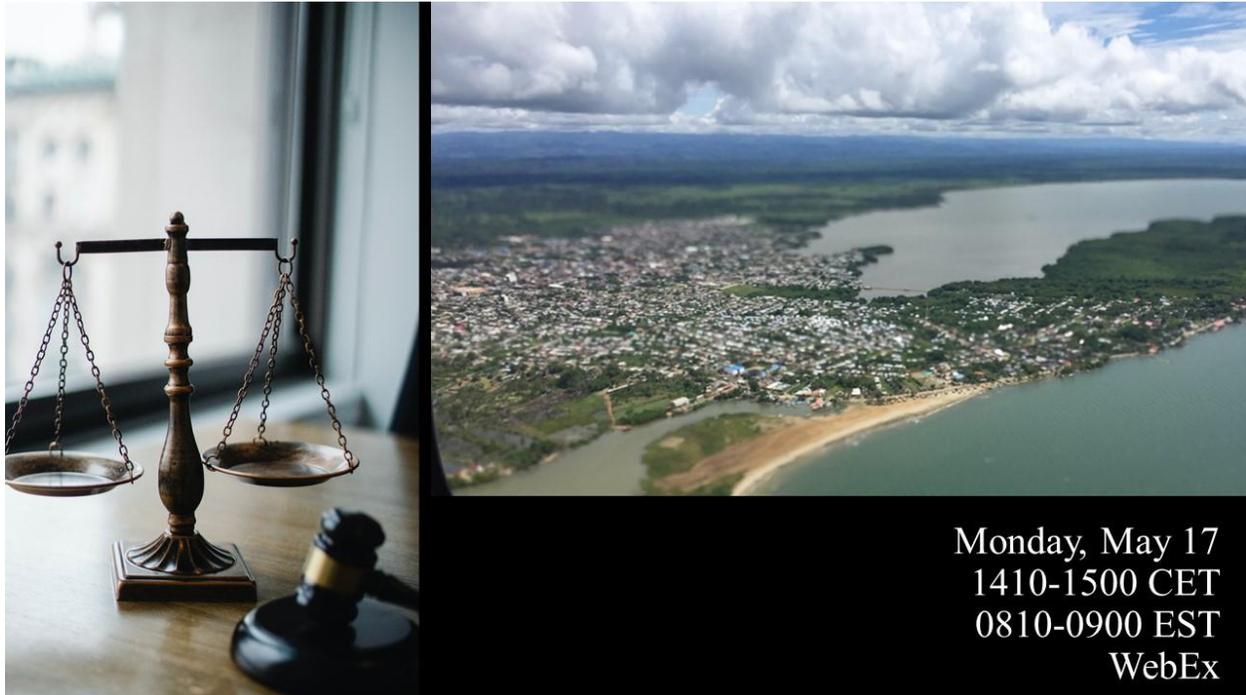


# Operation Turbo: How Migrant-Smugglers-Turned-Killers were Brought to Justice



Monday, May 17  
1410-1500 CET  
0810-0900 EST  
WebEx

This event will feature a case study and interactive discussion among an expert panel involved in the successful execution of “Operation Turbo.” Operation Turbo stands as a stark reminder of the dangerousness of smuggling ventures, how vulnerable migrants are at the hands of their smugglers, and the ways in which countries can leverage the international legal framework to pursue justice for smuggled migrants who can become victims in transit. This event will feature an expert panel of representatives from the United States and Colombia who were involved in this operation. Together the panel will explore successes and challenges of this case as an example of the international cooperation that is essential to combat migrant smuggling.

**Join the event virtually at this link:**

<https://statedept.webex.com/statedept/j.php?MTID=m43cb29787348a404625061c776ba7ea4>

Meeting Number (access code): 199 103 6481

Meeting Password: p6Fad24Q785

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## Speaker Biographies

**Mr. James A. Walsh** is the Acting Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. He is responsible for supporting State Department programs and policies to combat illicit drugs and organized crime around the world. INL currently manages a portfolio of more than \$4 billion in more than 90 countries. Mr. Walsh has served in various senior leadership roles in the INL Front Office since January 2015. In that time, he directed State Department law enforcement and rule of law assistance activities in Europe and Asia (excluding Pakistan and Afghanistan) while overseeing the Department's Air Wing and INL's resources. He was the Senior Bureau Official from December 2017 to May 2018 and Acting Principal Deputy Secretary from May to August 2018. Mr. Walsh previously served as the Executive Director/Controller for the bureau where he led several efforts to strengthen criminal justice assistance programs including the development of an inter-agency Criminal Justice Sector Rating Tool. Prior to joining the Department, Mr. Walsh worked in the private sector for five years supporting Fortune 500 companies. He also served nearly eight years in the U.S. Army where he had several overseas deployments leading aviation units. A career member of the Senior Executive Service, Mr. Walsh holds a bachelor's degree from West Point and a Master's degree in business administration from Bowie State University. Mr. Walsh received the Presidential Meritorious Rank Award in 2017.

**H.E. Miguel Camilo Ruíz Blanco** serves as Ambassador of Colombia to Austria and Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the International Organizations in Vienna. He was appointed on August 1, 2018. He is a member of the Diplomatic and Consular Career of the Republic of Colombia and currently holds the rank of Ambassador. In February 1988, he entered the service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he has held the following positions: Director for Multilateral Political Affairs, Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Acting Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Director of America, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretary Pro Tempore of the Association of Caribbean States, Ambassador of Colombia to Honduras, Director for Multilateral Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Disarmament Coordinator of the Direction for Multilateral Political Affairs, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations and other International Organizations, Geneva, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations and other International Organizations, Geneva, Advisor to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Consul of Colombia in Cuenca, Ecuador, Advisor to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Second Secretary, Direction of Protocol, and Second Secretary, Human Resources Division. He was awarded the Francisco Morazán Order, Category Great Silver Cross by the Government of the Republic of Honduras. He is a Public Administrator graduate from the Public Administration School, ESAP, and Specialist in Public Finances from the same institution.

**Mr. Michael Sheckels** serves as Deputy Chief in the Human Rights & Special Prosecutions Section in the Department of Justice's Criminal Division. He is responsible for overseeing all aspects of HRSP's human smuggling portfolio including litigation, policy, program management, training and interagency engagement. Mr. Sheckels has worked at HRSP since 2010, specializing in prosecuting transnational criminal organizations and other complex international cases, including those involving human smuggling networks. Mr. Sheckels award-winning trial and litigation work has been recognized by the Attorney General and numerous federal law enforcement agencies while at HRSP and during stints at the United States Attorney's Office in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining DOJ through the Attorney General's Honors Program, he worked for two federal judges in the D.C.-area. He holds a law degree from Catholic University's Columbus School of Law and a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland.

**Ms. Gloria Isabel Lastra Arbelaez** is a Specialized Prosecutor, in Colombia's Specialized Office Against Organized Crime (DECOC) in the Attorney General's Office. She has extensive experience with criminal gang-related offenses and transnational offenses such as migrant smuggling and child pornography. In her capacity as an attorney at the Office of the Prosecutor General of Colombia, she has investigated criminal acts and prosecute criminal offenses in Colombia's special courts, while contributing to the development and implementation of criminal policy, in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Colombia. She has participated in training courses, workshops, and meetings in both Colombia and internationally, reinforcing professional practice and leveraging skills acquired to improve the Colombian justice system. She received her law degree from the Catholic University of Colombia, with a specialization in Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure; Master's Degree in Criminal Procedural Law from the Nueva Granada Military University.

**Mr. Alexandre Schmidt** is Senior Special Agent with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). A highly accomplished law enforcement professional with over 25 years of experience both in the United States and abroad, leading investigative efforts aimed at disrupting and dismantling Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO's). Currently assigned to the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR), a section responsible for internal affairs investigations within the department. Previously, at HSI, he had multiple Long-Term assignments to foreign countries supporting both HSI and the Office of International Affairs (OIA) focusing in, Narcotics Smuggling, Financial/Money Laundering, Intellectual Property Rights, Human Smuggling/Trafficking and Anti-Terrorism cases. Fluent in Portuguese and Spanish, he also has over 10 years of experience as the Lead Undercover agent for international and domestic investigations while infiltrating and dismantling criminal organizations that span Homeland Security's investigative portfolio. In addition, he has also been a guest instructor at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), OIA and OPR on multiple classes and seminars over a variety of investigative disciplines.

**Mr. Eduardo Escobar** is a Special Agent with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Office of International Affairs, assigned to the U.S. Embassy, Bogota, Colombia as a Country Representative. HSI's mission is to investigate, disrupt, and dismantle terrorist transnational and other criminal organizations that threaten or seek to exploit the customs and immigration laws of the United States. SA Escobar has been investigating complex criminal investigations, related to money laundering, weapons, fugitive apprehension, identity fraud, passport and visa fraud, organized crime, financial crimes, bulk cash smuggling, commercial fraud, foreign public corruption, narcotics, human smuggling and immigration, since October 2007. SA Escobar has created national and international strategies and investigative initiatives to combat criminal organizations by detecting illicit pathways, expanding undercover operations, exploitation of financial transactions to fund criminal travel, and a comprehensive target identification process. SA Escobar is currently working on a project to create the Homeland Security Interagency Unit, an international initiative to combat transnational crime and promote public security. SA Escobar received a bachelor's degree in Business Management from Johnson and Wales University.

**Ms. Danielle Hickman** is a Trial Attorney with the Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section (HRSP) in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Department of Justice. HRSP prosecutes members of international criminal networks who seek to evade our immigration laws, such as by smuggling persons into the United States. In addition to its prosecutorial activities, HRSP is actively engaged in policy work, both domestically and internationally. In 2019, Ms. Hickman and the Operation Turbo Team were awarded the Assistant Attorney General's Award for Distinguished Service. Ms. Hickman joined the Department in August 2016. She previously

served for almost fourteen years as a Deputy District Attorney in San Diego, California, with her last assignment as the Assistant Chief of the Superior Court Division. From 1999-2003, she was a Deputy City Attorney for the City of San Diego. Ms. Hickman received her J.D. from Pepperdine University School of Law in 1997 and her LL.M. in Public International Law with Merit from the University of London, King's College, in 1998. She has worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in London and in 1999, participated in a war crimes documentation project in Kosovo for the International Crisis Group. She has taught for organizations including the California District Attorneys Association, National Institute for Trial Advocacy, and the Chief Probation Officers of California, and is also a published author.

**Mr. Fabian Camilo Arbelaez Mosquera** is a Criminal Investigator in the International Investigations Group – INTERPOL, with the Colombian National Police.