

# Executive Memorandum

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## Integrating Immigration, Customs, and Border Enforcement Should Be a Priority

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Effective border control requires merging internal enforcement and trade and travel security with operations on the border. That means ensuring that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)—both of which are divisions of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—can work together seamlessly to accomplish their critical missions. Although CBP deals primarily with border enforcement and ICE performs interior enforcement, there are steps that DHS can and should take immediately to achieve this goal.

### **Border Operations and Internal Enforcement.**

It makes no sense to have an artificial distinction between enforcing immigration laws at the border and enforcing them in the interior, leaving potential gaps for human smugglers and absconders (individuals attempting to avoid arrest, prosecution, and deportation) to exploit. A far better approach would be an organization to support regions, critical trouble areas, and vital ports of entry and exit. The best solution would be to create task forces that combine ICE and CBP assets, as well as those of other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

DHS has experimented with creating Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BEST) along the Southwest border. There are other effective

models of this approach that they could draw on as well, including Project Seahawk at the port of Charleston; the Joint Interagency Task Force in Key West, Florida; the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces; and Canada's Integrated Border Enforcement teams. DHS should rapidly expand the task force concept to organize its regional operations.

**Detention and Removal.** Deporting individuals who have crossed the border illegally or are unlawfully present in the United States before they abscond is an essential component of deterring further illegal immigration. The

best way to do this is to increase DHS's capacity to detain and remove individuals as fast as legally possible.

ICE and CBP should work together to eliminate impediments that slow this process. The recently created ICE-CBP Coordination Council is responsible for identifying bottlenecks in the system and both procedural and technological fixes. Imple-

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- Effective border control requires merging internal enforcement and trade and travel security with operations on the border.
  - The Department of Homeland Security should therefore take steps to ensure that Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement work together seamlessly to accomplish their critical missions.
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This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/research/homelanddefense/em1006.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/homelanddefense/em1006.cfm)

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menting this council's findings and recommendations should be a priority.

**Intelligence and Information Sharing.** Connecting the dots, making sure that the right information gets to the right person in order to do the right thing, is the single greatest capability needed to integrate international, border, and internal enforcement. DHS lacks an integrated intelligence plan and mechanisms to distribute information effectively. A more concerted intelligence effort is required.

DHS should make development of an integrated plan for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance for border and internal enforcement a top priority. The department should work with the Director of National Intelligence to better leverage other capabilities of the intelligence community (such as the CIA and the Pentagon) in support of border operations. Establishing capabilities such as Project Seahawk and the Joint Interagency Task Force, which serve as intelligence fusion and information-sharing cells for federal, state, and local agencies, will also help significantly.

**State and Local Law Enforcement.** Cooperation with state and local authorities plays an integral role in both border security and internal enforcement. DHS created an External Relations and Law Enforcement Partners Program that advises state and local officials about DHS information-sharing programs. The department is also developing a Homeland Security Data Network. These efforts are not sufficient. This kind of effort alone does not provide the kinds of information and cooperation needed to support investigations and detention and removal operations. There is a better way.

Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act permits state and local agencies to form assistance compacts with DHS. DHS should expand the number of states participating in 287(g), providing better support for CBP-ICE operations. States should be authorized to use Homeland Security Grants to fund participation in the 287(g) program.

**International Operations.** DHS components maintain numerous operations abroad. CBP and

ICE operations overseas, however, are virtually uncoordinated. Stronger leadership is needed.

The department created the position of Homeland Security Representative to be deployed to U.S. embassies and to act as the single point of contact for homeland security matters in a specific country. The Homeland Security Representative should also be empowered to coordinate and monitor all U.S. homeland security operations, especially those involving ICE and CBP.

**Retention and Professional Development.** Working together effectively requires building trust and confidence and understanding the roles and missions of both CBP and ICE. At the same time, the skills and competencies resident in both agencies can be used to enhance and inform each other. The DHS plan to create "one face at the border"—fusing the duties of first-line immigration and customs inspectors—is an unrealistic program to achieve this goal, placing too great a burden on junior personnel to master too many tasks. A better professional development plan is essential.

DHS should develop a human capital initiative that integrates professional development within CBP and ICE through a program that sets standards for joint education, assignments, and accreditation as criteria for promotion. This initiative should establish promotion opportunities and career patterns that span the two agencies.

**Conclusion.** The realities of border enforcement make it essential that critical functions currently divided between CBP and ICE are integrated in a manner that will ensure that they are performed as efficiently and effectively as possible.

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