

US Homeland Security Agents Extend Their Mission into Brazil

Contributed by Newsroom
Friday, 24 March 2006

Agents from the United States Department of Homeland Security will soon be helping Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay combat money laundering and terrorism financing, said the United State Embassy in Brasília.

The focus is the porous border region where Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina meet an area US authorities have long considered a source of fundraising for radical Islamic groups.

"It is also believed to be South America's busiest contraband and smuggling center, where billions of dollars annually are generated from arms trafficking, drug smuggling, counterfeiting, intellectual property-rights violations, and other crimes," the embassy said in a statement.

Agents are due to arrive in Brazil within two months, and in neighboring Argentina and Paraguay shortly after. Working with local law enforcement and customs officials, they will set up units to investigate and prosecute an array of financial crimes that also include contraband smuggling and tax evasion, the embassy said.

Money and explosives for two of the worst terrorist attacks that left dozens killed and injured in Buenos Aires in the nineties are believed to have come through the triple border area. One of the targets was the Israel Embassy (1992) and the second the Argentine Jewish Community Association, (1994).

According to the U.S. embassy, the effort was agreed to by a permanent working group representing Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and the United States. The Brazilian Federal Police had no immediate comment.

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