

**DEFEATING A SOPHISTICATED AND DANGEROUS  
ADVERSARY: ARE THE NEW BORDER SECURITY  
TASK FORCES THE RIGHT APPROACH?**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
BORDER AND  
MARITIME SECURITY**

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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## **DEFEATING A SOPHISTICATED AND DANGEROUS ADVERSARY: ARE THE NEW BORDER SECURITY TASK FORCES THE RIGHT APPROACH?**

**Tuesday, April 4, 2017**

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in Room HVC-210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. Martha McSally [Chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McSally, Duncan, Hurd, Rutherford, Vela, Correa, Demings, and Barragan.

Ms. MCSALLY. The Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security will come to order. The subcommittee is meeting today to examine the threat posed by drug cartels and transnational criminal organizations and the Department's unified effort to defeat those threats.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

At the subcommittee's first hearing this Congress, we examined the advanced techniques and tactics utilized by our adversary to evade or circumvent our border security efforts. Obscene profit margins power the cartel's ability to be creative, nimble, and entrepreneurial as they smuggle vast quantities of illicit drugs across the border.

Threats posed to the Nation by transnational criminal organizations whose influence extends beyond the immediate border zone and into the major metropolitan areas of the Nation, is a National security challenge.

Now that we better understand the lengths to which the cartels will go to make the billions of dollars that they net every year, I want to shift our focus to the Department of Homeland Security's collective response and potential solutions for this immense task.

I believe we should begin with the development of a counter-network approach that looks to disrupting every level of cartel operations. From the low-level scout on an Arizona hilltop guiding drug loads away from Border Patrol agents, to the local plaza boss taxing the movement of drugs and people through his area, to the cartel kingpins at the very top of the Sinaloa cartel.

General Stanley McChrystal is famous for his phrase, "It takes a network to defeat a network." That thinking can and should be

applied to the problem set of trying to defeat an insidious adversary that brings death and ruin to so many.

Does DHS have a friendly network to defeat the cartel's network? This is the question that we are starting to look at today. Do we have a coherent transnational criminal organizational strategy and, most importantly, is the Department of Homeland Security organized in a way that sets us up for success? I look forward to discussing those questions in greater detail with our witnesses today.

As part of the Executive Order on transnational crime recently signed by the President, the Secretary of State, the attorney general and the Secretary of Homeland Security and the director of national intelligence are all asked to improve the coordination of Federal agencies' efforts to identify, interdict, investigate, prosecute, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations. I will be interested in learning what role DHS will play in this administration's increased focus on TCOs.

Beyond our strategic approach to counter the cartels, we need to be properly organized to fight them as well. In 2003, the Department of Homeland Security was created from 22 disparate agencies. It should not be surprising that there would be significant growing pains before the agency would function as a truly unified Department.

Each component of the Department, be it CBP, ICE, or the Coast Guard, has a tendency to operate in its own silo, without coordination required to make border and maritime security efforts successful, not to mention reducing redundancy and overlap. This can have negative effects on logistics, communications, and, most importantly, operations.

Several years ago, then-Secretary Johnson took a page from the Department of Defense playbook and created three joint task forces in an attempt to eliminate stovepipes and foster unity of effort along the border.

Two of these task forces, JTF-East and West, are geographically based. While one, JTF-Investigations is a functional task force. The goal was simple: Establish a streamlined and unified structure that prioritizes border security operations and investigations against the most meaningful cartel actors.

This committee, working with our Senate counterparts, provided a temporary 6-year authorization for the joint task force, which was included in last year's National Defense Authorization Act.

The intent was to allow the concept to mature and provide ample opportunity for the Department to demonstrate to this committee that organizational structure has measurably contributed to border security that would not have happened in the absence of these task forces.

In drafting the authorization, we expressly borrowed several concepts from the Department of Defense, including joint duty training, and joint duty assignments to foster a culture and operational mindset that we hope will transform the way that DHS conducts border security operations. Having done some joint assignments and joint training myself, I am uniquely interested in seeing how this applies and translates over to DHS.

Today is the very first time Congress has held a hearing on new border security joint task forces, so I look forward to hearing from

the commanders as we discuss how best to counter the growing sophistication of the Mexican cartels and the serious National security threat that they pose.

[The statement of Chairwoman McSally follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN MARTHA MCSALLY

APRIL 4, 2017

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Gen. Stanley McChrystal is famous for the phrase, "It takes a network to defeat a network," and that thinking can and should be applied to the problem set of trying to defeat an insidious adversary that brings death and ruin to so many. Does DHS have a "friendly" network to defeat the cartel's network? Do we have a coherent transnational criminal organization strategy and more importantly is the Department of Homeland Security organized in a way that sets us up for success?

I look forward to discussing those questions in greater detail with the witnesses today.

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Today, is the very first time Congress has held a hearing on the new border security joint task forces, so I look forward to hearing from the commanders as we discuss how best to counter the growing sophistication of the Mexican cartels and the serious National security threat they pose.

Ms. MCSALLY. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Vela, for any statement he might have.

Mr. VELA. I thank the Chair for holding today's hearing to examine the Department of Homeland Security Joint Task Forces. Those of us who represent Congressional districts on the U.S.-Mexico border know first-hand the essential role several agencies within the Department of Homeland Security play in securing America's borders and facilitating legitimate trade and travel.

Integrating the operations of the 22 different agencies that came together as DHS has been a challenge since the Department commenced operations in 2003. Nowhere is this truer than for border security.

Using the Department of Defense as a guide, former Secretary Jeh Johnson established the Border Security Joint Task Forces to help ensure Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Coast Guard worked together to coordinate operations, maximize resources, and reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts.

We know drug trafficking organizations adapt quickly to any real or perceived weakness in our security, shifting to new locations along the land border, using the ports of entry to smuggle their contraband across the border, or exploiting the maritime routes into this country.

That is why it is so imperative that all of DHS work together to identify, disrupt, and dismantle the networks as quickly as they are adapted to our operations.

Each of these agencies must work together and with their Federal, State, and local counterparts if we hope to combat the cartels effectively. With that in mind, I hope to hear from our DHS witnesses today about how the Joint Task Forces are operating currently, potential next steps and the vision for the future.

I also hope to hear from our Government Accountability Office witness, about what prior DHS coordination efforts tell us about the likelihood of success with the Joint Task Forces.

Ultimately, I believe a whole-of-Government approach that includes border security, cooperation with foreign partners, and domestic demand reduction will be necessary to addressing the threat that illegal drugs and those who traffic them pose to our country. Getting DHS's role right will be essential to that important effort.

I thank the witnesses for joining us today and look forward to a productive discussion.

I yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Vela follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER FILEMON VELA

APRIL 4, 2017

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Getting DHS's role right will be essential to that important effort. I thank the witnesses for joining us today and look forward to a productive discussion.

**Ms. MCSALLY.** Other Members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

[The statement of Ranking Member Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

APRIL 4, 2017

The establishment and authorization of the Department of Homeland Security's Joint Task Forces was a major priority for former Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson. Secretary Johnson was in a position to observe first-hand many of the coordination challenges that continue to face the Department of Homeland Security, almost 15 years after its establishment.

Those of us who have conducted oversight of the Department since it was created from 22 different Federal departments and agencies also understand the effects of that legacy, which persist today.

Drawing on the example of the Department of Defense, and launched as part of a Unity of Effort campaign, the Joint Task Forces are meant to set the conditions for the Department to act in a more unified fashion.

Coordination of the border security activities of the Department in particular is critical, given the number of DHS components that play a role in the mission, including the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has closely examined issues regarding coordination among Department components and programs over the years. We are grateful to have Ms. Gambler from GAO with us today to testify about her work on border security issues and DHS coordination and share her thoughts about whether and how the Joint Task Forces can be successful.

I also want to note that the discussion about facilitating border security coordination and cooperation is moot if these agencies are not properly resourced by the Trump administration.

Hiring 15,000 Border Patrol agents and ICE agents and officers while ignoring critical CBP staffing shortages at ports of entry does not enhance our Nation's border security.

Securing the areas of the border between the ports of entry while leaving the proverbial front door to the country thousands of officers short creates glaring security vulnerability.

Similarly, slashing the Coast Guard's already lean budget makes no sense from a security perspective. Enhancing security on the land borders but crippling the

Coast Guard's ability to patrol our coasts would undermine border security, as drug traffickers will surely shift their operations to the path of least resistance.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the resources they need to fulfill their border security mission, and how the Joint Task Forces can be an important part of that effort.

Ms. MCSALLY. We are pleased to be joined today by four distinguished witnesses to discuss this important topic.

Vice Admiral Carl Schultz assumed the duties as the director of DHS Joint Task Force East in August 2016. In this role, Admiral Schultz is responsible for his joint operating area, which covers the Caribbean Ocean and eastern Pacific region and Central America.

In addition to those roles and responsibilities, Admiral Schultz served as commander, Coast Guard Defense Force East, which provides Coast Guard mission support to the Department of Defense and combatant commanders.

Commander Paul Beeson is the commander of the Joint Task Force–West, with responsibilities for security along the entire southern land border and the coast of California. Previously, Director Beeson was the commander of Joint Task Force–West Arizona and chief of the Tucson Sector Border Patrol.

Ms. Janice Ayala is the director of Joint Task Force–Investigations, which prioritizes and integrates support for criminal investigations along both Joint Task Force–West and East, to mitigate the risk of terrorism, dismantle transnational criminal organizations, and reduce illicit traffic. Previous to this assignment, Ms. Ayala served as the deputy director of Joint Task Force–West and focused integrated counter-network operations.

Ms. Rebecca Gambler is the director of the U.S. Government Accountability Office, Homeland Security and Justice team, where she leads GAO's work on border security, immigration, and Department of Homeland Security's management and transformation.

The witnesses' full written statements will appear in the record.

The Chair now recognizes Admiral Schultz for 5 minutes to testify.

**STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL KARL SCHULTZ, DIRECTOR,  
JOINT TASK FORCE–EAST, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND  
SECURITY**

Admiral SCHULTZ. Good morning, Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, Members of the subcommittee. It is a pleasure to appear today on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security, to discuss Joint Task Force East and our efforts to address transnational criminal organizations and the threats they pose to the safety and the security of the United States.

I request that my full written statement that was provided earlier, be submitted into the record, as you noted, Madam Chairwoman.

As the director of Joint Task Force–East and commander for Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains, my staffs collaborate across the Department of Homeland Security component agencies with the Department of Defense and with other inter-agency and international partners on a continual basis, to deliver operational effect against transnational criminal organizations, commonly referred within the law enforcement community as TCOs.

These TCOs are highly resilient, highly adaptive, and they require a whole-of-Government solution to thwart their illicit activities. Our roughly 40-member JTF–East team is comprised of members from Customs Border Protection, ICE, the United States Coast Guard. My two deputy directors: One is a Customs Border Protection and Marine director, and the other is from HSI.

JTF–East’s geographic area of responsibility and joint operations area is vast, as you noted, and that is included in my written statement, ma’am.

Established to enhance unity of effort, build regional cooperation, and define operational priorities, the DHS Secretary gave the task force a wide mandate to achieve effective enforcement interdiction across land, sea, and air domains in order to degrade these transnational criminal organizations, while facilitating the flow of lawful trade, legal commerce across our borders.

At Joint Task Force–East, we strive to lead the planning and coordination of DHS component, counter-network enforcement operations directed at disrupting transnational criminal organizations across our joint operating area.

To best coordinate across the many individual component operational entities, JTF–East has adopted a regional integrating group or RIG framework, with our initial focus being on the eastern RIG, which encompasses Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, a region replete with transnational criminal activity.

Under this RIG construct, our DHS components are working in close collaboration to develop standard operational plans that support regional surge operations aimed at weakening and defeating criminal networks.

Our efforts aim to enable better information sharing and the optimal utilization of high-demand, low-availability enforcement assets, such as cutters, aircraft, small boats, as well as finite intelligence, analysts, and investigators. While still nascent in our development, the benefits of improved unity of effort to DHS mission accomplishments are promising.

For example, during our November 26 surge of resources to the Puerto Rican-U.S. Virgin Island vector, JTF worked with DHS components under their standing Caribbean guard operation and with the Department of Defense to reallocate resources stationed outside the region to support the Eastern Caribbean RIG’s resource shortfalls, as well as leverage refined intelligence support from the Department of Defense’s Joint Interagency Task Force South, often referred to as JIATF–South.

The collaborative efforts enabled the arrests of 13 individuals, the interdiction of 88 migrants from both shore and sea, the seizure of 500 kilograms of cocaine, 28 kilograms of marijuana, \$77,000 in bulk cash, and two vessels.

These efforts also disrupted a Nationally-identified priority transnational criminal organization. As a director, I am pleased that the unity of effort was enhanced across the components in pursuit of joint operational priorities.

Our task force works to fill intelligence gaps between the maritime and land domains in order to cultivate a comprehensive perspective on emerging threats. Joint Task Force–East has been iden-

tified as the Secretary's single touch-point in the event of increased or mass maritime migration.

Zeroing in on the Joint Task Force shared operating area in Central America, we are supporting aggressive efforts to counter TCOs at the earliest possible points in their supply chains.

By increased collaboration with DHS and Homeland Security investigations, international attachés, the Department of Defense, international and interagency partners, efforts such as the JTF-East led Western Hemisphere Illicit Pathways Initiative, or what we refer to as WHIP, promote information sharing and collaboration in the fight against TCOs in Central America, by enabling partner nations to enroll, share, and collaborate on biometric data on migrants and special interest aliens transiting through Central America.

In closing, I am pleased to report that the DHS Joint Task Forces are enhancing unity of effort, building regional cooperation, and more clearly defining operational priorities. From my vantage point at the helm of Joint Task Force-East, continued progress on these fronts is instrumental to defeating transnational criminal organizations and making America safer.

Continued maturation of the JTS will strengthen the Department of Homeland Security and enable broader cooperation and coordination across the whole-of-Government enterprise and internationally as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Schultz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KARL L. SCHULTZ

APRIL 4, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Vela, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee. It is a pleasure to be here today on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to discuss how Joint Task Force-East (JTF-E)—one of three Joint Task Forces established under the DHS Southern Border and Approaches Campaign Plan (SBACP)—is working to address the threats posed by Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) to the safety and security of the United States.

I assumed the duties as director of Joint Task Force-East in August 2016 and look forward to continued strong partnership and collaboration with my counterparts, U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Chief Paul Beeson, director of the Joint Task Force-West; and Janice Ayala, director of the Joint Task Force-Investigations, from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

JTF-EAST BACKGROUND

Before the creation of the DHS Joint Task Forces (JTFs), DHS agencies in the field regularly worked together to achieve significant enforcement results; however, these results frequently relied upon a network of informal personal relationships and overlapping agency priorities, versus a clear framework that directed regional efforts. The JTF construct formalizes operational processes between regional- and National-level DHS components, and establishes enduring functional relationships between DHS agencies. JTF-E's organization provides a platform for operational continuity at the National level and optimizes a complex network of relationships with other non-DHS law enforcement and inter-agency partners.

Joint Task Forces were established to enhance unity of effort, build regional cooperation, and define operational priorities. The SBACP gave the JTFs a wide mandate to achieve effective enforcement and interdiction across land, sea, and air do-

mains; and to degrade TCOs while facilitating the flow of lawful trade, travel, and commerce across borders. As the JTF-E director, I thank the committee for its role supporting the authorization that enabled the DHS Secretary to formally establish JTFs.

Today I am pleased to report, under the JTF construct, DHS components in the field are working in close collaboration to develop standard operational plans supporting regional operations to defeat these criminal networks. We leverage existing DHS facilities and capabilities to stand-up Joint Information Operations Centers to best coordinate information sharing and asset utilization. The enhanced coordination and sharing of resources and information is improving our ability to more comprehensively target and dismantle TCOs through a “whole of Department/unity of effort” approach. While still nascent in our development at JTF-E, the benefits to DHS mission accomplishment are very promising.

JTF-E’s geographic responsibility includes the international waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the Eastern Pacific Ocean—southward to the north coast of South America, the airspace spanning U.S. territorial lands and waters; also, the international airspace in the approaches to Central America is shared with JTF-West.

My dual-hatted status as a member of the Armed Forces responsible for Coast Guard operations east of the Rocky Mountains, and as the JTF-E Director, positions me well to coordinate and collaborate across DHS agencies and with Department of Defense (DoD) Geographic Combatant Commands, including U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) and U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). This positioning enhances information sharing and assists in identifying DoD resources that could be requested to support DHS Component-led operations. JTF-E’s two deputy directors are Senior Executive Service (SES) representatives from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)—Air and Marine Operations; and ICE-HSI, with additional members from CBP’s Office of Field Operations and the USBP. The JTF-E staff of just over 40 detailees provide key touch points and experience essential to building relationships and processes crucial to JTF-E’s performance.

#### CURRENT STATUS OF JTF-EAST

JTF-E’s task is to lead the coordination of DHS component enforcement efforts to plan and implement enhanced counter-network operations directed at disrupting TCOs across its Joint Operating Area (JOA). Secretary Kelly has directed the JTFs to target individuals and organizations whose criminal conduct undermines border security or the integrity of the immigration system, including 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. These broad responsibilities make the JTFs distinct from other DHS task forces which have more specific functional roles.

Given the geographic size and complexity of our JOA, coordinating efforts among the hundreds of individual component operational entities with distinct missions, chains of command, responsibilities, and operating areas remains a challenge. JTF-E has focused its efforts on coordinating operations within our newly created Regional Integrating Groups (RIGs), beginning with the Eastern Caribbean RIG. JTF-E has also conducted initial planning meetings with the Central Caribbean and Gulf Coast RIGs.

The JTFs seek to harmonize DHS-wide operational priorities with the priorities of local front-line component offices working at the tactical level. Through a repeatable, deliberate planning process that best aligns available resources against both regional and National Department-level threats, JTF-E enhances enforcement at the field level.

For example, from November 10 to November 22, 2016, JTF-E, partnering with the Eastern Caribbean RIG, coordinated a push of resources to Puerto Rico in support of the Caribbean Border Interagency Group’s (CBIG) operation “Caribbean Guard,” a standing joint operation in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that seeks to deter, disrupt, and dismantle TCOs.

JTF-E and regional DHS leadership received and validated resource requests from ICE, CBP, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and other partners, and developed a consolidated, interagency resource request in order to reallocate resources stationed outside of Puerto Rico to meet the joint operational requirements. These resources included additional CBP aircraft, DoD linguist support, and a USCG Maritime Safety and Security Team operating out of the Virgin Islands. Additionally, JTF-E leveraged refined intelligence support from Joint Inter-Agency Task Force-South (JIATF-S). The collaborative effort enabled by JTF-E yielded 13 arrests, 70

migrants intercepted ashore and 18 migrants interdicted at sea, the seizure of more than 500 kilograms of cocaine and 28 kilograms of marijuana, over \$77,000 in bulk cash, and two vessels. These actions also disrupted a Nationally-identified priority TCO. However, these numbers only partially capture the results of the integrated field operations.

Enhancing Unity of Effort in the pursuit of joint operational priorities is also a key goal of the JTF concept. JTF-E improves synchronization of cross-component capabilities that provide timely, actionable, fused “all-source” intelligence. Additionally, JTF-E intelligence efforts fill in the intelligence gaps between the maritime and land domains, while also leveraging cross-component personnel to cultivate a comprehensive perspective on emerging threats. Our most recent example includes JTF-E compiling and coordinating existing intelligence prepared by CBP, ICE, USCG, USSOUTHCOM, JIATF-S, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and others, in order to produce an all-inclusive threat overview, termed a Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment (JIPOE).

To thwart illegal maritime migration, the recently-developed DHS Maritime Migration Contingency Plan identifies JTF-E as the Secretary’s single touch-point in the event of increased or mass maritime migration. JTF-E’s recently clarified roles will enable the Secretary to receive consolidated information and make validated requests for assistance to DoD, thus allowing for more rapid decision making and analysis. JTF-E recently exercised this role in a large-scale multi-week USSOUTHCOM exercise and implemented it during the recent termination of the wet-foot/dry-foot policy affecting Cuban maritime migration.

#### FUTURE JTF-EAST ENGAGEMENTS

In addition to our responsibility to coordinate within our Department, JTF-E supports DHS’s aggressive efforts to counter TCOs at the earliest possible points in their supply chains via increased collaboration with our partners in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. JTF-E leads the Western Hemisphere Illicit Pathways Initiative (WHIP), promoting information sharing and collaboration with our partner nations to fight against TCOs in Central America and Special Interest Aliens transiting through Central America and the Caribbean. Through collaboration with DoD’s Combating Terrorism and Technical Support Office, JTF-E continues to explore technology solutions that enable the law enforcement missions of U.S. and international partners, while illuminating illicit pathways throughout the Western Hemisphere.

JTF-E is actively working with the Eastern Caribbean RIG, the Central Caribbean RIG and the Gulf Coast RIG to facilitate additional near-term joint operations. These efforts will build upon the lessons learned from prior joint operations supporting regional DHS components, as well as enhanced collaboration across departmental and interagency lines. Enhanced intelligence sharing and informational analysis will also be incorporated as interagency law enforcement coordination is improved and future operational processes are further refined.

#### CONCLUSION

The JTFs are new and reside in a department with a short 14-year history that is responsible for the critical and complex task of securing our homeland and our borders. JTF-East, JTF-West, and JTF-Investigations operate collaboratively to unify operations on a daily basis to achieve the objective of the Southern Border and Approaches Campaign Plan. All three Task Forces are enhancing unity of effort, building regional cooperation, and are more clearly defining operational priorities. Continued progress on these fronts is instrumental to defeating TCOs and making America safer. TCOs are adaptive and resilient, investing a significant amount of resources and time in adjusting tactics to subvert our efforts. Combating TCOs will continue to be a priority for the JTFs, as they play a key role in our layered border security strategy. As JTFs mature, they will continue to strengthen cooperation within DHS and improve coordination both internationally and across the whole-of-Government enterprise.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Admiral Schultz.

The Chair now recognizes Commander Beeson for 5 minutes to testify.

**STATEMENT OF PAUL A. BEESON, COMMANDER, JOINT TASK FORCE–WEST, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Chief BEESON. Good morning, Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and distinguished Members of this subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today to discuss Joint Task Force–West.

During the hearing before this committee on February 16 of this year, we discussed the unique challenges faced by several DHS components in combatting the threats posed by transnational criminal organizations.

During that hearing, I discussed the advanced tactics and techniques and the networks used by TCOs to smuggle drugs, and humans, toward and across our Southwest Border, into the United States.

Today I would like to discuss with you Joint Task Force–West and some of the steps that DHS has taken to confront the threats posed by these sophisticated TCOs and their illicit networks.

Thanks to the support of Congress in the past decade, DHS has deployed more personnel, resources, technology, and tactical infrastructure to secure our borders than at any other time in history.

While DHS components are now better equipped because of these investments, we must continue to evolve to a more cross-functional operations model, to counter a threat that exploits our jurisdictional seams.

In response to the growing TCO threat, DHS has sought to capitalize on past successes realized through increased coordination between DHS components. Pursuant to the Southern Border and Approaches Campaign, we piloted a structure for coordinating operational integration of the joint task forces.

JTF–West was responsible for the Southwest Border with Mexico from California to Texas. The land approaches through Mexico to this border, the littorals of the Gulf of Mexico off Texas, and then the Pacific Ocean off California and the air space spanning U.S. territorial land and waters.

JTF activities are coordinated and conducted through DHS components situated in four operational corridors, aligning DHS enforcement efforts with known traffic flows of illegal cross-border activities.

This integration across geographic and agency boundaries along the entire Southwest Border, is helping us to identify priority TCOs and complex and expansive networks, operatives, and affiliates. This enables us to design strategies to disrupt and ultimately dismantle these TCOs and illicit networks.

While the JTFs are still in the early stages of integration and organizational set-up, we have realized some successful outcomes of our coordination efforts. In fiscal year 2016, JTF–W identified a total of 19 TCOs prioritized for disruption or dismantlement, using a developed and standardized interagency process.

Four of these original TCOs have been dismantled. JTF–W and JTF–I continue to coordinate with DHS components to disrupt and dismantle those remaining TCOs that are still active.

In addition to these longer-term efforts, JTF–W led the coordination and execution of Operation All-In. This operation sought to synchronize intelligence-gathering investigations, interdictions, and

other efforts against known human smuggling facilitators across the Southwest Border and into the interior of the United States. These individuals had been operating with impunity up to that point and profiting financially from their criminal enterprise.

Based on the initial success of Operation All-In, we have transitioned this operational concept to an open-ended steady-state enforcement effort.

These JTFs are examples of how DHS has embarked on enhanced information sharing and joint operational planning and execution. TCOs recognize no borders or authorities. The only way to combat a threat of this nature is to leverage the collective capabilities of DHS partner agencies and governments.

In support of the recent Presidential Executive Orders related to immigration enforcement, border and National security, and the guidance set forth by DHS Secretary Kelly, JTF-W will continue to employ its counter-network strategy against TCOs and illicit networks to enhance the safety and security of the homeland.

Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Chief Beeson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAUL A. BEESON

APRIL 4, 2017

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 bien-



nial 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 percent 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 on-going 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 Orders<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> JTF-W will plan and implement enhanced counter-network operations directed at disrupting TCOs, particularly those involved in human smuggling. Working with our Federal, 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.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Commander Beeson.  
The Chair now recognizes Ms. Ayala for 5 minutes.

<sup>1</sup> 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>.

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/17_0220_S1_Implementing-the-Presidents-Border-Security-Immigration-Enforcement-Improvement-Policies.pdf).

**STATEMENT OF JANICE AYALA, DIRECTOR, JOINT TASK FORCE—INVESTIGATIONS, HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS**

Ms. AYALA. Good morning, Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and distinguished Members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. As a senior executive of Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, I serve as the director of Joint Task Force—Investigations, or JTF—I.

JTF—I, JTF—East, and JTF—West are responsible for establishing operational priorities and synchronizing capabilities. While JTF—East and West are geographically-focused task forces, JTF—I is a functional task force with no geographic boundaries, established to improve the investigative functions within DHS.

Consisting of over 60 interagency investigators and analysts and operators, primarily from ICDP, and Coast Guard, we utilize a process that prioritizes and integrates support for criminal investigations along the U.S. Southern Border and approaches, to dismantle transnational criminal organizations, prevent their reconstitution and reduce illicit flows.

Our success depends upon a high level of cooperation, transparency, and communication in consolidating resources and leveraging unique domestic and international authorities to combat TCOs. The primary TCOs that threaten border security on the Southwest Border are Mexican cartels.

Over the last decade, the United States, working with foreign law enforcement and military counterparts, has had sustained success in attacking cartel leadership. However, this success is countered by the fact that the cartels are highly networked with built-in redundancies and adaptability.

Cartels move illicit proceeds. They hide assets and exploit vulnerabilities in the financial system through trade-based money laundering, funnel accounts, and the misuse of money service businesses. We have an abundance of investigative tools in our arsenal to target money laundering and financial violations.

ICE has assigned more than 1,500 special agents to investigate crime along the Southwest Border by TCOs, some of them assigned to the Border Enforcement Security Task Forces, which provide a comprehensive regional approach or response to the regional border security threats.

In addition to leveraging domestic assets, we work closely with attaché personnel assigned to 66 offices in 49 countries, to include the engagement of ICE HSI Transnational Criminal Investigative Units or TCIUs. They are composed of DHS-trained host country vetted counterparts who have the authority to investigate and enforce violations in their respective countries.

These efforts, often thousands of miles from the U.S.-Mexico border in countries like Colombia and Mexico, essentially act as an outer layer of security for the Southwest Border.

In fiscal year 2016, drug-smuggling investigations conducted by the five HSI Southwest Border SAC offices, resulted in over 6,000 arrests and nearly 4,000 indictments.

JTF—I prioritizes these and other DHS component investigations across international boundaries, prosecutorial jurisdictions, agency

missions, programs in operation areas, and as a result of which is the scores of the United States and foreign investigations and prosecutions.

To accomplish this, JTF-I developed and manages the DHS-wide nominations election process for priority criminal networks, called HomeCort, or Homeland Criminal Organization Target.

JTF-I also developed National case coordination that manages the most serious and complex criminal investigations impacting Homeland Security, in support of DHS taskforce and component priorities.

JTF-I staff produces over 3,500 hours of monthly support, analytical and investigative, to HomeCort investigations, while developing and improving best practices related to joint investigations, analysis, and targeting.

Over the last 20 months, JTF-I coordinated and supported the targeting of 14 homeland criminal networks comprised of several hundred individual criminal investigations involved in money laundering, sex trafficking, and the smuggling of drugs or cash, weapons and human cargo, to include special interest aliens. As of today, 11 of those 14 criminal networks have been dismantled to the point they no longer pose a threat to homeland security.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, for your continued support of DHS and its mission, and I will be happy to take any questions at this time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ayala follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JANICE AYALA

APRIL 4, 2017

Chairman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and distinguished Members: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) solutions to threats posed by drug cartels and smugglers, and the efforts of the DHS Joint Task Forces (JTFs). As a senior executive of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the primary criminal investigators of DHS, I serve as director of Joint Task Force-Investigations (JTF-I). ICE has been designated as the executive agent of JTF-I.

Former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson announced the Department's new Unity of Effort Initiative in April 2014. On May 8, 2014, former Secretary Johnson announced and directed our Department-wide Southern Border and Approaches Campaign (SBAC) Plan. The SBAC is part of a comprehensive security strategy designed to unify efforts across DHS components to address threats specifically associated with terrorism, illicit market-driven flows, and illegal migration across our Southern Border and approaches. In furtherance of the Department-wide SBAC, former Secretary Johnson commissioned three pilot Joint Task Forces (JTFs) on November 20, 2014. The three Joint Task Forces, JTF-I, JTF-East (JTF-E), and JTF-West (JTF-W), are responsible for establishing operational priorities and synchronizing capabilities in order to achieve SBAC objectives.

Two of the JTFs, JTF-East (JTF-E) and JTF-West (JTF-W), are geographically-focused task forces that concentrate on the southern land and maritime borders of the United States and the approaches to our border—all the way to Central and South America. As a "functional" task force, JTF-I was established to improve the investigative functions within the Department in furtherance of the SBAC Plan. JTF-I uses a Department-wide process that prioritizes and integrates support for criminal investigations along the U.S. Southern Border and approaches to mitigate the risk of terrorism, dismantle transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), prevent their reconstitution, and reduce illicit flows.

JTF-I operates within the diverse mission space of the SBAC. JTF-I's ability to facilitate cross-cutting partnerships between components with overlapping mission responsibilities allows the SBAC to operate with a higher level of cooperation, transparency, and effectiveness. By consolidating resources and refining duplicative ef-

forts, the JTF–I leverages unique domestic and international authorities that are integral to the elimination of targeted TCOs. JTF–I’s coordination has led to the successful disruption of several smuggling networks, which I describe in detail below.

We leverage HSI’s broad authority, unique investigative tools, and global footprint to secure our borders, working in close coordination with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Joint Task Forces–East and –West, and many other domestic and international law enforcement and customs partners to target TCOs. Today, I will provide JTF–I’s perspective on the solutions to the sophisticated smuggling threats that we face on our Southwest Border, the approaches that lead up to our border, and some of what we do to address TCOs and their smuggling activities before contraband arrives at our borders, and even in the interior of the United States.

#### THE CARTELS ALONG THE SOUTHWEST BORDER

The primary TCOs that threaten the Southwest Border of the United States are Mexican drug cartels (the cartels). Over the last decade, the United States, working with our Mexican law enforcement and military counterparts, has had sustained success in attacking cartel leaders, as evidenced by the recent extradition of Joaquin Guzman Loera, aka “El Chapo”, to face prosecution in the United States. However, every law enforcement success against the cartels is countered by the fact that the cartels are highly-networked organizations with built-in redundancies that adapt on a daily basis based on their intelligence of U.S. border security and law enforcement.

While drug smuggling remains the focal point for media and community interest, the threat and crimes associated with human smuggling are prevalent and very much real. Based on investigatory evidence and collected intelligence, we observe that human smuggling enterprises and the cartels maintain a symbiotic relationship with each other. Certain members of these criminal enterprises control the major U.S. and foreign drug markets and others control the smuggling flow across certain geographic areas of the border on behalf of their cartel. Some/most human smugglers are required to pay taxes and fees to cartels for access to smuggling routes through specific geographic areas and are subject to physical violence and/or death if proper coordination and compensation are not rendered. In addition, failed coordination between the cartels and human smuggling enterprises greatly increases the risk of unwanted law enforcement attention and investigative efforts.

The cartels move illicit proceeds, hide assets, and conduct transactions globally. Among the various methods cartels use to transfer and launder their illicit proceeds are bulk cash smuggling, trade-based money laundering, funnel accounts, professional money launderers, and the misuse of Money Service Businesses (MSB) and emerging payment systems. The cartels exploit vulnerabilities in both the U.S. and Mexican financial system and conduct layered financial transactions to circumvent regulatory scrutiny, which presents difficulties for authorities attempting to distinguish between licit and illicit use of the financial system. The U.S. Government has refined our ability to target money laundering and financial violations through various techniques, to include interagency investigations, training, and capacity-building, targeted financial sanctions, and direct engagement with at-risk financial institutions and jurisdictions.

U.S. Anti-Money Laundering laws and regulations impose customer identification, recordkeeping, and reporting obligations on covered financial institutions that help deter criminals from moving illicit proceeds through the financial system. These preventive measures also create valuable evidentiary trails for law enforcement to employ during an investigation. As such, HSI has an abundance of investigative tools in our arsenal to disrupt and dismantle cartel money laundering operations as well as to discourage new actors from engaging in illicit activity.

#### SMUGGLING TRENDS ALONG THE SOUTHWEST BORDER

The Southwest Border is a diverse environment, including maritime borders in both the Gulf of Mexico and on the Pacific Ocean that transition to vast land border areas that include rivers, rural agricultural lands, and densely-populated urban areas along the nearly 2,000 miles of our Southern Border. In response to these vastly different areas, the cartels adapt their methods and cargo to the smuggling environment.

Mexico is a major source and transit country for illicit drugs destined for the United States. It is a primary source of marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin, and a key transit area for cocaine.

As a result of Mexico’s dominant role as either a source or transit point for illicit drugs destined for the United States, it has also become a primary destination for

the illicit proceeds that the cartels earn from their distribution networks in the United States. Mexican cartels use a variety of techniques to repatriate illicit proceeds, from bulk cash smuggling to sophisticated trade-based money-laundering schemes. Many of the more complex techniques rely on third-party money launderers and corrupt individuals at financial institutions.

#### ATTACKING THE TCOS

To investigate TCOs impacting Southwest Border security, ICE has assigned more than 1,500 special agents and almost 150 intelligence research specialists to Southwest Border offices, to include the Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BESTs), which provide a comprehensive regional response to the growing threat to border security, public safety, and National security. This includes border security at land, maritime, and international airports. In fiscal year 2016, ICE drug smuggling investigations conducted by the five HSI Special Agent in Charge offices along the Southwest Border resulted in 5,659 criminal arrests, 3,941 indictments, 3,383 convictions, and 330 administrative immigration arrests.

JTF-I prioritizes these and other DHS component investigations, to best focus on an integrated approach transcending border-centric activities, into broad counter-network operations. These networks are comprised of international, border, and domestic elements conspiring together that require a multitude of investigations from a variety of offices.

In addition to leveraging domestic assets, we work closely with attaché personnel deployed to 66 offices in 49 countries that are uniquely positioned to utilize established relationships with host country law enforcement, to include the engagement of Transnational Criminal Investigative Units (TCIUs). These TCIUs are composed of DHS-trained host country counterparts who have the authority to investigate and enforce violations of law in their respective countries. Since our law enforcement officers working overseas do not possess general law enforcement or investigative authority in most host countries, the use of these TCIUs enables ICE to promote direct action in its investigative leads while respecting the sovereignty of the host country and cultivating international partnerships. These efforts, often thousands of miles from the U.S.-Mexico border in countries like Colombia and Panama, essentially act as an outer layer of security for our Southwest Border.

Mexico has proven to be an outstanding partner in the fight against TCOs, taking down the cartels' top leadership and working to dismantle these organizations. ICE's attaché office in Mexico City is the largest ICE presence outside of the United States and has coordinated the establishment of TCIUs in Mexico comprised of Mexican law enforcement officers. ICE attaché personnel work daily with Mexican authorities to combat these transnational threats. Additionally, ICE—along with other DHS components—actively works through the Department of State to provide training and technical assistance to our Mexican counterparts. The spirit of collaboration and joint effort between DHS components and our counterparts in Mexico is unprecedented.

JTF-I is responsible for enhancing and integrating criminal investigations in support of the operational priorities of JTF-East, JTF-West, the components, and DHS Headquarters. To accomplish this, JTF-I manages the DHS-wide nomination and selection process for Homeland Criminal Organization Targets (HOMECORTs), the top transnational criminal networks impacting homeland security, and then coordinates the dozens of investigations and operations targeting each HOMECORT.

HOMECORT consists of three parts. The first is a nomination and selection process for prioritizing the top transnational criminal networks that are threatening homeland security based on the specific threats prioritized and described in JTF-E and JTF-W operational priorities. The second is the development of comprehensive knowledge about the criminal network (hierarchy, associations, activities, etc.), which is called Comprehensive Criminal Network Analysis (CCNA). The third is National Case Coordination, a term used to describe centralized management and support of complex and priority investigations of entire criminal networks that cross jurisdictions, programs, and interagency and international boundaries. The ultimate goal of a HOMECORT investigation is the complete dismantlement of the criminal network that is the subject of the investigation. Dismantlement is defined as destroying the target organization's leadership, network, and financial base to the point that the organization is incapable of reconstituting itself.

HOMECORT criminal networks typically cross international boundaries, prosecutorial jurisdictions, agency missions, programs, and operations areas; and, as a result, are linked to scores of U.S. and foreign partner investigations, operations, prosecutions, seizures, and apprehensions. HOMECORT cases are the most serious and complex criminal investigations conducted by the Federal Government, as they typi-

cally involve all functions of Federal policing and governance including investigations, patrol, inspections, immigration, citizenship, finance, justice, public integrity, public health and safety, trade, and diplomacy.

JTF-I consists of over 60 interagency investigators, analysts, and operators, primarily from ICE, CBP, and Coast Guard, located in ICE headquarters and embedded in National Capital Regional Centers. As members of an ICE HSI-led Task Force, these detailees have full access to Investigative Case Management systems, analytical tools, and other unique and useful investigative information that they typically would not have at their own agency. JTF-I staff provides over 3,500 hours of monthly analytical support to HOMECORT investigations and SBAC and JTF priorities while developing and improving best practices related to joint investigations, analysis, and targeting.

By filling a gap in the coordination of National-level cases and leveraging the broad knowledge, skills, and capabilities of its interagency detailees, JTF-I achieved significant successes disrupting several transnational criminal networks (involving hundreds of criminal investigations) that threatened homeland security. Equally important, JTF-I coordination has helped overcome many of the obstacles to information sharing, investigative integration with operational forces, tactical cueing, and intelligence support that previously plagued other task forces, interagency initiatives, and National programs.

Over the last 20 months, JTF-I coordinated and supported the targeting of 14 HOMECORT criminal networks, comprised of several hundred individual criminal investigations. Presently, 11 of these 14 criminal networks have been dismantled to the point they no longer threaten homeland security. The 11 networks include human smugglers, sex traffickers, drug smugglers, money launderers, bulk cash smugglers, weapons smugglers, and smugglers of special interest aliens. The three other HOMECORT criminal networks continue to be the targets of active criminal investigations. Efforts against current and future HOMECORT criminal networks will be enhanced by Executive Order 13773, Enforcing Federal law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking (the EO). Among other things, the EO directs the entire Executive branch to strengthen its enforcement of Federal law to thwart TCOs, prioritize and dedicate sufficient resources to disable and dismantle TCOs, develop strategies to counter the crimes committed by TCOs, and otherwise pursue and support efforts to defeat TCOs. Solidifying HOMECORT as the DHS-wide process for identifying and prioritizing the top criminal networks impacting homeland security will help to fulfill all of these objectives. The EO also directs DHS to use HOMECORT to identify and describe homeland security threats to the National Security Council's Threat Mitigation Working Group. And, the EO supports further JTF-I engagement with foreign partners to build investigative capacities through operations such as HSI's CITADEL, an investigative surge operation to identify, disrupt, and dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs), Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) and terrorist networks by targeting the mechanisms they use to move people, illicit funds, and contraband through the Central America (CENTAM) corridor. CITADEL integrates each of the JTF-I HOMECORT cases and associated targets with International Operations, as well as other HSI priority cases. Specifically, CITADEL focuses on leveraging HSI and Partner Nation (PN) authorities and subject-matter expertise to dismantle priority TCO targets involved in human and bulk cash smuggling, as well as narcotics smuggling.

#### CONCLUSION

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your continued support of DHS and its mission. JTF-I is committed to stemming cross-border criminal organizations through the various efforts I have discussed today. I appreciate your interest in these important issues.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you Ms. Ayala.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Gambler for 5 minutes.

#### **STATEMENT OF REBECCA GAMBLER, DIRECTOR, HOMELAND SECURITY AND JUSTICE ISSUES, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

Ms. GAMBLER. Good morning, Chairwoman McSally. Good morning Ranking Member Vela, and Members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing to dis-



cuss GAO's work on collaborative mechanisms and other programs DHS has used in its border security effort.

My remarks today will summarize GAO's work in two areas: First collaborative mechanisms for coordinating border security operations, and second, DHS efforts to assess its use of resources and programs to secure the border.

With regard to the first area, over time DHS and its components have used various mechanisms and task forces to coordinate and collaborate on border security efforts. These have included entities like component-led border security task forces, broader multi-agency collaborative groups to share information and leverage access, and the more recent joint task forces that are the subject of today's hearing.

Our work on some of these different groups has identified various practices that contributed to successful collaborations, such as the sharing of resources and information and the building of positive working relationships.

However, our work has also identified barriers or challenges to successful collaboration. These challenges included resource constraints or limited resource commitments by participating agencies and lack of common objectives.

We previously recommended that DHS evaluate the effects of some of its past collaborative mechanisms to include collecting information on and reviewing best practices and identifying areas for possible improvement. Consideration of past successes and challenges could assist DHS's current task forces in building capacity and implementing their organizations.

Through our work, we have also identified the need for DHS to strengthen coordination for specific border security programs.

For example, in a report we issued to the subcommittee in February of this year, we found that CBP needs to better document procedures for coordinating its operations using Predator B unmanned aerial system, and we recommended that CBP do so. CBP concurred with our recommendation and plans to take steps to address it.

With regards to my second area, we have reported on the need for DHS to strengthen its efforts to assess the effectiveness of a range of border security programs and resources. For example, we have reported on CBP to deploy sensing and surveillance technologies along the Southwest Border.

A key finding from these reports has been the need for DHS to establish metrics for assessing the contributions of infrastructure and technology to border security. In particular, while CBP collects data that could be useful in assessing contributions to border security, such as the location of the legal entries, CBP has not developed metrics to make these assessments, and we have recommended that CBP do so.

In other areas, we have reported on the need for CBP to strengthen its data collection or methodologies for reporting results. For example, in a February 2017 report for the subcommittee, we recommended that CBP improve its practices for collecting and reporting data related to Predator B and tactical aerostat operation to help the agency better assess the effectiveness of these operations.

We also reported in January on steps CBP could take to strengthen its methodology for calculating recidivism rates, which is the percentage of aliens apprehended multiple times along the Southwest Border.

In particular, we found that CBP's methodology does not account for an alien's apprehension over multiple years or apprehended aliens for whom there is no record of removal from the United States and he may remain in the country.

Among other things, we recommended that CBP strengthen its methodology for calculating recidivism by accounting for an alien's apprehension history beyond one fiscal year, and excluding aliens for whom there is no record of removal.

In closing, we will continue to follow up on and monitor for actions DHS and its components have taken in response to our recommendations across a number of border security programs, assets, and efforts.

The ability of DHS and its components to effectively assess and measure the contributions of various border security task forces, programs, and assets is important for providing insights on current border security investments and can help inform future decision making.

This concludes my oral statement, and I would be pleased to answer questions Members may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gambler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REBECCA GAMBLER

APRIL 4, 2017

Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and Members of the subcommittee: I am pleased to be here today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) efforts to coordinate and assess its border security operations. Securing U.S. borders is the responsibility of DHS, in collaboration with other Federal, State, local, and Tribal entities. Within DHS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is the lead agency for border security and is responsible for, among other things, keeping terrorists and their weapons, criminals and their contraband, and inadmissible aliens out of the country.<sup>1</sup> The United States international border with Mexico (Southwest Border) continues to be vulnerable to illegal cross-border activity, and DHS reported apprehending over 331,000 illegal entrants and making over 14,000 seizures of drugs in fiscal year 2015.

Over time, DHS and CBP have established various collaborative mechanisms along the southern U.S. border, including the Southwest Border and southern maritime approaches, to integrate CBP operations and improve interagency coordination. For example, CBP, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard), and other stakeholders have partnered to form multiple joint task forces. To further support collaboration, DHS and CBP coordinate use of resources, including a variety of technology and assets such as aircraft. For example, CBP's Air and Marine Operations (AMO) uses Predator B unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and other aircraft equipped with video and radar surveillance technology along the Southwest Border to conduct border security efforts, in part, through coordination with joint task forces.

GAO has identified best practices for implementing interagency collaboration—broadly defined as any joint activity that is intended to produce more public value than could be produced when agencies act alone.<sup>2</sup> Among other things, these best practices note that agencies can enhance and sustain their collaborative efforts by developing mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on results. In addition, we

<sup>1</sup> See 6 U.S.C. § 211(a) (establishing CBP within DHS), (c) (enumerating CBP's duties).

<sup>2</sup> GAO, *Results-Oriented Government: Practices That Can Help Enhance and Sustain Collaboration Among Federal Agencies*, GAO-06-15 (Washington, DC: Oct. 21, 2005) and *Managing for Results: Key Considerations for Implementing Interagency Collaborative Mechanisms*, GAO-12-1022 (Washington, DC: Sept. 27, 2012).

found that all collaborative mechanisms benefit from certain key features, such as implementing processes to track and monitor progress toward short-term and long-term outcomes. With regard to assessing its progress and efforts to secure the border, CBP components collect a variety of data on their use of resources and programs. For example, CBP's U.S. Border Patrol (Border Patrol) collects data that support efforts to address smuggling and other illegal cross-border activity along the U.S. Southwest Border through its Consequence Delivery System (CDS) program—a process to classify each apprehended alien into criminal or noncriminal categories and apply various criminal, administrative, and programmatic consequences, such as Federal prosecution, most likely to deter future illegal activity. In addition, Border Patrol collects a variety of data on its apprehension of aliens and seizures of narcotics along the Southwest Border and on use of resources such as tactical infrastructure—fencing, gates, roads, bridges, lighting, and drainage—and surveillance technology, such as towers equipped with video cameras and radar technology. AMO also collects data on its use of air and maritime assets; for example, seizures and apprehensions provided for by support from its Predator B UAS and Tethered Aerostat Radar System (TARS) program—fixed site unmanned buoyant craft tethered to the ground equipped with radar technology.

Over the years, we have reported on the progress and challenges DHS faces in implementing its border security efforts, including establishing collaborative mechanisms and assessing the effectiveness of its use of resources and programs along the border. My statement discusses our past findings on: (1) DHS's efforts to implement collaborative mechanisms along the Southwest Border and (2) DHS's efforts to assess its use of resources and programs to secure the Southwest Border.

My statement today is based on reports and testimonies we issued from September 2013 through February 2017 that examined DHS efforts to enhance border security and assess the effectiveness of its border security operations (see Related GAO Products at the end of this statement). Our reports and testimonies incorporated information we obtained by examining DHS's collaborative mechanisms established along the Southwest Border; reviewing CBP policies and procedures for coordinating use of assets; analyzing DHS data related to enforcement program and asset assists or instances in which a technological asset assisted in the apprehension of illegal entrants, seizure of drugs or other contraband; and interviewing relevant DHS officials. In addition, since 2013, we assessed the extent to which DHS and CBP have implemented recommendations by reviewing supporting documentation. More detailed information about our scope and methodology can be found in our reports and testimonies. We conducted all of this work in accordance with generally accepted Government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

DHS AND CBP HAVE ESTABLISHED COLLABORATIVE MECHANISMS ALONG THE SOUTHWEST BORDER, BUT COULD STRENGTHEN COORDINATION OF PREDATOR B UAS OPERATIONS

*DHS and CBP Have Implemented a Variety of Collaborative Mechanisms to Coordinate Border Security Efforts*

DHS and its components have used various mechanisms over time to coordinate border security operations. In September 2013, we reported that the overlap in geographic and operational boundaries among DHS components underscored the importance of collaboration and coordination among these components.<sup>3</sup> To help address this issue and mitigate operational inflexibility, DHS components, including those with border security-related missions such as CBP, Coast Guard, and ICE, employed a variety of collaborative mechanisms to coordinate their missions and share information. These mechanisms had both similarities and differences in how they were structured and on which missions or threats they focused, among other things, but they all had the overarching goal of increasing mission effectiveness and efficiencies. For example:

- In 2011, the Joint Targeting Team originated as a CBP-led partnership among the Del Rio area of Texas, including Border Patrol, CBP's Office of Field Oper-

<sup>3</sup> GAO, *Department of Homeland Security: Opportunities Exist to Enhance Visibility Over Collaborative Field Mechanisms*, GAO-13-734 (Washington, DC: Sept. 27, 2013). Among other things, we recommended that DHS take steps to increase its visibility over how collaborative field mechanisms operate. DHS concurred and implemented actions to collect information about the mechanisms.

ations, and ICE. This mechanism was expanded to support the South Texas Campaign (STC) mission to disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal organizations, and its membership grew to include additional Federal, State, local, Tribal, and international law enforcement agencies.<sup>4</sup>

- In 2005, the first Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) was organized and led by ICE, in partnership with CBP, in Laredo, Texas, and additional units were subsequently formed along both the Southern and Northern Borders. The BESTs' mission was to identify, disrupt, and dismantle existing and emerging threats at U.S. land, sea, and air borders.
- In 2011, CBP, Coast Guard, and ICE established Regional Coordinating Mechanisms (ReCoM) to utilize the fusion of intelligence, planning, and operations to target the threat of transnational terrorist and criminal acts along the coastal border. Coast Guard served as the lead agency responsible for planning and coordinating among DHS components.

In June 2014, we reported on STC border security efforts along with the activities of two additional collaborative mechanisms: (1) The Joint Field Command (JFC), which had operational control over all CBP resources in Arizona; and (2) the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT), which was a multi-agency law enforcement partnership in Arizona.<sup>5</sup> We found that through these collaborative mechanisms, DHS and CBP had coordinated border security efforts in information sharing, resource targeting and prioritization, and leveraging of assets. For example, to coordinate information sharing, the JFC maintained an operations coordination center and clearinghouse for intelligence information. Through the ACTT, interagency partners worked jointly to target individuals and criminal organizations involved in illegal cross-border activity. The STC leveraged assets of CBP components and interagency partners by shifting resources to high-threat regions and conducting joint operations.

More recently, the Secretary of Homeland Security initiated the Southern Border and Approaches Campaign Plan in November 2014 to address the region's border security challenges by commissioning three DHS joint task forces to, in part, enhance collaboration among DHS components, including CBP, ICE, and Coast Guard. Two of DHS's joint task forces are geographically-based, Joint Task Force–East and Joint Task Force–West, and one which is functionally based, Joint Task Force–Investigations. Joint Task Force–West is separated into geographic command corridors with CBP as the lead agency responsible for overseeing border security efforts to include: Arizona, California, New Mexico/West Texas, and South Texas. Coast Guard is the lead agency responsible for Joint Task Force–East, which is responsible for the southern maritime and border approaches. ICE is the lead agency responsible for Joint Task Force–Investigations, which focuses on investigations in support of Joint Task Force–West and Joint Task Force–East. Additionally, DHS has used these task forces to coordinate various border security activities, such as use of Predator B UAS, as we reported in February 2017 and discuss below.<sup>6</sup>

*Collaborative Mechanism Participants Identified Practices that Enhanced or Served as Challenges to Collaboration*

In September 2013, we reported on successful collaborative practices and challenges identified by participants from eight border security collaborative field mechanisms we visited—the STC, four BESTs and 3 ReCoMs.<sup>7</sup> Their perspectives were generally consistent with the seven key issues to consider when implementing collaborative mechanisms that we identified in our 2012 report on interagency collaboration.<sup>8</sup> Among participants who we interviewed, there was consensus that certain practices facilitated more effective collaboration, which, according to participants, contributed to the groups' overall successes. For example, participants identified three of the seven categories of practices as keys to success: (1) Positive working relationships/communication, (2) sharing resources, and (3) sharing information.

<sup>4</sup> CBP developed and implemented the STC to identify and address current and emerging threats along the border in South Texas. The STC conducts targeted operations to disrupt and degrade the ability of transnational criminal organizations to operate throughout the South Texas corridor while it simultaneously facilitates legitimate trade and travel.

<sup>5</sup> GAO, *Border Security: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Collaborative Mechanisms Along the Southwest Border*, GAO-14-494 (Washington, DC: June 27, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> GAO, *Border Security: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Collection of Unmanned Aerial Systems and Aerostats Data*, GAO-17-152 (Washington, DC: Feb. 16, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> GAO-13-734.

<sup>8</sup> GAO-12-1022. We identified seven features of successful collaborative mechanisms: (1) Outcomes and accountability; (2) Bridging organizational cultures; (3) Leadership; (4) Clarity of roles and responsibilities; (5) Participants; (6) Resources; and (7) Written guidance and agreements.

Specifically, in our interviews, BEST officials stated that developing trust and building relationships helped participants respond quickly to a crisis, and communicating frequently helped participants eliminate duplication of efforts. Participants from the STC, BESTs, and ReCoMs also reported that having positive working relationships built on strong trust among participants was a key factor in their law enforcement partnerships because of the sensitive nature of law enforcement information, and the risks posed if it is not protected appropriately. In turn, building positive working relationships was facilitated by another collaborative factor identified as important by a majority of participants: Physical collocation of mechanism stakeholders. Specifically, participants from the mechanisms focused on law enforcement investigations, such as the STC and BESTs, reported that being physically collocated with members from other agencies was important for increasing the groups' effectiveness.

Participants from the eight border security collaborative field mechanisms we visited at the time also identified challenges or barriers that affected their collaboration across components and made it more difficult. Specifically, participants identified three barriers that most frequently hindered effective collaboration within their mechanisms: (1) Resource constraints, (2) rotation of key personnel, and (3) lack of leadership buy-in. For example, when discussing resource issues, a majority of participants said funding for their group's operation was critical and identified resource constraints as a challenge to sustaining their collaborative efforts. These participants also reported that since none of the mechanisms receive dedicated funding, the participating Federal agencies provided support for their respective representatives assigned to the selected mechanisms. Also, there was a majority opinion among mechanism participants we visited that rotation of key personnel and lack of leadership buy-in hindered effective collaboration within their mechanisms. For example, STC participants stated that the rotation of key personnel hindered the STC's ability to develop and retain more seasoned personnel with expertise in investigations and surveillance techniques.

In addition, in June 2014, we identified coordination benefits and challenges related to the JFC, STC, and ACTT.<sup>9</sup> For example, DHS and CBP leveraged the assets of CBP components and interagency partners through these mechanisms to conduct a number of joint operations and deploy increased resources to various border security efforts. In addition, these mechanisms provided partner agencies with increased access to specific resources, such as AMO air support and planning assistance for operations. Officials involved with the JFC, STC, and ACTT also reported collaboration challenges at that time. For example, officials from 11 of 12 partner agencies we interviewed reported coordination challenges related to the STC and ACTT, such as limited resource commitments by participating agencies and lack of common objectives. In particular, one partner with the ACTT noted that there had been operations in which partners did not follow through with the resources they had committed during the planning stages. Further, JFC and STC officials cited the need to improve the sharing of best practices across the various collaborative mechanisms, and CBP officials we interviewed identified opportunities to more fully assess how the mechanisms were structured. We recommended that DHS establish written agreements for some of these coordination mechanisms and a strategic-level oversight mechanism to monitor interagency collaboration. DHS concurred and these recommendations were closed as not implemented due to planned changes in the collaborative mechanisms.

*CBP Has Established Mechanisms to Coordinate Its Use of Predator B UAS, but Could Benefit From Documented Procedures for Coordinating its Predator B UAS Operations*

In February 2017, we found that as part of using Predator B aircraft to support other Government agencies, CBP established various mechanisms to coordinate Predator B operations.<sup>10</sup> CBP's Predator B aircraft are National assets used primarily for detection and surveillance during law enforcement operations, independently and in coordination with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. For example, at AMO National Air Security Operations Centers (NASOC) in Arizona, North Dakota, and Texas, personnel from other CBP components are assigned to support and coordinate mission activities involving Predator B operations.<sup>11</sup> Border Patrol agents assigned to support NASOCs assist

<sup>9</sup> GAO-14-494.

<sup>10</sup> GAO-17-152.

<sup>11</sup> As of fiscal year 2016, CBP operated nine Predator B aircraft from four AMO NASOCs in Arizona, Florida, North Dakota, and Texas. CBP's Predator B aircraft are launched and recovered at its NASOCs in Sierra Vista, Arizona; Corpus Christi, Texas; and Grand Forks, North

with directing agents and resources to support its law enforcement operations and collecting information on asset assists provided for by Predator B operations. Further, two of DHS's joint task forces also help coordinate Predator B operations. Specifically, Joint Task Force–West, Arizona and Joint Task Force–West, South Texas coordinate air asset tasking and operations, including Predator B operations, and assist in the transmission of requests for Predator B support and communication with local field units during operations, such as Border Patrol stations and AMO air branches.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to these mechanisms, CBP has documented procedures for coordinating Predator B operations among its supported or partner agencies in Arizona specifically by developing a standard operating procedure for coordination of Predator B operations through its NASOC in Arizona. However, CBP has not documented procedures for coordination of Predator B operations among its supported agencies through its NASOCs in Texas and North Dakota. CBP has also established National policies for its Predator B operations that include policies for prioritization of Predator B missions and processes for submission and review of Predator B mission or air support requests. However, these National policies do not include coordination procedures specific to Predator B operating locations or NASOCs. Without documenting its procedures for coordination of Predator B operations with supported agencies, CBP does not have reasonable assurance that practices at NASOCs in Texas and North Dakota align with existing policies and procedures for joint operations with other Government agencies. Among other things, we recommended that CBP develop and document procedures for Predator B coordination among supported agencies in all operating locations. CBP concurred with our recommendation and stated that it plans to develop and implement an operations coordination structure and document its coordination procedures for Predator B operations through Joint Task Force–West, South Texas and document its coordination procedures for Predator B operations through its NASOC in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

DHS AND CBP COULD STRENGTHEN EFFORTS TO ASSESS USE OF RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS TO SECURE THE BORDER

*Border Patrol Could Benefit From Improving Its Methodology to Assess Effectiveness of its Consequence Delivery System Program*

In January 2017, we reported that Border Patrol agents use the CDS to classify each alien apprehended illegally crossing the border and then apply one or more post-apprehension consequences determined to be the most effective and efficient to discourage recidivism, that is, further apprehensions for illegal cross-border activity.<sup>13</sup> We found that Border Patrol uses an annual recidivism rate to measure performance of the CDS; however, methodological weaknesses limit the rate's usefulness for assessing CDS effectiveness. Specifically, Border Patrol's methodology for calculating recidivism—the percent of aliens apprehended multiple times along the Southwest Border within a fiscal year—does not account for an alien's apprehension history over multiple years. In addition, Border Patrol's calculation neither accounts for nor excludes apprehended aliens for whom there is no ICE record of removal from the United States. Our analysis of Border Patrol and ICE data showed that when calculating the recidivism rate for fiscal years 2014 and 2015, Border Patrol included in the total number of aliens apprehended, tens of thousands of aliens for whom ICE did not have a record of removal after apprehension and who may have remained in the United States without an opportunity to recidivate. Specifically, our analysis of ICE enforcement and removal data showed that about 38 percent of the aliens Border Patrol apprehended along the Southwest Border in fiscal years 2014 and 2015 may have remained in the United States as of May 2016.

To better inform the effectiveness of CDS implementation and border security efforts, we recommended that, among other things, (1) Border Patrol strengthen the methodology for calculating recidivism, such as by using an alien's apprehension history beyond one fiscal year and excluding aliens for whom there is no record of

Dakota; while the NASOC in Jacksonville, Florida remotely operates Predator B aircraft launched from other NASOCs. CBP's Predator B aircraft are equipped with video and radar sensors primarily to provide intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities.

<sup>12</sup> Joint Task Force–West, Arizona's area of responsibility includes Tucson and Yuma Border Patrol sectors. Joint Task Force–West, South Texas's area of responsibility includes Rio Grande Valley, Laredo, and Del Rio Border Patrol sectors.

<sup>13</sup> GAO, *Border Patrol: Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Post-Apprehension Consequences*, GAO-17-66 (Washington, DC: Jan. 12, 2017). Under U.S. immigration law, an "alien" is any person that is not a U.S. citizen or national. See 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(3). According to the National Institute of Justice, recidivism refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime.

removal; and (2) the Assistant Secretary of ICE and Commissioner of CBP collaborate on sharing immigration enforcement and removal data to help Border Patrol account for the removal status of apprehended aliens in its recidivism rate measure. CBP did not concur with our first recommendation and stated that CDS uses annual recidivism rate calculations to measure annual change, which is not intended to be, or used, as a performance measure for CDS, and that Border Patrol annually re-evaluates the CDS to ensure that the methodology for calculating recidivism provides the most effective and efficient post-apprehension outcomes. We continue to believe that Border Patrol should strengthen its methodology for calculating recidivism, as the recidivism rate is used as a performance measure by Border Patrol and DHS. DHS concurred with our second recommendation, but stated that collecting and analyzing ICE removal and enforcement data would not be advantageous to Border Patrol for CDS purposes since CDS is specific to Border Patrol. However, DHS also stated that Border Patrol and ICE have discussed the availability of the removal and enforcement data and ICE has agreed to provide Border Patrol with these data, if needed. DHS requested that we consider this recommendation resolved and closed. While DHS's planned actions are a positive step toward addressing our recommendation, DHS needs to provide documentation of completion of these actions for us to consider the recommendation closed as implemented.

*CBP Collects Data That Could be Useful in Assessing How Border Fencing Contributes to Border Security Operations but Needs Metrics to Assess the Contribution to Its Mission*

In February 2017, we reported on CBP's efforts to secure the border between U.S. ports of entry using tactical infrastructure, including fencing, gates, roads, bridges, lighting, and drainage.<sup>14</sup> For example, border fencing is intended to benefit border security operations in various ways, according to Border Patrol officials, including supporting Border Patrol agents' ability to execute essential tasks, such as identifying illicit-cross border activities. CBP collects data that could help provide insight into how border fencing contributes to border security operations, including the location of illegal entries. However, CBP has not developed metrics that systematically use these data, among other data it collects, to assess the contributions of its pedestrian and vehicle border fencing to its mission. For example, CBP could potentially use these data to determine the extent to which border fencing diverts illegal entrants into more rural and remote environments, and border fencing's impact, if any, on apprehension rates over time. Developing metrics to assess the contributions of fencing to border security operations could better position CBP to make resource allocation decisions with the best information available to inform competing mission priorities and investments.

To ensure that Border Patrol has the best available information to inform future investments and resource allocation decisions among tactical infrastructure and other assets Border Patrol deploys for border security, we recommended, among other things, that Border Patrol develop metrics to assess the contributions of pedestrian and vehicle fencing to border security along the Southwest Border using the data Border Patrol already collects and apply this information, as appropriate, when making investment and resource allocation decisions. DHS concurred with our recommendation and plans to develop metrics and incorporate them into the Border Patrol's Requirements Management Process. These actions, if implemented effectively, should address the intent of our recommendation.

*CBP Has Taken Actions to Assess the Effectiveness of Its Predator B UAS and Aerostats for Border Security, but Could Improve Its Data Collection Efforts*

In February 2017, we found that CBP has taken actions to assess the effectiveness of its Predator B UAS and tactical aerostats for border security, but could improve its data collection efforts.<sup>15</sup> CBP collects a variety of data on its use of the Predator B UAS, tactical aerostats, and TARS, including data on their support for the apprehension of individuals, seizure of drugs, and other events (asset assists).

<sup>14</sup> GAO, *Southwest Border Security: Additional Actions Needed to Better Assess Fencing's Contributions to Operations and Provide Guidance for Identifying Capability Gaps*, GAO-17-331 (Washington, DC: Feb. 16, 2017). Ports of entry are facilities that provide for the controlled entry into or departure from the United States. Specifically, a port of entry is any officially designated location (seaport, airport, or land border location) where DHS officers or employees are assigned to clear passengers, merchandise, and other items; collect duties; and enforce customs laws; and where DHS officers inspect persons seeking to enter or depart, or applying for admission into, the United States, pursuant to U.S. immigration law.

<sup>15</sup> GAO-17-152. Tactical aerostats are relocatable unmanned buoyant craft tethered to the ground and equipped with video surveillance cameras. As of fiscal year 2016, CBP deployed six tactical aerostats sites along the U.S.-Mexico border in south Texas.

For Predator B UAS, we found that mission data—such as the names of supported agencies and asset assists for seizures of narcotics—were not recorded consistently across all operational centers, limiting CBP’s ability to assess the effectiveness of the program. We also found that CBP has not updated its guidance for collecting and recording mission information in its data collection system to include new data elements added since 2014, and does not have instructions for recording mission information such as asset assists. In addition, not all users of CBP’s system have received training for recording mission information. We reported that updating guidance and fully training users, consistent with internal control standards, would help CBP better ensure the quality of data it uses to assess effectiveness. For tactical aerostats, we found that Border Patrol collection of asset assist information for seizures and apprehensions does not distinguish between its tactical aerostats and TARS. Data that distinguishes between support provided by tactical aerostats and support provided by TARS would help CBP collect better and more complete information and guide resource allocation decisions, such as the redeployment of tactical aerostat sites based on changes in illegal cross-border activity for the two types of systems that provide distinct types of support when assisting with, for example, seizures and apprehensions.

To improve its efforts to assess the effectiveness of its Predator B and tactical aerostat programs, we recommended, among other things, that CBP: (1) Update guidance for recording Predator B mission information in its data collection system; (2) provide training to users of CBP’s data collection system for Predator B missions; and (3) update Border Patrol’s data collection practices to include a mechanism to distinguish and track asset assists associated with tactical aerostats from TARS. CBP concurred and identified planned actions to address the recommendations, including incorporating a new functionality in its data collection system to include tips and guidance for recording Predator B mission information and updating its user manual for its data collection system; and making improvements to capture data to ensure asset assists are properly reported and attributed to tactical aerostats, and TARS, among other actions.

*CBP Uses Other Assets to Provide Security at the Arizona Border, and Would Benefit From Reporting and Tracking Asset Assist Data*

In March 2014, we reported that CBP had identified mission benefits for technologies under its Arizona Border Surveillance Technology Plan—which included a mix of radars, sensors, and cameras to help provide security for the Arizona border—but had not yet developed performance metrics for the plan.<sup>16</sup> CBP identified mission benefits such as improved situational awareness and agent safety. Further, a DHS database enabled CBP to collect data on asset assists, instances in which a technology—such as a camera, or other asset, such as a canine team—contributed to an apprehension or seizure, that in combination with other relevant performance metrics or indicators, could be used to better determine the contributions of CBP’s surveillance technologies and inform resource allocation decisions. However, we found that CBP was not capturing complete data on asset assists, as Border Patrol agents were not required to record and track such data. We concluded that requiring the reporting and tracking of asset assist data could help CBP determine the extent to which its surveillance technologies are contributing to CBP’s border security efforts.

To assess the effectiveness of deployed technologies at the Arizona border and better inform CBP’s deployment decisions, we recommended that CBP: (1) Require tracking of asset assist data in its Enforcement Integrated Database, which contains data on apprehensions and seizures and (2) once data on asset assists are required to be tracked, analyze available data on apprehensions and seizures and technological assists, in combination with other relevant performance metrics to determine the contribution of surveillance technologies to CBP’s border security efforts. DHS concurred with our first recommendation, and Border Patrol issued guidance in June 2014 and Border Patrol officials confirmed with us in June 2015 that agents are required to enter this information into the database. These actions met the intent of our recommendation. DHS also concurred with our second recommendation, and as of September 2016 has taken some action to assess its technology assist data and other measures to determine contributions of surveillance technologies to its mission. However, until Border Patrol completes its efforts to fully develop and apply key attributes for performance metrics for all technologies to be deployed under the Arizona Border Surveillance Technology Plan, it will not be well-posi-

<sup>16</sup> GAO, *Arizona Border Surveillance Technology Plan: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Management and Assess Effectiveness*, GAO-14-368 (Washington, DC: Mar. 3, 2014).



tioned to fully assess its progress in determining when mission benefits have been fully realized.

Chairwoman McSally, Ranking Member Vela, and Members of the subcommittee, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Ms. Gambler.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for questions. I think my experience in the military, to include moving past Goldwater-Nichols in 1986, is probably a strength and a weakness in the way I look at this.

But I think what we are talking about here is as if we were a couple of years into Goldwater-Nichols and trying to review what the military services and how they were organizing jointly and how effective they were. So we are early on in this process, and I really do appreciate the efforts to be focused more on unity of effort and more joint in the way we address these issues.

We are in a resource-constrained environment, for sure, as many of you have referenced. My first thought, Admiral Schultz, was looking at and deep-diving into JTF-East and what you are doing, seems like there is potential for redundancy with JIATF-South.

Now, I realize they have a specific mission and authorities, but we all have the same objective here, right? To interdict transnational criminal organizations and illicit flow of traffic coming from South and Central America into the United States.

So when I think—I know there are different authorities, but we are responsible for authorities here, but we have similar objectives here as a country.

When we are talking about interagency whole-of-Government specifically to address the issues, more in the maritime domain, I think about, if you have two different operation centers, two different computer systems, overhead, all that comes with that, is there a way for us to think outside the box?

Can you just comment, based on your experiences also, at SOUTHCOM, you are at SOUTHCOM, and is there a place for us to look freshly at—the JTF-East is focused on homeland security. JIATF-South is trying to be more and more the interagency-focused area.

Like, where is there a place that we can find better synergies, perhaps, even between those two efforts, so that even on overhead and air conditioning bills, you know, spending where we don't need to? Just to have more of a unity of effort.

Admiral SCHULTZ. Well, Chairwoman, thank you for the question. Clearly, there is always a better way to look at every problem. So I would say I think you have an understanding of JIATF-South.

They have been in existence here for about 26 years now. It is probably the most recognized global interagency operation that gets after the counter threat network, particularly for drugs. That is their origin and that is really where their authorities lend them.

Under 10 USC 124, they do the detection and monitoring business for the Department of Defense. They have no law enforcement authorities, as you know with your defense background and homeland duties.

Ms. MCSALLY. Right.

Admiral SCHULTZ. That is where they turn over the endgame to either our 7th or 11th district Coast Guard operations.

I think where you see this task force, Joint Task Force–East and JIATF–South lash up is they are very complementary. You know, we try to leverage what they call the critical movement alert system.

We just did some recent operations back in November, as I mentioned in my oral statement here. Most recently in the last couple of weeks in March, surge operations down in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands–Puerto Rico vector.

That is a vector where there is quite a bit of cocaine coming out of South America. There is a lot of violence, weapons, money moving back south through Puerto Rico.

JIATF’s focus, because it is resource-informed, like everything else in the Federal Government, has been very much in the eastern Pacific and the western Caribbean.

About 85 percent of the drugs that come out of Columbia are in the eastern Pacific. But there are also threats in Puerto Rico—Puerto Rico, part of our U.S. soil here. We have got some responsibilities down there. JIATF and us work there.

We are able to enhance Unity of Effort with the DHS components. We are able to link. I think this works well with my dual status as the Coast Guard Atlantic area commander.

I have operational forces east of the Rockies and the task force. We can work in that space where we bring resources to the DHS components. We link in DOD capabilities, the linkage with JIATF–South and then we get after the threats most pressing to the homeland.

So I think they are complementary. Could there be an eventual change in authorities for JIATF–South? I think so. But I think if you look at the origins, if you look at the resourcing right now, there are some muscle movements here that are fairly significant to tackle.

In the interim period, I think we are working very well together. I think, again, the military status that I bring, dual-hatted, allows some linkages there. My recent experience in SOUTHCOM, I think, also plays well to that.

Because bringing the heft of DOD and all that capability and capacity down to working with an HSI attaché or a small team in a foreign location or even a place like Puerto Rico, there is different lexicon there.

Ms. MCSALLY. Yes, that is—

Admiral SCHULTZ. I think that is sort-of that middle space we work very well in, ma’am.

Ms. MCSALLY. Absolutely, and I would like to follow up with you, again, and just to think outside the box to whether there needs to be new authorities to look at this freshly for the best, at this moment in time, whole-of-Government approach, you know, to address this problem set.

Chief Beeson, looking to the organization for JTF–West and its division into corridors, are those corridors perfectly aligned with the sectors? If not, is there an opportunity for us to align sectors to corridors so we are all operating in similar areas?

Just again, as we are evolving this process, if your border patrol sectors are your ground force of this joint force, and your, you know, the JTF is looking jointly at each corridor, is there a way

to line those up if they are not lined up? Is that being looked at at all?

Chief BEESON. I want to say that they are aligned. As I think about the corridors there are four, the California corridor, which covers the two sectors in California. Arizona corridor covers the two Arizona sectors. West Texas-New Mexico covers two sectors, and then you have got the south Texas, which has three, the Laredo, del Rio, and Rio Grande valley.

So each one of those corridors has a commander that is responsible for the coordination and collaboration of the DHS efforts. So I think that the way that they are aligned, if I understand your question correctly, I think, works.

Ms. MCSALLY. OK, great. Thank you. I am over my time.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Vela, for 5 minutes.

Mr. VELA. Yes. I would kind-of like to follow up with the Chairwoman's questions.

That is, Vice Admiral Schultz, with respect to JIATF-South and JTF-East, I am curious as to your thoughts as to why we need both?

Admiral SCHULTZ. Well, Ranking Member Vela, great question. I think we need both because, I think their focus is definitely different. At the end of the day, as I mentioned, the statutory responsibility that JIATF-South has supports drug interdiction, drug interdiction in the maritime domain.

Are there possible expansions of authorities that allow you to do different, you know, counter-network-type stuff at JIATF-South? Clearly, that is in the realm of the possible. I think, we work—not we think—but we clearly work in that space with DHS components.

Again, we at JTF-East are not directing operations from my parent location in Portsmouth, Virginia. We are enabling operations. We are synchronizing operations.

We are getting after that unity of effort. We are getting after that collaboration of regional DHS component work. We are linking that to the operational priorities that are established from the Secretary of Homeland Security.

They are mutually compatible reinforcing with JIATF-South, but I would say, right now, as I mentioned to the Chairwoman, because JIATF-South's work is resource-informed, they put their focus against the highest threats.

Right now, the eastern Pacific, given that JIATF's focus is drugs, most of the cocaine is moving in that vector. We support that. I mentioned in my oral statement that we are organized under these regional integration groups. We have an eastern Pacific RIG. That is one of our frameworks. It is very well-standing and well-oiled.

Back when Chief Beeson and I were stationed out in California in our previous assignments, we worked this coastal California corridor and the partnership was terrific there. When this whole task force model started up the question was, why don't you just take that collaboration—and nationalize that? It worked well there. I have been other places it didn't work so well.

March forward, we have these task forces now. I think we leveraged that learning, that coordination at the tactical level and that is where you get the differences.

There are the DHS components. There is the local State, Federal tie-in there. Then you have got JIATF that has got a National mission getting after drugs.

But again, as the Chairwoman suggested, there are always ways to revisit authorities, broaden authorities. The question would be, you know, how do you resource that? How do you fund that? What is their bandwidth to take on too many different things?

They are the best in the world at the counter-narcotics and the maritime mission right now. I am not sure what happens, you know, if you don't commensurately resource that and you just put more work on them. You may take your eye off the ball and not be as effective at your primary mission at the end of the day.

Mr. VELA. So, I know we have JIATF-South. We have JIATF-West, right, stationed in California or Hawaii?

Admiral SCHULTZ. JIATF-West, sir, is out of Hawaii.

Mr. VELA. Do we have another JIATF? Or are those the two JIATF?

Admiral SCHULTZ. Sir, under the counter-narcotics frameworks, there is JIATF-West, JIATF-South. There are other JTFs under the Department of Defense that do different things. There is JTF-North, JTFs that support different entities, but I think in the realm I believe you are asking, it is west and south.

Mr. VELA. I am not anywhere familiar with the work of JIATF-West but my question for you, Chief Beeson is basically the same thing.

What do you see as the distinction between what JIATF-West does and what JTF-West does and maybe you could comment on your thoughts, in terms of the reasons that we need both as well?

Chief BEESON. So I look at the task force, the Joint Task Force-West, East and I as what is really a whole-of-Government approach.

I was a chief in a sector when these task forces were stood up, and I was also the commander of that task force in the corridor. What I saw, I felt like we had a very good relationship with our DHS partners in the corridor, but I did see it get better.

We were able to get more assets to come together and look at threats, to identify priorities, and then take the actions that we needed to take against the priorities, the appropriate law enforcement consequences.

As I look at what we are doing as a JTF-West, it is really furthering that DHS Unity of Effort, bringing together the partners. We are doing a much better job, I think, on identifying our threats and sharing our intelligence now than we were in the past.

I think this task force is a way to continue that effort, to continue to align the DHS assets as we go after these transnational criminal organizations.

Mr. VELA. Yes. I am running out of time as well. I am just—so what is JIATF-West doing that is different than what JTF does?

Chief BEESON. Well, like you, I have to admit I am not real familiar with JIATF-West.

Mr. VELA. OK. Fair enough. I am out of time, and Ms. Ayala, maybe we can explore later. I kind-of have the same questions with respect to JTF-Investigations, HSI and HIDTA, but we can address that later.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Vela.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Rutherford from Florida, for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Madame Chairwoman. You know, I just had the distinct privilege to go and visit Task Force–West. I have to tell you, I came back much encouraged by what I saw from the Joint Task Force operations.

Admiral, if I could ask you first, you know, I think as we see more pressure placed on our land borders, we are going to see more pressure. You know, as I heard it explained several times, when you squeeze the balloon, the air goes to the, you know, the ends. Particularly in San Diego, we saw that with the panga boats that started making the end runs but you responded to that.

Now, to disrupt their business model, they are being forced to go hundreds of miles out to sea and around. I think the highest I heard that they even went up to San Francisco Bay, I think they said one time. I realized that wasn't practical for their business model.

So my question is this: On the maritime response, I know that you all have some very old cutters and things, but can you talk a little bit about the needs—now I am shifting to Joint Task Force–East, I think, because I am—being from Florida, I am really concerned about the maritime borders over there.

Can you talk about the threat when we tighten up the Rio Grande Valley and how that is going to impact our JTF–East?

Admiral SCHULTZ. Yes, Congressman. Clearly, if, as you noted the balloon analogy, if you squeeze the balloon, the pressure sort-of releases elsewhere. So when there is a focus on the land border, clearly, there is a nice enhanced risk of more maritime smuggling.

You know, we and our partners patrol the waters routinely and we are paying great attention to that. Some of the stuff, the manifestation we saw as you talked about California with the panga threat, that was marijuana in large quantities, some methamphetamines coming up.

It used to be human smuggling on the waterfront there. We stymied that with this JTF-like model before in a collaborative environment just working with our DHS partners. I think that shows the power of what enhanced collaboration, unity of effort, Federal, State, local linkage can do together.

So we are very much aware of the pressure at the land border. I say we are constantly, because of our partnerships, because of the shared intelligence, the fusion of intelligence, I think if we see a trend, a threat vector that moves land smuggling to the maritime domain, we will be ready for that.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you. Thank you.

Chief Beeson, I will first tell you that having dealt with span of control quite a lot in my previous career, I did not see—I thought you all had a very good span of control in the JTF.

Another thing that I know is this. You cannot build relationships in the middle of a crisis. You can only access the relationships that you have already built.

One of the things that I notice about HSI and the Border Patrol working together across the border that there is a lot of relation-

ship-building going on there that I had no idea existed. That was eye-opening.

The ability to integrate your intelligence, your communication, and your response on the border to respond to those invasions was—was quite impressive.

So my question is, Chief, what technologies would you say are needed in each of your sectors to better achieve that detection so that we have a good response time?

You know, what I saw in Tucson was excellent. The BigPipe in the intelligence work that was going on there. Can you talk a little bit about what you need in some of the other sectors where I saw less technology?

Chief BEESON. So as the commander for the Joint Task Force—West, my responsibility is to leverage a whole-Government approach against counter network operations, against the TCOs that are, you know, out violating the borders.

In my current capacity, I am not the technology guy. That would be to the component to Customs and Border Protection, so I would want to defer to them on their technology needs.

I can tell you that they are buried and, you know, quite—as you saw when you were out there, the terrain is vast. It is diverse. So the technology to address that is going to be pretty complex, and we have to get back to you from them on that.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you.

I am out of time, but let me just say, Ms. Ayala, the HSI folks were doing a fantastic job working across that border and congratulations to all of you on JTF. I think it is working well.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Mrs. Demings from Florida, for 5 minutes.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Thank you so much, Chairwoman and to our Ranking Member as well and to our witnesses this morning. Thank you for being here.

Admiral Schultz, yesterday the commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard was quoted as saying even though the service he commands faces the same readiness concerns as the other military services, the Coast Guard is left behind while other branches of the military receive budget increases.

Given that the current administration's fiscal year 2017 supplemental budget requests are supposed to bolster military and border security capabilities, how will JTF—East strategy and operations be impacted, if the Coast Guard continues to be excluded from the overall discussion on resources and needs?

Admiral SCHULTZ. Well, Congresswoman, thank you for the question. Clearly, with the fiscal year 2018 budget only being a blueprint at the Hill and the formal budget with a Congressional justification not coming until May, I am at limit at what I can speak to there.

I am confident that Coast Guard will be able to sustain our current level of operations and our on-going acquisitions efforts with the budget that is proposed. There is talk of a defense supplemental out there, I think to the tune of \$52 billion.

I think the commandant's comments speak to, you know, we are one of the five armed services. Clearly, when you talk about Na-

tional security, homeland defense, there are Coast Guard equities as part of that discussion.

I believe that will be a multi-year effort. The Department of Defense has many readiness challenges as we have been a Nation at war here for more than the past decade.

The Coast Guard clearly shares some of those readiness challenges, some of our force construct challenges. Clearly, as one of the five armed services, we would like to see, you know, potential future inclusion there.

But again, we understand the demands on DOD, the challenges on DOD. I think the comments, the commandant's comments yesterday were framing it in don't forget the Coast Guard is one of your five armed services and we have National security and homeland security missions, and just to keep the aperture broad for future inclusion in those discussions. But by no means are we at risk in 2018 here to sustain our level of operations.

As it impacts the Task Force, as it impacts my Coast Guard duties, I am confident the Secretary, having served under his leadership at SOUTHCOM, understands the unique capabilities that the Coast Guard brings to the problem set better than anyone in this town here.

I think we will be in fine shape, here. But clearly, we as an armed service, we want to be considered on those readiness challenges, because they are very real in the Coast Guard as well.

We had 6 years of funding at or below the Budget Control Act level. I think when you play that forward, looking back playing forward, that is about a 10 percent loss of purchasing power. So we do have some readiness challenges, but—

Mrs. DEMINGS. Isn't there a recommendation to cut the Coast Guard's budget by 28 percent? Are you saying if that occurred, that there would be no effect on your readiness to meet your responsibilities?

Admiral SCHULTZ. No, Congresswoman. I am saying that the 2018 budget, which has been bantered around in the press is pre-decisional. There is talk about cuts in there. I am not going to speak to that.

I believe the commandant and my leadership would say conversations with the Department, with the Secretary about our needs, and I believe those needs will be addressed that will allow us to sustain our operations and maintain our critical momentum on our acquisitions programs.

But we have come out of multiple years of funding at the BCA level or below, which has not allowed us to sustain grown with, you know, the increasing costs of things.

Mrs. DEMINGS. OK. Thank you.

Chief Beeson, it is good to see you again. Thank you for being here. How has the creation of JTF-West affected the way CBP and its DHS partners interact with other State, local, and Federal law enforcement as well as Tribal partners?

Chief BEESON. The local level corridor—so there are within JTF as mentioned, there are the four corridors. At that level, the commanders there are interacting with State, local, Tribal law enforcement partners, something that we have been doing since I have been a Border Patrol agent.

I mean, certainly, the ability for us to work together to address border security issues has been very impactful for us. You know, we utilize Operation Stonegarden to provide some source of funding for some agencies so that they are able to leverage that stream of funding and provide some border security assistance through increased patrols by law enforcement in particular areas. Then it usually runs the whole gamut from the State, local, and Tribal.

Mrs. DEMINGS. I know my colleague asked about technology. What other areas are there room or is there room for improvement?

Chief BEESON. So I think, you know, technology is certainly one. Staffing, you know, we continue to look to increase our size. Then, of course, and then there are still the border barriers. We are still looking to enhance those.

Mrs. DEMINGS. OK. Thank you.

I yield back.

Ms. MCSALLY. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Duncan from South Carolina.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Madame Chairman. We have been focused on the Southwest Border for a long time for interdiction of smuggling and narcotrafficking.

In fact, in 1974, in response to a study by the Justice Management Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, the study was entitled "A Secure Border, Recommendation Number 7: A Secure Border."

Recommendation No. 7 of this study suggested the establishment of a Southwest Border intelligence center now known as EPIC, led by the DEA and staffed by representatives of that agency, U.S. Customs and now probably 15 other agencies involved in EPIC.

I have visited that center and I point out 1974, and here we are in 2017. So the question I have for the panel is how is EPIC leveraged in your JTF?

I will start with Ms. Ayala.

Ms. AYALA. Well, JTFI as a functional task force is primarily involved in the improvement of the investigative process. Of course, part of that is to leverage as much intelligence as possible. Our main goal is to focus on a customer service model, the special agent in the field working on investigation.

EPIC, just like all of the National capital region centers, are leveraged to ensure that there is no duplication of effort, that there is significant deconfliction, and that we are maximizing the broad knowledge that there is out there and the capabilities of our inter-agency partners. So from that perspective, we are utilizing EPIC.

But mostly in our models we are looking at transnational criminal networks and how they impact homeland security. So we are focusing in on prioritizing those threats and then creating models that actually enable us to look at a network.

So instead of looking at individual targets or organizations, we are looking at multiple cells and organizations that are supported by multiple sources of supply, money launderers, and illicit pathways and other illicit support systems. That is the breadth of what we are looking at.

So we are not looking at individual intelligence or small organizations. We are looking at networks that are impacting the international arena that sometimes are the subject of dozens of inves-



tigations and hundreds of arrests and indictments and prosecutions on both sides of the border.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, ma'am.

Admiral, on the East with air and marine, I mean I visited EPIC so I have seen some of the capabilities. Are they helping you guys, you know, I guess, triangulate and find the aircraft and the marine assets that are maybe smuggling contraband or drugs into the country? How do you utilize EPIC? It is just for my edification, really.

Admiral SCHULTZ. Congressman, most of our maritime activities here through the transit zone are coordinated through JIATF-South. But JIATF-South has linkages across all the Federal intelligence centers. They have international linkages with Interpol.

We have representations there from it is more than a dozen international partners. So that is the fusion point or the consolidation point. So there is a relationship there with the DOJ, the justice centers in the El Pasos of the world, the El Paso Intelligence Center. So that is sort of our fusion point.

When all that works through one lens it is fused. It is the best intelligence. It is pushed out to our operational resources.

You know, at the end of the day, the best capability for us with my Coast Guard hat on, which is complementary to the Task Force that is a Coast Guard cutter, a major cutter with the capability of carrying a helicopter in the back, ideally an airborne use of force capable helicopter, which can shoot out the engines. A lot of the threat is fast boats smuggling about a thousand, plus or minus, kilograms cocaine.

When you can push that intelligence from those centers through JIATF-South to the tactical operational units out there, whether it is a Coast Guard law enforcement attachment on a Navy ship or on a allied partnership or a Coast Guard cutter, there is patrol aircraft. We can leverage that intelligence.

We have visibility through all the National intelligence capabilities on about 80 percent of the maritime activity. We action about less than a third of that, about 30 percent of that. So there is really a capacity discussion here.

We could roll more drugs up out of the transit zone with more capabilities, but we are pretty darn good at doing what we do. It is more of a capacity discussion. We reach back to all those centers like EPIC to fuse that information and give us the best ability to target our efforts.

It is intelligence-driven operations is really what we are driving for because we are capacity-constrained. When I was a young ensign, you know, 33 years ago, we were boring holes in the ocean just out there sort of aimlessly patrolling, looking for some vessel that might move through our patrol box.

Today, we, with specific information fused through JIATF-South, we can go not quite to the spot on the map, but we can get pretty darn close, launch an unmanned aerial system from the back of a cutter, put a DOD patrol aircraft over the top, then we can get on that vessel and create an end-game, an interdiction or a disruption at sea.

Mr. DUNCAN. All right. Well, thank you for that.

I chair the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs. So I meet with the leaders in Panama and Costa Rica and Colombia. One thing that they keep driving home is apprehension of drugs in large bulk shipments as they are coming out of Colombia is more effective than those parcels being broken up in smaller, as they migrate North and being broken up even into backpack size parcels to be brought across the border.

So the question I have, I guess for you Admiral, but Ms. Ayala may answer this. How well are our partners working in Panama, Costa Rica, really, Honduras, El Salvador, the whole Central American isthmus, but Colombia as well? Can you all touch on is it effective working with our foreign partners on this?

Ms. MCSALLY. If you can make it quick? The time is—

Admiral SCHULTZ. Congressman, absolutely it is effective. The partner nations, when I talk about the JIATF successes, the Coast Guard interdicted more than 200 metric tons last year with our interagency partners.

When you roll up the contributions of the other partner nations, I think there are about 340 metric tons taken out of the entire transit system. About two-thirds of those cases have a partner nation connection. About 35 to 40 percent is a partner nation end-game asset, a boat, a cutter, a naval ship from one of those countries does the interdiction.

Sometimes that is informed with U.S. intelligence that we can push through, you know, the right filters to them. Sometimes it is a DOD or a Coast Guard or CBP aircraft that brought that Guatemalan special naval vessel to the scene.

So I would say the partnerships have grown exponentially in recent years. DOD does some support and capabilities for them, Border Patrol, Coast Guard, CBP, we are training them. We have a persistent presence in those countries. We have attachés. We have liaisons.

So I would tell you that is a very good news story. Sometimes that story, I think, is lost in the collaboration, but our partners are in that fight, because they are kind-of caught as the meat in the sandwich.

The end-users of drugs in the United States, the source country in the Indian Ridge and Central America is feeling, you know, that squeeze that manifests itself with people showing up at our Southwest Border.

Ms. MCSALLY. All right, the gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thanks.

Ms. MCSALLY. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Correa from California, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

General question to all of you, big picture statement. Vice Admiral Charles Ray at the last hearing we had here mentioned that the Coast Guard was unable to interdict, his words, "580 known smuggling events due to capacity challenges." It sounds to me like he just didn't have the assets to interdict those 580 known smuggling events.

Some of the comments you have all made right now, which is working with other countries, collaborating with other countries, and given the fact that we are all limited by resources in trying

to come up with an optimal resource allocation in terms of investing our taxpayer dollars, what would you say would be our highest yield in terms of asset investment going forward?

New ships for the Coast Guard, greater cooperation with our neighbors to the south in terms of intelligence, multi-layered defense, multi-layered border system, so to speak? It is a general question, but I am asking you to answer it given your experience out there in the field?

Ms. AYALA. I would say probably a little bit of both on the multi-layered and the foreign investment. But I will say that as we look at criminality and our opportunities to engage it, we always want to engage it as far away from the U.S. border as possible. So investment in capacity building with a foreign partner is always crucial to us.

Mr. CORREA. How? Specifics.

Ms. AYALA. Well, in many cases in working with Department of State, our intention is to train them to be able to investigate better, to be able to work with host countries, to strengthen some of their laws or some of their capacities, to engage in investigative surges with them.

Every year we do engage in that type of investigative search where we deploy HSI, CBP, and DOD personnel to Central America and other countries to work on priority investigations that have impact on both sides of the border.

These type of operations in just a short time yield up to, like, 800 arrests, identification of 32 transnational criminal organizations, a dismantlement of nine.

But mostly to identify the networks and look for vulnerabilities that we can exploit so we can better attack the adversary further away from the border.

So international—

Mr. CORREA. So that is based on local intel that you pick from sources outside the United States?

Ms. AYALA. Yes, and sources in the United States also.

Ms. GAMBLER. If I can add, Congressman? I think it is a really important question, and it gets at the heart of what has been a key finding from GAO's work on border security programs and investments, which is that the Department has not established those metrics and those assessments to provide information for looking at which investments are yielding which types of results and to help inform decision making, whether it is technologies, whether it is additional infrastructure, whether it is additional manpower.

That is why the Department putting in place some of the metrics that we have been recommending through our work is so important.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you.

Admiral SCHULTZ. Congressman, per my answer to Congressman Duncan, it is a capacity conversation. I think from a Coast Guard perspective I think the best way to get after that for us is to maintain the momentum we have on our recapitalization efforts, our National security cutters, our off-shore patrol cutters, our fast response cutters.

The Congress has been very supportive keeping steady predictable funding moving forward for us will allow us to replace 50-

soon to be 60-year-old ships that are working on those threat vectors.

Our folks are doing a terrific job. But kind-of walking back to my answer about the readiness challenges, when you are maintaining a 50-plus-year-old ship, you know, suppliers for those parts don't exist anymore. There's—it's challenging. We are doing a little bit of that on the backs of our people.

So getting those new ships fielded, putting the helicopters, we have C-27s, 14 C-27s that came to the Coast Guard from DOD with the support of Congress. We need to missionize those. They are slick aircraft.

Right now they go out and they can patrol, but they don't have any capabilities to detect and surveil out there. Getting the predictable funding going forward to make them operationalized is part of the solution.

Mr. CORREA. Admiral Ray, let me interrupt you and say, Admiral Ray—I should say Admiral Shultz—mentioned again 580—

Admiral SCHULTZ. Right.

Mr. CORREA [continuing]. Known drug-smuggling targets.

Admiral SCHULTZ. Yes, sir.

Mr. CORREA. Not enough assets to go after them. It sounds like you need assets as opposed to a predictable revenue stream, predictable funding.

Admiral SCHULTZ. Well, Congressman, more clearly adds to the equations, you know. I talked about the 70 percent we didn't act. We have intelligence and we acted against 30 percent of that. So that is a conversation purely about capacity.

But you need to have the right type of assets. There have been many forays in recent years about pushing vessels out there. You need that vessel. I mentioned previously about what is that capability that really allows you to be effective on that mission?

It is that flight deck-equipped Coast Guard cutter with an embarked helicopter that can deploy use of force and an over-the-horizon boat supported by unmanned aerial surveillance or maritime patrol aircraft.

So the right capabilities adds to the equation. Just pushing ships out there with the wrong capabilities—we have ally partners that contribute. The Navy was very much part of this mission set. But the Navy is subscribed elsewhere in the world with a rising, you know, Russian threat and the South Sea China threat.

We are not seeing a lot of the Navy in this hemisphere. Admiral Tidd—General Kelly talked about the Coast Guard being his Navy in the Western Hemisphere. That is reality.

So there is a resource component, sir. But I think the momentum getting those assets out there is probably the practical way to keep moving forward here.

Mr. CORREA. I yield, Madam Chair.

Ms. MCSALLY. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Hurd from Texas, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HURD. Thank you, Chairwoman. Admiral Shultz, if you had \$999 million in fiscal year 2017 how would you use it? How would you suggest it be used in JTF-East?

Admiral SCHULTZ. Congressman, I would have to first get some more people to execute \$999 million, about 40 people. If we had ad-

ditional resources in JTF–East, kind of agnostic to the number, talking about additional resources, we would build on the momentum we have.

My goal since I have been here the last 8 months is we are the startup JTF–East. I say we are like the commercials that talk about BASF. We don't build it. We make it better. We don't direct operations, we power operations.

Mr. HURD. So maybe let me redirect the question. If Coast Guard, and again I know you are wearing your JTF–East hat, right. But if Coast Guard had \$999 million, how would they use it?

Admiral SCHULTZ. So if we had just under \$1 billion, we would get after some of our readiness challenges that we have been forced to kick the can on a little bit here. That is maintenance. That is operations.

We are looking to—

Mr. HURD. Can you buy any more boats with that?

Admiral SCHULTZ. We are looking to maintain momentum on bringing an icebreaker into our ranks. We have got two icebreakers—one medium, one heavy.

There are demands in the Arctic that warrant a heavy icebreaker right now. We are looking to move that down the rails. The commandant has talked about trying to field that ship by 2023. That is an ambitious endeavor. Some, you know, additional funding toward that to meet that—support.

Mr. HURD. Might help make it a little bit quicker.

Admiral SCHULTZ. Absolutely.

Mr. HURD. Good. Copy.

I just want to confirm, and you say this multiple times, and Chief Beeson, I am coming to you with the next question.

A third of the actionable intelligence that Coast Guard has, they can only act on a third of that because of capacity issues.

Admiral SCHULTZ. We action about one-third of the information we have. We have information on about 80 percent of the maritime movements. We get after about a third of that.

Mr. HURD. So Chief Beeson, is that a similar problem that Joint Task Force–West and Border Patrol has when you look at our Southern Border with Mexico?

Chief BEESON. I would say that it is not. I mean, we are not in terms of having a vast number of intelligence targets to go after. That is something that if you were to give me \$999 million I would be looking at building our intelligence capabilities.

You know, I think that I have seen some really, to me, phenomenal intelligence successes where leveraging the intelligence community has really paid off for us.

But it is for us, in terms of intelligence targets, it is not what I would call a target-rich environment. It is something we need to continue to build on.

Mr. HURD. So this question, again, to you Chief Beeson, and Ms. Ayala, I welcome your impact. As a former human intelligence officer I would say that countering narcotraffickers and kingpin human smugglers is not a National intelligence priority.

If we made it a National intelligence priority, had it as one of the top three of the NIPF, that we would see increased intelligence coming from Mexico and Central America that can be used to direct

some of your limited human resources. Am I crazy to think that? Would you agree? Help me refine that understanding.

Ms. AYALA, you can go first if you are interested.

Ms. AYALA. Yes. I would say that I would be happy to answer that question and give you certain examples of how we prioritize and are able to leverage that in a different environment in Classified setting.

Mr. HURD. Sure. So are you happy with the amount of intelligence that is being produced on the 19 criminal organizations that are operating in Mexico?

Ms. AYALA. I know from our perspective we are beyond the 19 criminal organizations as we are looking at the network. We could always use more intelligence. We could always use more systems and order in individuals to be able to go through that intelligence, properly analyze it and determining what we go after first.

Our goal is—

Mr. HURD. Which is the lead agency responsible for collecting intelligence on drug trafficking networks coming through Mexico? What agency within the Federal Government? CIA? What is DEA's role? Can you—microphone?

Ms. AYALA. The DEA's role is also to be overseas and collect intelligence. But as we know and as being former military operator and I know that you have a background as a significant operator, there are a lot of other individuals that are out there doing that work and funneling it through different places. So again, I would be happy to discuss that with you in a different environment.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. We are going to go through a second round here. I want to talk about the process and prioritization of air assets.

So we have two geographic JTFs. And then we have your air force is air and marine. Can you guys talk me through the process of how you prioritize requirements for specifically ISR air assets? Who makes the decision on where those air assets go and how nimble that is?

Then, Ms. Gambler, I think you talked a little bit about this related to Predator B. I want your perspective after I hear.

So obviously they may have competing requirements, so who decides where the air assets are going? How quickly does that turn and is it modified on a daily, weekly, monthly basis? Do either of you guys want to go first?

Chief.

Chief BEESON. So I will go back to having recently come from the Tucson sector. We had an air tasking operations group. So it was basically all of the providers of air support within the corridor, primarily the Office of Air Marine.

There was some DOD support. We did get some State and local support and even civil air patrol provided support to us. So they are meeting on a biweekly basis, sitting down looking at, getting an intel brief to start with.

OK. Here is what we are seeing, here is where we see the activity occurring, the threats, things of that nature. This is we think we are going to need air support and then plugging in based on that.

So the priorities are set by the commanders in the field. Primarily, the agents in charge at the stations are saying these are my priorities. Those would come up and get vetted at the sector level. We are perfecting that at the maritime.

When you get to land-centric, if Chief's team comes forward with a request to the Coast Guard, maybe out of San Diego in that quarter, we will respond to those on a case-by-case basis. We don't fly a lot over the land. But we certainly will support those requests when they come in.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. But generally speaking, there is not a lot of fluidity between JTF-East and JTF-West support assets. You are generally talking about what is within your ability to task in JTF-East. But there—

Admiral SCHULTZ. Well, if we are talking in the wet domain I would say there absolutely is a coordination, to where at the very point end, at our sectors in the Gulf of Mexico at the regional coordinating mechanisms, they would work across that seam without border.

I mean, if there is a need we talk to CBP air marine, they talk to Coast Guard. We can interchange. We can be a—you know, what we try to do is minimize redundancy.

Ms. MCSALLY. Yes.

Admiral SCHULTZ. So I say in Chief's world, you know, predominantly in the land-centric border we are not flying a lot of Coast Guard air there. So I would say you are not that synergy because there is not that sort of demand signal. We are working in different spaces most of time in West.

Ms. MCSALLY. Yes, but specifically air and marine assets I guess is what I am getting at.

Admiral SCHULTZ. Yes, I would tell you ma'am, I think there is a great story there.

Ms. MCSALLY. OK.

Admiral SCHULTZ. I think we schedule jointly together, we, you know, rooted out any redundancies. We can do hot hand-offs where, you know, these cases, particularly in the water when they are fast-moving targets operating at night, shutting down the daytime, if you are not on top of them, they are very difficult to go back and detect again.

So it is all about that efficiency, that crisp hand-off. I think we have got that wired pretty well.

Ms. MCSALLY. Ms. Gambler, your perspective on—

Ms. GAMBLER. Yes, related specifically to Predator Bs, Chairwoman, we found that there were some differences across the different air and marine operation centers for Predator B.

So some of those operation centers did have procedures for coordinating requests for Predator B support and then some didn't. So our recommendation was to better improve those coordination procedures as they relate across all of the different air and marine operation centers for the Predator Bs.

Ms. MCSALLY. So they are specifically asking requests for a platform as opposed to a capability in some of these centers?

Ms. GAMBLER. So we looked at what are called the four operation centers from which air and marine flies the Predator Bs. So some of those air operation centers have procedures for coordinating the

request that they receive for air support and that kind of thing and some didn't. So hopefully that clarifies.

So, our recommendation was related to strengthening those coordination procedures and making sure they exist across the different operation centers from which Predator Bs fly.

Ms. MCSALLY. Yes. My only point is, again, I am coming from my military experience, you don't ask for an asset. You ask for capability. There are other manned surveillance capabilities out there.

So if you need intelligence you don't say this is the platform I want. So an intelligence process needs to look at what the requirements are, what the prioritization is, and then what platforms can meet that requirement. Not I need my Predator today, is all I am getting at. So OK.

I am over my time, so you want another round?

Mr. CORREA. If I may? Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. MCSALLY. Recognize Mr. Correa, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CORREA. Question to everybody again, but I will start out with Ms. Gambler if I can? About a decade ago the Department of Homeland Security deployed physical infrastructure, fence, wall, anything you want to call it and technology on the Southern Border.

At the request of this committee, the GAO ultimately issued multiple reports, many of them not too favorable, showing mismanagement, cost overruns, and ultimately led to the cancellation of SBInet technology program.

To this day, CBP lacks a metric to show how these kinds of investments or that investment a decade ago actually contributed to our security, border security.

So my, you know, my question to you is in general. Lessons learned, are we heading down that same road today which is essentially, again, investing heavy sums of taxpayer dollars, not sure of what the ultimate return will be in terms of security, securing our taxpayers and citizens?

Ms. GAMBLER. I think there are several lessons learned from GAO's past work looking at DHS's efforts to deploy infrastructure and technology. One, Congressman you already mentioned, which is the need to have in place performance metrics to be able to assess what we are getting out of those investments.

The second one relates to DHS oversight and management of these acquisition programs. We have reported on technologies, infrastructures, and even in other areas that DHS doesn't always follow its own acquisition management processes.

Because it doesn't always follow those processes consistently it leads to some of the things you mentioned, Congressman, in terms of schedule slippages, cost overruns, and performance than is less than what is desired.

So it is important for the Department as it moves forward with acquisition programs to ensure it is following its management processes. That it is testing the technologies that it is putting out there to make sure that they operate in the environments where they are being deployed.

So, I think those are two key lessons learned from GAO's work on border security technology and assets.



Mr. CORREA. So again, it is a matter of rolling out some metrics to assure that we are watching the results of these investments, and No. 2, constant vigilance to make sure that what we bought is what we are getting.

Ms. GAMBLER. Management and oversight are two important words there, Congressman, yes.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you.

Any other comments from the rest of the panel?

Madam, I yield my time.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you.

Mr. Rutherford, do you want a second round of questions? The Chair now recognizes Mr. Rutherford from Florida, for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Ms. Ayala, could you talk a little about one of the vulnerabilities of the TCOs is once they move their drugs north, they got to move their money south.

I know speaking with a couple of the HSI agents, they spoke about some very good coordination of effort that identified a particular bank that I think was moving like \$20 million.

Could you talk a little bit about that and how that could be replicated across the whole Joint Task Force area?

Ms. AYALA. OK. I am not sure specifically which case that you are referring to, but I will tell you that, I mean, obviously the components here—specifically, HSI has over 40 years of money laundering expertise that dates back to the Bank Secrecy Act. So we have a lot of experience in all different areas.

A lot of, obviously, authorities that help us to intercept, whether it be cash or look for vulnerabilities in our financial systems, whether they be funnel accounts or the misuse of certain things. We also work with private sector in order to develop best practices.

I can tell you that we are looking at all of the movements of bulk cash on the way down. Not just at the border, but throughout the United States and pipelines. We are working on, obviously, to seize assets in bank accounts.

Obviously some of that is difficult when we are looking at funnel accounts and the rapid way in which they move and the way that that system is used in order to then remove money near the border and then try to bulk cash it out.

So those are certain ways. There are many vulnerabilities along the way for the organization. Where it becomes complicated is their use of trade-based money laundering, which, of course, is in large scale and it involves billions and billions of dollars in money that is going south through trade investments that are not what they appear.

So one of the main things that we do in JTFI is prioritize the top threats of criminal networks. Many of them involve money-laundering investigations.

So we are looking at the complete network. We are prioritizing the same investigations that are in the field so that we can lend value to them and increase the possibility, not just for seizures, but for increasing prosecutions and the seizure of assets.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you.

Chief Beeson, could you talk a little bit about BigPipe and how that works in Arizona? Why something like that hasn't been replicated in the Rio Grande Valley sector?

Chief BEESON. So BigPipe is a platform, a software platform. Let us see how I can explain this. But basically it provides a secure method for law enforcement that have an account, that can sign into it to chat.

There is like a chatroom, if you will, about what is going on within the area of operations. There is also the ability to downlink video from an ISR platform that might be out operating in the area. One of the—either the Predator or a helicopter with a camera mounted onto it.

So what they are doing is it is just a way for folks operating within the tactical operation centers to look at what the threats are, request assets, maybe do some coordination of resources. It could be replicated across the Southwest Border.

I don't know that it is or isn't being used in Rio Grande Valley. I just know, having come from Tucson, that we were making effective use of it there.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. I don't believe they are using it, well, they are not using BigPipe, but I mean they are trying some integration.

But that is why I was asking about the technology needs for, you know, across the board. Because, that is something that—the integration that we saw there that I guess you started is something that we need to replicate over in the Rio Grande Valley.

Chief BEESON. I would like to take credit for starting it, but the reality is I had a number of predecessors before me that actually did that, so—

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Oh, OK. Well, you just mentioned that you were there so I just think—OK. Thank you.

I yield back, Madam Chair.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you. Still have some more questions if you guys don't mind? Bear with me here.

Ms. Ayala, can you share with us, and I know we are in an Unclassified setting, the presence of TCOs within the United States, within the 50 States?

I mean, I have seen some different numbers out there about how many cities we have a pretty significant presence of cartel activity and operatives. Can you just share your perspectives on that at the Unclassified level?

Ms. AYALA. Well, I probably can't really go into the numbers, the specifics of city by city, but what I can tell you is that our strategy is to pursue every element of those transnational criminal organizations from a network point of view, whether they are in China, coming up through the Southern Border and approaches through the border and into, you know, Chicago or Detroit or wherever that is.

That we are looking at all of the sources of supply, the distribution, the transportation networks and putting that together and looking at supply chain investments and seeing how we can look for vulnerabilities in their actions along the entire crime spectrum to be able to then pursue some enforcement action against them.

So they are everywhere. We have transnational criminal organizations in every city across the United States. We are working to minimize the impact in all those cities.

Ms. MCSALLY. Is there anything that we can do, that Congress can do, to help your activities to combat cartel activity within the 50 States?

Ms. AYALA. Well, I think that when we look at individual agency missions and goals and some of the infrastructure that we built to support that, sometimes we look at it in stovepipes.

So for instance, when we are looking at the hiring of agents, special agents for criminal investigations, we often forget that we really need, you know, forensic auditors and financial experts and other analysts and other missions to support that effort.

Even if we were able to take on everything we wanted without prioritization, we would still need more assistant U.S. attorneys, and more infrastructure in the court system to be able to support those investigations.

So I think looking at a holistic approach to what hiring 10 Border Patrol agents or office of field operations or Coast Guard would require as far as investigators and all of the support infrastructure as a whole, I think would help in our endeavor.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great, thanks. Back to just overall effectiveness of the JTF so far, can you think of an example—I know we are in an Unclassified setting—of a case or a mission that you saw now that we have JTFs that show that JTFs are effective?

Like, had we not had this new construct perhaps you wouldn't have been able to operate in a way that impacted a specific mission. Like, can you give any examples that actually show that what we are doing here is increasing effectiveness?

Ms. AYALA. So what I was going, we will fill in three distinct gaps in DHS capabilities, things that we are doing now that weren't available before that we developed jointly, most of us together in our integrated teams.

So in the past, DHS lacked a mechanism to prioritize the top transnational criminal networks and now we have. We developed the HomeCort process. The deputies of all of the components and the task force directors and the heads of all of the investigative services are on there.

We also lacked a way to consistently tie together and manage all of the investigations, operations, arrests related to a criminal network. We were able to develop that, which is Comprehensive Criminal Network Analysis, which we did not have before in the Department.

We also were able to develop National case coordination, which now manages that and is able to coordinate across the entire domain and spectrum.

The main thing, third, though is that we have been able to focus on the investigative process of work, which we really necessarily did not before. The criminal investigative process and looking for ways to support that through technology and weaknesses.

So this enables us to have better cross-programmatic and cross-domain visibility. Our strength is in the interagency team and the broad knowledge that they are bringing together to National centers.

Because of that we have been able to do things like not looking at ways of maybe couching future metrics, but in ways of value-added statements.

Like, for instance, like in a human trafficking investigation, a network that we assisted in and did comprehensive criminal network analysis, we were able to expand the knowledge of the network by 200 percent in half of the time, which builds in all those efficiencies in man hours.

In addition, that resulted in tripling the number of indictments more than tripling from 10 to 12 to 38. You know, how does that matter? Because then now it is harder to reconstitute itself.

In this case, because it was human trafficking, obviously prevented people to continually be victimized or create larger victims. I can go on in many different scenarios—

Ms. MCSALLY. No. That is great. Thank you. So you are a fan of the JTFI organizations it sounds like?

Ms. AYALA. I am a fan of my team and the support that I receive from my executive agents and my partners in West and East that support those efforts.

Ms. MCSALLY. Commander Beeson.

Chief BEESON. I always forget that button. I think that a couple of examples for me come to mind. Most recently in Arizona, a capacity was needed by the team out there in order for them to further their investigative efforts.

So that capacity request came into Joint Task Force–West. It was then sourced out. Then we did source it also to Joint Task Force–I. They have been able to meet the capacity request. So they will be getting that resource down to Arizona, if it is not there already, for them to utilize.

I think that that is something that prior to the task forces, that probably would have gone just up one particular stovepipe and might not have been met. But I do think it was met.

Additionally, I think of some, you know, bringing in citizenship and immigration services into the taskforce has enabled us to identify, I mean, very recently, within the last couple of weeks, individuals who were pending immigration benefits in the United States that we know were engaged in narcotics smuggling in Mexico.

They are not going to get those benefits now. That is, to me, something that certainly adds value.

Ms. MCSALLY. That is great.

Admiral Schultz.

Admiral SCHULTZ. Madam Chairwoman, I would tell you in a couple places. First and foremost, I think our DHS partners have collaborated well in the past. I think we have upped that game. We are able to bring in capabilities and capacities from outside regional locations toward better end effect against transnational criminal organizations.

Our recent efforts in Puerto Rico, where we linked in DOD linguists, we linked in DOD analysts. We brought in P-3 support that wouldn't normally support that vector in the Western Hemisphere Initiative, illicit pathway initiative I talked about.

In Central America we are fielding a capability with partner nations where they can enroll migrants moving up through the Central American corridor. We can enroll them.

We have biometrics as they move across, you know, they leave the Indian Ridge, they show up in the Darien, the jungle regions there. They move through the Darien into Costa Rica and up the chain. We enroll them. The partners see that. As they move up, their stories change.

They start to dial in on what are those folks with these changing stories? At what point do we need to get a partner nation lashing up with the U.S. law enforcement folks to figure out who that person really is before they present at the Southwest Border?

So I think there are many places. I use the metric that when I reach out to my DHS partners in the field and they say, hey, we want more support from you, to me that is the greatest testament. We are building relationships and they are asking for more support to be more effective in their work.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. Thank you.

All right. The Chair now recognizes Ms. Barragán for 5 minutes.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Thank you. I just left a meeting with Secretary Kelly, and I didn't have an opportunity to get a clarification so I was hoping maybe somebody here maybe to elucidate on this.

Right now when an agent goes out for an enforcement action they have, as he stated, they have a name of somebody who is a target and that agent has orders to go find this target.

But if, for example, the order is to go out and arrest Nanette and my friend, you know, Tim is with me, and it turns out Tim is undocumented, he is being picked up, too. Are there any policy memos or any guidelines that are being used on prosecutorial discretion as it pertains to collaterals?

Ms. AYALA. I would say that that is a question that I would leave to the component to answer from a joint task force perspective. What we are looking at is the targeting of human smuggling organizations and people involved in the fraudulent processes and abuses along the way. So our warrants or our arrests would be involved, large transnational criminal networks involved in the process.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Anybody else up here that might be able to shed some light on this?

Chief BEESON. So I am the director for the Joint Task Force—West for Arizona, so like Director Ayala, we are focusing on transnational criminal organizations. CBP is focusing on border security.

We are not in the business that you just described. That is not within our portfolio of—at the moment we are focusing on the actual border itself, border security there.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. OK.

Ms. Ayala, Mr. Trump wants to add more enforcement and removal operations. What does that do to the workload of Homeland Security Investigations?

Ms. AYALA. Well, I think we just had a bit of a discussion on any time that we increase the number of enforcement removal or CBP officers. That there is always a correlation between the number of HSI investigators that you would need in order to support the investigative process.

I know there is a ratio out there that we could probably look at that I would be happy to maybe get to you as far as how many investigators to other operators within the Department.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. What does it do to ICE's Office of the Principal Legal Advisor?

Ms. AYALA. This is what we were speaking about earlier about the holistic approach to looking at the assets and the support that is always needed, because you are always going to need—any time you plus-up in one area you have to plus-up the support mechanisms.

So that would be Office of Principal Legal Advisor. That would be mission support. That would be analytical support. It could be other technological support and other equipment that goes along with it.

So it is a complete, let us say, huge pie of percentages and trying to figure out which correlates to what. I know that there are work force models that are out there that each component has that addresses that.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. So that reminds me, you know, we have been hearing a lot about ramping up and hiring a lot of new ICE agents and, you know, adding 10,000 agents, but we haven't heard a lot about adding support for the courts, right? The courts are already backed up.

As somebody who has actually represented a woman—in an asylum case from Guatemala, you know, my case took years. I was limited to maybe an hour-and-a-half in court. I would keep going back until I got, you know, a full 6 hours.

We aren't really hearing anything about ramping up cost for courts and making sure that we are following through on the judicial side. Do you foresee that we are going to see that or do you have any comment on that?

Ms. AYALA. Our goal is always to have more prosecutorial resources or space and so that we are separating that from looking at transnational criminal organizations.

We could go out there with all the assets we have and make 20 time more cases, but we don't have the prosecutorial resources to take those investigations, and we don't have pre-trial services to go through and meet all those individuals.

We don't have detention space to house them, then, you know, we can't take on those number of cases. So that is why there is prioritization everywhere.

So we could definitely support the increase of support in all aspects of Government that correlate back to our investigative process.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. OK.

Then the last question is to you, Vice Admiral. You know, I was hearing about the possible cuts for the Coast Guard and TSA to build a border wall. How do the Coast Guard's aging assets limit your ability to carry out your missions?

Admiral SCHULTZ. Well, Congresswoman, I would say that due to the terrific capabilities of our folks and the commitment we are getting the work done with our aging assets.

But you can only squeeze so much life out of a ship. You know, we have got ships that are 50-plus years old. With the help of Con-

gress we have momentum to recapitalize those ships, our offshore patrol cutters.

We just awarded a contract back in September to build the first 9 of what we hope will be a fleet of 25. We just had a ceremony in Seattle, here for the Coast Guard Cutter Monroe this past weekend with the secretaries—and the commandant.

That is the most capable platform we ever had. So the end of the day predictable, sustained budgets allow us to continue our recapitalization efforts to get those old ships out of service, put new ships on there.

The new ships are more capable. The living conditions for the men and women on-board are much more adequate and, you know, we want to continue that momentum. I think we are on a good trajectory to recapitalize the Coast Guard.

Clearly we can do more with more, but getting those old ships out and new ships fielded is really a critical part of our continued success.

Ms. BARRAGÁN. Great. Thank you.

I yield back.

Ms. MCSALLY. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Correa for some final questions.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

You know, gentlemen, if you looked at the border area, 100 miles plus 100 miles plus-minus north-south, if you look at it economically probably would be one of the world's largest economies. Probably one of the top five economies in the world. It is just a lot of economic activity in that area.

So it behooves all of us to try to coordinate our activities north and south of the border when it comes to a lot of these criminal elements because, of course, otherwise we would be fighting a war, so to speak, with one hand tied behind us.

Chief BEESON, a minute ago you said that through your coordination, a person that was about to get immigration benefits was denied those benefits because you had intel that that person had been engaged in narcotics activities in Mexico. How did you come up with that information, if you can say?

Chief BEESON. Not sure that I can in this setting.

Mr. CORREA. Be as general as you can.

Chief BEESON. It was the result of an investigation. So as the result of investigation, which is the gathering of information, gathering of law enforcement intelligence, they were able to determine that was the case.

Mr. CORREA. Any of those investigations with coordination of assets or government south of the border?

Chief BEESON. Thinking of that particular event, it does not come immediately to mind. I would have to take that back for the record.

Mr. CORREA. Is one of the—one prior life as a State legislator in California, one of the complaints I had from folks in the Tijuana area was the lack of coordination with immigration folks and when it came to following individuals that have criminal records, especially when it came to deportations.

In those days, and I don't know if it is still the case, deportation you are opening some gates. Folks walk out into Tijuana and the folks in the southern side wouldn't know if you were deporting

somebody based on a speeding ticket or that person was a convicted murderer that was now being released into Mexico.

So my question in general is do we have coordination with Mexican authorities to make sure that we can follow some of these bad hombres, so to speak, not only north of the border but south of the border to make sure that folks are kept in check that should be kept in check?

Chief BEESON. So I believe the answer is yes. Routinely before we remove anybody to Mexico we provide Mexico with a list of the individuals, and I am speaking specifically for CBP in terms the folks that we remove, with a list of the individuals that are being removed and the reasons for it.

We work closely with Mexico to check and see if individuals that we have arrested are wanted, if there are outstanding warrants for them in Mexico.

On occasion we do see where there are individuals that we have arrested in the United States that have outstanding criminal warrants in Mexico so we are making sure that when they are returned to Mexico that Mexico knows and we are essentially meeting them at the border and turning them over to them.

Mr. CORREA. My final question, shifting gears a little bit; drug law in Mexico is a little bit different than it is in the United States right now, given the emerging pattern in the United States, clear pattern of legalization of marijuana in the United States whereas in Mexico it is still a serious crime. If you are caught with possessions of significant amounts you are going to do 10, 20 years in jail.

Is that complicating the relation between the United States and Mexico in terms of enforcement of drug—

Admiral SCHULTZ. Congressman, I would tell you this.

Mr. CORREA [continuing]. Policy?

Admiral SCHULTZ. The government of Mexico remains a key partner, I think, in the land domain under drug enforcement. On the maritime domain we have a great working relationship with CMAR, which is the Mexican navy. We will be meeting with Mexican counterparts here coming up in April.

You hit the nail on the head. I mean, there is key economic trade across the border and our challenge is to disrupt these TCOs while allowing and enabling that trade to continue to happen.

If you look at Mexico, you know, from my time at SOUTHCOM, everyone focuses at the goal line defense at the Southwest Border. I think Mexico's focus is clearly their Guatemalan-Mexican border.

If you think about this as a layered defense of why are folks showing up at our border, most of these days they are Central Americans, not Mexicans anymore.

It is that instability in Mexico—excuse me, in Central America by the transnational crime that is ending up there. That is where the drugs land. Most of the drugs land in Costa Rica now, increasing amounts, in Panama, in Guatemala.

Guatemala is the first stop country for most of the drugs. That is the violence that comes with the drugs. There is a question about breaking big bulk drugs that you could interdict at sea down to small—once it is in the land domain it is very much a problem set, and there is a tremendous violence that is associated with it.



So I think the Secretary's view is push the border out. You partner with the Mexicans where you can at our land border, but clearly at their land border with Guatemala. That is part of the problem set as well.

We have a very good working relationship across our respective components. I think the task force is apt to complement that, but not create new entities and new partnerships with the Mexicans that confuse them. I think there are existing strong relationships that we will continue to build on.

Mr. CORREA. Thank you.

Chair, I yield the remainder of my time.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you.

I want to thank the witnesses for their valuable testimony and Members for their questions. Members of the committee may have some additional questions, and for the witnesses we will ask you to respond to those in writing. Pursuant to committee Rule VII(D) the hearing record will be held open for 10 days.

Without objection, the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:44 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

