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## New task force to target border crime

*By Niraj Warikoo*  
*Free Press Staff Writer*

Immigration officials announced today a new task force composed of U.S. and Canadian law enforcement officials to better crack down on border crime.

Called the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST), the new group consists of about 50 law enforcement officials led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), part of the Department of Homeland Security. It's based in downtown Detroit.

"We don't want to slow down legitimate trade," Brian Moskowitz, special agent in charge of ICE's Michigan and Ohio office, said today at the McNamara Federal Building. "We want to protect people."

The nation's highest-ranking immigration investigative official, John Morton, Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, attended a news conference today that announced the task force. He said the new task force will allow multiple agencies to "work together" in a "coordinated and cooperative fashion."

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, there has been increased focus on security issues at borders.

The task force was modeled after similar task forces in other parts of the country, such as the southwest, where Mexican and U.S. officials have cooperated on fighting border crime. The BEST task force will focus on fighting terrorism, human smuggling, contraband smuggling, money laundering, cash smuggling, and gang activities, among other crimes.

Morton said the new task force will not hamper the "vibrant, robust exchange" of trade between the two countries.

The new task force is not about "slowing every third car down," Morton said.

Thomas Brandon, special agent in charge of the Detroit office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said the task force will provide continuity in relationships between law enforcement agencies that will more effectively fight crime.

"People will be sharing intelligence, which is critical," Brandon said.

In the past, sharing information among agencies was sometimes a challenge, federal officials said. The task force is housed at the federal building and includes members of Michigan State Police, Macomb and Oakland County Sheriffs, Windsor Police, Ontario Provincial Police, U.S. Attorney's office, Detroit Police, among other federal, state and local agencies.

Contact **NIRAJ WARIKOO**: [nwarikoo@freepress.com](mailto:nwarikoo@freepress.com).