



STATEMENT OF

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (ACTING)
MARIKO SILVER**

BEFORE THE

**HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

AND THE

**HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT, INVESTIGATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT**

*Assessing the Mérida Initiative: The Evolution of Drug Cartels and the Threat to Mexico's
Governance, Part 2*

October 4, 2011

Securing our Border and Partnering with Mexico

Chairman Mack and Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Engel and Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittees: On behalf of Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, I want to thank you for your continued support the opportunity to testify today about the Mérida Initiative.

Although the Mérida Initiative began as a foreign assistance program with a focus on equipment purchases and associated training, it has helped facilitate a much broader security partnership. I want to focus first on ways in which DHS has supported the foreign assistance aspects of the Mérida Initiative, and then I will turn my attention to the broader security partnership that the Mérida Initiative has facilitated. Lastly, I will address the work that DHS is doing at our shared border.

The Mérida Initiative

DHS Components have participated in the Department of State (DOS)-led Mérida Initiative since its inception in 2007, and Secretary Napolitano continues to support DHS's active participation in Mérida-funded programs. The DOS has responsibility for policy oversight and for disbursing the appropriated Mérida funds, but DHS and other U.S. interagency partners assist in implementing specific programs—an approach that is consistent with the Department of State's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, which states, "given the national security implications of security sector assistance, State will look first to the Department of Justice, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Homeland Security to implement State programs involving counterterrorism capacity building, foreign law enforcement, or strengthening justice and interior ministries."

Through the Mérida Initiative programs DHS: (1) provides training courses and conferences in DHS areas of expertise, including operational corridor security, intelligence gathering, and investigations; (2) procures on behalf of the Government of Mexico (GOM) using Mérida initiative funds equipment; (3) assigns advisors to conduct training for (GOM) officials, customs officers, federal police, and military, including on the rule of law and respect for human rights; and (4) completes assessments on border security, transnational criminal groups, the flow of weapons, and the use of biometrics. Some examples of the types of equipment, training, and/or assistance DHS has provided during the course of the Mérida Initiative include:

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

- From August 2009 to December 2009, ICE deployed 26 special agents to teach basic criminal investigative methods to approximately 2,400 Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) recruits at the SSP academy, and in November 2009 conducted a two-week undercover training course for 42 SSP officers covering basic concepts of undercover operations, situational awareness, informant management, surveillance, operational security, intelligence gathering, and basic special response team tactics.
- In August 2009, ICE deployed four instructors to teach one-day courses on arms trafficking and cyber crimes to 200 senior SSP officers.

- Conducted training for approximately 40 Office of the Attorney General (PGR) and Mexican Customs officials on state-of-the-art money counters in May 2010, hosted a Bi-National Money Laundering conference and strategy session in Mexico City in June 2010, and obtained funding for 34 Mexican government officials to attend the 2010 BEST conference and training session in August 2010.
- Provided Reid Interview training—a technique which consists of non-accusatory interviews combining both investigative and behavior-provoking questions—to approximately 50 SSP and Center for Investigation and National Security (CISEN) officials throughout in the summer of 2010.
- Conducted a ten-week criminal investigator course for 24 Tax Administration Service (SAT) officials modeled on ICE special agent training from August 2010-October 2010, complimented by a shadowing program for these same SAT officials as a follow-up to the ten-week investigator course.
- Conducted transnational gang training for 61 SSP officers in August 2011.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

- CBP provided training to 50 SSP officers on Non-Intrusive Inspection Equipment in 2010 and to an additional 40 SSP officers in August 2011.
- CBP provided 50 canines and trained 42 handlers and 5 canine instructors. In 2011, CBP provided 20 additional canines for Mexican Customs (MXC), trained 19 handlers, and recertified two instructors.
- In FY 2010, CBP provided training to 57 SSP officers on Hidden Compartments, First Aid Awareness Training, All-Terrain Vehicle Awareness Training and Close Quarters Marksmanship and Room Clearing Training. In FY2011, CBP trained 189 SSP Officers in the same categories.
- In May 2010 and February 2011, CBP provided three-week training courses to two groups of thirteen (13) MXC Academy instructors; follow-on training is planned for October/November 2011 and February/March of 2012.

United States Coast Guard (USCG)

- Utilizing Merida Funds, USCG is procuring four CN235 Maritime Patrol Aircraft, spare parts, and training for Mexico. USCG awarded a contract on October 1, 2010, to EADS North America. Delivery of the first aircraft is planned for November 2011 and the second, third and fourth aircraft are scheduled to be delivered in early February, late February, and March 2012, respectively.

National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD)/United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) Program

- US-VISIT provided Mexico's National Institute for Migration (INAMI) with technical information relating to the standards and specifications for collecting, storing, and matching the biometric data of individuals seeking entry to Mexico. INAMI has used this assistance to begin limited biometric collection in connection with document issuance on its border with Guatemala.

DHS is proud of the support we have provided through the Mérida Initiative. We believe that DHS's unique expertise and skill sets have contributed greatly to further developing the

capacity of our Mexican counterparts. DHS will continue to work with DOS to support this effort.

The Mérida Initiative marked a change in the nature and extent of collaboration with Mexico on security and law enforcement issues. As part of this shift, it led to a significant reframing and reorganization of much of our bilateral engagement with Mexico. The Mérida Initiative is now framed around four pillars: (1) Disrupting Organized Criminal Groups; (2) Institutionalizing Reforms to Sustain Rule of Law and Respect for Human Rights; (3) Creating a 21st Century Border; and (4) Building Strong and Resilient Communities. These four pillars guide much of the overall U.S.-Mexico interaction. DHS is engaged, to various degrees, in all four of the Mérida Initiative Pillars.

During the State Visit of Mexican President Felipe Calderón in May 2010, Presidents Obama and Calderón specifically noted the importance of the work being accomplished under “Building a 21st Century Border.” Presidents Obama’s and Calderón’s joint statement set out a policy vision for our countries, articulating that “the Twenty-First Century Border must ensure the safety and security of residents in communities along both sides of the border and affirmed the mutual interest of Mexico and the United States to prevent entry into our countries of people who pose a threat to the national security of both nations.” The presidents’ border vision also recognizes the importance of facilitating lawful trade and travel—that we need to “develop [the border] and manage it in a holistic fashion and in ways that facilitate the secure, efficient, and rapid flows of goods and people and reduce the costs of doing business between our two countries.”

This policy vision requires us to move beyond seeing border management as simply guarding or policing the jurisdictional line between the United States and Mexico. The border and the interior are inextricably linked. Thus, government efforts at the border and the interior should be complementary, coordinated, deconflicted, and mutually reinforcing, leveraging the good work of all interagency counterparts. Enforcement at the border—between and at ports of entry—is a necessary component of any border security plan, but it should be part of a more comprehensive approach, through which we engage domestically, at the border, and abroad to secure the safety of United States. We need also to leverage opportunities—working with our foreign partners—to intercept and neutralize threats *before* they reach the U.S. border.

During the State Visit, the presidents also issued a Declaration on 21st Century Border Management, and as governments we have taken tremendous steps forward in implementing the presidents’ vision of a safe, secure, and prosperous 21st century border.

- The Declaration established the Executive Steering Committee, whose membership includes senior officials from the U.S. and Mexican governments. In its first meeting on December 15, 2010, it approved a binational Action Plan comprised of specific initiatives and deliverables to be jointly worked by the U.S. and Mexican interagencies, which have either been completed or will be completed by the end of this year.
- A series of targeted binational technical working groups were created and there is regular binational collaboration and coordination on diverse areas of expertise such as: infrastructure planning, development, and improvements; development and expansion of trusted traveler

and shipper programs; and improved private sector outreach for commerce, response and recovery, and community concerns.

Though not without its challenges, the Mérida Initiative has helped move us to a historic level of collaboration, understanding, cooperation, and trust. It not only provides needed assistance to our counterparts in Mexico in order to further mutual objectives, it also provides a policy framework upon which to build, and further institutionalize, this important relationship.

DHS's Efforts to Secure our Border

Many of the investments we are making in the Mérida Initiative and related programs will reap long term rewards. At the same time, we are continuing efforts to secure the border. DHS's border security efforts are based on an overarching goal: to ensure a safe, secure border zone where we expedite legal trade and travel. A border policy that enables expedited flows of legitimate goods and people will free up finite law enforcement resources to focus on goods or people for which we lack information or know are high risk.

The success to date of the *Southwest Border Initiative*, launched in March 2009, illustrates our commitment to collaborating with each other and with our federal, state, local, and tribal partners to achieve this goal. The Initiative has brought unprecedented focus to Southwest border security, and is an effective approach to enforcing immigration laws in the interior of our country.

Thus far:

- The Border Patrol is better staffed today than at any time in its 87-year history, having doubled the number of agents from approximately 10,000 in 2004 to more than 21,000 today.
- Since 2004, the number of “boots on the ground” along the Southwest border has increased by 91% to nearly 18,000 Border Patrol Agents today.
- ICE has deployed a quarter of all its personnel to the Southwest border region – the most ever.
- ICE has doubled the number of personnel assigned to Border Enforcement Security Task Forces.
- ICE has increased the number of intelligence analysts along the Southwest border focused on cartel violence.
- ICE has tripled deployments of Border Liaison Officers.
- CBP has deployed additional dual detection canine teams, which identify firearms and currency, as well as additional narcotics detection canine teams.
- CBP has deployed additional non-intrusive inspection systems, Mobile Surveillance Systems, Remote Video Surveillance Systems, thermal imaging systems, radiation portal monitors, and license plate readers to the Southwest border.
- DHS has deployed thousands of technology assets – including mobile surveillance units, thermal imaging systems, and large- and small-scale non-intrusive inspection equipment – along the Southwest Border and currently has 127 aircraft and four Unmanned Aircraft Systems operating along the southwest border.

Further, with the aid of the \$600 million supplemental requested by the Administration and passed by the Congress in the summer of 2010, we are continuing to add technology, manpower, and infrastructure to the border. These funds are helping us to:

- Add 1,000 new Border Patrol Agents;
- Add 250 new CBP officers at our ports of entry;
- Add 250 new ICE HSI Special Agents focused on transnational crime;
- Improve our tactical communications systems;
- Add two new forward operating bases to improve coordination of border security activities; and
- Add additional CBP unmanned aircraft systems. In fact, we have now instituted Predator Unmanned Aircraft System coverage along the entire Southwest border – from the El Centro Sector in California to the Gulf of Mexico in Texas.

Additionally:

- President Obama authorized the temporary deployment of 1,200 National Guard troops who actively assisted us in our work along the border;
- Based on risk, cross-border traffic and border-related threat intelligence, in the last three years (Fiscal Years 2009, 2010 and 2011) DHS provided a total of \$167 million in Operation Stonegarden funding to Southwest border law enforcement agencies – a record amount—which represents over 80 percent of the Operation Stonegarden, up from 59 percent in 2008.
- In partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Department of Defense, we have achieved initial operational capability for the new Border Intelligence Fusion Section, which stores, integrates, and synthesizes all available Southwest border intelligence from federal, state, local, and tribal partners to create a common intelligence picture to support border enforcement activities for the Southwest border within the El Paso Intelligence Center; and
- We are continuing to work with Mexico to develop an interoperable, cross-border communications network that will improve our ability to coordinate law enforcement and public safety issues.

Taken as a whole, the additional manpower, technology and resources we have added over the past two years represent the most serious and sustained action to secure our border in our nation's history. And it is clear from every key measure that this approach is working:

- Nationwide Border Patrol apprehensions of illegal aliens decreased from nearly 724,000 in FY2008 to approximately 463,000 in FY 2010, a 36 percent reduction, indicating that fewer people are attempting to illegally cross the border.
- Over the past two and a half years, DHS has seized 75 percent more currency, 31 percent more drugs, and 64 percent more weapons along the Southwest border as compared to the last two and a half years during the previous Administration.
- DHS matched the decreases in apprehensions with increases in the seizure of illegal currency, drugs, and weapons along the Southwest border.

- In fiscal years 2009 and 2010, ICE made over 20,617 criminal arrests along the Southwest border, an increase of approximately 14 percent compared to the two previous years. Over 13,229 of these arrests were of drug smugglers and over 2,622 of these arrests were of human smugglers.
- Complementing these efforts, the United States Coast Guard has continued to serve as an effective deterrent force against illegal immigration via our maritime borders, while working to combat the flow of illegal drugs and other contraband into the United States. In fiscal year 2010, the Coast Guard interdicted more than 2,000 undocumented migrants, felons and repeat offenders attempting to illegally enter the United States from the sea. The Coast Guard also seized more than 202,000 pounds of cocaine and 36,700 pounds of marijuana.

Conclusion

DHS recognizes that more places in more countries are interconnected through networks of trade and travel and that the very nature of travel, trade, and commerce today means that vulnerabilities or gaps anywhere across the globe have the ability to affect activity thousands of miles away. Our efforts to secure our borders, then, must include efforts to secure global trade and travel networks, not just the border itself. Our land, air, and sea ports will be most secure when the networks that feed these access entry points are also secure. This multi-layered approach to border security highlights the importance of collaboration and coordination with federal, state, local and tribal governments, as well as international and private sector partners—the Mérida Initiative and the Southwest Border Initiative are programs that facilitate these types of important collaborative efforts.

From the field level to senior departmental leadership, the United States and Mexico are closer now than we have ever been. And the successes we have achieved demonstrate the value of our work together. Strong partnerships with international counterparts are particularly essential when we are dealing with shared problems like the transnational drug trade, human smuggling and trafficking, and border management. We will continue to work with Mexico as a partner to address common issues and challenges along the border. As part of our partnership with Mexico, providing assistance—be it technology, training, or equipment—will and must remain central. But assistance is only one part of a larger, comprehensive approach. By deepening our relationship with Mexico, we will enhance both countries' economic competitiveness, security, and safety. The United States' and Mexico's shared goal is to disrupt, degrade, and ultimately dismantle transnational criminal organizations operating in Mexico and the criminal infrastructure that facilitates their illicit activities—which will benefit both U.S. citizens and the people of Mexico.

While challenges remain, we believe there is a strong foundation of cooperation upon which we will build. The United States and Mexico will continue to work together to secure the legitimate flow of goods and people—segmenting those flows so we can focus law enforcement resources on the people or goods we know are dangerous or about which we know the least.

DHS appreciates the support Congress has shown for our work, and for its support of the United States' relationship with Mexico through the Mérida Initiative. We look forward to

working with Congress as we realize the border vision. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to take any questions you may have.