

Press Release

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DHS EXPANDS OPERATION STONEGARDEN TO BOLSTER BORDER SECURITY EFFORTS

WASHINGTON - The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced today the expansion of Operation Stonegarden, an initiative that will give states additional funding and flexibility to strengthen America's borders.

The new grant guidance reflects Secretary Michael Chertoff's top priorities to strengthen border security and establish a common approach to enhancing preparedness capabilities throughout our nation.

As part of the 2006 fiscal year Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program (LETPP) will award \$400 million in grants to states based on risk and need. In fiscal year 2006, the LETPP allows for up to 25 percent of the funds awarded to each border state to be used for border protection.

"Operation Stonegarden was a series of innovative pilot programs that gave states flexibility to use DHS grant dollars to support closer coordination of state and federal law enforcement agencies at our borders," said Secretary Michael Chertoff. "By expanding this successful program, we are giving border states and communities the ability to target additional resources to secure their borders."

Under the auspices of the LETPP, DHS plans to reinstate the highly successful Operation Stonegarden as a means of improving border security and countering the terrorist threat. During fiscal year 2005, Operation Stonegarden was extremely effective in bolstering border security in areas deemed vulnerable or at risk with 214 state, local, and tribal agencies working a total of 36,755 man-days along the Mexican and Canadian borders. Funding will be contingent upon recipients having an approved operational plan developed jointly between state, tribal and local law enforcement officials and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Starting in fiscal year 2006, funds may be used toward the hiring of new staff or contractors to serve as intelligence analysts. Prospective personnel must successfully complete training to ensure baseline proficiency in intelligence analysis and production.

The department will award more than \$2.5 billion in grant funding through the fiscal year 2006 HSGP, which augments the nearly \$9 billion already delivered to state and local governments and first responders.

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