

The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Program: Going Forward

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The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program was [originally created](#) in 1982 as part of President Reagan’s initiatives to counter drug trafficking and organized crime. It is the [largest anti-crime task force](#) in the United States. The program operates as a stand-alone component within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), not under the leadership of any one particular partner agency. [OCDETF targets](#) transnational organized crime (TOC), with the intent to disrupt and dismantle criminal networks with an [historically drug-centric focus](#). Some policymakers have shown [interest](#) in the future of the OCDETF program, as President Trump’s [proposed budget for FY2026](#) includes substantial changes to it—chiefly, eliminating all future funding for OCDETF in its current form.

OCDETF Structure

The OCDETF program has [federal partners](#) within DOJ and the U.S. Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, Treasury, Labor, and State, and the U.S. Postal Service, as well as state and local law enforcement partners. OCDETF’s prosecutor-led, multi-agency task force model relies on coordination, intelligence and information sharing, and directed resourcing to counter the highest priority targets. The program has nine regions and [19 strike forces](#) around the country to coordinate investigations and prosecutions. These co-located strike forces bring together federal, state, and local law enforcement to conduct multi-jurisdictional operations, and the OCDETF Fusion Center (OFC) leads intelligence sharing for the program. The OFC also houses the International Organized Crime Intelligence and Operations Center (IOC-2), allowing for information sharing between these two entities and their partners. The [IOC-2 was established](#) in 2009 and later placed under administration of the OFC.

The OCDETF Director manages the Consolidated Priority Organization Target (CPOT) process for identifying priority drug trafficking threats as well as the Priority Transnational Organized Crime (PTOC) process for the designation of investigations of priority non-drug organized crime threats. OCDETF’s nine regions can also designate regional priority targets. The OCDETF program has been involved in carrying out various national strategies including the [National Drug Control Strategy](#) and the [Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime](#). (The National Drug Control Strategy and the Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime were most recently updated during the Biden Administration.)

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Expanding OCDETF Mission

OCDETF's mission has [expanded beyond countering drug trafficking](#) to include investigations of all forms of transnational organized crime. This [broader mission began](#) with the release of the 2011 White House Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime and was reinforced through President Trump's [2017 Executive Order 13773](#), directing federal agencies—with specific reference to OCDETF, OFC, and others—to coordinate to counter TOC, broadly.

White House Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime

In July 2011, the Obama Administration released the first [White House Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime](#), which laid out the federal government's first broad conceptualization of TOC, focusing on it as a national security concern. In December 2023, the Biden Administration issued an [updated White House Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime](#) (2023 Strategy). The [updated strategy](#) notes that:

Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) refer to groups, networks, and associated individuals who operate transnationally for the purpose of obtaining power, influence, or monetary or commercial gain, wholly or in part by illegal means, while advancing their activities through a pattern of crime, corruption, or violence, and while protecting their illegal activities through a transnational organizational structure and the exploitation of public corruption or transnational logistics, financial, or communication mechanisms.

The 2023 Strategy also notes the opportunistic, poly-criminal nature of transnational criminal networks, the fluidity of their sizes and structures, and their activities that overlap the licit and illicit realms. It outlines four broad strategic pillars to counter TOC: (1) enhancing intelligence and information sharing; (2) strengthening interdictions, investigations, and prosecutions; (3) targeting TOC enablers; and (4) building international capacity, cooperation, and partnerships.

The 2023 Strategy affirms that many counter-TOC investigations are led by task forces and fusion centers. These include entities such as the OFC and IOC-2. As such, policymakers may question how any recent and proposed changes to the OCDETF program may affect the country's ability to implement the Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime and other related strategies and initiatives.

Recent and Proposed Changes to OCDETF

On March 6, 2025, Deputy Attorney General Blanche [issued a memorandum](#) establishing *Operation Take Back America*, reliant on OCDETF and [Project Safe Neighborhoods](#) resources to support DOJ's "core enforcement priorities: stopping illegal immigration, eliminating Cartels and TCOs, and ending illegal trafficking of dangerous drugs and human beings." While OCDETF resources have consistently been used to counter criminal networks engaged in a range of illegal activity, some may view the use of OCDETF resources to counter illegal immigration (including "cases involving obstruction of immigration objectives by sanctuary jurisdictions," as outlined in the memorandum) to be an expansion of the OCDETF mission beyond countering priority target organizations. It is currently unclear how the shifting, or expanding, mission of OCDETF—under *Operation Take Back America*—may affect federal resources and capacity to counter already-designated OCDETF priority targets.

Additionally, as part of its FY2026 budget proposal, the Trump Administration [has proposed](#) shifting the management of the OCDETF program away from its current status (managed by a director of a stand-alone entity within DOJ) to a task force director within the Office of the Deputy Attorney General. The Administration notes that funding for OCDETF operations "is requested directly in the appropriations of its partner DOJ components"; however, the budget proposal does not include specific funding for OCDETF activities in its appropriations request for agencies participating in the OCDETF program. Some [may interpret](#) this as a proposed elimination of the OCDETF program rather than a shift in program management. It is unclear whether or how the proposed changes might affect OCDETF task force operations, the OFC, or the coordination of federal law enforcement efforts to counter TOC.

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