



Fact Sheet Combating Money Laundering

"The prevention of money laundering and combating financial terrorism are a fundamental part of the state's comprehensive strategy against organized crime."

*Felipe Calderón
President
Mexico*

Financial gains are at the heart of all organized crime. Disrupting the ability to move and launder money is critical to curtailing the flow of cash and power to drug trafficking organizations in Mexico and the United States. Enforcement agencies in both countries are cooperating to create programs and develop strategies that will improve investigations and prosecutions, bulk cash seizures, and the overall reduction of money laundering activities among criminal organizations. Current bilateral initiatives include:

Achievements:

- **Asset Forfeiture Enforcement in the U.S.** – In March 2010 a four year case, led by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) with financial investigation cooperation from the Mexican Attorney General and Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF), concluded with charges against Wachovia bank, the fourth largest commercial bank in the U.S. Wachovia entered into a deferred prosecution agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to resolve charges that it knowingly processed the proceeds of illicit activity and willfully failed to establish an anti-money laundering program. As part of the agreement, Wachovia forfeited \$110 million to the United States and paid an additional \$50 million fine to the U.S. Treasury. The case demonstrates that the U.S. will not tolerate abuse of the financial system to launder illegal monies, and is a prime example of what is possible when the U.S. and Mexico work together in financial investigations.
- **Seizures** – Increased efforts by U.S. law enforcement authorities continue to pursue bulk cash smugglers aggressively as well- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) seized more than \$260 million in cash in Fiscal Year 2010.
- **Bulk Currency Operations** – In January 2010, ICE re-initiated Operation Firewall, a joint Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Mexican Customs, and ICE initiative that targets known methods of currency and contraband smuggling within Mexico. The program has already resulted in the following seizures: \$6 million in U.S. currency, \$179,900 in counterfeit currency, 20 kilograms of cocaine, 3,390 kilograms of pre-cursor chemicals and eight arrests.
- **K-9 Teams for Mexican Customs** – To date, a total of 58 canines and 44 handlers from Mexico's Customs agency (SAT) have been trained in the detection of drugs, weapons, ammunition, and currency from the Border Patrol Canine Academy in El Paso, Texas. Five SAT officials successfully completed an additional 16-week "Train-the-Trainer" course, which teaches officials how to manage a 5-week canine handler courses and bolster Mexico's own canine training capacity.
- **Kingpin Designations** –Pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, OFAC has designated 271 individuals and 135 entities tied to the financial and commercial networks of Mexico's most dangerous cartels since 2008. An additional five companies are currently blocked pending investigation. These individuals and organizations will be denied access to the U.S. Financial System and designated individuals and family members will be denied U.S. visas.
- **Border Security** – CBP and Mexican Customs (SAT) are coordinating southbound inspections activities to maximize coverage and avoid duplication of effort in stopping southbound flow of illicit cargo, including bulk cash smuggling and firearms. CBP is also providing advanced training to SAT to identify concealment techniques, advanced interviewing techniques, and risk-based targeting of cargo.
- **Asset Forfeiture Capacity Building** – Mexico passed new legislation in May 2009 that strengthens its ability to enforce its asset forfeiture laws to deny the proceeds of illicit activities to criminal organizations and their leaders. The U.S. Department of Justice, with the Department of State, is sponsoring 64 training courses in all 31 Mexican states and the Federal District designed to strengthen Mexico's ability to investigate and prosecute money laundering cases.
- **Developing Specialists** – The Office of Foreign Assets Control (Treasury) supported nine training courses for approximately 60 Mexican personnel to be Association of Certified Anti-money Laundering Specialist (ACAMS) and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) certified.

“... I recognize that the problem will not simply be solved ... if we're not also dealing with our responsibilities in the United States. And that's why we will take aggressive action to reduce our demand for drugs and to stop the flow of guns and bulk cash south across our borders.”

*Barack Obama
President
United States of America*

- **Joint Investigations** – In December 2010 the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT, an office within the DOJ) hosted a bi-national event featuring Mexican officials from the Attorney General's office, the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs and the Federal Police, and U.S. officials from DOJ's Criminal Division and agents from ICE, DEA, OFAC and the FBI. The event concluded with the selection of six cases for joint investigation by Mexican and U.S. prosecutors. These cases are active and progressing.
- **Asset Sharing Agreement** – The U.S. Department of Justice, with interagency support from the Departments of State and Treasury, entered into an asset sharing agreement worth \$2.9 million with the Government of Mexico in October 2010. Asset sharing agreements are an effective tool in encouraging joint investigations of narcotics trafficking and money laundering.
- **Asset Management and Money Laundering Assessment** – The Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT, an office within the DOJ) hosted an Asset Management and Money Laundering team in Mexico City in January 2010. The team met with Mexican agencies to learn the status of the current asset management system and determine next steps in collaboration with DOJ's Asset Forfeiture and Money Laundering office.
- **Equipment Delivery** – ICE has delivered \$250,000 worth of equipment for the ICE Border Enforcement Security Taskforce and Mexican Customs to use in their work with money laundering investigations and Operation Firewall. The equipment was purchased with Treasury funds.
- **Targeting Strategic Nodes** – A bi-national assessment was released in June 2010 containing analysis of current illicit flows of U.S. currency to Mexico to identify points of weakness that can be exploited by law enforcement. A June 2010 conference between U.S. and Mexican participants immediately followed, and bi-lateral steps to address identified weaknesses in the financial system were designed for implementation.
- **Investigative Training** – Mexico's Attorney General (PGR) and Customs have received two ICE-sponsored training courses in the use of money counters, called COBRAs. COBRAs can read currency serial numbers, used to identify the origin of illicit deposits across the border or the origin of a financial transfer from the U.S. to Mexico. Additionally, DOJ's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) has conducted seven courses on proper anti-money laundering investigative techniques and presentation of evidence.
- **Technology Improvements** – The U.S. is providing state of the art technology for the Mexican Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF). Through the Merida Initiative UIF is receiving the infrastructure (such as software applications, servers, storage, and link analysis tools) for their newly acquired data center. This technology will allow UIF to analyze information received from other entities and draw correlations between large value transactions and suspicious activity reports.

In addition, conventional computer equipment and forensic analysis tools (used for extracting information from devices such as cell phones and hard drives that have been confiscated in counternarcotics operations) have been provided to other GOM agencies responsible for investigating money laundering and suspicious financial transactions. This support is valued at \$14 million.