

**Homeland Security Advisory Council
HSAC Public Conference Call to
Deliberate on Southwest Border Recommendations
October 17, 2011, 4:00 PM EST
Meeting Minutes**

PARTICIPANTS:

Judge William Webster	Chief Bill Bratton
Ambassador James Jones	Sheriff Guadalupe Trevino
Bonnie Michelman	Lydia Thomas
Jeff Moss	Richard Cañas
Clark Ervin	Ellen Gordon
John Magaw	
Mohamed Elibiary	

Judge Webster: Thank you. Good afternoon. This is William Webster and I am Chairman of the Homeland Security Advisory Council and the Southwest Border Task Force and I hereby officially convene this meeting.

This is a public meeting of the Advisory Council and we appreciate those members of the public, the government, and the media who have joined us today.

I also would like to welcome the members of the Homeland Security Advisory Council and the members of the Southwest Border Task Force who are on the call today.

Our purpose today is to be briefed and deliberate on the recommendation from the Southwest Border Task Force on the issues of enhancing commerce and facilitating more communication between law enforcement partners.

Over the past several months the Task Force held an in-person meeting in Tucson, Arizona, convened ten conference calls, and heard from 19 subject matter experts.

Nineteen subject matter experts briefed the Task Force to help inform the group and on site tours of the Mariposa and the DeConcini ports of entry at Nogales, Arizona were conducted.

The Task Force was held by Vice Chairs Jim Jones of ManattJones Global Strategies and Sheriff Lupe Trevino of Hidalgo County, Texas. On behalf of the HSAC, I thank all the members of the Task Force for all your

efforts, the subject matter experts for their input, and the Border Patrol that hosted our meeting this summer.

I'll now turn the floor over to Vice Chair Sheriff Trevino to brief the report to the HSAC. Sheriff?

Sheriff Trevino: Thank you Judge Webster and members of Homeland Security Advisory Council.

The Task Force divided itself into two subgroups - one focusing on enhancing commerce and one on enforcement issues. Ambassador Jones led the Commerce Subgroup and I led the Enforcement Subgroup. I will later turn the call over to Ambassador Jones to discuss the commerce recommendations.

The Enforcement Subgroup spent considerable time getting briefed on the corridor security concept and the neo-alliance combat transnational threats programs in Arizona and New Mexico West Texas.

Regarding corridor security, the Task Force called for the department to number one adopt a corridor security approach to border security using a (whole) of government approach and collaborative partnerships between law enforcement agencies.

Number two, to identify corridor specific transnational threats and criminal groups.

And number three, to proactively anticipate moves by criminal organizations by expanding the corridor security strategy to additional corridors.

Recommendations 4-14 focused on the alliance to combat transnational threats model that has been implemented in Arizona, New Mexico West Texas in the past two years.

The alliance to combat national threats launched in September of 2009 continues to utilize a collaborative cooperative enforcement approach and leverages the capabilities and resources of Department of Homeland Security agencies in selected sectors in partnership with other federal, state, local, tribal governments, and the government of Mexico against criminal organizations that pose a threat to the United States.

The recommendations the Task Force proposed on the alliance to combat transnational threats regarding relevant federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement cooperation, the establishment of a headquartered level

council to monitor objectives and engage with our Mexican counterparts and ensuring funding for the program to continue.

This is my brief on our recommendations and I turn the call over to Ambassador Jones now.

Ambassador Jones: Thank you very much Sheriff Trevino and thank you Judge Webster for leading us in this effort.

The Task Force on commerce also looked at ways to streamline the border inspections at the ports of entry to facilitate commerce while at the same time not compromising security.

The recommendations of our subgroup sought to standardize information and regulatory processes at the ports of entry with our Mexican counterparts. We suggested that we work with our Mexican partners on new ports of entry configurations to consolidate inspections and we also made recommendations on improving rail security processes all along the US/Mexico corridor.

One of the things that we concluded was that we need more ports of entry to handle the high volume of commerce and people along our Mexican border and we supported more public private partnerships.

But subsequent to the work I've heard from some sources that perhaps our government is not fulfilling its part of these partnerships to make them feasible. So I think that's something perhaps the advisory group might want to look in and make further recommendations.

The final recommendation that we made in the Southwest Border Report dealt with expanding pre-inspection programs in both the United States and Mexico.

Specifically the Task Force recommended that the US government should work with their Mexican counterparts to expand pre-inspection programs by doing a number of things such as working with Mexico to allow Mexican law enforcement officers to be stationed here and then also that Mexico permit foreign custom officials such as US officials to be stationed in Mexico. And the purpose would be to conduct pre-inspection and pre-clearance activities further from the border to make commerce again more efficient.

We recommended identifying more high volume locations on the other side of each other's mutual border and we recommended looking at pre-inspection programs in the interior of each country as well as at the border.

So we hope you will consider our recommendations and we thank you for this opportunity, and I'll turn the program back to Judge Webster.

Judge Webster: Thank you very much Ambassador Jones. Now for those sitting to review these recommendations, are there any questions on the recommendations before we proceed to voting on them?

Some of you may have put your phones on mute and you may be trying to reach me just push the mute button and get back to the regular (times). Does anyone like to offer any questions or recommendations?

Mohamed Elibiary: Judge, this is Mohamed Elibiary. I had one question if you'll allow me.

Judge Webster: Certainly.

Mohamed Elibiary: For the law enforcement coordination portion on Recommendation Number 9 talking about de-confliction of operations, I was wondering if the Sheriff wanted to kind of go a little bit more in depth to that because it seems like a very important recommendation...

Man: Yes...

Mohamed Elibiary: ...operationally how that would work.

Sheriff Trevino: On the de-confliction of operations, it is important because we want to avoid what's commonly known as in law enforcement circles is blue on blue which means that we do not want for example DEA knocking somebody's door down where customs may be working undercover and that's what we call a blue on blue.

A de-confliction center which we are currently using through the HIDA program is a center where we will call in with approximate addresses, areas, and our objectives to see if anybody else is working in that area and that would avoid any tragedies. I hope I answered your question.

Judge Webster: Thank you Sheriff. Thank you for the question. I trust that answered the question. If not, I'll be glad to hear from you.

Mohamed Elibiary: No it does. No, when you mentioned the HIDTA.

Judge Webster: All right good. Thank you. Any other questions or recommendations? Well we put a good deal of time and work into these recommendations so I'm not surprised that they're a limited number of questions. That was a good one.

Jeff Moss: Judge?

Judge Webster: Yes?

Jeff Moss: This is Jeff Moss.

Judge Webster: Yes, Jeff.

Jeff Moss: What is the consideration of additional costs or bureaucratic overhead to implement these recommendations?

Judge Webster: Can anybody answer that question about additional costs or overhead? It occurred to me that some of it might actually save money, but go ahead. Ambassador Jones or Sheriff Trevino?

Ambassador Jones: In some of the inspection process if we could consolidate the inspection process among well a number of things. Number one among both Mexican and US officials, we think that that would be more efficient and could save money.

And number two where there's so many agencies involved that actually slows down and puts holds on cargo going across the border, it would be well to designate one agency or to have some sort of a clearance process so that it becomes again more efficient and more cost effective.

The recommendations we're making on public private partnerships is something that I think could save money by having the private sector put in for the capital costs if not all and the government sector take the brunt of the operational costs.

So there's a number of things in there that I think could save money. We did not have an opportunity to cost out the total budget impact, however.

Sheriff Trevino: Judge, this is Sheriff Trevino. On the enforcement part, we did ask for additional funding for state and locals to participate in the alliance to combat transnational threats.

Nonetheless, I think it really is a cost saving method so because we currently are using existing grants such as Stonegarden and other state grants to basically do what we're doing now at no extra cost to anybody.

But the problem is that our municipal police officers and our deputies are working so much overtime at some point they become almost ineffective because we just tire them.

And if we were to get additional funds to fund the program to hire additional boots on the ground, it would be probably more effective. But that is a recommendation that we make.

Judge Webster: Thank you Sheriff. Thank you Ambassador Jones. Anything further?

Mohamed Elibiary: Judge, this is Mohamed again. If you'll allow me one more time...

William Webster: Sure.

Mohamed Elibiary: ...to ask. Sheriff Trevino, speaking of Stonegarden - my memory might be a little faded on this, but doesn't the grant allow for overtime but not hiring new staff with those dollars? And if so would you recommend that the Department consider changing that guidance to allow the Sheriff's Department to actually go ahead and use that money for hiring new staff?

Sheriff Trevino: You're absolutely correct. Under the current guidelines Stonegarden can only be used in order to buy some equipment, but mostly used for overtime and it is not allowed to employ individuals.

Now, we had spoken of maybe allowing Stonegarden funds to be used to hire more boots on the ground and that is one of the things that we actually discussed. And it is - one of the recommendations was to hire was to hire more personnel.

Now in the recommendations as you see them, it was not specifically said or stated that we wanted to change the objectives of Stonegarden but maybe additional funding through other programs.

Mohamed Elibiary: Is there a specific other grant program that you would recommend new money be appropriated through instead of just or modifying the guidelines on Stonegarden as it currently exists?

Sheriff Trevino: Well actually the HIDTA program, there are some areas - some HIDTA groups throughout the United States that are allowed to hire boots on the group, to hire municipal police officers and deputies with HIDTA. And with that I believe it's a 25% match on that and I know that in our part of the country in (unintelligible) County.

Of course I was the director for the HIDTA group for South Texas and we did allow that. So it's possible that we could do it to HIDTA or initiate a new program.

Mohamed Elibiary: Thank you.

Judge Webster: All right. Thank you both. All right if there are no other comments or recommendations or questions, I'll proceed and would entertain a motion by the HSAC to approve the Southwest Border Task Force Report and transmit it to Secretary Napolitano.

Clark Ervin: Judge, this is Clark Ervin. I so move.

Judge Webster: All right. It's been moved. Is there a second?

Lydia Thomas: Seconded. This is Lydia Thomas.

Judge Webster: Thank you Lydia. Have moved and seconded. All members in favor of adopting the report, please say aye.

Group: Aye.

Judge Webster: Any members opposed or reserving?

Very well. By voice vote it is unanimously adopted. So we're coming to our close right on time.

Members of the public, we're about to close the session. Those members who would like to provide comment and that includes the media to provide comment to the Homeland Security Advisory Council may do so in writing.

By mail to as follows: the Homeland Security Advisory Council, US Department of Homeland Security, 1100 Hampton Park Boulevard, Mail Stop 0850, Capital Heights, Maryland 20743 or by email at HSAC@dhs.gov. I'll repeat HSAC@dhs.gov. Those comments are appreciated and they'll be reflected in the meeting's minutes.

So I formally declare this October 17, 2011 meeting of the Homeland Security Advisory Council adjourned and thank you all very much.