

This information is submitted consistent with Section 1230 of the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (50 U.S.C. § 1543a).

For decades the response to the flow of illicit narcotics into the United States has primarily relied on the use of law enforcement authorities. These efforts have been unsuccessful in stemming the tide of these ever increasingly addictive and lethal drugs. The cartels involved have grown more armed, well organized, and violent. They have the financial means, sophistication, and paramilitary capabilities needed to operate with impunity.

They illegally and directly cause the deaths of tens of thousands of American citizens each year. Although friendly foreign nations have made significant efforts to combat these organizations, suffering significant losses of life, these groups are now transnational and conduct ongoing attacks throughout the Western Hemisphere as organized cartels. Therefore, the President determined these cartels are non-state armed groups, designated them as terrorist organizations, and determined that their actions constitute an armed attack against the United States.

In response, based upon the cumulative effects of these hostile acts against the citizens and interests of United States and friendly foreign nations, the President determined that the United States is in a non-international armed conflict with these designated terrorist organizations. The President directed the Department of War to conduct operations against them pursuant to the law of armed conflict. The United States has now reached a critical point where we must use force in self-defense and defense of others against the ongoing attacks by these designated terrorist organizations.

Accordingly, at the President's direction, and in compliance with the law of armed conflict, on September 15, 2025, U.S. forces struck an unflagged vessel at a location beyond the territorial seas of any nation. The vessel was assessed by the U.S. intelligence community to be affiliated with a designated terrorist organization and, at the time, engaged in trafficking illicit drugs, which could ultimately be used to kill Americans. This strike resulted in the destruction of the vessel, the illicit narcotics, and the death of approximately 3 unlawful combatants.

Although this strike was limited in scope, U.S. forces remain postured to carry out military operations as necessary to prevent further deaths or injury to American citizens by eliminating the threat posed by these designated terrorist organizations.

The President directed these actions consistent with his responsibility to protect Americans and United States interests abroad and in furtherance of United States national security and foreign policy interests, pursuant to his constitutional authority as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive to conduct foreign relations. The Department of War appreciates the support of the Congress in this action.