

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of the Deputy Attorney General

The Deputy Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

March 6, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES  
FROM: THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL [TB]  
SUBJECT: U.S. Attorneys' Offices Staffing Priorities

U.S. Attorneys' Offices operate on the front lines of the Justice Department's fights against illegal immigration, Cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs), and illegal trafficking of dangerous drugs and human beings. This memorandum sets forth guidance to ensure that U.S. Attorneys' Offices are appropriately staffed to win those fights, subject to the hiring freeze that has been appropriately imposed in furtherance of the need to achieve greater efficiency with the funds taxpayers make available to their government.

Please rest assured that the Department is taking all steps available to advocate for the retention of AUSAs in probationary status so that they can make crucial contributions to national security and public safety. Moreover, existing guidance regarding the hiring freeze is not intended to limit other staffing options at U.S. Attorneys' Offices, such as hiring, appointing, or accepting uncompensated Special Assistant United States Attorneys, or employing unpaid law student externs, law student volunteers, college interns, and administrative interns.

### **I. Hiring In Border Districts**

President Trump and the Attorney General have emphasized the need for increased criminal enforcement efforts on the border. They are correct, and I share their. U.S. Attorneys' Offices in Districts on the southern border,<sup>[1]</sup> and in all Florida Districts, are critical to the implementation of the policies established by President Trump, including in Executive Order 14159, entitled Protecting the American People Against Invasion, and Executive Order 14157, entitled Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists. The threat of illegal immigration and associated crime at our northern border is also escalating, as President Trump pointed out in Executive Order 14193. This is particularly true in the Western and Northern Districts of New York and the District of Vermont, including within the Swanton Sector.

<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this guidance, the southern border Districts are all Districts in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, as well as the Southern District of California.

Consistent with the charging priorities identified by the Attorney General on February 5, 2025, AUSAs must commit to investigations and prosecutions targeting all of the insidious results of the four-year invasion of illegal immigration that we are now working to repel. AUSAs must continue to charge more cases involving aliens who illegally entered or reentered the United States, see, e.g., 8 U.S.C. § 1325, 1326; aliens who illegally possess firearms, see, e.g., 18 U.S.C. §922(g)(5); and aliens who fail to timely register, depart, or make other required filings, 8U.S.C. § 1253, 1306. Because unlawful impediments to President Trump's immigration policy will not be tolerated-including by state and local law enforcement, as well as misguided advocacy groups operating against the public interest-AUSAs must also charge cases involving efforts to obstruct removals and other immigration enforcement efforts in sanctuary city jurisdictions and elsewhere, see, e.g., 18 U.S.C. §§ 371, 1505; trespassing and damage to federal facilities used for immigration purposes, see, e.g., 18 U.S.C. § 1382; and harboring or concealing aliens, including at prison facilities and work places, see e.g., 8 U.S.C. § 1324.

Border Districts have a unique role to play in these efforts. They have been empowered to bring racketeering charges and impose the death penalty to eliminate Cartels and TCOs that infiltrated the unacceptably porous border before President Trump took decisive action to seal it. They must bring terrorism and sanctions charges against illegal aliens who provide material support to Cartels and TCOs designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) pursuant to Executive Order 14157, entitled Designating Cartels and Other Organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists. Prosecutors operating in Border Districts must evaluate use of these charges, now unfettered by approval obligations at Main Justice, in connection with all aspects of illegal immigration. In addition to using these types of charges in drug- and weapons-trafficking cases, this obligation requires bringing terrorism and sanctions charges against aliens who pay or otherwise provide support to Cartels and TCOs for help entering the country, or assistance in trafficking in minors and other humans. Finally, in addition to operating on the front lines, these U.S. Attorneys' Offices must charge aliens who committed crimes in their Districts and then migrated into the Nation's interior-where we will work tirelessly with our partners to apprehend and remove them.

To do this important work, the relevant U.S. Attorneys' Offices must be staffed appropriately. Accordingly, U.S. Attorneys' Offices operating in the Districts identified in this section are authorized to hire AUSAs for the purpose of working on investigations and prosecutions relating to illegal immigration, illegal trafficking of dangerous drugs and human beings, and targeting the Cartels and TCOs designated as FTOs and SDGTs pursuant to the process established in Executive Order 14157. These Districts will be provided funding to fill a specific number of direct-funded attorney FTE vacancies in the District. The number of funded attorney FTE vacancies will be established in implementation guidance issued by EOUSA.

In addition to authorized direct hiring, attorneys throughout the Department—and especially those assigned to Main Justice—are encouraged to voluntarily pursue details or permanent transfers to U.S. Attorneys' Offices in border districts.<sup>[2]</sup> Such details and transfers are not subject to the hiring freeze, and JMD and EOUSA are directed to effectuate them as soon as is practicable. For all details pursuant to this paragraph, the sending District or Main Justice component will bear the salary cost of the attorney while on the detail, and EOUSA will fund travel costs associated with the detail. Detailed employees will not count against the receiving District's allocated number of FTEs for the first two years of the attorney's detail to the receiving District. For all permanent transfers, the receiving District will assume the cost of the attorney's salary, the transfer will count as the filling of a vacant FTE position, and EOUSA will provide a subsidy to cover up to \$15,000 in eligible relocation costs.

For U.S. Attorneys' Offices in Districts not referenced in this section, the Department will evaluate on a case-by-case basis whether a hiring request is consistent with existing guidance relating to the hiring freeze. Exemption requests should be made via a memorandum to EOUSA that explains (i) the reason why the exception from the hiring freeze is required, ii) why the need cannot be filled by an existing employee or employees, and (iii) the Office's vacancy percentage. EOUSA shall transmit those requests, with an accompanying recommendation, to the Office of the Deputy Attorney General for approval through the Justice Management Division. Exemptions are more likely to be granted where the application includes an undertaking that the attorneys and/or support staff to be hired will be specifically focused on the priorities set forth above.

## **II. Hiring To Support Priority Task Force Efforts**

President Trump and the Attorney General have created four Task Forces that will enforce the priorities of the Administration and the Justice Department. The Homeland Security Task Force established in Executive Order 14159 will establish a presence in every State in order to "end the presence of criminal cartels, foreign gangs, and transnational criminal organizations throughout the United States, dismantle cross-border human smuggling and trafficking networks, [and] end the scourge of human smuggling and trafficking, with a particular focus on such offenses involving children." Joint Task Force Alpha is targeting human trafficking and human smuggling. Joint Task Force Vulcan is targeting Tren de Aragua (TdA) and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Joint Task Force 10-7 is targeting those responsible for the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack in Israel, addressing the ongoing threat posed by Hamas and its affiliates, and combatting antisemitic acts of terrorism and civil rights violations in the homeland.

Any U.S. Attorney's Office that details an AUSA to one of these four Task Forces may backfill the temporary vacancy with an AUSA hire. These backfills are authorized exceptions from the hiring freeze. EOUSA will centrally fund the salary and travel costs of the detail for USAOs.

<sup>2</sup> In the absence of voluntary attorney participation in efforts to support districts on the Border, the ongoing national emergency may require that attorneys be detailed or reassigned from their current duties at Main Justice to support these efforts.