

THE UNITED STATES' STRATEGY TO INVESTIGATE AND PROSECUTE MIGRANT SMUGGLING



U.S. Department of Justice
Human Rights & Special Prosecutions Section
UNTOC Working Group on the Smuggling of Migrants
June 27-28, 2022

NATIONAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW



- **HRSP Smuggling & Immigration Portfolio**
 - Prosecute cases in federal courts **across the country**
 - Focus on multi-district, transnational, and otherwise complex smuggling or document fraud cases
- **ECT = Extraterritorial Criminal Travel Strike Force**
 - ECT Program is a partnership between DOJ and HSI
 - ECT cases are staffed with an HRSP prosecutor and HSI agent
 - Focus on transnational smuggling networks that create a national security concern (such as the existence of a smuggling pipeline that could be utilized by terrorist networks to unlawfully enter the United States) or humanitarian concern (such as particularly dangerous conditions of travel)

NATIONAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW



Prosecute Migrant Abuse and Kidnapping

- Deter smuggling organizations and kidnappers
- Vulnerable victims/humanitarian imperative
- Raise awareness in immigrant communities
- Increased reporting to law enforcement

NATIONAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW



- **JTFA = Joint Task Force Alpha**

- Build teams of specialized prosecutors, agents, investigators, analysts, and other support personnel from across DOJ and DHS offices and agencies to work jointly and develop criminal cases that target individuals and networks operating in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico
- Coordinate with prosecutors and agents assigned to existing human smuggling or trafficking cases to identify additional leads and targets for JTFA
- Develop processes to focus intelligence collection and target investigations based on the predominate smuggling networks used by migrants
- Work closely with foreign partners to identify and target individuals and networks for prosecution; coordinate transnational law enforcement efforts as much as possible to maximize disruption and dismantlement of human smuggling and trafficking networks

NATIONAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW



- JTFA = **HIGH LEVEL TARGETING**: leaders, organizers, and significant facilitators
 - Concentrate on those networks involved in the smuggling of regional migrants, which make up majority of persons illegally entering the U.S.
 - Especially target actors and groups that abuse/exploit/endanger migrants, that have links to transnational organized crime, or pose national security threats

NATIONAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW: JTFA 4 PILLARS



1. COORDINATION

- Prosecutors
- Law Enforcement
 - Intel
- Foreign Partners

2. INVESTIGATION

3. PROSECUTION

4. DETERRENCE



PROSECUTIONS



JTFA Public Success Stories Thus Far

Eight Defendants Indicted for Human Smuggling and Drug Conspiracy Offenses

Defendants Charged With Smuggling 24 Hondurans Into Louisiana; One Defendant Arrested for Conspiring to Possess With Intent to Distribute 24 Kilograms of Cocaine Seized From the Boat Carrying Undocumented Hondurans

Eight individuals were charged in an indictment, unsealed today in the Eastern District of Louisiana, for their involvement in an international scheme to smuggle 24 undocumented individuals from Honduras into Louisiana aboard the Motor Vessel (M/V) "Pop," which is owned by one of the defendants. One of the defendants was also arrested for conspiring to possess with intent to distribute 24 kilograms of cocaine seized on this boat which the U.S. Coast Guard interdicted off the coast of

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas

SHARE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Cuban National Sentenced to Over 38 Years in Prison for Drug Trafficking and Other Crimes after Using His Border Ranch as a Criminal Corridor

EL PASO – A Cuban national living in Fort Hancock was sentenced today to 460 months in prison for drugs, firearms and immigration crimes.

Department of Justice
Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 10, 2022

Law Enforcement Cooperation Between United States and Mexico Leads to Mexican Takedown of Significant Human Smugglers

Extensive bilateral cooperation between the United States and Mexico resulted in the Mexico Attorney General's Office's "Fiscalía General de la República" (FGR) conducting a significant enforcement operation to dismantle a prolific transnational human smuggling organization operating in Nogales, Sonora, along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of California

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 18, 2021

Boat Operators Plead Guilty in Smuggling Death in La Jolla

Assistant U. S. Attorneys Jimmy N. Rotstein (619) 546-8573, Colin M. McDonald (619) 546-9144, and Victor P. White (619) 546-8439

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – August 18, 2021

SAN DIEGO – Victor Alfonso Soto Aguilar and Jose Ramon Geraldo Romero pleaded guilty in federal court today in connection with their roles as operators of a panga boat that attempted to smuggle fourteen Mexican citizens into the United States in open ocean waters, ultimately resulting in the death of one passenger.

PROSECUTION



In less than a year since it began, and despite resource limitations, JTFA has achieved significant results, including:

- **85+ domestic and international arrests, including against leaders, organizers and significant facilitators;**
- **68 defendants in U.S. custody;**
- **36+ convictions;**
- **significant jail sentences imposed;**
- **substantial asset forfeiture.**

NATIONAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW



RECOMENDATION

- Consistent with the UNTOC and domestic law, States parties are encouraged to identify and share specific points of contact to facilitate the exchange of information and provision of assistance between investigators and prosecutors in migrant smuggling cases.

QUESTIONS?

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