



Secretary Napolitano Highlights Illegal Immigration Enforcement, Appoints Alan Bersin as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Special Representative For Border Affairs

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano visited El Paso, Texas, today to highlight major DHS efforts to crackdown on illegal immigration and cross-border trafficking, which resulted in more than one million apprehensions of illegal aliens in fiscal year 2008—including nearly 800,000 along the Southwest border. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) removed 369,000 illegal immigrants from the United States during the same time period, a 27 percent increase from fiscal year 2007.

"The Department of Homeland Security has taken strong action to put the right resources in key places along the Southwest border," said Secretary Napolitano. "Thanks to additional technology and personnel along the border, we are getting better intelligence leading to drug and weapons seizures and better identification of illegal and criminal aliens."

Secretary Napolitano also announced the appointment of Alan Bersin as DHS Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Special Representative for Border Affairs. Bersin previously served as U.S. Department of Justice Southwest Border Representative.

"Alan brings years of vital experience working with local, state and international partners to help us meet the challenges we face at our borders," said Secretary Napolitano. "He will lead the effort to make our borders safe while working to promote commerce and trade."

Secretary Napolitano visited El Paso as part of a three-stop tour of the Southwest border, which will also include visits to Columbus, N.M., and Nogales, Ariz. Secretary Napolitano will then travel to Mexico City to meet President Obama.

Bersin's responsibilities at DHS will include improving relationships with the Department's partners in the international community, as well as those at the state and local level including elected officials, law enforcement, community organizations and religious leaders. He will lead the Department's efforts to crack down on violence along the Southwest border highlighted in Secretary Napolitano's March 24 announcement including the deployment of additional personnel and enhanced technology to help Mexico target illegal guns, drugs and cash.

Mr. Bersin will report directly to the Secretary's office, and begins immediately. Following the announcement in El Paso, Texas, Bersin will travel to the border communities of Del Rio, Laredo, Hidalgo, McAllen, and Brownsville where he will meet with local law enforcement to discuss coordination across the border and with federal, state and local authorities.

Bersin brings unique experience to the post, as a law enforcement official, educator, and civil servant. Bersin was appointed in 1995 by former Attorney General Janet Reno as Special Representative for the Southwest Border with responsibility to coordinate border law enforcement from South Texas to Southern California. Bersin advised the Attorney General on improvements in immigration law enforcement along the Southwest border in addition to overseeing anti drug and human trafficking programs. Bersin also worked with the Mexican government and local partners on important trans-national issues such as cross-border commerce and immigration.

From 1993 to 1998, Bersin served as the U.S. Attorney for California's Southern District where he tripled felony prosecutions, resulting in the heaviest federal criminal caseload in the country. These prosecutions involved a full range of federal criminal violations, including immigration and narcotics offenses, in addition to violent and white collar crime.

Most recently, Bersin was the Board Chairman of the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority. Prior to that position, Bersin served as California's Secretary of Education and the Superintendent of the San Diego Public Schools. He holds a B.A. from Harvard College, a J.D. from Yale University, and was also a Rhodes Scholar.

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