup>

Crucially, these risks extend to “those individuals and entities that may not know of or suspect a connection to drug trafficking but that nonetheless may be sued under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) on a theory that they had constructive knowledge or ‘should have known’ of an alleged connection to a designated cartel or its agents or affiliates.”<sup>60</sup> Additionally, “[i]ndividuals or entities may also face heightened scrutiny from the US government as it seeks to investigate and prosecute those most closely connected to the newly designated FTOs; additional regulatory obligations, particularly with respect to US financial institutions’ obligations to freeze and report on FTO funds; and increased risks of being subject to secondary sanctions.”<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, as individuals and organizations seek to insulate themselves from investigatory risks and liabilities,

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<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> *Total Elimination of Cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations*, OFF. OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/ag/media/1388546/dl?inline>.

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

<sup>56</sup> *Designation of International Cartels*, U.S. DEPT. OF STATE (Feb. 20, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/designation-of-international-cartels/>.

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> Walter Kemp, *A Game Changer? Designating Criminal Groups as Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (Apr. 24, 2025), <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/designating-criminal-groups-as-foreign-terrorist-organizations/>.

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*

<sup>60</sup> *Implications of EO 14157 and Recent “Foreign Terrorist Organization” and “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” Designations*, WILMERHALE (Apr. 22, 2025), <https://www.wilmerhale.com/en/insights/client-alerts/20250422-implications-of-eo-14157-and-recent-foreign-terrorist-organization-and-specially-designated-global-terrorist-designations>.

<sup>61</sup> *Id.*



the cartels designated as FTOs and SDGTs are slowly choked and starved of the financial oxygen necessary to operate across international borders.

Put simply, designating criminal cartels, including those that specifically target Indian country, as FTOs and SDGTs, gives the federal government and law enforcement agencies “new and necessary powers to combat and defeat” these criminal organizations and ensure that those Native American communities ravaged by criminal cartel activities can more effectively fight back.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Looking Forward: Eradicating Criminal Cartels Still Operating in Indian Country***

According to recent information obtained by the Committee, federal law enforcement agencies are currently involved in between 4,000 and 5,000 criminal investigations in Indian country, many of which involve violent and drug crimes.<sup>63</sup> These federal law enforcement agencies operate dozens of joint task forces, including the Safe Trails Task Force, with more than 500 task force members spanning the FBI, DEA, DHS, BIA, and local tribal law enforcement.<sup>64</sup>

Although investigations remain in early stages, federal law enforcement agencies and task force members are keenly aware of how FTO and SDGT designations for criminal organizations can be used to eradicate these cartels by charging cartel agents, affiliates, and supporters with material support or financing terrorism. The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has already begun to sanction Mexican nationals and Mexico-based entities involved in drug trafficking associated with the Jalisco New Generation cartel.<sup>65</sup> After the U.S. designated cartels as FTOs and SDGTs, Mexico expelled nearly 30 cartel members and associates to face charges in the United States.<sup>66</sup>

Since President Trump took office, law enforcement officials have confiscated approximately 4,000 pounds of hard drugs from operations in Indian country and have seen a 27 percent decrease in drug poisonings.<sup>67</sup> Just this month, thirteen individuals, at least some of whom were criminal aliens, were charged with, or pleaded guilty to, offenses related to trafficking fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana on the Yakama Nation Reservation in Washington State.<sup>68</sup> The joint DEA and BIA operation, which concluded in June 2025, “seized 7,100 pounds of marijuana, 336 pounds of methamphetamine, nearly 25 pounds of cocaine, 7 pounds of fentanyl power, 4,704 fentanyl laced pills, \$22,512 in drug proceeds, and 12 firearms” to date.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Arming America to Win: Designating the Mexican Cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs)*, TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION AND AMERICA FIRST POLICY INSTITUTE (Jan. 2025), [https://www.americafirstpolicy.com/assets/uploads/files/Arming\\_America\\_to\\_Win\\_Designating\\_Mexican\\_Cartels\\_as\\_Foreign\\_Terrorist\\_Organizations.pdf](https://www.americafirstpolicy.com/assets/uploads/files/Arming_America_to_Win_Designating_Mexican_Cartels_as_Foreign_Terrorist_Organizations.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Notes from June 10, 2025, federal law enforcement briefing on file with the Committee.

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> *Treasury Targets Major Mexican Cartel Involved in Fentanyl Trafficking and Fuel Theft*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE TREASURY (May 1, 2025), <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0125>; *Treasury Issues Historic Orders under Powerful New Authority to Counter Fentanyl*, U.S. DEPT. OF THE TREASURY (June 25, 2025), <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0179>.

<sup>66</sup> Notes from June 10, 2025, federal law enforcement briefing on file with the Committee.

<sup>67</sup> *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> *DEA Operation Overdrive Targets Fentanyl Traffickers on the Yakama Nation Indian Reservation, Thirteen Charged, Thousands of Pounds of Drugs Seized*, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (July 14, 2025), <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2025/07/14/dea-operation-overdrive-targets-fentanyl-traffickers-yakama-nation-indian>.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

The fentanyl powder and pills alone yielded enough doses to kill approximately 250,000 people, or “every member of the Yakama Nation more than eight times over.”<sup>70</sup>

To be clear, the war against cartels in Indian country and on federal lands is just beginning. As the Biden Border Crisis proliferated, criminal cartels extended their international reach, partnering with Chinese entities to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars to fund operations across the United States and infiltrate tribal communities.<sup>71</sup> Now, the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans are working together to secure America’s southern border through issue-tailored EOs and passing legislation like the OBBB. With these tools, federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies must continue fighting until criminal cartels no longer operate in Indian country, on federal lands, or elsewhere in the United States.

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<sup>70</sup> *Id.*

<sup>71</sup> Notes from June 10, 2025, federal law enforcement briefing on file with the Committee.