



FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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December 12, 2019

The Honorable Tom Cotton
United States Senate
326 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cotton,

The Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (www.fleoa.org) is the nation's largest non-partisan professional association representing federal law enforcement officers. With over 27,000 Members from across all 65 federal law enforcement agencies, FLEOA's members are on the front lines protecting and defending America.

We are writing today to express our strong support for the introduction of S. 3031, the "Significant Transnational Criminal Organization Designation Act," which is legislation that would subject certain foreign criminal organizations like drug cartels to sanctions, including immigration, financial, and criminal penalties. The process would be similar to the system used for designating entities as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs).

This is a long overdue piece of legislation. FLEOA recently advocated to the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy to do exactly what this legislation proposes: designate the drug cartels as foreign terrorist-type organizations.

As DEA's 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment cited, "Mexican transnational criminal organizations, including the Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel, remain the greatest criminal drug threat in the United States. The cartels are the principal wholesale drug sources for domestic gangs responsible for street-level distribution" (pages 97-99). These cartels manage the majority of the supply, importation and distribution of illegal drugs into and also inside the United States. The drugs entering Mexico often come from Central and South America nations such as Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala and Honduras. The illegal drug traffic from Mexico alone surpasses every other trafficking route.

Our federal law enforcement officers try to protect and defend against this onslaught of illicit drug traffic every day. They also witness and are victimized by the violence the illicit drug trade perpetuates against anyone it touches. These acts include murder, rape, torture, kidnapping, human slavery, and coordinated attacks against foreign governments such as terrorist type improvised explosive device and vehicle borne improvised explosive device bombings. On July 15 of this year, the Juarez drug cartel detonated a car bomb on the streets of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, less than a mile from the U.S. border. This use of car bombs represents an emerging and growing tactic in the escalating street violence between drug cartels and Mexican authorities.

FLEOA members understand how dangerous these drug cartels are to America and Americans and that in every way, these cartels function like Al Qaeda or ISIS by the use of terrorist tactics to perpetuate their illicit trade and inflict mayhem on anyone that seeks to thwart it. Drug cartels are so brazen that they have shown no hesitation in targeting civilians or U.S. federal law enforcement officers for kidnapping and assassination. In 2011, ICE-HSI Special Agent Jaime Zapata was ambushed and murdered by the Mexican criminal group Los Zetas in San Luis Potosí, Mexico; and in 1985, DEA SA Enrique Camarena, was kidnapped, tortured and murdered by the former Guadalajara Cartel. These violent attacks are but an example of the violence that also plays out against civilians and other federal law enforcement officers assigned to the border or tasked with enforcing our nation's drug laws. This is why FLEOA has recommended and believes that classifying these violent foreign drug cartels as a terror type organization is necessary to effectively combat their violent and illicit trade.

Supporting this legislation is a commitment to make America safer, and we are grateful that Sens. Cruz, Blackburn, Cornyn, Graham, Hawley, Perdue, Romney, and Sasse have joined you as original cosponsors. We look forward to the bill's swift passage and federal law enforcement having all the tools cited in this bill to send a strong message to the cartels that America is not open for the illicit drug business.

FLEOA is always available to provide our subject matter expertise with this or any other federal law enforcement issues and can be contacted at fleoa@fleoa.org.

Sincerely,

Larry Cosme

National President

Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association

CC: Senate Judiciary Committee Members
Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader Charles Schumer