



# Department of Justice

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**AG**  
**(202) 514-2007**  
**TDD (202) 514-1888**

## **Twenty-Five Federal Prosecutors to be Added to U.S./Mexico Border Districts**

WASHINGTON – The United States Departments of Justice and Homeland Security announced today additional resources to enhance the enforcement of immigration laws and border security along the Southwest border.

The Department of Justice will add 20 Assistant United States Attorneys (AUSAs) to the five federal law enforcement districts along the border: the Southern District of Texas, the Western District of Texas, the District of Arizona, the District of New Mexico and the Southern District of California.

These 20 AUSAs will prosecute only immigration-related offenses, including alien smuggling, entering the United States without inspection, illegal re-entry, possession of firearms as an alien, illegal employment of undocumented aliens, human trafficking and document fraud. The additional resources will be funded by a \$2 million supplemental appropriation that was requested by the President and approved by Congress. The hiring process will begin immediately.

The Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Program will provide funding for five new AUSAs – one in each of the federal districts along the border – to prosecute drug trafficking organizations responsible for smuggling illegal narcotics across the Southwest border.

In addition to the 25 new prosecutors, in the coming months the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will also identify several attorneys who will be designated as Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys to prosecute immigration offenses along the Southwest border.

"As a nation of laws, it is important that those who cross our borders illegally or smuggle drugs are prosecuted swiftly and fairly," said Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales. "These new prosecutors will help ensure that our immigration and drug laws are aggressively enforced."

"We applaud the Attorney General for dedicating these additional resources to help prosecute those criminals and smugglers that create violence along our border and present risks to those living and working in our border communities," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "DHS will also dedicate additional lawyers to assist U.S. Attorneys and ensure that our nation's laws are enforced."

Including the additional prosecutors, the number of AUSAs in the Southwest border districts has increased 29 percent since 2000, to a total of 561. In the same time frame, the Department of Justice's immigration prosecutions have increased by approximately 40 percent. (About 30 percent of all new criminal cases are for immigration-related crimes, making immigration cases the largest category of cases filed by the United States Attorneys' Offices.) In 2005, over 95 percent of immigration prosecutions resulted in convictions, with approximately 85 percent of convicted defendants serving time in prison.

From fiscal year 2003 to fiscal year 2005, the United States Attorney's Offices in districts along the U.S./Mexico border have seen a 78 percent increase in the number of investigations initiated through OCDETF against sophisticated drug trafficking organizations.

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