

Testimony of Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Charles S. Shapiro
Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sub-Committee on International Organizations,
Human Rights and Oversight
July 31, 2007

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The United States and Mexico enjoy excellent bilateral relations, including cooperation on trade, law enforcement, the environment, energy, gangs, and a host of issues related to our common border. We are working together with the Government of Mexico on a joint strategy on fighting narcotics related violence in Mexico. Our presidents will meet together with the Prime Minister of Canada in Montebello, Canada on August 20-21.

One of the most important functions of U.S. Embassies overseas is the protection of U.S. citizens. U.S. consular officers work to ensure that U.S. citizens are treated in accordance with local law. Mission Mexico comprises one of the largest and most extensive U.S. diplomatic and consular missions in the world, consisting of the Embassy in Mexico City, four consulates general, and five consulates, as well as 14 consular agencies.

In the United States, Mexico operates 48 Consulates, with a 49th in New Orleans slated to reopen in the near future.

Slightly under 2,000 Americans are arrested in Mexico per year. American prisoners visited by consular staff quarterly at minimum, more often if needed (prisoners may request no visits). Worldwide, our consular officers conducted 5,694 prison visits through the end of the 3rd Quarter FY 2007. We responded to over 13,000 Welfare and Whereabouts (W/W) requests worldwide from concerned parties regarding U.S. citizens missing, hospitalized, arrested, or to pass emergency messages. 214 fugitives worldwide were returned to the United States through extradition, deportation, and repatriation.

Under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, when foreign nationals are arrested or detained, they must be advised of the option to have their consular officials notified. Consular officials are entitled to access to their nationals in detention, and are entitled to provide consular assistance. The United States has no additional bilateral consular notification agreement with Mexico that would require consular notification of the arrest or detention of a foreign national, regardless of the national's wishes.

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) is the security and law enforcement arm of the Department of State. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security is responsible for providing a safe and secure environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Operating from a global platform in 25 U.S. cities and 159 foreign countries, DS ensures that America can conduct diplomacy safely and securely.

I would be delighted to answer your questions.