



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

June 7, 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS

HEADS OF DEPARTMENT COMPONENTS
LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

FROM:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

SUBJECT:

JOINT TASK FORCE AGAINST HUMAN SMUGGLING AND
TRAFFICKING NETWORKS

Transnational human smuggling and trafficking networks pose a serious criminal threat. These networks not only seek to profit from the exploitation of migrants, but also routinely expose them to violence, injury, and even death. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has reported that, since October 2020, it has rescued more than 4,000 migrants along our southwest border who were abandoned by smugglers. In 2020 alone, DHS located 250 migrants who had died during their journey.

To combat this threat, I am announcing the establishment of Joint Task Force Alpha, a joint law enforcement effort that will marshal the investigative and prosecutorial resources of the Department of Justice, in partnership with DHS, to disrupt and dismantle human smuggling and trafficking networks that exploit and endanger migrants to the United States from the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and from Mexico. The Joint Task Force will investigate and prosecute those who are criminally smuggling and trafficking individuals into the United States, with a particular focus on individuals and networks that abuse, exploit, or endanger those being smuggled, pose national security threats, or have links to transnational organized crime.

In addition to U.S.-based investigations and prosecutions, the Task Force will work closely with our foreign partners in the Northern Triangle and Mexico. DOJ and DHS will expand capacity-building efforts in these countries to strengthen the rule of law and enhance coordination in transnational law enforcement efforts against human smuggling.

The Task Force will consist of federal prosecutors from the U.S. Attorneys' Offices for the District of Arizona, Southern District of California, Southern District of Texas, and Western District of Texas, and from the Criminal Division and Civil Rights Division, along with law enforcement agents and analysts from DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). The Task Force will engage and utilize each of the Department's law enforcement components, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) will be part of the Task Force.

Assistant United States Attorney Victor White from the Southern District of California and Deputy Chief Mike Sheckels from the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section will lead the Task Force, under the supervision of the Assistant Attorney General for the Criminal Division.

The Task Force will draw upon a wide range of intelligence resources from across the government, including ICE's Human Smuggling Unit, CBP's National Targeting Center, DEA's Special Operations Division, the FBI's International Organized Crime Intelligence and Operations Center, and the Justice Department's OCDETF Fusion Center. Finally, Joint Task Force Alpha will work closely with Operation Sentinel, a recently announced DHS operation focused on countering transnational criminal organizations affiliated with migrant smuggling.

With these combined investigative, prosecutorial, and capacity-building efforts, the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security will disrupt and dismantle smuggling and trafficking networks that abuse, exploit, or endanger migrants, that pose national security threats, and that are involved in organized crime, as part of the government's overall efforts to safeguard our borders and ensure a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system.