



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 19, 2025

State, DOJ Move Against Cartels; Produce List, Language for Indictments & Search Warrants

The State and Justice departments have begun to implement President Donald Trump's order designating the drug cartels operating mainly at the Southwest border as terrorist organizations.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has published a list of the cartels now considered terrorists and, therefore, subject to attack by the U.S. military. Attorney General Pam Bondi has declared the Justice Department's (DOJ) goal as "total elimination of cartels and transnational criminal organizations [TCOs]."

She also ordered subordinates to draft canned language to include in indictments and search warrants.

Just after Trump's designation, border agents exchanged gunfire with the cartel terrorists, and the cartels tried to murder two hikers in California. Even so, *The New York Times* claimed the designation threatened the U.S. economy.



AP Images
Pam Bondi

□ The U.S. has officially declared the following as Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Tren de Aragua, MS-13, the Sinaloa Cartel, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, the United Cartels, the Gulf Cartel, the Northeast Cartel, and the Michoacán Family.

pic.twitter.com/cgcw9juyEl

— Rapid Response 47 (@RapidResponse47) [February 19, 2025](#)

On January 20, Trump designated the cartels terrorists in an executive order, writing that "the Cartels have engaged in a campaign of violence and terror throughout the Western Hemisphere that has not only destabilized countries with significant importance for our national interests but also flooded the United States with deadly drugs, violent criminals, and vicious gangs."

As well, he wrote, they "control, through a campaign of assassination, terror, rape, and brute force nearly all illegal traffic across the southern border of the United States."

Trump observed that the cartels are "quasi-governmental" operations in some parts of Mexico. And, he wrote, "Their activities, proximity to, and incursions into the physical territory of the United States pose an unacceptable national security risk to the United States."

State Department, DOJ Notices

Trump specifically pointed to El Salvador's MS-13 and Venezuela's Tren de Aragua, both operating with impunity inside the United States. [Rubio's order fingered](#) eight cartels as terrorists as defined in [8 U.S. Code 1189](#). They are:



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[Tren de Aragua](#) (TdA);

[Mara Salvatrucha](#) (MS-13);

[Cartel de Sinaloa](#) (the Sinaloa Cartel);

[Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion](#) (Jalisco New Generation Cartel);

[Carteles Unidos](#);

[Cartel del Noreste](#);

[Cartel del Golfo](#); and

[La Nueva Familia Michoacana](#).

The day before, Bondi published her memorandum for all DOJ employees that discussed “total elimination” of the cartels.

Bondi plans to charge cartel and TCO leaders and managers with capital crimes, both as terrorists and racketeers and as foreign narcotics kingpins who run continuing criminal enterprises and violate machine-gun laws.

“More generally, while charging decisions must be based on case-specific assessments of the facts and evidence, the following factors should be evaluated when considering whether to pursue charges, arrests, and/or extraditions of a Cartel or TCO target,” Bondi wrote:

- Whether the target is a manager or a leader of the organization;
- Whether the target has significant ties to the United States, including physical presence or directing action in the United States;
- Whether the target’s conduct resulted in death of or injuries to U.S. citizens;
- Whether the target’s conduct involved international terrorism ... ;
- The availability of non-criminal responses to the target’s conduct, including removal from the United States and economic sanctions; and
- Any known or suspected prior violent crimes committed by the target.

DOJ also will settle on “standardized language” to describe TdA, MS-13, the Sinaloa Cartel, and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel in indictments and search warrants.

And Bondi also wants “fentanyl-related substances” added to [Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act](#).

Added to Schedule III of the act will be [xylazine](#), “which has no legitimate human use and makes fentanyl even more lethal.” Xylazine is a non-narcotic veterinary sedative and muscle relaxant often added to other drugs to increase their potency.

Cartel Fires at Hikers, Border Agents

Twice in January, cartel terrorists tried to murder Americans.

Three days after Trump declared the cartel terrorists, [they apparently tried](#) to lure a group of hikers to their death in the [Jacumba Wilderness](#) on the border with Mexico.

The cartel thugs, who carried weapons, approached an American and a Canadian in the group and



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ordered them to approach. When the hikers refused, the terrorists fired at them and hit the American in the leg. They also stole the hikers' cellphones and backpacks.

American hiker strafed with gunfire & shot twice by suspected [#cartel](#) [#terrorists](#) in Jacumba, CA

Cartels think they can bring their war here. Think again!

Americans won't be intimidated. Our agents & BORTAC will confront these threats HEAD ON! [@CBPAMO](#) pic.twitter.com/8QpQ86RRpQ

— USBP Chief Patrol Agent Gregory K. Bovino (@USBPChiefELC) [January 23, 2025](#)

On January 27, the terrorists fired at Border Patrol agents as a group of illegal aliens tried to cross the border at Frontera, Texas.

After that attack, border czar Tom Homan again warned, as [he did](#) at the Republican National Convention in July, that Trump would find and destroy the cartels.

"The whole of government is going to dismantle these people and wipe them off the face of the earth," he told Fox talker Sean Hannity. "They are not going to go lightly."

NOW - Tom Homan Declares War on Cartels After Border Agents Fired Upon |

"The whole of government is going to dismantle these people and wipe them off the face of the earth."

Things are heating up fast.

Border Czar Tom Homan just announced that the U.S. is preparing to wage... pic.twitter.com/eEH9KTPXL

— Overton (@overton_news) [January 28, 2025](#)

NYT: Calling Cartels Terrorists Is Bad for the Economy

[One voice against](#) Trump's designating the cartels as terrorists is *The New York Times*.

On January 22, it claimed that "labeling cartels terrorists could hurt the U.S. economy."

The terror label, the newspaper reported, "could force some American companies to forgo doing business in Mexico rather than risk U.S. sanctions ... an outcome that could have a major effect on both countries given their deep economic interdependence."

As well, because American companies do business with the cartels, likely inadvertently, they could be charged with materially supporting them if, for instance, they paid ransom, the *Times* explained.

The *Times* was extremely concerned about the cartel-infested avocado trade. The terror designation might cause banks to stop lending money to the industry.

How Labeling Cartels 'Terrorists' Could Hurt the U.S. Economy <https://t.co/rdeOtCUULF>



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— Earl Anthony Wayne (@EAnthonyWayne) [January 22, 2025](#)

Also worrisome are “American companies that are firmly north of the border but rely on Mexican labor,” the *Times* continued:

The designation is so broad and vague that ranches in Texas or farms in California could be swept up by the penalties if their employees send remittances to family members in Mexico who are involved in organized crime.

“Total elimination” of the cartels and TCOs will likely require more than action by DOJ, given that the criminals don’t much fear cops and prosecutors. Instead, the U.S. military will likely be required to attack them, and, as Homan said, “wipe them off the face of the earth.”



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