



Drug Enforcement Administration

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DEA Launches Bold Bilateral Initiative to Dismantle Cartel Gatekeepers and Combat

Synthetic Drug Trafficking

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WASHINGTON – The Drug Enforcement Administration announces a major new initiative to strengthen collaboration between the United States and Mexico in the fight against cartels, whose trafficking networks are responsible for flooding American communities with deadly synthetic drugs.

At the core of this effort is Project Portero, DEA's flagship operation aimed at dismantling cartel "gatekeepers", operatives who control the smuggling corridors along the Southwest Border. Gatekeepers are essential to cartel operations, directing the flow of fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine into the United States while ensuring the movement of firearms and bulk cash back into Mexico. By specifically targeting them, DEA and its partners are striking at the heart of cartel command-and-control.

To advance this effort, DEA has launched a multi-week training and collaboration program at one of its intelligence centers on the Southwest Border. The program brings

together Mexican investigators with U.S. law enforcement, prosecutors, defense officials, and members of the intelligence community. Over the course of several weeks, participants will identify joint targets, develop coordinated enforcement strategies, and strengthen the exchange of intelligence.

Project Portero is also coordinated with the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF), ensuring a whole-of-government approach. HSTF integration brings together law enforcement, intelligence, defense, and prosecutorial elements, aligning priorities and operations so the United States can apply its full capabilities against cartel networks.

“DEA is taking decisive action to confront the cartels that are killing Americans with fentanyl and other poisons,” said DEA Administrator Terrance Cole. “Project Portero and this new training program show how we will fight - by planning and operating side by side with our Mexican partners, and by bringing the full strength of the U.S. government to bear. This is a bold first step in a new era of cross-border enforcement, and we will pursue it relentlessly until these violent organizations are dismantled.”

This initiative reflects Administrator Cole’s broader priorities: recommitting DEA to enforcement, dismantling cartels designated as terrorist organizations, and strengthening collaboration with foreign counterparts. While fentanyl is the

most urgent threat, Project Portero addresses all aspects of cartel criminal activity — from drug smuggling to weapons trafficking to illicit finance — that cross the border and endanger American communities.

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