



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS  
AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS

Prepared Statement of:

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Hearing Before the:

**United States Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control**  
**“Drug Trafficking Across the Southwest Border and Oversight of U.S.  
Counterdrug Assistance to Mexico”**

*Tuesday, November 17, 2015*

Chairman Grassley, Co-Chairman Feinstein, and distinguished Members of the Caucus: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss drug trafficking along the Southwest border, and the effectiveness of U.S. counternarcotics assistance to Mexico.

The flow of illicit narcotics across our shared borders fuels violence, instability, and threatens the security of both our countries, and we have a shared responsibility to address these common challenges. Recognizing this, the United States forged a comprehensive security partnership with Mexico in 2007, the Merida Initiative, to strengthen the capacity of Mexico's justice sector to counter organized crime, strengthen the rule of law, and protect our shared border from threats, including the trafficking of drugs.

The Merida Initiative continues to be guided by four pillars: disrupt the capacity of organized crime to operate; institutionalize the capacity to sustain the rule of law; create a 21<sup>st</sup> century border; and build strong, resilient communities. For the past eight years, under the framework of the Merida Initiative, we have worked closely with the Government of Mexico, first under President Calderon and now in partnership with President Pena Nieto, to advance our shared security objectives. To date, the U.S. government has delivered to Mexico more than \$1.4 billion worth of capacity building assistance, including training and equipment, which complements the significant resources the Government of Mexico has dedicated to our shared security goals.

Today we have more than \$600 million in bilaterally agreed upon projects with the Pena Nieto administration: this supports the Merida Initiative and underpins the basis of our security cooperation with Mexico. These projects fall into three priority areas: professionalizing and building the capacity of Mexican law enforcement agencies; supporting the Government of Mexico's efforts to strengthen border management and security; and helping advance reforms across Mexico's justice sector.

#### Reforming the Justice Sector and Professionalizing Law Enforcement

Building on the support we provide that strengthens the capacity of Mexico's police at the federal level, INL is working to strengthen policing capacity at state and municipal levels in Mexico. This training is designed in large measure to help prepare police for their responsibilities under the oral accusatory system, which Mexico is transitioning to now both in both federal and state courts.

This change is of great significance, and INL is playing an important supporting role. Mexico currently has had an inquisitorial system, and in that system the court itself is involved in investigating the facts of a case. In an adversarial system the court acts as an impartial actor between the prosecution and defense.

As a result of INL's work, Mexican law enforcement will be better prepared under the new system to present evidence, preserve crime scenes, and become more effective expert witnesses during trials. INL will continue to build on the progress that some Mexican state governments have already made in this regard so that they can be models for other states that are further behind in this transition.

INL is also assisting, in conjunction with the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (DOJ/ICITAP), in Mexico's desire to increase police professionalization. This is being accomplished by: enhancing the effectiveness of their law enforcement institutions; helping them adopt and implement improved standards for how police are hired, fired, promoted, assigned, and trained; and assisting them in providing career paths and incentives for police that deter misconduct and corruption.

These INL-supported programs include a full range of professionalization activities such as: the development of enforceable standards; continuing and leadership education programs; academy accreditation; recruitment initiatives; law enforcement vetting programs; and the creation of effective internal affairs offices. As a result, we expect there will be greater observance of civil and human rights, and growing trust in these intuitions by the people of Mexico. This is vital to any effort to stem drug trafficking, reduce the capabilities and influence of drug cartels, and secure our border with Mexico.

In furtherance of justice sector reform, INL is also supporting other criminal justice sector professionals as they transition to Mexico's new criminal justice system. INL programs, together with DOJ's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT), are building the skills of prosecutors, investigators, and experts. INL is enhancing the technical capacity of courtrooms throughout the country to handle oral trials, and law school students are now being trained in the skills needed to be successful in this new environment. In addition, INL works with the criminal investigation arm of Mexico's Attorney General Office to increase their capacity to pursue complex investigations.

## Strengthening Border Management and Security

Strengthening border security capacity on both Mexico's northern and southern borders is a significant bilateral priority. Our governments have committed to further increasing Mexico's ability to interdict illicit narcotics, arms, and money, as well as strengthen control of porous border areas, with INL providing more than \$125 million in inspection equipment and about 340 canine teams deployed at ports of entry and internal checkpoints throughout the country. In 2014, the 172 canines donated to Mexico's Federal Police made 365 seizures, including 146 kilograms of cocaine; 4,000 kilograms of marijuana; 41 kilograms of crystal meth; 15 weapons; and over \$110,000. In addition, they detected four clandestine graves and 12 corpses, and in October 2014 two Mexican Federal Police canine teams detected and interdicted three kilograms of heroin in the Guadalajara airport.

INL also regularly uses the "train-the-trainer" method to multiply the impact of our assistance. This technique is used to train individuals not only new skills, but then teaches them how to train others. Through this method thousands of Mexican law enforcement professionals, including police, military, and customs officials have received specialized training that addresses and advances border security priorities.

Strengthening Mexico's capacity to control its southern border with Belize and Guatemala directly impacts the security of our own southern border. On Mexico's southern border, in partnership with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), INL is mentoring and training Mexican immigration officials to improve checkpoint operations. INL is also working to enhance communications among Mexican law enforcement and immigration officials, increasing both their interoperability and capacity to share information and adapt to evolving criminal tactics. In the northern border region, INL has provided equipment, training, and technical assistance to improve communications between the Mexican Federal Police and CBP.

### New Challenges - Heroin

Mexico is both a drug producing and transiting country, and Mexican drug cartels have in recent years increasingly turned to heroin trafficking. Under Merida, we are continuing to cooperate closely with Mexico to combat the threat posed by heroin production and trafficking, a scourge affecting so many of our communities. INL is building Mexico's heroin interdiction capabilities including training, inspection equipment, and canines. We are also working with the U.S.

Drug Enforcement Administration to provide training to augment Mexico's ability to identify, investigate, and interdict heroin labs, and to better prepare them to dismantle them.

We will continue to support efforts to improve information sharing, work together to better assess heroin cultivation in Mexico, and with all of our interagency partners, we will continue our high-level focus on exploring other avenues to enhance our bilateral cooperation when it comes to heroin. At the high level Security Cooperation Group recently held in Mexico City, although many aspects of our security cooperation were discussed, heroin was one of the group's priorities. We agreed to continue working in partnership on a bilateral plan for combating the cultivation, production and trafficking of heroin in Mexico.

### Conclusion

Building strong and able justice sector institutions in Mexico capable of dismantling organized criminal enterprises, and the violence and corruption they are responsible for, and bringing about the justice and security Mexico's citizen's deserve is a difficult, long-term challenge. It has and it will take years of dedicated and sustained work across numerous institutions and sectors; the continued political will to affect change; and the resources and stamina to see it through. INL's work in Mexico under the Merida Initiative has achieved far-reaching, positive results, and I am confident that with your support our effective collaboration with Mexico and across the region will continue.