

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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**EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:15AM**

March 24, 2009

**ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER SECURITY  
POLICY: A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE & COMMITMENT**

**WHO:** Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, Deputy Secretary of State Jim Steinberg and United States Deputy Attorney General David Ogden

**WHEN:** TODAY, Tuesday, March 24, 2009 at 10:15AM

**WHERE:** White House Brady Briefing Room

Today, Department of Homeland Secretary Janet Napolitano, Deputy Secretary of State Jim Steinberg and United States Deputy Attorney General David Ogden will lay out the Administration's comprehensive response to the situation along the border with Mexico. President Obama and his Administration are focused on all aspects of the U.S. relationship with Mexico because it is vital to core U.S. national interests.

The President is concerned by the increased level of violence, particularly in Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana, and the impact that it is having on the communities on both sides of the border. He believes that the United States must continue to monitor the situation and guard against spillover into the United States. And the President is firmly committed to ensuring our borders are secure and we are doing all we can to reduce illegal flows in both direction across the border.

We are taking steps on both sides of the border, working with our Mexican partners, to support the Mexican government's campaign against the violent cartels and to reduce contraband in both directions across the border.

- Under the Merida Initiative, we are investing \$700 million this year to work in collaboration with Mexico on law enforcement and judicial capacity.
- DOJ, DHS, and Treasury are all ramping up personnel and efforts directed at the Southwest border.
- We are renewing our commitment to reduce the demand for illegal drugs here at home.

The President admires President Calderon's courage and determination to confront and dismantle the drug cartels and we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with him in that fight. Mexico undoubtedly faces serious challenges, but it is vigorously confronting them. Mexico's drug-related violence is carried out among the warring cartels and against government forces. To the extent we have seen related violence in the United States it has been cartel-on-cartel.

Because this effort has so many facets, the U.S.-Mexico relationship and our efforts to help address the increase in violence in Mexico are being coordinated at the White House through the NSC and HSC.

**We are investing \$700 million this year in enhancing Mexican law enforcement and judicial capacity and working closely to coordinate our efforts against the cartels.**

- Congress has appropriated (FY08 Supp, FY09 Omnibus) \$700 million to support Mexico's security and institution building efforts under the Merida Initiative. These funds will help to improve law enforcement, crime prevention and strengthen institution building and rule of law. That money will provide:
  - Increased capacity for Mexican border security efforts to help stem illegal flows in both directions across the border;
  - Non-intrusive inspection technology to enhance Mexican interdiction efforts;
  - Training for rule of law and judicial reform efforts;
  - Information technology to enable Mexican prosecutors, law enforcement, and immigration officials to communicate securely;
  - 5 helicopters to increase air mobility for the Mexican Army and Air Force, and a surveillance aircraft for the Mexican Navy.
  - Support and training for implementation of Mexico's new legal system and to strengthen observance of human rights by judicial authorities and police; and
  - Help for Mexican prosecutors' offices to develop an effective witness and victim protection programs.
- DoD has been and is continuing to work with its Mexican counterparts to increase information sharing, interoperability, and training and equipping of counternarcotics forces.
- The Administration is committed to working with Congress to ensure that we fully fund our commitments under the Merida Initiative.
- We are also coordinating our efforts with the Mexican government through regular high-level contact and at a working level with nine Merida Initiative working groups overseeing implementation.

**We are moving to more effectively disrupt illegal flows of weapons and bulk cash to Mexico and to ensure that our border security remains resistant to the flow of drugs and violence into the United States.**

- **DHS** is developing a plan to supplement resources on the southwest border that includes the following elements:
  - **Doubling Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BEST) teams** that incorporate foreign, federal and state/local law enforcement and intelligence officers
  - **Tripling DHS Intelligence Analysts** working along the Southwest Border
  - **Increasing ICE attaché staff in Mexico** in support of Mexican law enforcement efforts
  - **Doubling Violent Criminal Alien teams** located in Southwest Border Field Offices

- **Quadrupling the number of Border Liaison Officers** working with Mexican law enforcement entities
  - **Bolstering Secure Communities Biometric Identification capabilities**
  - **Increasing southbound rail examinations**
  - **Enhancing the use of technology at ports of entry, including backscatter mobile x-ray**
  - **Increasing the number of canine units operating on the SW Border**
  - **Increasing engagement with state and local Southwest border law enforcement**
  - Making up to \$59 million in current Operation Stonegarden funding available to enhance state, local and tribal law enforcement operations and assets along the border
  - Increasing the use of mobile license plate readers for Southbound traffic on the SW Border
- **DHS** is also continuing *Armas Cruzadas* – A DHS/ICE-led bilateral law enforcement and intelligence-sharing operation to thwart export of arms from US into Mexico
- **DOJ** is **confronting the criminal enterprises responsible for violence in Mexico** and trafficking drugs, illegal arms and bulk cash across the Southwest border.
    - The **Mexican Cartel Strategy**, led by the Deputy Attorney General, is
      - Working with federal prosecutor-led task forces that bring together all DOJ and DHS law enforcement components to identify, disrupt and dismantle the Mexican drug cartels through investigation, prosecution, and extradition of their key leaders and facilitators, and seizure and forfeiture of their assets;
      - Increasing focus on investigations and prosecutions of the southbound smuggling of guns and cash that fuel the violence and corruption;
      - Addressing any instances of spill-over violence into the U.S.; and
      - Attacking the cartels in Mexico itself, in partnership with Mexico’s PGR and SSP.
    - **DEA is increasing its efforts:**
      - **Placing 16 new positions in its Southwest border field divisions** (29% of DEA’s domestic agent positions (1,171 agents) are now allocated to the DEA’s Southwest border field divisions.
      - DEA is **forming four additional Mobile Enforcement Teams (METs)** to specifically target Mexican methamphetamine trafficking operations and associated violence, both along the border and in U.S. cities impacted by the cartels.
    - **ATF** is increasing its efforts by:
      - **Relocating 100 personnel to the SW border in the next 45 days**, using dedicated resources from the economic stimulus, to fortify its Project Gunrunner aimed at disrupting arms trafficking between the U.S. and Mexico that has resulted in ATF referring more than 1,500 defendants for prosecution involving more than 12,000 weapons; and

- **Continuing its *eTrace Initiative*** which works with Mexican officials to forensically track weapons used in drug cartel violence. In FY07, Mexico submitted approximately 1,112 guns for tracing that originated in TX, AZ and CA.
- **FBI** is stepping up its efforts along the SW Border by:
  - **Creating a Southwest Intelligence Group (SWIG)**, a clearinghouse of all FBI activities involving Mexico;
  - **Increasing its focus on public corruption, kidnappings, and extortion** relating to SW border issues; and
  - **Continuing its successful implementation of the Central American Fingerprint Exchange (CAFÉ) initiative** -- which was developed to collect, store, and integrate biometric data from El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and the Mexican state of Chiapas into a central database accessible to US law enforcement -- as well as the Transnational Anti-Gang initiative -- which coordinates the sharing of gang intelligence between the U.S. and El Salvador.
- **OJP** – Office of Justice Programs – is **investing \$30 million** in stimulus funding to **assist with state and local law enforcement** to combat narcotics activity along the Southern border and in High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas, and
- **OCDETF** – DOJ’s Organized Drug Enforcement Task Forces Program – is **adding personnel** to its strike force capacity along the **Southwest border**.

**We are making concerted efforts to cut off funding for Mexican drug cartels.**

- *Operation Firewall* – A DHS-led comprehensive law enforcement operation targeting criminal organizations involved in the smuggling of large quantities of US currency.
- Treasury has made targeting the financial networks of Mexican drug trafficking organizations a top priority and is committed to continuing to work with the Mexican government to disrupt drug money laundering operations. This includes continuing to pursue the use of Treasury authorities including the Kingpin Designation Act.
- Treasury and other departments and agencies are collaborating closely with Mexico to analyze cross-border cash flows to try to distinguish legitimate activity from drug money laundering and other illicit transactions, as well as to support financial aspects of investigations by U.S. and Mexican law enforcement.
- Treasury continues to provide the Mexican government with training on how to conduct financial analysis and financial investigations of drug cartels activities, examination of financial institutions and certain Merida-supported IT investments.

**We are renewing our commitment to reduce the demand for illegal drugs here at home.**

- Approximately \$5 billion have been committed in the previous year for initiatives to reduce illicit drug use within our borders.
- The Obama Administration is focusing on integrating substance abuse services into national healthcare systems with early screening, diagnosis and intervention as regular preventative medicine to reach the millions of patients who need treatment, and as a means to prevent millions more from becoming dependent.
- Expanding treatment capacity of drug courts in the United States is a priority of the Obama Administration. The FY09 Omnibus includes \$63.9 million for drug courts that bring judicial, law enforcement, and treatment communities, as well as other social and public services together with the goal of breaking a non-violent offender's drug addiction.

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