

The Department of Justice's Terrorism Task Forces

Evaluation and Inspections Report I-2005-007
June 2005
Office of the Inspector General

Appendix XVI

DEA Response

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U. S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration

Washington, D.C. 20537

MAY 12, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Paul A. Price
Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation and Inspections

FROM: Michele M. Leonhart
Deputy Administrator

SUBJECT: Draft Audit Report: *The Department of Justice's Terrorism Task Forces*

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has reviewed the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) draft edit report entitled *The Department of Justice's Terrorism Task Forces*. DEA provides the following comments as requested in your memorandum dated April 22, 2005.

Of the report's 28 recommendations, 2 require action by DEA. DEA concurs with the recommendations resulting from this audit and will take steps to implement the recommendations related to its contribution to the Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs). DEA is also committed to its roles on the NJTTF and the Deputy Attorney General's National Security Coordination Council to aid in the Department's counterterrorism efforts.

Notwithstanding DEA's drug law enforcement mission, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks focused renewed attention on the links between drug trafficking and terrorism. DEA works with domestic and foreign law enforcement agencies at all levels, to include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in an effort to identify and anticipate emerging threats posed by the links between drug trafficking and terrorism, and when called upon by the Attorney General, has joined in the coordinated efforts to prevent terrorist attacks. An example of DEA's participation in this capacity is evidenced in DEA's participatory role in preventing terrorist activity during the 2004 election.

On a continuing basis, DEA's proven expertise in the areas of surveillance, analysis, and development of intelligence is made available to the various JTTFs. Following September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, DEA offered personnel and did in fact assign personnel to the JTTFs on a full-time basis at various locations across the country. Over time, it was determined the investigative workload did not justify continued full-time participation in the JTTFs. DEA determined that it was possible for the DEA Special Agents assigned to the

JTTFs to continue supporting the JTTFs in a liaison capacity, while at the same time, enabling those same Special Agents to conduct drug and drug-money laundering investigations that could have a terrorism connection. As a result, these Special Agents now handle DEA investigations while serving also as DEA liaison to the JTTFs. DEA Special Agents, Intelligence Analysts, and other personnel are available to the JTTFs to provide resources deemed necessary to support the counterterrorism mission.

DEA has consistently offered or responded to requests by the FBI for personnel to support the JTTFs in response to terrorist threats and elevated threat levels. DEA is committed to continuing this cooperation and contends that it has assigned necessary resources in a timely manner, albeit not always in a permanent capacity, to support the identified needs of the National Joint Terrorism Task Force (NJTTF) and the JTTFs. Indeed, the DIG review did not find instances in which DEA through its points-of-contact failed to support an identified need of the JTTFs. DEA has further met the needs of the counter terrorism investigative community through the designation of a headquarters group, the Special Coordination Unit, which ensures counter terrorism-related information is shared with appropriate organizations outside of DEA.

DEA is fully aware that its investigative capacity is beneficial to counter terrorism efforts; however, resource allocations must be balanced with regard to operational needs of the JTTFs in the areas of operation. The ability to investigate the broad spectrum of criminal activity by terrorist suspects, to include drug trafficking offenses, cannot be overstated. DEA Headquarters' managers, in conjunction with the appropriate field offices, will continue to work with the FBI to determine the needs for optimal placement of full-time DEA personnel at JTF locations with regard to operational concerns and available resources. In locations where drugs and terrorism are not interconnected or where resource constraints exist, DEA points-of-contact that serve as liaisons to JTTFs will continue to be a viable alternative. Additionally, guidelines will be drafted and disseminated to clarify the roles and responsibilities of its JTF and NJTTF members and points-of-contact.

DEA has completed a sensitivity review of the portions of the draft audit report specific to DEA. This information is provided under separate cover.

Documentation detailing DEA's efforts to address the DIG recommendations will be provided to OIG until all corrective actions are employed. If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact Audit Liaison Sheldon Shoemaker at (202) 307-4205.

Attachment

Cc: Richard P. Theis
Acting Assistant Director, Audit Liaison Group Management and Planning Staff

ACTION PLAN

[Not Available Electronically]