



**Remarks by the Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
Mr. John Morton**

**2010 Border Enforcement Security Task Force Training Conference
San Diego, California**

Tuesday, August 17, 2010

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Good morning, and welcome to the 2010 Border Enforcement Security Task Force annual conference. I am thrilled to be here with you in San Diego.

We have a great conference planned for you. One that reflects how far BESTs have come in such a short time. One that places an emphasis on the future, on innovation, on good old fashioned law enforcement.

I want to extend a particular welcome to our friends from Mexico, Canada, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, Panama, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. International participation has become a prominent and growing feature of our BESTs. For example, at BESTs on the Southwest border, we have the participation of the Mexican Secretaria de Seguridad Publica or SSP. On the Northern border, we have Canadian law enforcement agencies such as the Canada Border Services Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Niagara Regional Police Service, the Toronto Metropolitan Police, the Windsor Police Service, and the Amherstburg Police Service. The Argentinean customs agency is on the Miami BEST and the Colombian National Police is on both the Miami and New York-New Jersey BESTs.

Looking out over this room, it is hard to fathom that the first BEST was started just five years ago in Laredo, Texas, by a few enterprising managers who saw a need for an inter-agency assault on border crime and came up with a local solution. Fast forward to today. We have 17 BESTs up and running, the President specifically noted the importance of BESTs in a recent speech on border security, and this conference attracted over 600 participants from federal, state, tribal, and international police services.

This progress continues this year. We have created a dedicated BEST unit at ICE Headquarters to manage the program. This program is open to and will include our partners, and will ensure that we make the BESTs a lasting, mature program that serves the need of all who participate.

We are also opening four new BESTs:

- One in Albuquerque, New Mexico;
- One on the Gulf Coast, which will be based in New Orleans, Louisiana; and include Mobile, Alabama; and Gulfport, Mississippi;
- One in Seattle, Washington, that will also include Tacoma;
- and one on the Southeast Coast, based in Wilmington, North Carolina; but including Charleston, South Carolina; and Savannah, Georgia.

That brings us from 17 to an astounding 21 BESTs. Down the road, we're looking to open yet another four BESTs in Norfolk, Virginia; Honolulu, Hawaii; San Francisco, California; and Massena, New York. The Massena BEST will border Canada and the Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne, a territory which straddles the U.S. – Canada border. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the Nation who are here with us today. We look forward to working with you on this new endeavor.

In a video message we will show in just a few moments, Secretary Napolitano will review some of what the BESTs have accomplished this year. It's not too shabby and brings us to an impressive level of total performance over the short life of the task forces. Since BEST's inception, we have collectively initiated more than 6,400 cases. We have made more than 5,200 criminal arrests and more than 7,200 administrative arrests. We have seized more than 12,000 pounds of cocaine, more than 300 pounds of heroin, more than 300,000 pounds of marijuana, more than 2,800 pounds of ecstasy, and more than 1,800 pounds of meth. We have seized more than 3,400 weapons, 455,000 rounds of ammunition, 1,500 vehicles, and \$42.5 million in currency.

At the end of the day, the beauty of the BESTs is that they work. We come together, we pool resources and authorities, and we catch criminals who abuse our borders.

So where do we take BEST over the next five years?

First, we continue to consolidate and mature the basic program through joint management supported at the national level.

Second, we add task forces at all the major seaports. The BEST concept has worked very well in seaports so far, and we should build on that success.

Third, we attempt the BEST concept at a major international airport. I see no reason why BEST wouldn't work at an airport when it works so well on land and sea ports.

Finally, I think we look to export the concept by helping other countries establish BESTs of their own in land, air, and sea ports of mutual interest.

Thank you again for being here this week, thank you for participating in and supporting the BESTs, and thank you for your service to public safety. At the end of the day, we are all about

protecting the public from criminals. Let's keep working together to catch them, to seize their ill gotten goods and gain, and to put them in jail. And with that, let's take a look at Secretary Napolitano's video message.