

U.S. – MEXICO – CANADA AGREEMENT

Countering Wildlife & Plant Trafficking Efforts at the Southern Border

BACKGROUND

Through an Interagency Agreement (IAA), the U.S. Trade Representative has provided funding to the Office of Law Enforcement of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to strengthen intelligence and enforcement capacity at the southern U.S. border. Mexico is both a significant source and transit country for illegal wildlife, plants and timber. Coincidentally, the U.S. is both a *destination* for trafficked wildlife and plants and a *transit* country for these illicit products from Mexico. Despite cooperative efforts across the U.S. interagency and with Mexican authorities, the illegal trade persists, fueled by high-value wildlife and plant commodities and comparatively lower risk and penalties for traffickers. Wildlife and plant trafficking directly contributes to environmental degradation, habitat loss and species extinction; and is a significant driver of corruption, natural resource insecurity and regional instability. Wildlife trafficking has direct ties to narco-trafficking in Mexico and remains an important funding mechanism for Transnational Organized Criminal networks operating in the Region.

GOAL 1 – INCREASED PRESENCE AT THE BORDER

- Staff additional wildlife inspectors at the Mexican Border
- Train and deploy K-9 units at the Mexican Border
- Increase inspections and border enforcement operations

OUTCOMES SO FAR

- Three Wildlife Inspectors have been hired, trained and onboarded in San Ysidro, El Paso & Nogales.
- Three K-9/wildlife inspectors and one K-9 were hired and trained. The first-ever K-9 at the southern border is expected to be operational in El Paso in late 2022.
- FWS participated in several Counter Wildlife & Plant Trafficking (CWT) Operations in 2021, including Operation Thunder 2021, a global CWT Operation facilitated by Interpol and World Customs Organization, with 118 participating countries, including the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. In the first quarter of FY2022 alone, FWS recorded a 346% increase in wildlife seizures at the Mexican Border.



GOAL 2 – INCREASED INTELLIGENCE

- Staff Intel Analyst at El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC)
- Increase overall intelligence exchange with Mexico

OUTCOMES SO FAR

- An Intel Analyst is now fully onboarded and working at EPIC.
- Through liaison with the FWS Attaché in Mexico City, intelligence exchange is increasing between Mexican authorities, USG and NGOs operating in the region. Recent Intelligence received from NGOs have led to controlled deliveries of smuggled wildlife from Mexico.



GOAL 3 – INCREASED TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS

- Establish a Mobile Forensics Lab that will increase FWS's ability to quickly and efficiently identify wildlife and timber species at remote border inspection ports.
- Deploy infrared x-ray devices at border ports
- Deploy Advanced Intelligence Software to improve targeting and increase wildlife interdictions

OUTCOMES SO FAR

- The Mobile Forensics Lab is fully operational. FWS is analyzing potential deployments for an upcoming operation.
- Infrared X-Ray devices have been purchased and are continuing to be piloted at the Port of El Paso and Rio Rico.
- FWS has purchased licensing for advanced intelligence software from Babel Street Analytics and IBM's i2 platform to assist in CWT along the southern border.



LOOKING FORWARD

These enhanced tools and resources are producing increased presence and inspections at the southern border to CWT. Looking forward, FWS will:

- Further increase staffing and enforcement operations along the southern border.
- Apply lessons-learned from pilots and deploy additional infrared x-ray devices and new intelligence software.
- Staff and deploy the Mobile Forensics Lab to support CWT interdictions & investigations along the border.
- Staff Intelligence Analyst at EPIC and increase exchange and use of actionable intelligence to CWT at the border.

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