

H.R.770 -- Border Enforcement Security Task Force Act of 2011 (Introduced in House - IH)

HR 770 IH

112th CONGRESS
1st Session
H. R. 770

To establish a Border Enforcement Security Task Force program to enhance border security by fostering coordinated efforts among Federal, State, and local border and law enforcement officials to protect United States border cities and communities from trans-national crime, including violence associated with drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien trafficking and smuggling, violence, and kidnapping along and across the international borders of the United States, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 17, 2011

Mr. CUELLAR introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security

A BILL

To establish a Border Enforcement Security Task Force program to enhance border security by fostering coordinated efforts among Federal, State, and local border and law enforcement officials to protect United States border cities and communities from trans-national crime, including violence associated with drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien trafficking and smuggling, violence, and kidnapping along and across the international borders of the United States, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the `Border Enforcement Security Task Force Act of 2011'.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND DECLARATION OF PURPOSES.

(a) Findings- Congress finds the following:

(1) The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) overriding mission is to lead a unified national effort to protect the United States. United States Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative agency within DHS and is charged with enforcing a wide array of laws, including laws related to securing the border and combating criminal smuggling.

(2) Mexico's northern border with the United States has experienced a dramatic surge in border crime and violence in recent years due to intense competition between Mexican drug cartels and criminal smuggling organizations that employ predatory tactics to realize their profits.

(3) Law enforcement agencies at the United States northern border face similar challenges from transnational smuggling organizations.

(4) In response, DHS has partnered with Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement counterparts to create the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) initiative as a comprehensive approach to addressing border security threats. These multi-agency teams are designed to increase information-sharing and collaboration among the participating law enforcement agencies.

(5) BEST teams incorporate personnel from ICE, United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATFE), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the United States Coast Guard (USCG), and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO), along with other key Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies.

(6) Foreign law enforcement agencies include Mexico's Secretaria de Seguridad Publica (SSP), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

SEC. 3. BORDER ENFORCEMENT SECURITY TASK FORCE.

(a) Establishment- There is established in United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) a program known as a Border Enforcement Security Task Force (referred to as `BEST').

(b) Purpose- The purpose of the BEST program is to establish units to enhance border security by addressing and reducing border security threats and violence by--

(1) facilitating collaboration among Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement agencies to execute coordinated activities in furtherance of border security, and homeland security; and

(2) enhancing information-sharing, including the dissemination of homeland security information among such agencies.

(c) Composition and Designation-

(1) COMPOSITION- BEST units may be comprised of personnel from--

(A) United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement;

(B) United States Customs and Border Protection;

(C) the United States Coast Guard;

(D) other Federal agencies, as appropriate;

(E) appropriate State law enforcement agencies;

(F) foreign law enforcement agencies, as appropriate;

(G) local law enforcement agencies from affected border cities and communities; and

(H) appropriate tribal law enforcement agencies.

(2) DESIGNATION- The Secretary of Homeland Security, acting through the Assistant Secretary for ICE, is authorized to establish BEST units in jurisdictions where such units can contribute to the BEST program's missions, as appropriate. Prior to establishing a BEST unit, the Assistant Secretary shall consider the following factors:

(A) Whether the area where the BEST unit would be established is significantly impacted by cross-border threats.

(B) The availability of Federal, State, local, tribal, and foreign law enforcement resources to participate in the BEST unit.

(C) The extent to which border security threats are having a significant harmful impact in the jurisdiction in which the BEST unit is to be established, and other jurisdictions of the country.

(d) Operation- After making a designation under subsection (c)(2), and in order to provide Federal assistance to the area so designated, the Secretary of Homeland Security may--

(1) obligate such sums as are appropriated for the BEST program;

(2) direct the assignment of Federal personnel to the BEST program, subject to the approval of the head of the department or agency that employs such personnel; and

(3) take other actions to assist State, local, tribal, and foreign jurisdictions to participate in the BEST program.

(e) Report- Not later than 180 days after the date of the establishment of the BEST program under subsection (a) and annually thereafter, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall submit to Congress a report on the effectiveness of the BEST program in enhancing border security and reducing the drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien trafficking and smuggling, violence, and kidnapping along and across the international borders of the United States as measured by crime statistics, including violent deaths, incidents of violence, and drug related arrests.

(f) Authorization of Appropriations- There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Homeland Security such funds as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 2012 through 2016 to--

(1) establish and operate the BEST program, including to provide for operational, administrative, and technological costs to Federal, State, local, tribal and foreign law enforcement agencies participating in the BEST program; and

(2) investigate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals engaged in drug trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal alien trafficking and smuggling, violence, and kidnapping along and across the international borders of the United States.