

Department of Justice

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The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Celebrates 40th Anniversary

The Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) was created by Presidential Order four decades ago. On Oct. 14, 1982, in the Great Hall of the Department of Justice building, President Ronald Reagan announced a new coordinated federal government effort bringing together prosecutors and law enforcement agencies to attack the command and control elements of the drug trafficking organizations responsible for moving massive quantities of illicit narcotics into the country.

The White House directed that the OCDETF's top priority would be to disrupt the sales and distribution networks of the traffickers. Some of the department's most notable successes against drug cartels have resulted from OCDETF coordinated investigations and prosecutions. OCDETF was instrumental in taking down the powerful Colombian cartels of the 1980s; the notorious and violent Mexican cartels such as the Tijuana, Juarez and Gulf Cartels in the 1990s; and the methamphetamine, heroin, fentanyl and opioid threats from all over the world in the last two decades.

As criminal networks have grown more sophisticated in the last 40 years — branching out to more varied types of criminal activity — OCDETF has responded by expanding its mission beyond drug trafficking organizations and money laundering networks to all forms of transnational organized crime. OCDETF is fully engaged in all manner of investigations into criminal networks involved in human smuggling, sophisticated financial fraud, cyber-enabled crime, illicit finance, arms trafficking, government benefits theft, business e-mail compromise and U.S. sanctions evasion. OCDETF is uniquely and ideally structured to support the fight against transnational organized crime through operational integration, collaboration and law enforcement information sharing.

“Since its founding, OCDETF has been a synchronizer and our role is to incentivize prosecutors to lead smart, creative law enforcement agents in investigations focused on priority targets of organized criminal groups and the illicit financial networks that support them,” said OCDETF Director Adam W. Cohen. “Today, OCDETF provides a forward leaning structure for our partners to work together and leverage each other's strengths, capabilities and legal authorities resulting in continued positive impacts to the nation.”

OCDETF's successes over the last 40 years have been made possible by strong collaboration and coordination with its member agencies. OCDETF is partnered with the 93 U.S. Attorneys' Offices, the department's Criminal Division and 11 federal law enforcement agencies from the Department of Justice (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigation; U.S. Marshals Service), Homeland Security (Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Homeland Security Investigations; U.S. Coast Guard; U.S. Secret Service), Treasury (Internal Revenue Service/Criminal Investigation), Postal (U.S. Postal Inspection Service), Labor (Office of the Inspector General), and State (Bureau of Diplomatic Security).

OCDETF's governance, bringing leadership to the multi-agency transnational organized crime mission and focus on joint priority targets has generated genuine measurable accomplishments — over 34,000 multi-agency cases against priority targets, over 124,000 indictments of almost 360,000 defendants, and incredibly, over 15,690 of those resulted in impactful disruption, or even dismantlement of criminal organizations.

“As OCDETF begins our 41st year, we will continue to provide a coordination platform for comprehensive investigations and prosecutions of the most dangerous transnational criminal organizations, the successful result of which is to make our nation safer,” said OCDETF Director Cohen.

Topic(s):

Violent Crime
Drug Trafficking

Component(s):

[Criminal - Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section](#)
[Drug Enforcement Administration \(DEA\)](#)
[Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces](#)

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