



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 1, 2020

DEA Seizes \$29 Million in Drugs Smuggled Through Tunnel from Tijuana to San Diego

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) put out a new release on March 31 stating that Federal agents on the San Diego Tunnel Task Force uncovered a tunnel more than 2,000 feet long on March 19, which extends under the U.S.-Mexico border to a warehouse San Diego.

According to the release, federal agents seized approximately 1,300 pounds of cocaine, 86 pounds of methamphetamine, 17 pounds of heroin, 3,000 pounds of marijuana, and more than two pounds of fentanyl from the tunnel. The report noted, “The large seizure of mixed drugs represents the first time in San Diego’s history where five different types of drugs were found inside a tunnel. The total street value of the drugs seized from the tunnel is estimated at \$29.6 million.”



The tunnel was of very sophisticated construction, including reinforced walls, ventilation, lighting, and rail tracks similar to those used in mine shafts. Because of these features, agents estimated that the tunnel had been in existence for several months.

The press release quoted Cardell T. Morant, acting special agent in charge of HIS (Homeland Security Investigations) San Diego, who said,

I’m proud of the excellent work performed by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) agents, as well as U.S. Border Patrol and Drug Enforcement Administration agents as integrated partners of the San Diego Tunnel Task Force. Their tenacity made the difference in shutting down this tunnel. I hope this sends a clear message that despite the ongoing public health crisis, HSI and our law enforcement partners will remain resilient and continue to pursue criminal organizations responsible for the cross-border smuggling of narcotics into the United States.

U.S. Attorney Robert Brewer had this to say: “If cartels keep spending millions of dollars building tunnels, we will keep finding and filling them. This time, we seized a jaw-dropping \$30 million worth of dangerous drugs that aren’t going to reach the streets.”

The San Diego Tunnel Task Force also thanked Mexican authorities for their cooperation in the bilateral investigation that led to the discovery of the tunnel. The task force is a multi-agency entity, made up by personnel from HIS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Border Patrol, the DEA, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office.



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Though this latest tunnel to be discovered was designed mainly for the purpose of smuggling drugs, other tunnels have been used to smuggle people into the country. As [The New American noted](#) in January of 2019, a group of 376 migrants, almost all of whom were Guatemalan families and children seeking asylum, had breached the U.S.-Mexico border. Border Patrol Agent Jose Garibay, the spokesman for the agency's Yuma Sector, said that migrants, with the help of smugglers, had dug seven holes in the sandy soil underneath the bollard-style fence and the metal plates welded to the bottom of the barriers.

"The bollards, when they were put in, they didn't have concrete footers, because it wasn't designed to stop from digging under, it was designed to stop the vehicle traffic," Garibay said.

At the time, agents were concerned primarily with things such as illegal aliens overwhelming local schools, hospitals, and social services, as well as threatening the security of our borders. But now, with the danger of people who may be carrying the COVID-19 virus being able to enter our country without being adequately screened and tested, the threat to our nation's health is much greater.

The United States and Mexico have agreed to restrict all non-essential travel across their shared border in an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus, President Trump said on March 20.

Image: belchonock via iStock / Getty Images Plus

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.

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