



USNORTHCOM'S ROLE IN SOUTHWEST BORDER SECURITY

MARCH 2009

Congressional Fact Sheet

U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) was established Oct. 1, 2002 to provide command and control of Department of Defense (DOD) homeland defense efforts and to coordinate defense support of civil authorities. The USNORTHCOM area of responsibility encompasses North America, Bermuda, the Gulf of Mexico, the Straits of Florida, the Caribbean region inclusive of the U.S. Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands and surrounding waters out to approximately 500 nautical miles.

Criminal activity in the United States arising from Mexican drug cartels is first and foremost an issue of border security and law enforcement. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 assigns the Secretary of Homeland Security the responsibility for security of our nation's borders. USNORTHCOM's role in the border security mission is to provide support to civil authorities, principally the Department of Homeland Security, when directed by the President or Secretary of Defense. DOD support would be requested by the Department of Homeland Security only if their Components' capacity is exceeded or they do not have the resident capabilities to fulfill the mission.

USNORTHCOM is supporting the Department of Homeland Security in their ongoing southwest border violence planning efforts and is part of their Operations Planning team. The USNORTHCOM family of plans addresses potential requirements for consequence management, to include support to border states. In addition, through our subordinate units and component commands, we have structures in place to provide for command and control capability and longstanding relationships with civilian law enforcement agencies. In all cases, USNORTHCOM's involvement in border security operations is within parameters set by the Secretary of Defense and supports the efforts of governors and/or civilian law enforcement agencies.

USNORTHCOM has directed US Army North, our Joint Force Land Component Command, as lead Operational Authority for counterdrug and counterterrorism in the USNORTHCOM area of responsibility. Army North and Joint Task Force North (JTF North) sustain important relationships with federal law enforcement agencies and National Guard counterdrug task forces engaged in securing our nation's borders against drug traffickers and their associated activities. Army North and JTF North collaborate with operational-level leaders in Customs and Border Protection; Immigration and Customs Enforcement; U.S. Coast Guard; Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco Firearms and Explosives; National Guard Bureau; and State Joint Force Headquarters leadership in the states where JTF North operates. These relationships foster timely and responsive military support to law enforcement and provide greater interagency synchronization to deter and prevent drug traffickers and associated transnational threats.

JTF North will continue to support law enforcement agencies in the war against illegal drugs and associated transnational threats through the application of DOD capabilities when directed and in accordance with U.S. law. Among these capabilities is intelligence support, which includes employing military intelligence analysts to develop operational intelligence products that we can share with our interagency partners for their use in early cueing, warning and interdiction operations. JTF North also provides operational support which includes detection missions using a variety of sensors that are unique to the DOD in order to improve a supported law enforcement agency's ability to detect, monitor and interdict drug traffickers and associated transnational threats.

Through JTF North, USNORTHCOM has employed unmanned aerial systems along the southwest border in support of Customs and Border Protection. While conducting unmanned aerial system training, real time imagery

supports civilian law enforcement agencies in detecting and apprehending illegal traffickers in Arizona. JTF North also supports federal law enforcement agencies with training in order to increase civilian law enforcement capabilities, particularly in the areas of intelligence analysis and mission planning.

Engineering support provided through JTF North denies mobility to threat organizations and enhances the movement of law enforcement agencies along the southwest border. These missions have included, and may continue to include, construction of roads, bridges and fences, as well as installing area lighting to improve the ability of law enforcement officers to move, identify and respond to threats crossing the border.

Lastly, the ongoing existence, use and construction of cross-border tunnels represent an ongoing threat to the homeland. Civil law enforcement agencies have identified more than 100 cross-border tunnels entering the United States from Mexico. JTF North fields requests annually to bring militarily unique capabilities to find tunnels on the southwest border of the United States.

USNORTHCOM is actively pursuing improved tunnel detection and characterization capabilities. USNORTHCOM, along with U.S. Central Command and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is spearheading a Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense sponsored Joint Capability Technology Demonstration—the Rapid Reaction Tunnel Detection Defeat Counter Tunneling Initiative—to develop a baseline analysis of tunneling along the southern border. Through the use of initiatives such as fiber optics and robotics, this system will detect, classify, localize and characterize tunnel construction in order to identify future tunneling and thus reduce illicit smuggling.

A key prevention measure, acting to increase Mexico's capability to address security challenges and prevent violence, is military-to-military engagement with Mexico. As the U.S. Combatant Command with responsibility for North America, USNORTHCOM leads Theater Security Cooperation activities with Mexico. Security cooperation builds defense relationships to promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide US forces with peacetime and contingency access to a region.

Through our Theater Security Cooperation Plan and civil engagement activities, USNORTHCOM plays a significant role in assisting the Mexican military and civil authorities to improve the security situation in Mexico through the execution of our various ongoing train and equip programs, including:

- The President's three-year Merida Initiative for FY08: this program provides \$116.5 million in Foreign Military Financing to purchase 5 Bell 412 helicopters, 1 CASA aircraft, and ion scanners for use by the Mexican Armed Forces
- Section 1206 assistance: \$13.0 million for equipment such as Night Vision Goggles, Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats, personal protective equipment, and digital media forensics
- Counterdrug support: \$25.0 million for pilot training, specialized skills training, intelligence training, etc.
- Overseas Humanitarian Disaster Assistance and Civil Aid: \$1.25 million for hazardous materials response potentially relevant to a WMD event
- Program Budget Decision 709: \$2.6 million for knowledge exchanges on disaster response, including Incident Command Systems and WMD
- Army North-facilitated training support in the areas of Night Vision Goggles maintenance, Explosive Ordnance Disposal/Hazardous Material team training, and Aviation Training

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