

Officials Provide Update on Operation Southern Spear 1 Year After its Launch



U.S. officials spoke to the media yesterday regarding the progress of Operation Southern Spear – the large-scale U.S. military and counter-narco-terrorism campaign in the Western Hemisphere – one year after the operation launched in September 2025, saying the mission has been largely successful thus far.

Of note, one official said U.S. Southern Command's counternarcotics operations over the past year have driven record reductions in illicit maritime activity, with a 65% reduction in the Western Caribbean, a 60% reduction in the Eastern Caribbean and a nearly 50% reduction in key areas of the Eastern Pacific.

The official said President Donald J. Trump made a promise to the American people one year ago to secure the U.S., defend its sovereignty and “take the fight to the cartels and narco-terrorists who have poisoned our communities for far too long.”

“Under Secretary [of War Pete] Hegseth, the Department of War is delivering on that promise and – in the Western Hemisphere specifically – the results are simply undeniable,” the official said.

The War Department's most recent quarterly [report](#) to Congress on Operation Southern Spear, which covers the period from April 1 to June 30 of this year, states that the U.S. military conducted airstrikes on 19 vessels suspected of being affiliated with designated terrorist organizations, with approximately 56 individuals killed or presumed dead.

The previous quarter saw 12 vessels struck, killing 40 suspected narco-terrorists, according to the report.

Regarding the Trump administration's designation of multiple drug cartels in the Western Hemisphere as foreign terrorist organizations, which gives the U.S. military the authority to treat them under the same rules of engagement as foreign terrorist organizations in other parts of the world; one of the U.S. officials told the media the cartels are indeed comparable to long-established foreign terrorist organizations.

"The foreign terrorist organizations that operate in Mexico and across the Western Hemisphere are responsible for more American deaths than any other adversary that we have faced in recent memory," the official said.

The official added that it's not just the spread of the highly lethal drug fentanyl that is contributing to American deaths, but also the exportation of violence to U.S. communities.

"The gang structure in the United States is downstream of the cartel threat in the Western Hemisphere, so the evidence conclusively proves that the violence in our streets – the gangland killings, the assassinations, the bloodshed ... the extortion [and] the armed robbery – are all part and parcel of this vast, sophisticated network of foreign terrorist organizations that operate in the Western Hemisphere, for which the United States is the primary target," the official said.

In addition to the vessel strikes listed in the recent report on Southern Spear, the document also states that, during last quarter, eight U.S. Navy and Marine Corps vessels, a P-8 patrol and reconnaissance aircraft squadron and the Marine Corps' 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit were deployed in support of the operation.

The document also notes that, in late June, three of those

vessels were redeployed to support humanitarian relief operations following the earthquakes in Venezuela.

When asked what the future end state, or mission accomplishment for Operation Southern Spear would look like – as well as how long the Trump administration and War Department are prepared to continue the endeavor, one of the officials said victory would involve U.S. partner nations throughout the Western Hemisphere being in control of their own governments.

“Our job is not acting in defense of those countries for their own sake – though they are our partners and we help them – but in the defense of the United States, the president made clear we can and we will strike wherever we need to,” the official said.

“So, victory is these [foreign terror] organizations cannot raise armies, they can’t control territory, they can’t export violence into America, they cannot exercise control over commerce in the region and they can’t kill American citizens by importing drugs into our country,” the official added.

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