

ASSESSING U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO MEXICO

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY, AND TRADE OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

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CONTENTS

	Page
WITNESSES	
Rodriguez, Mr. Hugo, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. Department of State	7
Glenn, Mr. Richard, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State	13
Feinstein, Ms. Barbara, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, United States Agency for International Development	23
APPENDIX	
Hearing Notice	43
Hearing Minutes	45
Hearing Attendance	46
OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SIRES	
Opening statement submitted from Chairman Sires	47
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD	
Responses to questions submitted for the record from Chairman Sires	50
Responses to questions submitted for the record from Representative Castro ..	86

ASSESSING U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO MEXICO

Thursday, February 13, 2020

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
CIVILIAN SECURITY AND TRADE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Albio Sires (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SIREs. We are going to get started. The ranking member is on his way. The reason for the early hearing is we have votes and people go back to the districts today. So I wanted to make sure I got this hearing in. So I am going to begin. Other members will be walking in as the hearing is progressing.

Well, this hearing will come to order. This hearing, entitled “Assessing U.S. Security Assistance to Mexico,” will focus on evaluating the extent to which U.S. assistance under the Mérida Initiative has been effective in strengthening Mexico’s justice sector institutions, combating crime, and protecting human rights.

Without objection, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules. I will now make an opening statement and then turn it over to the ranking member for his opening statement.

Before I open with my statement, I want to thank everybody that is here. It is early, it is miserable outside, and I certainly want to thank the witnesses for being here.

Good morning, everyone, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

In reading the news over the last few weeks, the shocking headlines from Mexico have been impossible to escape. Last week I saw that kids as young as 6 years old are arming themselves to defend their families in a rural part of the Guerrero State. As cartels have sought to assert control over the area, the murder rate has doubled and the community has nearly shut down. Kids, who should be in school learning math and science, are instead learning how to fire shotguns and ambush armored vehicles.

As a former teacher, I believe that nothing is more sacred than the investment we make in our children’s future. It broke my heart to think that these kids are being deprived of their right to learn and grow free from violence and fear.

And we know that what is happening in Guerrero is just a microcosm of the broader trends we are seeing across Mexico. Mexico’s homicide rate has reached its highest level in decades. Targeted at-

tacks against journalists, human rights defenders, and local public officials have continued at rates higher than almost anywhere in the world.

A recent report from the International Federation For Journalists found that Mexico is the deadliest country in the world for journalists. Of the 49 journalist killings it documented in 2019, ten were in Mexico. Most journalist murders, like most homicides in Mexico, are never solved.

I have long advocated for robust U.S. assistance to help Mexico strengthen its democratic institutions, combat corruption, defend human rights, and improve security. I believe that Mexico and the United States have a shared responsibility to reduce violent crime and improve quality of life for those living on both sides of our border.

The United States must enact stricter gun laws, dedicate more resources to combating money laundering by the cartels, and increase investment in programs to reduce domestic demand for illegal drugs.

But we also expect a sincere commitment on the Mexican side to reducing this violence. I appreciate the efforts that Mexico's security forces are making, but they are being outgunned by these brazen and well-resourced cartels.

A Mexican civil society organization called Common Cause released a report this week showing that 953 police officers have been murdered in Mexico in just the past 2 years. I admire those courageous individuals who are putting their lives on the line, but it is clear that substantial political commitment is needed to address the underlying problem of impunity and corruption which are perpetuating the violence in Mexico.

Now is the time for the U.S. Government to look critically at our assistance programs to determine what is working and what is not. I am eager to hear from the State Department and USAID about our strategy and how Congress can measure tangible progress under the Mérida Initiative. I sincerely hope that the Trump Administration is prioritizing security in our engagement with Mexico rather than pressuring Mexico to use the National Guard to prevent desperate people from migrating.

I know that many of my colleagues share my frustration that we have not made more progress under the Mérida Initiative. I hope that this hearing will help us develop a clearer sense of what next steps we should take.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and with the executive branch on a bipartisan basis to explore solutions to these difficult challenges.

Thank you.

And I now turn it over to Ranking Member Rooney for his opening statement.

Mr. ROONEY. Thank you, Chairman Sires, for holding a second hearing to followup on this very important and timely issue regarding the security situation in Mexico.

The relationship with Mexico is among the most strategically important relationships for the United States. We are linked by geographic proximity, as well as economic, historical, and cultural ties, and the events occurring in Mexico directly impact our country.

Recent years have brought widespread violence, criminality, and a deteriorating security condition in Mexico, which has been largely driven by the drug cartels. You cannot ignore the fact that the paper today had the article about the children in Guerrero.

So cooperation is a critical component of our relationship with Mexico, and it is important that we review security conditions there and our assistance programs to identify what has been most effective and what has been ineffective in assisting the country to address its security challenges.

I am concerned that recent events in Mexico have resulted in the deaths of nine U.S. citizens, including three children, at the hands of the Mexican drug cartels. These events reflect the continued security challenges which Mexico faces and the need for both the United States and Mexico to take steps together to address them. Through intimidation, extortion, corruption, and pervasive violence, the Mexican people are terrorized daily.

The Lopez Obrador administration is taking steps to have a newly created Mexican National Guard take the lead on security. This force has also supported some immigration enforcement. Much work remains to properly train and equip them, and questions remain about other steps the Mexican Government can take to address these security challenges.

Despite the efforts of previous Mexican administrations to combat the cartels and address security, 2019 saw a 30 percent increase in Mexico's homicide rate, much of which driven by these drug-related crimes. Further, the cartels have expanded their drug trade to supply the surge in U.S. demand for methamphetamine, heroin, and synthetic opioids. I suggest anyone interested in this topic read the book "Dreamland" about the Nayarit drug gangs.

We must also acknowledge the flow of illegal weapons from the United States to Mexico, especially assault weapons and high powered weapons, which contribute materially to the violence, along with the systemic corruption, impunity, and lack of rule of law.

Since 2007 under the Mérida Initiative, the United States has provided roughly \$3 billion in security assistance to Mexico. Mexico, of course, has also contributed much more.

From 2014 to 2018, U.S. security assistance has focused on the rule of law, anticorruption, and human rights in Mexico. The Trump Administration has added focus on attacking the financing of the cartels and combating the increased trade in opioids and synthetic drugs, which I think is a positive step.

Yet the United States and Mexico must continue to work together to improve existing security infrastructure and ensure that regional security priorities are addressed. It is also critical that the Mexican Government communicate to us what they are doing to address the problem and present a comprehensive security strategy that U.S. assistance can support.

For its part, the United States should explore ways to modernize the security assistance provided under Mérida, and we need continued intelligence sharing, capacity building, and the provision of technology and equipment. We should also review our coordination on the border about security where we can support Mexico's efforts to carry out inspections and screenings.

The U.S.-Mexico security relationship has come a long way, but we must continue to build our relationship on a foundation of mutual trust and cooperation. This is a joint responsibility and serves the interests of both countries to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, our career foreign service officers, for being here today, and I look forward to hearing the testimony.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you. Thank you very much, Ranking Member Rooney.

I will now introduce Mr. Hugo Rodriguez, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. Mr. Rodriguez, is a career foreign service officer who most recently served as deputy chief of mission in Paraguay. He previously served as the consul general at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City and later as the mission's acting minister counselor for consular affairs.

Mr. Rodriguez, we welcome you to the hearing.

We will then hear from Mr. Richard Glenn, deputy assistant secretary of State in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. In his current role, Mr. Glenn oversees the Office of Anti-Crime Programs and Western Hemisphere Programs. He began his work with the INL in 2011 as deputy director of the Mérida Initiative in Mexico City and has also served in Ecuador and Argentina.

Mr. Glenn, thank you for joining us today. Welcome.

Finally, we will hear from Ms. Barbara Feinstein, Deputy Assistant Administrator in USAID's Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. Ms. Feinstein oversees USAID programs in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. A career member of the Senior Executive Service, she was previously Deputy Assistant Administrator for Legislative and Public Affairs and served as the Deputy Chief of Staff to Administrator Rajiv Shah and Chief of Staff to Acting Administrator Alonzo Fulgham.

Ms. Feinstein, thank you for joining us today.

I ask that the witnesses please limit your testimony to 5 minutes, and, without objection, your prepared statements will be made as part of the record.

Mr. Rodriguez, we recognize you first for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MR. HUGO RODRIGUEZ, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rooney, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss U.S. bilateral security cooperation with Mexico. I must also thank the U.S. Congress, and this committee in particular, for its consistent, bipartisan, strong support of the U.S.-Mexico relationship in general and the Mérida Initiative in particular.

While our bilateral agenda in Mexico covers a wide array of issues, including trade and commercial relationships, illegal immigration, educational exchanges, and efforts to create a more competitive partnership in a globalized world, security cooperation has always been the central element of that agenda.

The United States and Mexico are essential partners in confronting the transnational criminal organizations operating on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. These TCOs and their subsidiaries have engaged in unprecedented levels of violence and pose a fundamental challenge to Mexico and its people. They are also a major threat to the United States.

We must take a comprehensive approach to attack these TCOs, including the targeting of their business model, from production and trafficking of illicit drugs to their illicit finances and revenue. This is critical for the safety of all of our citizens.

The necessity of our cooperation has been made even clearer over the past few months with the horrific murders of nine American citizens on November 4, 2019, in Bavispe, Sonora, and the failed operation to arrest Ovidio Guzman in Culiacan in October 2019. These events are in addition to the many lives of Mexican security forces and citizens that continue to be lost in the fight against TCOs.

The Trump administration is committed to working with Mexico to combat these organizations. In just the last month, Attorney General Barr, Director of the National Drug Control Policy Office Carroll, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Deputy Commissioner Perez, and Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Kozak have all separately visited Mexico to discuss our joint efforts and the ways we can increase our collaboration to more effectively confront this threat.

Transnational criminal organizations traffic Mexican heroin, methamphetamine, fentanyl, and Colombian cocaine to the United States. To address these and related threats, the United States and Mexico partner through the Mérida Initiative to support Mexico's efforts to improve security, reduce drug production and trafficking, enhanced criminal prosecutions and the rule of law, build public confidence in the justice sector, improve border security, reduce irregular migration flow, and promote greater respect for human rights.

U.S.-Mexico security cooperation has been expanding and evolving since the Mérida Initiative was launched in 2008 and is based on the recognition and commitment that our countries share responsibility for combating transnational criminal networks and protecting our citizens from the crime, corruption, and violence they generate. The Mérida Initiative is founded on mutual respect and reflects our understanding of the tremendous benefits derived from collaboration.

U.S. assistance has provided crucial support to the Mexican Government in its efforts to build the capacity of its rule of law institutions while enhancing cooperation between the U.S. and Mexican Governments through the provision of equipment, technical assistance, and training. The Mérida Initiative also enables greater cooperation between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judges as they share best practices and expand their shared capacity to track criminals, drugs, arms, and money.

President Lopez Obrador has made the reduction of violence the key goal of his security policy and has pledged to fight corruption in Mexico. To advance efforts to combat our shared security challenges, the United States and Mexico have developed a new bilat-

eral structure, the Mexico City-based High-Level Security Working Group.

Under the umbrella of the HLSWG, we have jointly developed bilateral working groups to tackle issues of the highest importance. These working groups focus on drug policy, migration, illicit finance, cybersecurity, armed forces, emergency response, justice sector, and arms trafficking.

Through these groups, we are identifying priorities and specific actions we can take together to make progress in each area. For example, we are looking at ways we can increase joint efforts to combat synthetic drugs and illicit drug production, increase drug interdictions and TCO prosecutions, and stem illicit finances. We are also working to reduce the number of illicit firearms, weapons, and the quantity of ammunitions crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

The continued threat posed by transnational criminal organizations to both Mexico and the United States requires our continual support. Bilateral cooperation must continue, and the Mérida Initiative provides a comprehensive, flexible framework through which our partnership can move forward to the benefit of both Americans and Mexicans.

Let me turn the microphone over to my colleagues, and then I will be happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rodriguez follows:]

Statement of
Hugo Rodriguez
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for
Western Hemisphere Affairs

Before the
**House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere,
Civilian Security, and Trade**

“Assessing U.S. Security Assistance to Mexico”

February 13, 2020

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Rooney, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee; thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss U.S. bilateral security cooperation with Mexico. I must also thank the U.S. Congress, and this committee in particular, for its consistent, bipartisan, strong support of the U.S. – Mexico relationship in general, and the Merida Initiative in particular.

While our bilateral agenda with Mexico covers a wide array of issues including trade and commercial relationships, illegal immigration, educational exchanges, and efforts to create a more competitive partnership in a globalized world; security cooperation has always been the central element of the agenda.

The United States and Mexico are essential partners in confronting transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) operating on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. These TCOs and their subsidiaries have engaged in unprecedented levels of violent and criminal activities and pose a fundamental challenge to Mexico and its people. They are also a major threat to the United States. Dismantling these groups is, therefore, of vital importance to the national security of both our countries. We must take a comprehensive approach to dismantle these TCOs, including the targeting of their business model; from production and trafficking of illicit drugs to their illicit finances and revenue. This is critical for the safety of all our citizens.

The necessity of our cooperation has been made even clearer over the past few months with the horrific murders of nine American citizens on November 4, 2019, in Bavispe, Sonora and the failed operation to arrest Ovidio Guzman, and the accompanying violence, in Culiacan in October 2019. These events are in addition

to the many lives of Mexican security forces and citizens that continue to be lost in the fight against TCOs. The Trump Administration is committed to working with Mexico to combat these organizations. In just the last month, Attorney General Barr, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Carroll, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Deputy Commissioner Perez, and Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Kozak have all separately visited Mexico to discuss our joint efforts and ways we can increase our collaboration to more effectively confront this threat.

Merida Initiative

Transnational criminal organizations traffic Mexican heroin, methamphetamine, fentanyl (mostly from China), and Colombian cocaine to the United States. To address these and related threats, the United States and Mexico partner through the Merida Initiative to support Mexico's efforts to improve security, reduce drug production and trafficking, enhance criminal prosecutions and rule of law, build public confidence in the justice sector, improve border security and reduce irregular migration flow, and promote greater respect for human rights.

U.S. – Mexico security cooperation has been expanding and evolving since the Merida Initiative was launched in 2008, based on the recognition and commitment that our countries share responsibility for combating transnational criminal networks and protecting our citizens from the crime, corruption, and violence they generate. The Merida Initiative is founded on mutual respect, and it reflects our understanding of the tremendous benefits derived from this collaboration. We have forged strong partnerships to improve civilian security in affected areas to fight drug trafficking, organized crime, corruption, illicit arms trafficking, money laundering, and demand for drugs on both sides of the border.

U.S. assistance has provided crucial support to the Mexican government in its efforts to build the capacity of its rule of law institutions and advance justice sector reforms, while enhancing the bilateral relationship and the extent of cooperation between the U.S. and Mexican governments through provisions of equipment, technical assistance, and training. While the Merida Initiative does not fund law enforcement operations, it does build capacity. This capacity building helps Mexico produce skilled analysts, investigators, prosecutors, police and all the other public servants necessary to implement and strengthen the rule of law in Mexico. The Merida Initiative also enables greater cooperation between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and judges as they share best practices and expand bilateral cooperation in tracking criminals, drugs, arms, and money. A variety of U.S. federal agencies – including the Department of State, the United

States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice – are working with the Mexican government to implement Merida projects.

Cooperative efforts are based on the premise that to combat transnational criminal organizations we need to attack their business model and networks. Therefore, current priorities include reducing drug production, inhibiting cross-border movement of drugs, cash, and weapons, and denying illicit revenue. Continued support for Mexico's judicial reform invests in the criminal justice system and human rights, and contributes to stronger communities that can resist TCO and subsidiary presence and recruitment.

U.S. programming builds Mexico's capacity to coordinate with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations along our shared border and to identify, target, and interdict drugs and other illicit goods hidden within the otherwise licit cross-border trade and travel flows. Our assistance also helps Mexico combat illegal immigration, secure land, air, and sea ports of entry, and exchange biometric information.

Bolstering Mexico's criminal justice system is an essential component of combating transnational criminal organizations. Merida Initiative programs train investigators, prosecutors, and judges to advance effective prosecutions. From forensics analysts to prison officials, Merida programs support Mexican federal and state agencies in bringing institutions and personnel up to international professional standards, which increases transparency while reducing opportunities for corruption.

Training and technology investments supporting Mexico's transition from an inquisitorial to an accusatorial, oral trial justice system have paid dividends. A 2016 study by the World Justice Project reported a 46 percentage point increase in judges' appearance in court, a 57 percentage point increase in hearings recorded, a 25 percent decrease in time to resolve homicide cases, and a notable decrease in reported coerced confessions and use of torture in detention.

We also understand the importance of measuring the impact of our Merida assistance. The Department and USAID continue to advance monitoring and evaluation efforts to inform future projects and ensure a U.S. return on investment.

Way Forward

President Lopez Obrador has made the reduction of violence the key goal of his security policy and has pledged to fight corruption in Mexico. A prominent feature of the Lopez Obrador security strategy has been the creation of a National Guard focused on building closer connections with communities and reducing violence. To advance efforts to combat our shared security challenges, the United States and Mexico are undertaking a number of activities, including the development of the Mexico City-based *High-Level Security Working Group (HLSWG)*. The HLSWG is chaired by U.S. Ambassador Landau and Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations Ebrard and Secretary of Security and Citizen Protection Durazo. Under the umbrella of the HLSWG, we have jointly developed several bilateral working groups to tackle issues of the highest importance. These working groups focus on drug policy, migration, illicit finance, cyber security, armed forces, emergency response, justice sector, and arms trafficking. Through these groups, we are identifying priorities and specific actions we can take together to make progress in each area. For example, we are looking at ways we can increase joint efforts to combat synthetic drugs and illicit drug production; increased drug interdiction and TCO prosecutions; and stem illicit finances. We are also working to reduce the amount of illicit firearms, weapons parts, and ammunition crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. The United States Government also continues to address this issue through traditional, law enforcement-to-law enforcement collaboration and other bilateral coordination bodies such as the 21st Century Border process. The United States is also exploring how to improve our own domestic activities through the interagency U.S. Council on Transnational Organized Crime, which is part of implementing Executive Order (EO) 13773, *Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking*.

The continued threat posed by transnational criminal organizations to both Mexico and the United States requires our continued support. Bilateral cooperation must continue, and the Merida Initiative provides a comprehensive, flexible framework through which our partnership can move forward to the benefit of both Americans and Mexicans. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. SIREs. Mr. Glenn, we will now hear from your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MR. RICHARD GLENN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. GLENN. Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our efforts with Mexico.

The mission of the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs is to keep Americans safe by countering crime, illegal drugs, and instability abroad. We have provided assistance for the last 12 years under the Mérida Initiative to build Mexican interdiction, law enforcement, and prosecutorial capacity.

Our assistance has two principal purposes: First, to stop illicit drugs before they reach the United States; and second, to improve Mexican capacity to dismantle each component of transnational criminal organizations' business model, from drug production to trafficking to their illicit proceeds, and hold them accountable for their crimes.

Despite the news that U.S. drug overdoses are finally on the decline for the first time in 20 years, more than 67,000 Americans died in 2018 overdosing on drugs, many of which come from Mexico. Mexico is the source of most heroin and methamphetamine consumed in the United States and is a major transit zone for cocaine and synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

Meanwhile, in Mexico, Mexicans face their own epidemic, an epidemic of violence, with the homicide rate hitting a record high of 29 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2019. Impunity is high, public trust in police is low, and organized crime erodes government institutions through corruption.

Meanwhile, the Mexican Government continues to consolidate its transition to the accusatorial justice system, with some progress but major growing pains.

In the face of these challenges, the Mérida Initiative has better positioned U.S.-Mexico security cooperation to confront the evolving drug threat, tackle corruption and security, and build trust between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement. INL has learned, and we have adapted our programs to meet the changing environment, tackle priority issues for changing U.S. and Mexican administrations, and prioritize sustainability and measurable impact.

Where there is sustained Mexican political will, we have seen our investments bear fruit. One example, the more than 400 K-9s donated since 2011 have helped to interdict over 23 tons of narcotics. It includes fentanyl, it includes more than 56,000 guns, and millions of dollars in smuggled cash.

We have since expanded the K-9 program to State police and corrections partners, and our next step is working closely with Mexico to develop a strategic plan for the deployment of K-9s to targeted locations to increase seizures and save more lives.

We have learned that no amount of equipment or training can reduce impunity absent sustainable institutional improvements. This requires continued political will, resources, and urgency to

tackle today's immediate problems while laying the foundation for an enduring culture of lawfulness and accountability.

We are under no illusion that we have substantively reduced the number of drugs entering the United States or the level of violence in Mexico. We have a long road ahead. Yet U.S. investments, when fully embraced and leveraged by Mexico, yield improvements that can add up over time. We seek opportunities to make the greatest impact for our investment while mitigating risk and ensuring sustainability.

On the campaign trail and throughout his first year in office, Mexican President Lopez Obrador has repeatedly vowed to take aim at transnational criminal organizations by combating illicit finance, corruption, and arms trafficking. With Mexico's explicit commitment, we have an opportunity to more effectively tackle our shared threat.

Mexican political will must be backed by action and resources, and those will only make a measurable difference if they are deployed in a strategic manner with identified targets. We welcome the recent actions by the Government of Mexico in the wake of the visit by Attorney General Barr and look to build on this momentum.

INL is well-positioned to bolster Mexican capacity to tackle our shared threats, but our assistance is only effective when tailored to complement Mexico's own strategic efforts.

INL continues our important work in Mexico at a difficult time that calls for urgency. I will be the first to acknowledge the current statistics make it hard to argue we are making headway. Nonetheless, these sobering numbers are exactly why we must continue to work closely with Mexico.

We engage at every level to ensure our programs are matched with committed partners in the Mexican Government and we encourage Mexico to take a strategic approach to our shared challenges, and we will continue to do so, for the enduring and significant change we seek requires nothing less.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Glenn follows:]

Statement of
Richard H. Glenn
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for
International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Before the
**House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere,
Civilian Security, and Trade**

“Assessing U.S. Security Assistance to Mexico”

February 13, 2020

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, distinguished members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss U.S.-Mexico security cooperation. Today’s hearing comes at a time of crisis for both Mexico and the United States; U.S. drug overdoses and deaths remain alarmingly high, while Mexico suffers record violence. The U.S.-Mexico security partnership remains essential in the face of shared threats posed by transnational criminal organizations.

Over the last 12 years, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have provided foreign assistance to Mexico under the Merida Initiative to build interdiction, law enforcement, and prosecutorial capacity in the Mexican government to reduce the trafficking of drugs to the United States, and to hold members of transnational criminal organizations accountable for their crimes. U.S. assistance has contributed to genuine improvements in Mexican capacity, and INL continues to adapt programs to address U.S. national security priorities, Mexico’s own priorities, and the shifting threat environment. Dismantling transnational criminal organizations requires sustained political will, resources, and urgency to develop solutions that adequately address today’s problems while laying a foundation for long-term development, economic opportunity, and a culture of lawfulness. We continue to press for the essential ingredients that any effective security cooperation needs to deliver for the American people, for Mexico, and for our shared interest in a stable and prosperous Western Hemisphere. This calls for deepening our partnership and measuring progress against clear objectives. We have seen clear and positive steps regarding law enforcement cooperation in response to Attorney General Barr’s recent visits to Mexico. Building on that

momentum, with Mexico's explicit commitment and clear recognition of shared strategic priorities, we have an opportunity to more effectively tackle our shared threat. American and Mexican lives depend on our efforts; we cannot afford to lose focus.

The Drug Crisis

Today's drug problem is serious, but tomorrow's has the potential to be even worse. Drugs originating from and transiting through Mexico have a profound and deadly effect on the United States. Despite the good news that U.S. drug overdoses are finally on the decline for the first time in 20 years, dropping four percent between 2017 and 2018, more than 67,000 Americans died in 2018 from a drug overdose. Many of those overdoses are caused by cocaine and heroin, but we are also seeing a resurgence of methamphetamine use, as well as rising use of synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Nearly 70 percent of fatal drug overdoses in the United States in 2017 involved opioids, and of those, more than half involved synthetic opioids.¹ Synthetic drugs like fentanyl pose a particularly deadly threat; they are extremely potent and they are easy and profitable to make, traffic, and sell in U.S. communities. Criminals can produce these drugs anywhere, at a lower cost than ever before, and ship them through the mail to anyone with an internet connection and a mailing address. Worse still, criminal chemists are developing new substances at a rate faster than domestic action and international drug control frameworks can respond. Drug traffickers often mix these synthetics with heroin, cocaine, and other drugs before trafficking them across the U.S. border, which increases the drugs' profitability even as it renders them more deadly. Mexico is the source country for most heroin and methamphetamine consumed in the United States, and remains a major transit zone for cocaine from South America destined for the United States.² We are also seeing concerning signs of fentanyl production in Mexico and reports of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl.

This drug crisis is not limited to the United States; countries around the world note the rising use of synthetics and opioids, including in Mexico. Mexico's efforts to be more strategic about how it combats substance use disorders are welcome, particularly as anecdotal evidence suggest some Mexican states are seeing increases in the use of methamphetamine and cases of fentanyl use have been detected in Mexico City, Tijuana, and elsewhere in the country. In November, Mexico inaugurated a national chapter of the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP), which is a global organization that INL helped create

¹ [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

² [2018 National Drug Threat Assessment](#). U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration.

over the past five years aimed at integrating prevention, treatment, and recovery professionals with researchers to promote best practices in the field. This chapter, in addition to promoting evidence-based prevention and treatment services to deter and treat drug use disorders, will also integrate with the criminal justice system to support alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders. We look forward to Mexico advancing efforts to reduce poppy cultivation and illicit drug production, and to working together to interdict drugs to prevent use in Mexico and the United States.

Mexico Governance

Behind the drug crisis, Mexico faces an epidemic of violence, with a record high homicide rate of 29 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2019. In January, the Mexican government announced that its estimate of disappeared persons since 2006 now surpasses 60,000, more than 50 percent higher than its previous estimate. Transnational criminal organizations are major contributors to Mexican crime and violence – with estimates suggesting that anywhere between 20 and 67 percent of all homicides in Mexico are attributed to organized crime.³ In recent months, two incidents laid bare Mexico’s crisis. In October 2019, Mexican forces released Ovidio Guzman, the son of Sinaloa Cartel leader “El Chapo” Guzman, after government security forces were surprised by a large, heavily armed, violent cartel response in a highly publicized city-wide shootout in Culiacan, Sinaloa. And in November 2019, nine U.S. citizens, all women and children, were killed by cartel members in Chihuahua; this investigation is still ongoing.

In addition to the violence epidemic, impunity is high, public trust in police is low, and organized crime erodes government institutions through violence and corruption. According to one Mexican organization, four out of five homicide cases go unsolved, and 90 percent of all crimes go unpunished.⁴ Public confidence in Mexican law enforcement and the justice sector remains dismally low. In 2018, 20 former state governors were under investigation or in jail. In December 2019, former Secretary of Public Security Genaro Garcia Luna was arrested in Texas on charges of having taken multi-million-dollar bribes from the Sinaloa Cartel. Government institutions remain weak and often underfunded, while personnel lack career standards and training. Meanwhile, the Mexican government continues to consolidate its transition to the accusatorial justice system with notable signs of progress. Nevertheless, there are significant growing pains, and the full transition

³ *Organized Crime and Violence in Mexico, April 2019*. Justice in Mexico, Department of Political Science & International Relations, University of San Diego.

⁴ *Impunidad en homicidio doloso en Mexico: Reporte 2019*. Impunidad Cero.

process is one that development experts suggest takes an average of 40 years to complete.

The Merida Initiative, 2008-Present

In the face of these challenges, the Merida Initiative has better positioned U.S.-Mexico security cooperation over the last 12 years to confront the evolving drug threat, tackle corruption and insecurity, and build trust between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement. In support of President Trump's February 2017 Executive Order on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking, and the December 2017 National Security Strategy, the Department and USAID focus our cooperation on building the capacity of the Mexican criminal justice system to attack each component of transnational criminal organizations' business model – from drug production to trafficking to illicit proceeds – and hold them accountable to Mexican law. INL has learned and adapted its programs to meet the evolving environment; tackle priority issues for changing U.S. and Mexican administrations; and prioritize sustainability, Mexican ownership, and measurable impact. Just a few examples of where INL programs and enduring Mexican commitment converged to produce meaningful results include:

Counternarcotics

To enhance Mexico's capacity to detect and interdict illicit drug trafficking, INL donated more than 400 canines to Mexican federal and state agencies, and sponsored training for canine and handler teams to detect weapons, cash, and drugs. This included fentanyl-specific detection training through cooperation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 2018. We are seeing expanded drug seizures by those canine teams as a result of INL investment; the 448 canines donated since 2011 have resulted in the seizure of more than 23 tons of narcotics, including more than 26 kilograms of fentanyl, 56,000 guns, and \$12 million in smuggled cash. Together, canines and inspection equipment donated to Mexico by INL since 2008 have led to the seizure of more than 300,000 kilograms of deadly drugs destined for U.S. communities. INL has since expanded the canine program to committed state police and corrections partners and is working with Mexico to develop a strategic, data-driven plan for the deployment of canines to targeted locations to increase seizures and save more lives. INL also increased the Mexican Navy's (SEMAR) ability to interdict drugs. Launching operations from a base that was refurbished with INL support, SEMAR detected and seized two meth labs in the state of Durango in July 2019, including 541 liters of liquid meth (10.8 million doses), 30 kg of crystal meth (600,000 doses), 1,425 liters of liquid precursor chemicals, and 375 kg of solid precursor chemicals. In August 2018, INL-trained

and -equipped SEMAR forces conducted the largest seizure of meth on record, destroying more than 130 metric tons of processed meth (2.6 billion doses) and more than 29,000 liters and 10,000 kg of precursor chemicals from multiple clandestine labs and underground storage facilities in Sinaloa and Durango.

Border Security

At the border, INL-funded joint trainings with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Mexico's interagency facilitated stronger ties between law enforcement agencies patrolling either side of our shared border and led to an increase in the number of joint operations to disrupt transnational crime. These trainings yielded the identification and destruction of an illicit border tunnel in October 2019 just 700 yards west of the DeConcini Port of entry in Nogales, Arizona. At Mexico's southern border, INL investments expanded Mexico's visibility on migrants crossing into Mexico, many of whom are en route to the United States. Today, as a result of years of cooperation, Mexico's immigration agency is equipped to collect biometric data from migrants at all 54 Mexican migration stations nationwide and to share that information in real-time with U.S. law enforcement to identify persons of concern before they reach the U.S. border. This capability also enhances our countries' joint efforts to identify, track, investigate, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations and anticipate and respond to migration surges. The U.S. government advocates for a more comprehensive approach to securing our shared border through the increased use of technology and non-intrusive inspection equipment, and through increased joint operations.

Rule of Law

For the Mexican law enforcement and justice sectors, INL learned that no amount of equipment or training can reduce impunity absent sustainable, institutional improvements. INL programs ensure sustained improvements through helping Mexican institutions achieve and maintain international standards in areas such as police, forensics, and corrections. Accreditation to international standards is just one tool to build capacity, but in Mexico it has been a jumping off point to engender and sustain professional standards and promote best practices in response to security challenges. Institutionalizing those higher standards has the added benefit of surmounting the perennial challenges of personnel turnover and administration changes at the federal and state levels. This model has been most successful at the state level, spurring Mexican investment of resources to expand and sustain more effective criminal justice systems.

Building on U.S. assistance, 98 of Mexico's 300 prison facilities in 18 states have achieved American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation. Prison

accreditation has led to a reduction in escapes, riots, and assaults, and statistics indicate criminal activity both inside and surrounding prisons dropped in correlation with the number of accredited facilities in those areas. Meanwhile, Mexico has taken ownership of the model, adopting ACA accreditation as national policy in 2017. In 2018, ACA formally opened a Mexican chapter, in 2019 published a Mexico-specific code of standards, and is now positioned to share their knowledge and experience with others in the hemisphere.

Following Mexico's adoption of a new accusatorial criminal justice system in 2008, INL assistance helped the Mexican government to implement and consolidate the many changes needed to realize a completely new judicial system. While there is still much to be done, we believe Mexico would not have advanced at the level or pace it has in the justice sector had no investment been made over the past decade in this area.

Future of U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation

INL is under no illusion that we have achieved yet what we set out to accomplish through the Merida Initiative. Security assistance programs have not yet contributed to a substantive reduction in the availability of drugs in the United States or adequately contributed to reducing the levels of violence in Mexico. The challenges ahead still loom large. However, these examples demonstrate how U.S. investments, when coupled with Mexican political will, can yield improvements that can add up over time. We will seek opportunities to make the greatest changes for our investment, while mitigating risk and ensuring sustainability. The situation demands we continue to work closely with Mexico to develop more successful and enduring solutions to the threats that undermine both countries' security and prosperity.

Necessity of Shared Goals and a Strategic Approach

Critical to our efforts is an articulation of U.S. and Mexican shared goals, alongside a mutual understanding of our shared threats. In the first year of his presidency, President Lopez Obrador publicly committed to reduce violence through the establishment of a new National Guard, eliminate corruption, stop arms trafficking in Mexico, and target illicit proceeds from criminal activities. INL appreciates the President's emphasis on these critical issues, wholeheartedly agrees they are important, and hopes to see a specific and strategic set of objectives to advance progress along those broader promises. INL is well-positioned to build Mexican capacity to tackle all these issues.

In any country, political will must be backed by action and resources, and those will only make a measurable difference if they are deployed in a strategic manner, with identified targets and a deep understanding of the challenge. In August of last year, President Trump called on Mexico to do more to stop the flow of deadly drugs entering our country, specifically by intensifying efforts to increase poppy eradication, illicit drug interdiction, prosecutions, and asset seizures, and to develop a comprehensive drug control strategy.⁵ Attorney General Barr's visits have emphasized the United States' commitment to protecting U.S. and Mexican citizens through bilateral law enforcement cooperation and coordination across our justice systems. These visits yielded specific improvements, including a renewed commitment to U.S.-Mexico law enforcement cooperation and the extradition of a number of Mexicans wanted for trial in the United States.

U.S. assistance in this effort is most effective when matched to a Mexican strategy to reduce drug production and trafficking and deprive transnational criminal organizations of their assets and firepower. Mexican targets for poppy eradication, drug interdiction, transnational crime-related prosecutions, and asset seizures, with identified lines of effort that contribute to those targets, would allow us to tailor our assistance to maximize and sustain results.

The United States and Mexico hold high-level security working groups that have met regularly since October 2019 to discuss ongoing and new areas for cooperation. The working groups have identified opportunities critical to our efforts against synthetic drugs, including strengthening Mexican container control at seaports where precursors enter and ramping up inspections at mail facilities for drugs, weapons, and weapons parts.

Improving Data Collection to Measure Impact

We are constantly looking to improve our programs to ensure lasting impact and demonstrate good stewardship of U.S. taxpayer dollars. Before embarking on new projects at the federal, state, and local levels in Mexico, we assess and secure confirmation of our partners' political will, investment, and end goals to ensure the effort will meet both countries' needs and expectations. In recent years, we have expanded our programming at the state level, and we continue to codify Mexican commitment where possible to ensure continuity across administrations and personnel changes. As in any country where we provide foreign assistance, our success ultimately depends on the enduring will of our committed partners. Where

⁵ Memorandum on the Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2020, August 8, 2019.

we lack data, we design and fund projects that will collect and analyze the necessary baseline information to inform future assistance. For example, the World Justice Project measures rule of law at the state level in Mexico, enabling us to measure improvements in citizen security and the justice sector at a more granular level on an annual basis. We continue to partner with the Mexican government to improve the data collected across the Mexican interagency on drug interdictions and case prosecutions.

INL Bureau Project Design Improvements

Across the globe, INL is redoubling efforts to better understand our results, to know whether and to what extent we are improving security in a country receiving our assistance. There is good evidence that investing in careful project design will increase our success. When we are clear about what we seek to accomplish, we can improve our results, ensure taxpayer dollars advance INL's mission to combat transnational crime, and better explain to the American people how our work advances our national interests.

Conclusion

The deadly effect of the drug trade on American and Mexican lives demands our best efforts. Our security partnership has adapted to the changing context and priorities of successive U.S. and Mexican administrations. Where our programs are matched with committed partners in the Mexican government, we see results, and we continue to work to ensure future programs meet high standards. We welcome Mexico's responsiveness in the bilateral working groups and during high-level visits. We also believe a clear Mexican commitment to a strategic approach that tackles drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations would enable us to target our assistance more effectively. The enduring and significant change we seek – to save lives and improve security for both our countries – requires nothing less.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you.

Ms. FEINSTEIN.

STATEMENT OF MS. BARBARA FEINSTEIN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss USAID's work in Mexico under the Mérida Initiative.

Since 2008, USAID has partnered with the Department of State and other U.S. agencies to address the crime, justice, and corruption challenges that undermine Mexico's stability and threaten our mutual security and prosperity.

Under the Mérida Initiative, USAID works to strengthen justice institutions, address corruption and impunity, protect human rights, reduce crime and violence, and build transparency.

Undoubtedly, as you and as my colleagues have clearly articulated, the challenges before us are both enormous and daunting. And that is why USAID is clear-eyed and laser-focused on those areas where we have credible partners willing to work with us, who exhibit the necessary political will to enact systemic change.

And as I have outlined in my written testimony, we are seeing tangible results in each of the areas in which we work, results that we will continue to press the Federal, State, and local governments to replicate.

On rule of law, we are supporting the Mexican Government to carry out a seismic shift in its judicial system, moving from a presumption of guilt to a presumption of innocence. Working primarily at the state level, where the vast majority of crimes are tried, we are providing demand-driven support to prosecutors, judges, investigators, and defense attorneys to implement protocols and procedures to build more effective cases and secure prosecutions.

This is a long-term endeavor, but we are seeing progress. In the States of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Zacatecas, Nayarit, and Tabasco, our work has helped to increase prosecutions of felony crimes by 400 to over 700 percent. And in a similar set of states, our support to specialized homicide units has increased the number of indictments for homicides by 47 percent.

So why is this significant? Because it provides evidence of what can be done when sufficient political will, resources, and capacity are marshaled toward a set of shared outcomes.

The systems we are putting in place at state levels will be the foundations on which the entire justice system will grow and function, and for that reason, USAID is intentionally focusing and concentrating our programs under Mérida in 13 specific states where we see unique promise and partnership. And we are applying those same principles to our work in anticorruption and crime and violence prevention.

With regard to Mexico's national anticorruption system, we have purposefully shifted our resources to supporting state-level special anticorruption prosecutors and civil society.

And we are seeing tangible results here as well. In Coahuila, USAID support to the Special Prosecutor for Anticorruption re-

sulted in a 267 percent increase in the number of investigations closed. And in Jalisco, our support led to charges being filed in connection with 10 criminal organizations, a 400 percent increase over the baseline.

With regards to crime and violence prevention, USAID has also sharpened our geographic focus. We are working in 10 of the Government of Mexico's 27 priority cities for reducing violence where we see evidence of political will, a pledge to invest their own resources, and a commitment to using data and evidence to inform crime and violence prevention.

And here we are also seeing encouraging impact. The recidivism rate for incarcerated or paroled youth USAID works with is just above 3 percent, compared to the national rate of 60 percent.

Finally, with regard to human rights, and specifically the untenable levels of violence perpetrated against human rights defenders, journalists, and others, USAID is partnering with the Government of Mexico to improve its ability to prevent, investigate, and prosecute human rights abuses while also strengthening civil society to hold the government accountable.

USAID supports Mexico's National Protection Mechanism, which provides protective measures to more than 1,162 journalists and human rights defenders.

We are also helping to reduce the backlog of unsolved disappearances and to bring closure to criminal cases. USAID is supporting experts to identify the remains of victims and build forensic evidence for prosecution against the perpetrators.

And on that note, we are very encouraged by the Mexican Government's recent announcement of an Extraordinary Mechanism for Forensic Identification to deal with the disappearance crisis and look forward to expanded cooperation in this space.

In conclusion, against an extraordinarily challenging landscape, we are seeing signs of progress that can be scaled up and replicated, provided the political will and sufficient resources exist to do so.

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, members of the subcommittee, thank you again for the invitation to testify. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Feinstein follows:]

**Prepared Testimony of Barbara Feinstein
Deputy Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Before the House Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade
“Assessing U.S. Security Assistance to Mexico”
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to testify today. I am grateful for the Committee's support for the United States Agency for International Development's work in Latin America and the Caribbean, and am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss USAID's work under the Merida Initiative.

Context

Since 2008, USAID has partnered with the Department of State's Bureaus for Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and other U.S. federal agencies to address the crime, justice, and corruption challenges that undermine Mexico's stability and threaten our mutual security and prosperity. With programming under the Merida Initiative, USAID works at the federal, state, and local level to strengthen justice institutions, address corruption and impunity, protect human rights, reduce crime and violence, and build transparency. Such efforts are a critical complement to the security assistance provided under Merida.

While we have seen notable progress in these efforts, stark and clear challenges remain. Impunity represents one of the greatest challenges facing Mexico today. According to Mexico's national statistics agency, over 93 percent of crimes are neither investigated nor reported, and less than one percent of reported crimes result in a sanction.¹ The lack of consequences for criminal activity, ranging from petty theft to corruption to homicide, creates an environment where transnational criminal organizations and their subsidiaries flourish. Mexico registered more than 35,500 murders in 2019. There are more than 60,000 disappeared persons, more than 37,000 unidentified remains, and more than 3,600 clandestine graves. Mexico is also the second most dangerous country for journalists, behind only Syria, and ahead of Afghanistan. It ranks 130 out of 180 countries on the 2019 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, and corruption is estimated to cost \$53 billion annually, or five percent of GDP. Yet we believe that it is in the U.S. national security interest to continue to address these challenges and make progress where we can.

Supporting Justice and the Rule of Law

Through the Merida Initiative, USAID and INL are continuing to help Mexico implement a monumental transformation of its criminal justice system -- moving from an inquisitorial system, wherein individuals are presumed guilty until proven innocent, to an adversarial one -- similar to our own. Working primarily at the state level, where the vast majority of cases are tried, USAID's goal is to help prosecutors strengthen their investigations, bring more cases to closure, and ultimately, to reduce impunity. Since 2015, we have trained more than 2,000 judges,

¹ Source: Slide 31; Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública (ENVIPE) 2019, en www.INEGI.org.mx; accessed 02/06/2020

prosecutors, investigators, public defenders, and victims' advocates, on protocols and procedures that have enabled them to successfully work under the new justice system; improved assistance to victims; and furthered implementation of anti-corruption reforms. To increase public awareness of the reforms, we have trained more than 4,500 journalists, members of civil society, and students.

We have seen tangible progress in pockets of the country that are serving as models for reforms elsewhere. With USAID support, local authorities have used data and context analysis to break up and prosecute local criminal groups involved in serious crimes, including homicides. Our efforts to improve investigations have resulted in increases from 400 percent to over 700 percent in prosecutions for select crimes in five states. USAID support to specialized homicide units has increased the number of indictments for homicides by 47 percent in five target states. Similarly, the use of alternative dispute resolution, including plea bargains, conciliation agreements, and mediation, increased by 59 percent in five states. These mechanisms reduce the burden on overstretched justice institutions by more quickly resolving minor crimes and disputes, allowing prosecutors and judges to focus their efforts on more serious and high impact crimes.

Fighting Corruption and Promoting Transparency

USAID recognizes that corruption and impunity dangerously undermine citizen trust in government and are key drivers for crime and violence in Mexico. USAID supports Mexican-led efforts to reduce corruption and impunity while increasing transparency and integrity practices. We work alongside partners in the Mexican public, private, and non-governmental sectors and with international organizations to support implementation of the National Anti-Corruption System in Mexico's states, increase impartiality and professionalism in audit functions, improve civil society's and journalists' ability to monitor and report on corruption issues, and promote greater transparency in public procurements to reduce graft and increase opportunities for U.S. business investment.

Despite a challenging environment, we have seen some progress, particularly at the sub-national level. In Coahuila, USAID support to the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office resulted in a 267 percent increase in the number of investigations closed and an 842 percent increase in the number of administrative corruption proceedings against corrupt state court officials and staff. In Jalisco, our support led to charges being filed in connection with ten criminal investigations, a 400 percent increase over baseline. Together with a leading Mexican think tank, we supported the development of a web-based platform that publishes public procurement information using block chain technologies and structured data analysis that detected high corruption risk indicators in over half of the 1,836 infrastructure procurement procedures analyzed in Chihuahua and Nuevo Leon. We are now supporting state authorities to mitigate those risks. At the federal level, and with USAID's support, Mexico was accepted in 2017 as a candidate country for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a global standard for accountability.

Protecting Human Rights

As we recognize the untenable levels of violence perpetrated against human rights defenders, journalists and others, USAID partners with the Government of Mexico to improve its ability to prevent, investigate, and prosecute human rights abuses, while also, critically, strengthening civil society to hold the government accountable for this responsibility. This includes training for

civil society to more effectively engage the government and members of the public on critical issues such as freedom of the press, femicide, and forced disappearances.

USAID supports Mexico's National Protection Mechanism, which is currently providing preventative measures, including panic buttons, residential security upgrades, and protection teams, to more than 970 journalists and human rights defenders.

Our support was critical to the development of the 2017 laws on torture and forced disappearances, which provide a much-needed legal framework for victims' services and redress for families. And we are closely partnering with Mexico's newly-created National Search Commission and state-level search commissions in Chihuahua, Coahuila, Jalisco, Nuevo Leon and Veracruz to address disappearances. This includes connecting victims' groups and government officials with international forensic experts to facilitate the identification of remains and exhumation of clandestine gravesites. And we see opportunities to expand our support in this area, thanks to the Government of Mexico's announcement of an Extraordinary Mechanism for Forensic Identification to deal with the disappearance crisis.

Preventing Crime and Violence

USAID is also focused on reducing crime and violence by strengthening local authorities' commitment to tackle these challenges, and by engaging civil society and the private sector. We support local actors who use proven methods to interrupt the cycle of criminal behavior and work with the Government of Mexico to take these initiatives to scale. We also work to prevent at-risk youth in the most violent cities from turning to crime and potentially joining organized criminal groups. This includes targeting the most at-risk individuals, employing cognitive behavioral therapy, and supporting community courts and municipal police to provide prompt and transparent solutions to local conflicts.

The recidivism rate for USAID youth beneficiaries who have been in conflict with the law is 3.11 percent, compared to the national recidivism rate average of 60 percent, showing a clear impact of our work on local communities.

A New Approach

Mexico is not a traditional USAID partner. As an upper-middle income country and the 15th largest economy in the world, Mexico is well-positioned to address its development challenges, meet the needs of its citizens, and lead as a donor. However, we recognize the mutual interest in safety and security on both sides of our shared border and are committed to our strong partnership to address these challenges.

Mexico's vibrant private sector and high levels of domestic capacity offer opportunities for USAID to operate differently than in other countries. In the last three years, USAID has quintupled its resource partners, and engaged Mexico's top tier business chambers.

However, we recognize that our programming can only reach its full potential if we have host country counterparts who are willing, able and self-resourced to work with us to meet mutual goals. We welcome President Lopez Obrador's stated commitment to combat corruption and reduce violence and impunity, and we will continue to look for ways to partner with the

Government of Mexico to address these critical issues that lie at the heart of our shared security challenges.

Going forward, USAID is integrating our rule of law, crime and violence prevention, human rights, and anti-corruption programming into a coordinated approach specifically targeted at reducing impunity.

We are sharpening our geographic focus to target those areas where there is significant political will to effect change. Beginning in 2017 to present day, we are reducing the number of states in which we operate from 27 to the 16 where we have the most productive partnership with local leaders who are investing their own resources to improve investigative capacity, increase inter-institutional collaboration, and promote transparency. This new approach builds on past successes at the subnational level and will more fully engage public and private sector actors to lead progress.

We are also streamlining our geographic focus in the crime and violence sector to ten of the Government of Mexico's 27 priority cities for reducing violence. In these cities, we are expanding our work with municipal governments and police to foster proactive engagement to resolve community conflicts, target at-risk youth, and reduce insecurity. Constructive interactions between communities and local authorities increase citizen confidence in security and justice institutions, leading to increased crime reporting and the generation of data that is essential to inform successful prosecutions and criminal justice policies. We will continue to engage with the Mexican federal government to replicate and scale proven, evidence-informed approaches that address impunity, crime, and violence.

Monitoring and Evaluation for Learning and Accountability

As an accountable and learning organization, USAID has put in place systems for assessing the impact of our Merida Initiative programming from strategy to design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. We set clear objectives and outcomes with baselines and targets for our work in rule of law, crime and violence prevention, human rights, and, transparency and integrity, and design our activities based on these outcomes with accompanying monitoring plans. We conduct third party, external performance evaluations or "meta-evaluations" for a given development objective or activity approximately every three years.

USAID has used this information to modify our programming. For example, a mid-term evaluation of our major rule of law program led us to phase out of classroom training and basic education on justice reforms in favor of demand-driven, targeted technical assistance based on specific institutional needs where our experts support justice institutions not just to develop manuals, protocols, or procedures but also to put in place the management systems to actually execute them. We also now focus our assistance on the use of data to inform prosecutorial decisions and to increase our engagement with the private sector for justice sector oversight.

We exited primary crime prevention efforts (i.e. after-school programs, scouts, etc.) as they were too diffuse in terms of their target audience and did not directly reduce crime and violence. Instead, we adopted a secondary and tertiary prevention approach which deals with the most at-risk youth and ensures its interventions are based on evidence of what works.

In our anti-corruption portfolio, given challenges at the national level, USAID has deliberately focused our efforts in those states that clearly demonstrate commitment, and provide the necessary resources, to implement reform. In addition, to ensure local ownership, increase sustainability, and spark innovation, USAID is co-investing with top Mexican private sector chambers to support local leaders and NGOs leading change related to reducing corruption. These efforts include utilizing deep data analysis to monitor budgeting and procurement processes and better target government oversight efforts, fostering investigative and data journalism, and utilizing strategic litigation to promote legal and regulatory changes that combat corruption.

Finally, with regards to our human rights portfolio, we have redesigned our programming so that we clearly articulate measurable results up front and expand our focus from solely prevention mechanisms to engaging prosecutors to investigate human rights violations and increasing our direct engagement with civil society groups in order to foster dialogue with the Government of Mexico.

Conclusion

USAID programming under the Merida Initiative complements the work of our colleagues at the State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, including efforts to combat transnational criminal organizations. These criminal organizations are not only expanding in size and scope, but also diversifying their illicit activities. Criminal networks are fluid, striking new alliances with networks around the world and engaging in a wide range of illicit activities, ranging from illegal trafficking in drugs, wildlife, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling, to cybercrime and money laundering. We partner with the Government of Mexico, civil society, and the private sector to reduce impunity, uphold the rule of law, address corruption, protect human rights and promote freedom of expression, and engage at-risk youth to prevent crime and violence. Ultimately, these efforts will help us to disrupt the activities of transnational criminal organizations and their subsidiaries, reduce illicit trafficking to the United States, and promote Mexico's security and prosperity.

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, thank you again for the invitation to testify. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, and we will now turn to questions.

I will start it by asking, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, I was taken aback to read that children are forming armed groups to defend the community in Guerrero.

Ms. Feinstein, Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Glenn, can you provide examples of U.S. programs that have been effective in reducing violence and weakening the cartels at the local level, both in urban and rural communities?

Mr. Glenn, we will start with you, put you in the hot seat first.

Mr. GLENN. The Mérida Initiative programs, in terms of rural communities, have focused primarily on increasing the ability of police to do their jobs at both the Federal and the State level. We have generally avoided local police for various reasons.

The professionalization of the police is essential. Taking them from basically no or very little academy support and academy training at the beginning to now more professionalized policing ensures that they, at least at the beginning, have that kind of support and know-how to do their jobs.

Obviously, there is a lot more to do. The transition now with the Federal police turning into the National Guard, along with pieces of both the Marines and the Army, it is going to be key that they take on that training and deploy into those regions. And I think, as far as we understand the purpose of the National Guard, it is to get out into those rural areas and help secure those communities that desperately seek that peace and stability.

Mr. SIRES. Ms. Feinstein.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. From USAID's perspective, as I mentioned in my testimony, we are focused on targeted municipalities that have the highest levels of violence, including ones that the Government of Mexico has specifically targeted. And our approach is to look at where we have partners that are willing to invest their own resources and where we see that political will.

We are employing a variety of approaches to crime and violence prevention. In certain municipalities we have a model called Civic Justice. It is similar to community courts that exist in the United States, for example, where we will look at misdemeanors, for example. And for youth that are committing these crimes, we know through evidence that that can often be escalated and lead to more sophisticated levels of crimes.

If we can address that, build confidence in the system, and strengthen the social fabric between the community, between local law enforcement, the municipal government, and the justice system, then we think we can pave a foundation for stronger rule of law at the local level.

We are also not working in rural areas. In addition, as I referenced in my testimony, we are working with youth who are already in conflict with the law. Those are youth who have been in prison and/or on parole. And that is where, as I have said, through techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy, family counseling, working with youth before they exit prison to have a more successful reintegration into society, we are seeing very striking levels of lower levels of recidivism, around 3 percent compared to the 60 percent national average.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Would you like to add something, Mr. Rodriguez?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I will defer to my colleagues who can speak more knowledgeably to the programs themselves, sir.

Mr. SIRES. Last year 21 human rights defenders and 10 journalists were killed. In 2012, the Mexican Government created the mechanism to protect human right defenders and journalists. But since August 2017 at least six beneficiaries have been murdered.

What needs to be done for the killing of journalists and human rights defenders to actually be investigated and prosecuted?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You point to one of the biggest crises that we believe faces Mexico, both upholding the standards of human rights as well as the protection of journalists. This is something that we have raised frequently with the Government of Mexico. My belief is that they share that concern.

I can defer to Rich and to Barbara about the programs we have in place that are helping to strengthen those efforts. But I would say that both for us and for the Government of Mexico, this is a priority. And we have seen them take steps to address both the protection of journalists and human rights in general.

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Glenn.

Mr. GLENN. I will defer to Barbara on the specifics on programs that specifically focus on journalists and human rights defenders.

In general, our efforts with both State-level and Federal-level attorneys general and the investigative branches of law enforcement are to focus on increasing their ability to collect forensic evidence so that they can produce prosecutions. So that does not prevent the aggression against journalists, but when it does happen, it ensures that the Mexican Government can get justice.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. And briefly, I would add that from USAID's perspective, we are working on this issue on a number of different fronts.

One is, we are providing technical assistance and support to the National Protection Mechanism, as I mentioned earlier, that provides actual protective measures, from panic buttons to residential security upgrades to protection teams for journalists, and we are connecting journalists to that mechanism so that they can take advantage of those services as they exist.

In addition, on a more structural and fundamental level, we are also providing support to the Special Prosecutor's Office for Crimes Against Freedom of Expression so that they can strengthen their protocols, strengthen investigations, to be able to go after the perpetrators who are so viciously going after journalists.

And then last, we do also provide direct support to journalists in terms of assistance with digital security, how they can protect themselves online, what methods they can take to be more secure.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Congressman ROONEY.

Mr. ROONEY. Thank you, Chairman Sires.

I would like to start with Ms. Feinstein. I have two basic questions.

One is, can you give us a little more specifics about how the AID programs have involved under the Mérida Initiative and about our participation versus Mexico's?

And then what judicial reforms do we need to execute in Mexico to increase convictions and prevent the prolonged legal proceedings of the cartel members?

Thank you.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Thank you for that question.

In terms of the evolution of our programming, at the beginning of the Mérida Initiative, as we have talked about, Mexico has embarked on this seismic shift to transform their judicial system from one with a presumption of guilt to a presumption of innocence.

And so while all of that has been on paper and USAID has worked very hard, with the Mexican Government very much in the lead to try to ensure that implementing legislation has been in place in each of the states to carry out that reform, that is obviously the easiest part because now you have the laws on the books.

But in terms of the cultural change that is actually required to get all the individual actors in that system, including those who had been part of the old system, to go from a system where your judge is the same as your prosecutor to a system where, in fact, you have to go and make the tough decisions about which cases you are actually going to prioritize and then build those cases, work on forensics, as my colleague mentioned, and try to build the strongest evidence that you can to achieve those convictions—the issue, as we see it, is a structural and a systemic one.

It is not necessarily judicial reforms that are needed at this point—obviously, there could be some tweaks here and there—but it is reform of a system which requires the actors that are in that system to work together.

So in terms of the evolution of our approach and what we have done differently, in the rule of law space, whereas in the beginning, as I said, our work was mostly focused on helping at the state level to ensure the implementing legislation was in place, the next stage for us was classroom training for all of the individuals. So that is judges, defense attorneys, prosecutors, investigators, et cetera.

And we have realized that classroom training, while helpful, was not enough. What we needed to do was actually accompany, provide targeted assistance to actually bring these actors together.

And the examples that I mentioned earlier in terms of the increases in prosecutions were a result of a very deliberate effort to bring all of those actors around the table.

There is a tradition in Mexico in the judicial system where one part of it sends a letter to the other part of it, they are in receipt of the letter, and 1 month later maybe they will respond, as opposed to just picking up the telephone or being collocated—for example, prosecutors and investigators—to build more effective cases and move them through the system.

So one thing, as I said, has been moving from that classroom training to hands-on technical assistance.

Within the crime and violence space we have had an evolution where at the beginning there might have been a thought, “okay, let’s go to the violent areas and provide opportunity to underprivileged communities and that will probably reduce violence.”

Well, in fact, the evidence shows that that is not a very successful approach. Instead what you need to do is target more effectively who are those individuals that are most likely to be perpetrators of crime or victims of crime, consider those your at-risk communities, and actually look at the interventions that work most effectively.

So that might be cognitive behavioral therapy, family based counseling, a variety of mechanisms, bringing the different parts together, and that is what we are doing and that is where we are seeing results.

And on the municipal model we are pleased to see that the Government of Mexico has taken that civic justice model that I mentioned before, that we piloted in Escobedo and in Morelia, they have scaled that up to different parts of the country.

Mr. ROONEY. How has the recidivism rate been affected by those programs of the family counseling and things you are talking about?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. In the case of our work with at-risk youth, as I mentioned, we work with youth who are in prison and are likely to be released some time in the next 5 years. And we will work with them to give them the kind of training, life skills, and then once they come out, the vocational education to better reintegrate into society. And we are seeing recidivism rates of just over 3 percent as compared to the 60 percent national rate.

Mr. ROONEY. That is really great to hear.

One last quick thing. What is the contribution of the United States versus Mexico under the Mérida agreement.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. I would not be able to tell you across every element of it. I do not know if my colleagues have that information.

I would say at the local level, in terms of security, on a regular basis, on an annual basis, USAID's contribution, is around 40 million, about 37 to 40 million per year. And I know local security contributions are on the average of about 400 million.

Mr. ROONEY. Thank you.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Congressman Rooney.

Congressman VARGAS.

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. I apologize for my voice today. It is a bit raspy.

I think most of us here, really all of us here on the dais, want to see a very successful Mexico. In fact, interestingly, most of the Congress voted in favor of USMCA and see Mexico not only as a good neighbor, but obviously as a fellow partner in trade. However, there obviously are some problems.

Mr. Glenn, you said, I believe, the current statistics make it hard to say that we are making headway. So I guess my question would be, should we shift our approach or strategy under the Mérida Initiative? I mean, if the statistics are what they are, and they are pretty horrific, should we do something different?

Mr. GLENN. Absolutely, and I think we are. We have learned from the 12 years of experience that we have. We also have a new Mexican administration that is focusing on different areas and we will go along, as far as we can, to support those efforts of the current Mexican administration.

I think the focus on going after the illicit finance in a larger, greater, more focused way will be a major shift that will give us the kinds of results that we seek, focus on arms trafficking and helping the Mexican Government, at least from our end, from our foreign assistance end of arms trafficking, helping the Government of Mexico position equipment that we have donated previously so that they can protect their border and scan for guns and money coming south.

So shifting those kinds of resources and that kind of focus can help change the way that we focus the Mérida Initiative resources that we have.

Mr. VARGAS. Okay. One of the concerns I have is one of the shifts that we have seen also is the creation of this National Guard where, I believe, 25,000 of them now are being used to prevent Central American migration. I mean, that concerns me. I thought that they were supposed to be out there interdicting drugs and doing all these other things against the narco-traffickers, not against Central American migrants.

I do want to ask you also about MPP or the Migrant Protection Program or what we normally call the Remain in Mexico. Fifty-nine thousand migrants have been returned to Mexico, and as of December 31, 2019, there are at least reports, public reports, that 816 of these migrants have become victims of violent crimes, such as rape, kidnapping, and torture, after being attacked and returned to Mexico.

Now, that does not seem to me then it is very safe to return to Mexico when we see the statistics. Why are we continuing with this?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Congressman.

You raise an excellent point. The levels of violence in Mexico are of great concern to us, as is the violence that migrants face along the entire route of the journey. And one of our efforts has been to share responsibility, to look for partners to help us in addressing the irregular migration and helping to build capacity, particularly in Central America at this point, for offering asylum and offering support closer to the home, closer to the point of departure of these migrants so that they do not have to undertake the dangerous journey, including the dangerous conditions in Mexico.

The Government of Mexico has owned the concerns that we have about the levels of violence, particularly in the northern tier of Mexico. They have committed to us to provide the same protections to the migrants as they do to their citizens, and to U.S. citizens that are traveling in the area as well.

Mr. VARGAS. But I guess that is my point. I mean, the statistics do not prove out that it is safe for their own citizens.

I mean, Tijuana. I live in San Diego, one of the safest, largest cities in the United States. Across the border in Tijuana, they have the murder capital of the world. And yet a lot of the migrants that are sent to Tijuana, they are not from Tijuana, experience this incredible level of violence against them.

I mean, when you say they are returned and they are going to provide safety as they do for their own citizens, well, it is not safe. That is the whole point.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I agree with you, sir. The levels of violence are of tremendous concern. And I think the Government of Mexico shares that concern and is appropriately focused on it.

But this is a large-scale problem. We assist through the Mérida Initiative in the ways that we can. But, again, my understanding from the Government of Mexico is that they understand the problem and are focused on it.

Mr. VARGAS. My time has expired.

The only thing I would like to add is, I am not sure about this “hugs” thing either. The new President says “hugs instead of bullets.” I am not sure that is going to work.

Thank you.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Congressman.

Congressman YOHO.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate you all being here. And I want to thank you for the work that you and your agencies do, because I know you do it with a good intention and you put forth everything and the teams that are with you. But yet this is my eighth year in Congress and I hear the same thing over and over, again, good governance, we are working on rule of law, going after—increasing the judicial system and all that, but yet we are not seeing it.

And, Mr. Glenn, you brought that up. I think you said under no illusion that we have decreased the drug trafficking and flow, I think is what you were saying. And we know that. We know there is more drugs coming in.

I want to look—I like to look at things as, what is the solution? How do we change this?

Ms. FEINSTEIN, you were talking about there was 3 percent recidivism versus the 60 percent in the programs. How long have you tracked that? Is that within a year? Is that a 5-year period or a 10-year period, that 3 percent? And do they stay reformed and not go back into illicit activities?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Sir, I can get you the specifics on that, but my understanding is that it is a multi-year effort, that we are not just tracking people when they come out, because clearly that wouldn't be a good indication of whether recidivism is actually taking place.

Mr. YOHO. No. That would be a skewed number and that is what we do not want reported. So I do not know, is there a report out there that will say this is a 3 percent recidivism after 6 months, after a year, after 5 years?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Absolutely. I can get that for you.

Mr. YOHO. If you could get that, that would help us, because that gives us the programs that are working that we can bolster.

You were also saying that a 40 percent increase in convictions, and I forget what area it was, Chihuahua or somewhere, but you were saying that the 40 percent increase in sentencing or conviction. What about the sentencing and the reform side of that? Or do they get pardoned or get early release? Do we know what happens? Because you can go ahead and convict them, but what happens after that? Do you have any idea?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Certainly. The specifics that I was mentioning for the 47 percent was our support to specialized homicide units, and that is in a series of states I can read to you or not, where we have

increased the number of indictments. So that was indictments for homicide.

My other statistic was in terms of prosecutions of felony crimes. In terms of prosecutions, there are obviously a variety of ways that that could be resolved. It could result in incarceration, it could result in alternative dispute resolution, plea bargaining. So a variety of different methods.

I think the challenge with the Mexican judicial sector is that under this new system, as you, I am sure, are aware, in any criminal justice system, whether in our system or any system around the world, criminal justice systems only have the capacity to process about 10 percent of the crimes that are coming in.

So you have to make strategic decisions about how you are going to prioritize. You could have a prosecutor that goes after the easiest crimes and then kind of juices their rate.

Mr. YOHO. Well, that is the stuff we need to look at.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. What we are trying to do is look at the most serious crimes. So in this case, taking all these different elements, bringing them together, and asking, what is it that would really make a difference for the community, for people in Mexico? Looking at serious crimes like homicides, like home invasions, armed robberies, et cetera, not the easy ones.

And then look for—and for us it is not a sign—this has been a cultural change issue also in Mexico where people want to see folks behind bars and not necessarily look at plea bargains and other issues.

Mr. YOHO. All right. I appreciate it.

Mr. Glenn, you were talking about you do not work with the local law enforcement for obvious reasons. I want you to state what those obvious reasons are.

Mr. GLENN. I think it is recognized by the Mexican Government itself that the level of corruption at the local level is very high.

Mr. YOHO. OK, and we know that, and I just want that on record, because we have put so much money into these programs, but yet the results are not there.

I want to switch over to another question. The GAO reports show that 70 percent of the guns seized in Mexico by Mexican authorities come from America.

Do we track that to find out who they came from here in America? And if so, what do we do? Do we have extradition laws that allow that person to go to Mexico if those guns were involved in a crime?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. So we do work closely with the Government of Mexico to track those guns. ATF is present at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. And in the cases where we have tracking information where there are serial numbers on the guns, there is cooperation to share that with U.S. law enforcement so that we can track back—

Mr. YOHO. Have we sent our people down there that have been—

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. We have U.S. law enforcement officials in Mexico.

Mr. YOHO. No. The person that broke the law here selling the guns, have we sent them to Mexican prisons or their judicial system?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I would have to check with DOJ on specific cases. I cannot recall off the top of my head cases, but that does not mean—

Mr. YOHO. Would that be a strong deterrent if we did?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I would assume it would be a very strong deterrent, yes, sir.

Mr. YOHO. I think so.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you, Congressman.

Congressman Dean Phillips.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Rooney, and to our witnesses.

We had a similar hearing about a month ago relative to aid to Mexico and, not surprisingly, corruption took center stage.

So I would like to begin with a question to you, Mr. Glenn, and you, Ms. Feinstein, about how corruption very specifically impacts your work, starting with you, Mr. Glenn. And if you can be specific about corruption, not general.

Mr. GLENN. So our focus is on improving law enforcement. Our anticorruption efforts in the past and going forward as well, and our focus will be on how do we eliminate or how do we help the Mexican Government eliminate corruption within their public security forces.

Mr. PHILLIPS. But can you talk about that? I want to hear specifically about that corruption in those security forces.

Mr. GLENN. Sure. I think we have, at least, the alleged conduct of the former head of the Federal Police, Garcia Luna, who was arrested recently, I believe in Dallas. He was, at the time that I was in Mexico, one of our principal interlocutors.

So obviously that shakes the trust that we have. In order to do the work that we do, we have to work with those who the Government of Mexico has in place. We do our best to vet, not only do we do the Leahy vetting that is on the human rights side, but we also do the internal vetting to make sure that, to the best of our knowledge, our partners are with us and not against us.

Mr. PHILLIPS. And if we uncover troubling information, do they act on it, our Mexican partners?

Mr. GLENN. To the extent that I know, yes.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. If I could just jump in?

Mr. PHILLIPS. Sure, Mr. Rodriguez.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I know that Mexico has created an independent Federal prosecutor for corruption crimes, and they have moved to remove immunity from elected officials who engage in corruption, and they established the National Anti-corruption System.

President Lopez Obrador ran on a platform of targeting and prosecuting corrupt officials. We learned yesterday that the former head of Pemex was arrested in Spain based on a request by the Government of Mexico for alleged corruption involving Odebrecht. So they are pursuing corruption in both current and former government officials.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. And, Ms. Feinstein, specifically in your work, how does corruption affect it?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Sure. So corruption—anticorruption—is one of the areas that we have as a focus for our work in Mexico because of the toll that it takes on the Mexican State at every level where that is encountered by individuals on a day-to-day basis, as well as businesses.

For example, corruption is estimated to cost Mexico between 5 to 9 percent of its GDP. So it is obviously an enormous problem for the private sector and for individuals on a day-to-day basis.

Complementing what my colleagues have said, one of the areas of work that USAID engages in is looking at the procurement process in Mexico, since a lot of the historic corruption scandals in Mexico have related to government procurement.

And so what we have done is to provide the tools so that a spotlight can be shined on where corruption is going on with regard to sole-source procurement, for example, and have invested in blockchain analysis of the weaknesses in the procurement process. And we are working with specific states on a demand-driven basis to help them look at vulnerabilities in their procurement systems so that they can make those changes.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Rodriguez, another line of questioning here. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov recently announced that Mexico was in talks to purchase Russian-made helicopters. If that were to proceed, would it risk sanctions by the United States under Section 231 of the CAATSA act?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Congressman.

We have looked into that. We obviously saw that read-out of the meeting between Foreign Minister Lavrov and Foreign Secretary Ebrard. We read it with great interest, and it is concerning to us. Based on our initial investigation, it appears that such a sale would trigger potentially sanctions under CAATSA. And we do not have further specifics for you this morning, but I would be happy to give you a fuller read-out on that when we have it.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Have we made our position clear to our Mexican friends?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I believe we have at the embassy level, and I will need to check on that to confirm. But at the Washington level we have raised this as an area of concern with our counterparts in Mexico City to raise with the Government of Mexico.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. We would appreciate that information. Thank you.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, sir.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I yield my time.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you, Congressman.

Congressman Ken Buck.

Mr. BUCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Feinstein, I want to ask you a quick question. You mentioned different ways that we are trying to protect journalists. Could you just go through those really quickly again? I remember a panic button.

By the way, who answers the panic button on the other side? I hope not the corrupt law enforcement that we just heard about it.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. This is through the National Protection Mechanism, which is something that we as USAID helped the Government of Mexico to establish in the previous——

Mr. BUCK. I asked you, who answers it on the other side?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. It is officials associated with the National Protection Mechanism, which are vetted, vetted police, vetted law enforcement, who will then redirect that——

Mr. BUCK. And have you measured the response time of those folks?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. We recognize that this is not a foolproof mechanism. And so if, for example, you are a journalist and someone is trying to kill you and has, therefore, been in your presence, no call from a panic button is going to result in law enforcement coming and bailing you out immediately, which is why a panic button——

Mr. BUCK. Do you know what would? I was in law enforcement for 25 years and there were a lot of people that did not like me. Just like being a Congressman, there are a lot of people that do not like me now. But I did have a gun. Are we training these folks in the use of firearms?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Not to the best of my knowledge. I believe——

Mr. BUCK. Would that be a more efficient—I mean, if it takes 15 minutes for someone to show up and you have got 20 seconds to react, would that be a more efficient way of or more effective way of trying to help folks?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. So I would refer you to technical experts on this. I am not an expert in law enforcement, so you clearly have more expertise in this area than I do.

What I will say is a panic button is one of a variety of mechanisms that are provided. We also provide support so that there are residential security upgrades as necessary, protection teams, et cetera, so it is not just the panic button.

And I think, with some exceptions, this has been successful in terms of protecting journalists and keeping them alive. I think our hope would be that there are more resources invested in this mechanism so that it can be expanded to provide greater protection, which we would prefer not to have to do, but is a reality in Mexico today.

Mr. BUCK. I think someone just handed you a note. They may have told you whether you guys give them guns or not.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. No. In fact, that was an answer to Mr. Yoho's question on the recidivism rate——

Mr. BUCK. Oh, Okay.

Ms. FEINSTEIN [continuing]. Which we track for 12 to 18 months afterwards.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you.

Mr. BUCK. Mr. Rodriguez, I wanted to know about the flow of drugs across the border and what the Mexican Government is doing. My understanding is that they have enhanced military or law enforcement presence along the border. Is that correct?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. If I could, Congressman, I would like to pass this to Rich because the programs, the cooperative programs that we have with the Government of Mexico, really fall under his area of expertise.

Mr. GLENN. So the interdiction responsibility lies with multiple agencies within the Government of Mexico. The military is one of them. The National Guard is increasingly taking on that role.

Mr. BUCK. And I am specifically asking about the border area. Is there enhanced security—military, law enforcement—on the border area?

Mr. GLENN. There is enhanced focus on borders, both on the Mexican southern border as well as Mexico's northern border.

Mr. BUCK. And what is happening as a result of that? What result do we see?

Mr. GLENN. Well, we see increased amounts of seizures. We see greater success with the equipment that we have donated to them whether it is hard equipment or the K-9s that I mentioned earlier. We have also been trying to get them to focus and cooperate more on ports and the influx or importation of precursor chemicals.

Mr. BUCK. How much money have we given to Mexico in the last 10 years to assist in this? And why is it that we are asking them to help with ports? Is there obviously some incentive for them to help with ports?

Mr. GLENN. Sure.

Mr. BUCK. Do they also help with physical barriers along our southern border, their northern border?

Mr. GLENN. Yes. Let me touch first on the amount of money that we have spent over the last 10, 12 years specifically on border security, and that can be ports, both sea ports and land ports. We have spent about \$200 million on equipment and training. So that is nonintrusive inspection equipment, and K-9s.

Mr. BUCK. I am wondering about Mexico. How much money do they spend? Are they paying for a wall, I guess is this the question?

Mr. GLENN. Are they paying for a wall? A physical wall? Not that I know of. But in terms of personnel dedicated to screening and protecting both—well, to protecting the border, yes, they have deployed. I do not know a specific number on how much money they have spent.

Mr. BUCK. I yield back.

Mr. SIRE. Thank you, Congressman.

Congressman Joaquin Castro.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairman.

Under the Migrant Protection Protocols, thousands of vulnerable people—asylum seekers—are forced to live in dangerous conditions in Mexico due to the Trump Administration's policies as they await their asylum claims. I recently, along with 16 other Members of Congress, visited the border and I saw firsthand the conditions of disarray and fear and came away believing that it is an inhumane situation that we are placing these folks in.

Mexican border towns have become incredibly dangerous, and migrants have become victims of violent crime, including kidnapping, robbery, and rape, as they languish at the border.

So my question for you all is, do you know how many individuals are currently in Mexico under the Trump Administration's remain in Mexico policy awaiting adjudication of their asylum claims?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Congressman Castro, I do not know that I have that number right in front of me, but if you will permit me, I would be happy to get that number back to you, if I could take that.

Mr. CASTRO. OK. Do you believe that these people along the border are actually safe in that environment?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Safe is—well, let me put it this way. We and the Government of Mexico are working to increase their safety.

So our Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration works with international organizations, such as UNHCR and IOM, to provide support to migrants under the MPP program.

And to that extent, we are working directly to try to provide support and safety to those individuals, as well as encouraging and working with the Government of Mexico to provide support and safety to those individuals as well.

Mr. CASTRO. The State Department acknowledges that some of those Mexican cities are cities that the State Department has advised Americans not to travel to?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir.

Mr. CASTRO. Because of the danger of those cities?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Yes, sir.

Mr. CASTRO. What steps are the State Department and USAID taking to protect these people as they pursue their asylum claims?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. I will let Barbara talk about USAID, and I will only add that my understanding from DHS colleagues is that the period of time that these individuals are waiting in Mexico for their asylum hearings and the processing is meant to be as expedited as possible.

Mr. CASTRO. And I guess, based on what we heard from folks the other day, it is quite the opposite, which is courts in the United States are bringing these folks in for court dates and then setting a reset court date 3 or 4 months later, basically hoping that people will either stay in Mexico or just go away. So the folks that do remain there are being subject to these very dangerous conditions, threatening conditions.

But I have got just about a minute and 40 seconds left—unless you wanted to say something about USAID.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. No, just to mention that this is actually not within USAID's mandate in Mexico. It is, as DAS Rodriguez mentioned, with the Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau of the State Department. So we are not engaging in that area of work.

Mr. CASTRO. I mean, it sounds like this is more in the wheelhouse of USAID than some of the work that you have been describing for the last hour.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. So specifically in terms of how the U.S. Government handles migration, that is primarily within PRM, within the State Department, and so the work on asylum strengthening, for example, is not something that USAID engages in. That is something that PRM does.

Mr. CASTRO. You talked about the reform of Mexico's legal system or justice system. Do they have a public defender system or indigent defense system there?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. They do. And through our work, we work with public defenders, with the defense attorneys, at the state-level primarily.

Mr. CASTRO. And how extensive is that system now? Is it nationwide?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Yes. It was part of the judicial reform law—or whole change to the justice system in terms of presumption of innocence rather than presumption of guilt, and that has now been implemented in every single state. That being said, there are some states that are a lot more mature that are progressing more effectively in that than others.

Mr. CASTRO. Let me ask you all one last question, which is there are a lot of fully automatic actually and semi-automatic weapons that are trafficked to Mexico from the United States. Does the U.S. Government fund or help Mexico retrieve those guns, not just track the serial numbers, but actually go get them?

Mr. GLENN. So under the Mérida Initiative we have aided and assisted the Government of Mexico in the form of primarily recovering and being able to track weapons, so through serial number, through the forensics.

ATF is present in the embassy and does work with the attorney general's office, with State-level attorneys general offices to retrieve weapons that have been used in the committing of crimes, to then be able to track them back to the United States and hopefully find who it is that bought them and how they have come across the border.

Mr. CASTRO. Thanks. I yield back.

Mr. SIRES. Congressman Vicente Gonzalez.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a few questions. I am certainly concerned about the trade routes to my district and the violence on those roads. Being that Mexico last year had, if you consider the confirmed murders and disappearances, the number exceeds every soldier we lost during Vietnam, and this is just in 1 year.

Being that the violence is just this extreme, and Mexico being our No. 1 trading partner, are we having the conversation that this could potentially be a national security threat if we have a failed State or portions of the country are failed? And my opinion, they already are in certain States. Are we having those conversations with Mexico?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Thank you, Congressman Gonzalez.

We do have conversations every day about the security threats to Mexican citizens and U.S. citizens, and the fact that this obviously represents a national security concern both for Mexico and for the U.S. So, yes, sir, we do have those conversations, we are talking about that.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Being that Mexico's homicide rate has skyrocketed over the past few years, and we have also witnessed a series of issues of impunity in prosecuting crimes, especially those committed against American citizens in Mexico, recently we have had, just in the past few months, I can recall about 11 deaths of American citizens on Mexican soil.

Are we doing anything to try to extradite those individuals who are found to be the perpetrators of those crimes?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Let me speak specifically to the horrific murder of nine American citizens in Sonora at the end of 2019.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Chihuahua. Wasn't it Chihuahua? The Mormons?

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. It was Bavispe, Sonora, on the border with Chihuahua.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Okay.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. President Lopez Obrador, in his conversation with President Trump, agreed to a joint investigation involving the FBI, and that investigation has been ongoing, and I would urge you to talk to FBI about where they are with that. So there are conversations and joint investigations going on addressing the homicides.

I would also recognize, as you mentioned, that the homicide rate has been going up. Specifically since 2014, it has gone up every year. This is a problem that the Lopez Obrador administration inherited and has been very focused on. It is going to take a great deal of effort to bend that curve, but they are working on that.

And I can turn it over to DAS Glenn to talk about some of the efforts we provide under Mérida to help professionalize investigations and prosecutions.

Mr. GLENN. I could speak specifically quickly to extraditions and the assistance that we provide through the Mérida Initiative.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I am sorry to interrupt, but I want to know about extraditions on crimes perpetrated against Americans in Mexico. And I know that we have taken a special interest on this case, but there are many others, and I am curious if we have a concerted effort that we are actually trying to go after folks that harm American citizens in Mexico.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Attorney General Barr has traveled twice in the last 2 months to Mexico to speak with his counterparts there and to urge a focus on extraditions. The Government of Mexico has responded in a very fulsome way, and we have seen a large number of high value extraditions over the course of the last 3 months, as well as a high volume of fugitives returned to the U.S. for crimes that occurred in the United States. So, yes, we are getting a very fulsome response on extraditions.

As far as the underlying grounds for each of those cases, I would have to defer you to DOJ. I don't know if they are specific to crimes against American citizens in Mexico.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Yes, that is the only reason I am asking, because in the last 90 days we have had at least 11 American citizens murdered in Mexico. One or two of them were from my district, so it is quite a concern. One was just on the bridge coming across, on the Mexican side, and we had a 13-year-old kid get shot and these nine. And this is just what I know of. I don't have any more confirmations from the State Department, but it certainly is a concern.

Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. You are welcome.

If I might just add, if I could just take 1 more minute, I am a career consular officer with the Foreign Service, and I have spent a good deal of my career working in Mexico on Mexico issues with regard to the safety of American citizens. We take it very seriously.

We are immediately engaged when an American citizen is either injured or something more grave happens to them in Mexico. And I can tell you from my experience, the Mexican Government and their consular function kicks in to work very closely in tandem

with us in those cases. So in terms of cooperation, in my experience over the past 20 years, it has been very comprehensive.

And speaking once more to extraditions, I think we have had something north of 30 high-value extraditions in the past 90 days.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Thank you.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you, Congressman.

Well, thank you all for being here. Today is an important hearing. Reducing violence and insecurity in Mexico is no easy task. But I hope that my colleagues and I can work more closely in the coming months with the executive branch to evaluate our assistance to Mexico and improve our strategic approach toward Mexico.

I thank the witnesses and all the members for being here today.

With that, the committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:12 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128**

Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade

Albio Sires (D-NJ), Chairman

February 13, 2020

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>):

DATE: Thursday, February 13, 2020

TIME: 9:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: Assessing U.S. Security Assistance to Mexico

WITNESSES: Mr. Hugo Rodriguez
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Richard Glenn
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Ms. Barbara Feinstein
Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
United States Agency for International Development

*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special

accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY, AND TRADE HEARING

Day Thursday Date February 13, 2020 Room 2172

Starting Time 9:00am Ending Time 10:12am

Recesses 0 (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Albio Sires

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Stenographic Record ☒

Televised ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

Assessing U.S. Security Assistance to Mexico

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See attendance sheet (attached).

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

QFRs from Chairman Albio Sires and Rep. Joaquin Castro (attached).

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or
TIME ADJOURNED 10:12am

Randa Mearns
Subcommittee Staff Associate

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
WHEM SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Albio Sires, NJ
	Gregory W. Meeks, NY
X	Joaquin Castro, TX
	Adriano Espaillat, NY
X	Dean Phillips, MN
	Andy Levin, MI
X	Vicente González, TX
X	Juan Vargas, CA

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
X	Francis Rooney, FL
	Christopher Smith, NJ
X	Ted Yoho, FL
X	John Curtis, UT
X	Ken Buck, CO
	Michael Guest, MS

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN SIRES

House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Western Hemisphere Subcommittee

Chairman Albio Sires (D-NJ)

Opening Statement –
“Assessing U.S. Security Assistance to Mexico”
Thursday, February 13, 2020

-
- Good morning everyone and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.
 - In reading the news over the last few weeks, the shocking headlines from Mexico have been impossible to escape.
 - Last week, I saw that kids as young as six years old are arming themselves to defend their families in a rural part of Guerrero state.
 - As cartels have sought to assert control over the area, the murder rate has doubled and the community has nearly shut down.
 - Kids who should be in school learning math and science are instead learning how to fire shotguns and ambush armored vehicles.
 - As a former teacher, I believe that nothing is more sacred than the investment we make in our children’s future.
 - It broke my heart to think that these kids are being deprived of their right to learn and grow, free from violence and fear.
 - And we know that what is happening in Guerrero is just a microcosm of the broader trends we are seeing across Mexico.
 - Mexico’s homicide has reached its highest level in decades.
 - Targeted attacks against journalists, human rights defenders, and local public officials have continued at rates higher than almost anywhere in the world.
 - A recent report from the International Federation for Journalists found that Mexico is the deadliest country in the world for journalists.
 - Of the forty-nine journalist killings it documented in 2019, ten were in Mexico.
 - Most journalist murders, like most homicides in Mexico, are never solved.

- I have long advocated for robust U.S. assistance to help Mexico strengthen its democratic institutions, combat corruption, defend human rights, and improve security.
- I believe that Mexico and the United States have a shared responsibility to reduce violent crime and improve quality of life for those living on both sides of our border.
- The United States Government must enact stricter gun laws, dedicate more resources to combating money laundering by the cartels, and increase investment in programs to reduce domestic demand for illegal drugs.
- But we also expect a sincere commitment on the Mexican side to reducing this violence.
- I appreciate the effort that Mexico's security forces are making, but they are being outgunned by these brazen and well-resourced cartels.
- A Mexican civil society organization called "Common Cause" released a report this week showing that nine hundred and fifty-three police officers have been murdered in Mexico in just the past two years.
- I admire those courageous individuals who are putting their lives on the line.
- But it's clear that sustained political commitment is needed to address the underlying problems of impunity and corruption, which are perpetuating the violence in Mexico.
- Now is the time for the U.S. Government to look critically at our assistance programs to determine what is working and what is not.
- I am eager to hear from the State Department and U-S-A-I-D about our strategy and how Congress can measure tangible progress under the Merida Initiative.
- I sincerely hope that the Trump Administration is prioritizing security in our engagement with Mexico, rather than pressuring Mexico to use its National Guard to prevent desperate people from migrating.
- I know that many of my colleagues share my frustration that we have not made more progress under the Merida Initiative.
- I hope that this hearing will help us develop a clearer sense of what next steps we should take.

- I look forward to working with my colleagues and with the executive branch on a bipartisan basis to explore solutions to these difficult challenges.
- Thank you and I now turn to Ranking Member Rooney for his opening statement.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
U.S. State Department Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Hugo Rodriguez by
Representative Albio Sires**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

1. Since 2008, Congress has appropriated around \$3 billion for security and rule of law in Mexico through the Merida Initiative. In your estimation, do the metrics that the U.S. Government is currently using to assess the effectiveness of Merida Initiative programming provide a full picture of what is and is not working and where we should go from here?

2. During witness testimony, witnesses stated that U.S. programming that was aligned with Mexican efforts were most successful. Are current U.S. and Mexican strategies to improve security in Mexico aligned? How is the State Department working with the Mexican government to achieve better alignment between strategies?

3. In the past, the U.S. has withheld portions of its security assistance due to lack of progress by the Mexican government on human rights. Currently, human rights conditions apply to 25% of foreign military financing (FMF) funds provided to Mexico. What are the State Department and USAID doing to demand compliance with human rights in their security assistance? Is human rights conditionality in security assistance effective as a means of ensuring compliance by the Mexican authorities? Why have human rights progress reports for Mexico not been issued since 2017?

4. According to the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System in Mexico, femicides in the country have been on the rise. An average of 10 women are killed every day in Mexico, and as many as 25% of those murders may be considered femicides. The Executive Secretariat also found that in 2019, the number of women victims of violent crime such as femicide, kidnapping, and extortion, grew 2.5% to 74,632 women. In February, 25-year-old Ingrid Escamilla was brutally murdered, skinned, and disemboweled by her ex-husband after filing two complaints against him with the police, including one for domestic violence. Is the U.S. government working with the Mexican government in developing a strategy to address femicide and gender-based violence? What specific steps are being taken by the U.S. to address gender-based violence in Mexico? Is gender-based violence a priority for the U.S. or the Mexican government?

5. According to reporting by ProPublica, operations carried out by Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)-trained and funded vetted units – known as Sensitive Investigative Units or SIUs – in Monterrey and Allende, Mexico in 2010 and 2011 led to the deaths of between 60 and 300 Mexicans, the vast majority of whom were civilians. These operations raise serious questions about the practices of DEA-trained and funded SIUs and point to the need for greater accountability for these vetted units.

- What practices, if any, were changed by the DEA in Mexico or globally as a result of the SIU's activities? What role can INL play in making these reforms given its funding partnership with DEA?
- The Allende tragedy was precipitated by the leak of sensitive information provided to the DEA by a local source. This information was then shared by DEA with an SIU whose commander was rumored to have connections to Mexican drug trafficking organizations. At the time, we understood that the Mexican government refused to allow the U.S. to vet the commanders of these SIUs. Is that still the case? Should the U.S. government share information with SIUs if we are unable to vet their leadership?

6. A recent report by Doctors without Borders found that 75% of migrants they interviewed in Nuevo Laredo had been abducted while awaiting an asylum hearing under the "Remain in Mexico" policy. Is it the official position of the U.S. Government that so long as these individuals are in Mexican territory, the U.S. Government has no responsibility for ensuring their safety? Is the State Department pressing Mexico to manage their side of the implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols differently to ensure these individuals' safety? Do you dispute reports from human rights organizations that family separation is occurring under the Migrant Protection Protocols?

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
U.S. State Department Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Hugo Rodriguez by
Representative Albio Sires**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

Question 1:

Since 2008, Congress has appropriated around \$3 billion for security and rule of law in Mexico through the Merida Initiative. In your estimation, do the metrics that the U.S. Government is currently using to assess the effectiveness of Merida Initiative programming provide a full picture of what is and is not working and where we should go from here?

Answer 1:

The Department of State works closely with the Mexican government to track progress on our shared priorities using a variety of metrics, including but not limited to poppy eradication, seizures of illicit drugs, arms, and cash, and case prosecutions. We also track indicators of perceptions of rule of law and progress in institutional strengthening and professionalization of law enforcement and justice sector officials.

An enduring challenge to assessing the effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance programming in Mexico is the reliability and accuracy of the data for tracking outcomes; our efforts to improve those metrics through better project design and increased data sharing with the Mexican government are ongoing. These outcomes are high level metrics, which are by nature reliant on a multitude of variables, including: political will; the Mexican political, legal, and bureaucratic context; criminal organizations' actions and evolution; and the demand markets for illicit drugs. As a result, INL tracks outcome metrics in parallel with shorter term and smaller scale project results, which together provide a good sense of what is working and what is not. In specific areas, with specific Mexican partners, we have seen how U.S. investments and Mexican

political will can produce improvements that add up over time. We will continue to work closely with the Mexican government to build on that progress.

Question 2:

During witness testimony, witnesses stated that U.S. programming that was aligned with Mexican efforts were most successful. Are current U.S. and Mexican strategies to improve security in Mexico aligned? How is the State Department working with the Mexican government to achieve better alignment between strategies?

Answer 2:

The United States and Mexico are essential partners in confronting transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) operating on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. We are working together to take a strategic, comprehensive approach to dismantle these TCOs, including the targeting of their business model, from production and trafficking of illicit drugs to their illicit finances and revenue.

To further advance efforts to combat our shared security challenges, the United States and Mexico developed the Mexico City-based High-Level Security Group (HLSG), chaired by U.S. Ambassador Landau and Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations Ebrard and Secretary of Security and Citizen Protection Durazo. Under the umbrella of the HLSG, we have jointly developed bilateral working groups to tackle issues of the highest importance. These working groups focus on drug policy, migration, illicit finance, cyber security, armed forces, emergency response, justice sector, and arms trafficking. Through these working groups, our governments are identifying priorities and specific actions we can take together to make progress in each area. For example, the groups are looking at ways we can increase joint efforts to combat synthetic drugs and illicit drug production, increased drug interdiction and TCO prosecutions, and stem illicit finances. We are also working to reduce the amount of illicit firearms, weapons parts, and ammunition crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

Question 3:

In the past, the U.S. has withheld portions of its security assistance due to lack of progress by the Mexican government on human rights. Currently, human rights conditions apply to 25% of foreign military financing (FMF) funds provided to Mexico. What are the State Department and USAID doing to demand compliance with human rights in their security assistance? Is human rights conditionality in security assistance effective as a means of ensuring compliance by the Mexican authorities? Why have human rights progress reports for Mexico not been issued since 2017?

Answer 3:

The promotion of human rights is central to U.S. national security and prosperity. The United States uses a wide range of diplomatic tools to advance respect for human rights, including working directly with the Government of Mexico and civil society. USAID and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) have implemented projects in Mexico to address various human rights concerns, including forced disappearances, violence against human rights defenders and journalists, and impunity.

The Department promotes accountability for human rights violations and abuses by implementing human rights-related sanctions and visa ineligibilities, the Leahy law assistance restriction, and license reviews for arms sales. Consistent with U.S. law and Department policy, prior to furnishing assistance to security force units and individuals, we conduct Leahy vetting to assess if there is credible information that such units committed gross violations of human rights. The Department also considers non-human rights factors, including ties to organized crime and corruption, when implementing foreign assistance programming.

Understanding the importance of developing a security culture that respects human rights to be able to work effectively with the United States on regional security, Mexico is implementing internal vetting procedures and human rights training requirements for its new National Guard.

The Department submits reports consistent with the requirements of the relevant annual appropriations act.

Question 4:

According to the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System in Mexico, femicides in the country have been on the rise. An average of 10 women are killed every day in Mexico, and as many as 25% of those murders may be considered femicides. The Executive Secretariat also found that in 2019, the number of women victims of violent crime such as femicide, kidnapping, and extortion, grew 2.5% to 74,632 women. In February, 25-year-old Ingrid Escamilla was brutally murdered, skinned, and disemboweled by her ex-husband after filing two complaints against him with the police, including one for domestic violence. Is the U.S. government working with the Mexican government in developing a strategy to address femicide and gender-based violence? What specific steps are being taken by the United States to address gender-based violence in Mexico? Is gender-based violence a priority for the United States or the Mexican government?

Answer 4:

The governments of the United States and Mexico work together closely on various issues, including improving citizen security and protecting vulnerable populations. Gender-based violence (GBV) in Mexico is a priority for both governments.

On March 6, 2019, Mexico launched the “National Strategy for the Comprehensive Protection of Women, Girls, and Adolescents Affected by GBV.” The strategy calls for the establishment of coordination mechanisms between state and municipal governments to oversee victim services and searches for missing women and girls, as well as the development of a victim’s registry, advisory council, and legislative projects to strengthen prevention, investigations, accountability, and remedies in GBV cases. Execution of the national strategy is undertaken by the National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women (CONAVIM). The United States, which has a Memorandum of Understanding with Mexico to advance equality, empowerment, and the promotion of the human rights of women and girls, is working to assist Mexico on implementing its strategy.

USAID’s “No More Femicides” activity supports municipal and state governments in Nuevo León State to address specific challenges in the prevention, classification, investigation,

and prosecution of femicide cases. The activity is conducting a comprehensive diagnostic of femicides in the Monterrey metropolitan area with the goal of developing operational protocols, response, and prevention procedures for police, prosecutors, and judges. USAID is simultaneously working with civil society organizations to promote greater understanding of the issues by citizens and communities, while monitoring government responses.

Through the Promoting Justice (PROJUST) project, USAID developed a model for the evaluation and certification of Women's Justice Centers (WJCs) nationwide. CONAVIM adopted the model and included it as prerequisite to receive federal funding. PROJUST provided technical support to WJCs in 23 states and helped 13 states achieve CONAVIM certification. A new USAID activity will provide technical support to WJCs in the states of Coahuila, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas, Sonora, and Nuevo León.

INL has been working with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) since 2016 on a program to create a bridge between victims of GBV and Mexico's WJCs. As of December 2019, UNODC had trained 11,619 preventive police officers and emergency call center personnel on how to work with victims and connect them to WJC services. Beginning in January 2020, INL, building on the UNODC program, is administering a new advanced course on prevention and prosecution of femicide, targeted to 115 specialized police.

INL worked with the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 2018-2019 to provide study tours to police departments, victims advocate units, victims assistance centers, and shelters in Colorado, Florida, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin for 96 Mexican police and WJC leaders to demonstrate best practices in how these U.S. organizations work together.

Question 5:

According to reporting by ProPublica, operations carried out by Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)-trained and funded vetted units – known as Sensitive Investigative Units or SIUs – in Monterrey and Allende, Mexico in 2010 and 2011 led to the deaths of between 60 and 300 Mexicans, the vast majority of whom were civilians. These operations raise serious questions about the practices of DEA-trained and funded SIUs and point to the need for greater accountability for these vetted units.

- A. What practices, if any, were changed by the DEA in Mexico or globally as a result of the SIU's activities? What role can INL play in making these reforms given its funding partnership with DEA?
- B. The Allende tragedy was precipitated by the leak of sensitive information provided to the DEA by a local source. This information was then shared by DEA with an SIU whose commander was rumored to have connections to Mexican drug trafficking organizations. At the time, we understood that the Mexican government refused to allow the U.S. to vet the commanders of these SIUs. Is that still the case? Should the U.S. government share information with SIUs if we are unable to vet their leadership?

Answer 5:

INL provides administrative support to the DEA SIU in Mexico by managing DEA's funds allotted for this purpose and provides limited logistical support. For information regarding the history and current operations of the DEA SIU program in Mexico, we refer you to the DEA.

Question 6:

A recent report by Doctors without Borders found that 75% of migrants they interviewed in Nuevo Laredo had been abducted while awaiting an asylum hearing under the “Remain in Mexico” policy. Is it the official position of the U.S. Government that so long as these individuals are in Mexican territory, the U.S. Government has no responsibility for ensuring their safety? Is the State Department pressing Mexico to manage their side of the implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols differently to ensure these individuals’ safety? Do you dispute reports from human rights organizations that family separation is occurring under the Migrant Protection Protocols?

Answer 6:

The Department regularly engages the Government of Mexico (GOM) to address security challenges and closely monitors the security situation at the U.S. southern border. Department personnel have spoken to shelter administrators, Mexican National Institute of Migration staff, and Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Relations leadership about the living conditions, health, and security of those individual migrants and families returned to Mexico under the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). The GOM has noted publicly that individuals under the MPP are accorded all protections and freedoms recognized under Mexico’s legal obligations.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Glenn by
Representative Albio Sires**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

1. As a response to pressure from the Trump Administration to increase migration enforcement at border crossings, as many as one-third of the National Guard's members were deployed to Mexico's borders to provide backup and support for migration authorities during the summer of 2019. How do you respond to the concern that the use of the National Guard for migration enforcement could undermine its capabilities and resources to combat the cartels? Have any human rights concerns been raised to the U.S. government regarding the National Guard's treatment of Central American migrants? What mechanisms exist within the National Guard to address human rights violations?
2. A portion of Merida Initiative funding has gone to disrupting illicit finance by addressing money-laundering by transnational criminal organizations. How effective have Merida Initiative efforts been in combatting money laundering? What further steps can our Congress and the executive branch take to combat money laundering? Are U.S. banks doing enough to stop drug money from entering the U.S. financial system? What additional measures should they take to stop money laundering?
3. According to data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, 73,684 firearms—about 70% of all firearms seized in Mexico and traced between 2009 and 2014—came from the United States. Most of these weapons or weapon parts were purchased legally in the U.S. and illegally trafficked to Mexico. It was recently reported by the Wall Street Journal that the U.S. will step up its efforts to prevent guns from being smuggled into Mexico, in exchange for Mexico's enhanced efforts to go after and extradite high-value targets. Can you explain what specific new steps the U.S. will take to combat gun smuggling into Mexico? What specific benchmarks has the U.S. government established for reducing firearms trafficking? How does the U.S. government monitor firearms trafficking to Mexico?
4. In the past, the U.S. has withheld portions of its security assistance due to lack of progress by the Mexican government on human rights. Currently, human rights conditions apply to 25% of foreign military financing (FMF) funds provided to Mexico. Can you confirm that the U.S. Government is thoroughly vetting all security units receiving assistance in compliance with the Leahy Law? The preliminary results of an ongoing Government Accountability Office (GAO)

study suggest that INL and USAID have reduced their local human rights vetting of non-security personnel with sensitive positions. Are you aware of this practice being scaled back and, if so, can you explain why?

5. An upcoming Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on monitoring and evaluation plans under the Merida Initiative found that while USAID consistently created and followed monitoring and evaluation plans, INL often did not. How is INL assessing success of programs if not through monitoring and evaluation plans and procedures? Are there any efforts underway to improve INL's monitoring and evaluation of its programs?

6. In the Government Accountability Office (GAO)'s 2010 report on Merida Initiative performance indicators, the GAO recommended the adoption of outcome-based measures, rather than solely output measures. It also highlighted the importance of collecting baseline data and developing clear progress benchmarks. In what specific ways were GAO's 2010 recommendations incorporated into your monitoring and evaluation efforts? How do you measure the overall impact of the Merida Initiative? Are the Department of State and USAID planning on performing any impact assessments of the Merida Initiative? How are you linking project-level output indicators with indicators of the broader impact of the initiative?

7. In your testimony, you raised concern about police corruption at a local level and confirmed that INL is vetting police forces before receiving any U.S. assistance. Previously, the U.S. has supported police evaluation and vetting through the control de confianza, supported efforts to have a fully operational national registry of public security personnel, and supported the creation of anti-corruption systems and internal controls within security forces. Is the U.S. supporting internal affairs units within Mexico's police forces? What other methods is INL using to ensure that recipients of assistance are not corrupt? Does INL plan to provide support for anti-corruption efforts within the National Guard?

8. There is an ongoing debate over the wisdom of the U.S. and Mexican strategy of going after high-value cartel leaders. This approach was epitomized by the arrest and extradition of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman in 2017, which, by some accounts, led to violent competition between the Sinaloa cartel and the Jalisco-Nueva Generación cartel. Some experts argue that the approach has caused the larger drug trafficking organizations to splinter into competing factions, in some cases causing even greater violence. Do you believe that the strategy of targeting top cartel leaders has been helpful in the broader effort to reduce violent crime and insecurity in Mexico?

9. According to reporting by ProPublica, operations carried out by Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)-trained and funded vetted units – known as Sensitive Investigative Units or SIUs – in Monterrey and Allende, Mexico in 2010 and 2011 led to the deaths of between 60

and 300 Mexicans, the vast majority of whom were civilians. These operations raise serious questions about the practices of DEA-trained and funded SIUs and point to the need for greater accountability for these vetted units.

- What practices, if any, were changed by the DEA in Mexico or globally as a result of the SIU's activities? What role can INL play in making these reforms given its funding partnership with DEA?
- The Allende tragedy was precipitated by the leak of sensitive information provided to the DEA by a local source. This information was then shared by DEA with an SIU whose commander was rumored to have connections to Mexican drug trafficking organizations. At the time, we understood that the Mexican government refused to allow the U.S. to vet the commanders of these SIUs. Is that still the case? Should the U.S. government share information with SIUs if we are unable to vet their leadership?

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Glenn by
Representative Albio Sires**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

Question 1:

As a response to pressure from the Trump Administration to increase migration enforcement at border crossings, as many as one-third of the National Guard's members were deployed to Mexico's borders to provide backup and support for migration authorities during the summer of 2019. How do you respond to the concern that the use of the National Guard for migration enforcement could undermine its capabilities and resources to combat the cartels? Have any human rights concerns been raised to the U.S. government regarding the National Guard's treatment of Central American migrants? What mechanisms exist within the National Guard to address human rights violations?

Answer 1:

The Mexican government continues to address multiple priorities of importance to the United States, including migration, disrupting transnational organized crime, and reducing the amount of illicit drugs entering the United States. The Mexican National Guard has a wide mandate to address all of these issues, as provided by its legislative authorities, and we assess the National Guard will play an increasingly prominent role in public security as its forces reach their intended capacity by 2023.

We are aware that Mexico's National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) is reviewing 32 complaints against the National Guard for possible human rights violations in 2019, including six unconfirmed complaints for the treatment of migrants. To date, CNDH has not confirmed any of the alleged violations. The Mexican government requires all National Guard members to undergo human rights training in partnership with the United Nations Office of the High

Commissioner for Human Rights. As human rights issues arise, we will make clear our concerns and take action as appropriate.

Question 2:

A portion of Merida Initiative funding has gone to disrupting illicit finance by addressing money-laundering by transnational criminal organizations. How effective have Merida Initiative efforts been in combatting money laundering? What further steps can our Congress and the executive branch take to combat money laundering? Are U.S. banks doing enough to stop drug money from entering the U.S. financial system? What additional measures should they take to stop money laundering?

Answer 2:

The Department of State works closely with the Department of Treasury, Department of Justice, and other U.S. government partners to better integrate efforts with Mexico to detect, investigate, and prevent money laundering. INL programs have trained and mentored more than 2,400 Mexican federal and state investigators and prosecutors to develop the skills to advance anti-money laundering and asset seizure cases in Mexico. INL provides equipment and systems support to expand technical capabilities to build anti-money laundering investigations and strengthen the ability of Mexican regulators to deter money laundering.

As a result of this support, the Mexican Prosecutor General's Office (FGR/SEIDO) organized crime unit, a beneficiary of INL training, litigated over 40 asset forfeiture cases against various criminal organizations in 2018, seizing over \$18 million worth of assets and initiating efforts to seize an additional one million dollars from criminal enterprises. In the state of Quintana Roo, the Special Anti-Corruption Prosecutor attributed the recovery of \$11.5 million in state resources (including real estate and financial resources connected to corruption) in 2019 to INL training and technical assistance. In July 2019, Mexico passed a bill to reform its asset forfeiture regime, drafted with support from INL; the legislation represents an opportunity to deepen our cooperation to reduce impunity for financial crimes. We look to the Government of Mexico to fully utilize the tools and training provided to target illicit profits of transnational

criminal organizations. For efforts to combat money laundering in the United States, we refer you to the Department of Treasury.

Question 3:

According to data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, 73,684 firearms—about 70% of all firearms seized in Mexico and traced between 2009 and 2014—came from the United States. Most of these weapons or weapon parts were purchased legally in the U.S. and illegally trafficked to Mexico. It was recently reported by the Wall Street Journal that the U.S. will step up its efforts to prevent guns from being smuggled into Mexico, in exchange for Mexico's enhanced efforts to go after and extradite high-value targets. Can you explain what specific new steps the U.S. will take to combat gun smuggling into Mexico? What specific benchmarks has the U.S. government established for reducing firearms trafficking? How does the U.S. government monitor firearms trafficking to Mexico?

Answer 3:

Arms trafficking is the focus of one of eight bilateral sub-groups of the Mexico City-based High-Level Security Group (HLSG). The HLSG is chaired by U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Christopher Landau, Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard, and Mexican Secretary of Security and Citizen Protection Alfonso Durazo. The arms trafficking sub-group is chaired on the U.S. side by the Department of Justice's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Through this group, we are working closely with our Mexican counterparts, as well as members of the U.S. interagency, to reduce the amount of illicit firearms, weapons parts, and ammunition crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, particularly at the six land ports of entry the Mexican government has prioritized for countering southbound illicit firearms.

In partnership with ATF, INL is supporting training for investigative and forensic staff at the federal and state levels on the use of ATF's eTrace system, which identifies a seized firearm's original purchaser to inform a criminal investigation. The training will be integrated into INL's current programming, which raises forensic labs to international standards in support of criminal prosecutions. We strongly encourage Mexico to ensure full and effective use of previously-donated non-intrusive inspection equipment, as well as to permanently increase inspections of southbound traffic at our shared border. Working together, we can enhance joint

screening along our shared border to modernize and improve our ability to seize drugs before they enter the United States and disrupt the movement of arms into Mexico. We refer you to the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice for additional details on arms trafficking investigations and operations.

Question 4:

In the past, the U.S. has withheld portions of its security assistance due to lack of progress by the Mexican government on human rights. Currently, human rights conditions apply to 25% of foreign military financing (FMF) funds provided to Mexico. Can you confirm that the U.S. Government is thoroughly vetting all security units receiving assistance in compliance with the Leahy Law? The preliminary results of an ongoing Government Accountability Office (GAO) study suggest that INL and USAID have reduced their local human rights vetting of non-security personnel with sensitive positions. Are you aware of this practice being scaled back and, if so, can you explain why?

Answer 4:

The promotion and defense of the rule of law and human rights is a priority for the United States and remains a central component of our relationship with Mexico. In accordance with the Leahy law and State Department vetting procedures, we vet all security units nominated to receive applicable security assistance for human rights violations, including rosters of their individual commanders and members. The Department also considers non-human rights derogatory information during the vetting process, including ties to organized crime and corruption.

In addition to required Leahy vetting, U.S. Embassy Mexico City conducted local human rights vetting for non-security personnel. Due to staffing limitations, this additional vetting process was suspended in June 2017. Embassy Mexico City conducts the highest volume of Leahy vetting of any post worldwide, with more than 20,000 individuals vetted under the Leahy laws in each of the last two years.

Question 5:

An upcoming Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on monitoring and evaluation plans under the Merida Initiative found that while USAID consistently created and followed monitoring and evaluation plans, INL often did not. How is INL assessing success of programs if not through monitoring and evaluation plans and procedures? Are there any efforts underway to improve INL's monitoring and evaluation of its programs?

Answer 5:

The Merida Initiative has better positioned U.S.-Mexico security cooperation over the last 12 years to confront the evolving drug threat, tackle corruption and insecurity, and build trust between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement. We work closely with the Mexican government to track progress against our shared priorities using a variety of metrics, including but not limited to poppy eradication; seizures of illicit drugs, arms, and cash; and case prosecutions. We also track indicators of perceptions of rule of law and progress in institutional strengthening and professionalization of law enforcement and justice sector officials.

Our efforts to improve those metrics through better project design and increased data sharing with the Mexican government are ongoing. An increasing number of INL projects consist of a phased approach, including an initial assessment to establish clear baselines agreed with Mexican partner agencies and a plan to closely measure progress against the baselines in future stages of project implementation. INL is implementing new design standards for each project that align with GAO best practices and establish short- and long-term indicators that measure activity outputs as well as measured impact against strategic goals such as increased prosecutions and reduced drug production. In 2015, INL established a Monitoring and Evaluation team to better track program results and work more closely with the Mexican government on information sharing. INL now collects hundreds of data points from the Mexican

government and implementing partners and has a comprehensive web-based platform to track and analyze those points over time.

Question 6:

In the Government Accountability Office (GAO)'s 2010 report on Merida Initiative performance indicators, the GAO recommended the adoption of outcome-based measures, rather than solely output measures. It also highlighted the importance of collecting baseline data and developing clear progress benchmarks. In what specific ways were GAO's 2010 recommendations incorporated into your monitoring and evaluation efforts? How do you measure the overall impact of the Merida Initiative? Are the Department of State and USAID planning on performing any impact assessments of the Merida Initiative? How are you linking project-level output indicators with indicators of the broader impact of the initiative?

Answer 6:

We work closely with the Mexican government to track progress against our shared priorities using a variety of metrics, including but not limited to poppy eradication; seizures of illicit drugs, arms, and cash; and case prosecutions. We also track indicators of institutional strengthening and professionalization of law enforcement and justice sector officials. Our efforts to improve those metrics through better project design and increased data sharing with the Mexican government are ongoing.

As we work to improve the reliability and accuracy of data to measure output and outcomes, new INL projects are now designed with a plan for collecting the data that will measure their outcomes. Project-level output indicators feed into a model that identifies the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes. For example, a police training project produces an output of trained police, which contributes to the short-term outcome of police who are more confident in their professional skills, and ultimately to the longer term outcome of enhanced public confidence in police and a reduction in the crime rate. Where we lack data, we design and fund projects that will collect and analyze the necessary baseline information to inform future assistance. This is a long-term process; baseline assessment projects designed by INL with the purpose of improving evaluation several years ago are now beginning to provide the information

we will use to design future projects. Separately, in 2020, INL will conduct an impact assessment of the corrections program, one of the Merida Initiative's longest-running programs. We look forward to reviewing the results of the GAO's report on the impact of Merida Initiative programs and will endeavor to incorporate their recommendations in future programming.

Question 7:

In your testimony, you raised concern about police corruption at a local level and confirmed that INL is vetting police forces before receiving any U.S. assistance. Previously, the U.S. has supported police evaluation and vetting through the control de confianza, supported efforts to have a fully operational national registry of public security personnel, and supported the creation of anti-corruption systems and internal controls within security forces. Is the U.S. supporting internal affairs units within Mexico's police forces? What other methods is INL using to ensure that recipients of assistance are not corrupt? Does INL plan to provide support for anti-corruption efforts within the National Guard?

Answer 7:

Yes, U.S. assistance to police in Mexico includes efforts to strengthen the role of internal affairs units to reinforce accountability; ensure public agents adhere to professional, ethical, and legal principles, including on human rights; and reduce opportunities for corruption. INL helped Mexico develop professional certification standards and training curricula for internal affairs investigators. To date, 28 Mexican state internal affairs investigators have received their certification and will replicate the training and evaluation process for future cohorts, with the goal of certifying all 500 state-level internal affairs investigators over the next two years. INL is providing financial investigative training and equipment to state Anti-Corruption Prosecutors and related actors.

Under the Leahy vetting process, INL exercises its authority to reject Mexican security officials for training or other assistance not only based on credible allegations of gross violations of human rights (as is legally mandated), but also for information pertaining to other derogatory actions, including corruption, that may arise during the vetting process. Capable, trusted civilian law enforcement is key to achieving our shared goals, including at the federal level. The National Guard requires members to achieve and maintain the same professional police certificate (CUP) as the former Federal Police; this certificate requires among other things

background checks that include polygraphs, suitability investigations, and toxicology exams. The investigations look into potential prior ties to criminal activity, including corruption. We stand ready to discuss potential U.S. assistance to the Mexican National Guard, including on anti-corruption.

Question 8:

There is an ongoing debate over the wisdom of the U.S. and Mexican strategy of going after high-value cartel leaders. This approach was epitomized by the arrest and extradition of Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman in 2017, which, by some accounts, led to violent competition between the Sinaloa cartel and the Jalisco-Nueva Generación cartel. Some experts argue that the approach has caused the larger drug trafficking organizations to splinter into competing factions, in some cases causing even greater violence. Do you believe that the strategy of targeting top cartel leaders has been helpful in the broader effort to reduce violent crime and insecurity in Mexico?

Answer 8:

Targeting top cartel leaders is a necessary element to reduce insecurity in Mexico, but is insufficient on its own. It must be paired with parallel efforts to target and prosecute other mid-level members of transnational criminal organizations as well as the various components of the organizations’ business model: illicit drug production; trafficking of drugs, arms, people, and goods; and the related illicit proceeds. On the campaign trail and throughout its first year in office, the Lopez Obrador administration has changed course to prioritize tackling the root causes of violence. There are ongoing discussions between our governments on ways we can work together to combat our shared security challenges and support Mexico’s efforts to enhance the rule of law. We will continue to work with the Lopez Obrador administration to advance shared priorities and to innovate more effective approaches to dismantle transnational organized crime.

Question 9:

According to reporting by ProPublica, operations carried out by Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)-trained and funded vetted units – known as Sensitive Investigative Units or SIUs – in Monterrey and Allende, Mexico in 2010 and 2011 led to the deaths of between 60 and 300 Mexicans, the vast majority of whom were civilians. These operations raise serious questions about the practices of DEA-trained and funded SIUs and point to the need for greater accountability for these vetted units.

- A. What practices, if any, were changed by the DEA in Mexico or globally as a result of the SIU's activities? What role can INL play in making these reforms given its funding partnership with DEA?
- B. The Allende tragedy was precipitated by the leak of sensitive information provided to the DEA by a local source. This information was then shared by DEA with an SIU whose commander was rumored to have connections to Mexican drug trafficking organizations. At the time, we understood that the Mexican government refused to allow the U.S. to vet the commanders of these SIUs. Is that still the case? Should the U.S. government share information with SIUs if we are unable to vet their leadership?

Answer 9:

INL provides administrative support to the DEA SIU in Mexico by managing DEA's funds allotted for this purpose and provides limited logistical support. For information regarding the history and current operations of the DEA SIU program in Mexico, we refer you to the DEA.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
USAID Bureau for Latin America and Caribbean
Deputy Assistant Administrator Barbara Feinstein by
Representative Albio Sires**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

1. Between Fiscal Year 2014 and Fiscal Year 2018, \$70 million in assistance through the Merida Initiative was used by USAID for programs to address crime and violence prevention—implemented in coordination with civil society organizations, the private sector, and officials in the Mexican government. In your testimony, you pointed to some successes such as the low recidivism rate for USAID youth beneficiaries. How does USAID connect the success of these programs in specific communities to the broader security situation at the national level? Is USAID measuring the larger-scale impact of these programs? What challenges does USAID face in scaling up these efforts? Is the government of Mexico receptive to funding the scaling up or replication of successful programs?

2. In the past, the U.S. has withheld portions of its security assistance due to lack of progress by the Mexican government on human rights. Currently, human rights conditions apply to 25% of foreign military financing (FMF) funds provided to Mexico. The preliminary results of an ongoing Government Accountability Office (GAO) study suggest that INL and USAID have reduced their local human rights vetting of non-security personnel with sensitive positions. Are you aware of this practice being scaled back and, if so, can you explain why?

3. In the Government Accountability Office (GAO)'s 2010 report on Merida Initiative performance indicators, the GAO recommended the adoption of outcome-based measures, rather than solely output measures. It also highlighted the importance of collecting baseline data and developing clear progress benchmarks. In what specific ways were GAO's 2010 recommendations incorporated into your monitoring and evaluation efforts? How do you measure the overall impact of the Merida Initiative? Are the Department of State and USAID planning on performing any impact assessments of the Merida Initiative? How are you linking project-level output indicators with indicators of the broader impact of the initiative?

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
USAID Bureau for Latin America and Caribbean
Deputy Assistant Administrator Barbara Feinstein by
Representative Albio Sires**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

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Answer:

USAID supports local actors who use proven methods to interrupt the cycle of criminal behavior among youth, and works with the Government of Mexico (GOM) to take these initiatives to scale. For example, the GOM's National Policing and Civic Justice Model draws heavily on the civic justice model developed by USAID under its *Juntos para la Prevención de la Violencia (JPV)* activity, and is now being rolled out to nearly 70 municipalities across the country, demonstrating commitment to replication of successful programs. USAID-funded research on effective youth crime prevention interventions and the cost of violence in specific states provides an evidence base that has helped state and local governments shift resources from primary prevention (ie. in-school and sports programs) towards more targeted prevention

initiatives. These approaches target youth who exhibit risk factors for escalating criminal behavior (i.e. secondary) and those who are already in conflict with the law (i.e. tertiary), respectively.

This careful targeting and intensive engagement of those youth most likely to commit crimes has resulted in significantly lower recidivism rates and, when combined with proactive community engagement by police and municipal authorities, leads to reduced youth violence rates. For youth targeted by our programming, recidivism rates are a little over three percent, compared to a national average of 60 percent. In addition to recidivism rates and other individual measures such as school enrollment and employment, USAID connects the success of its programs through community measures such as youth intentional homicides and improved performance of the local institutions to implement prevention interventions beyond USAID's assistance. USAID monitors scaling of these interventions through federal and state government funding that is allocated for evidence-based violence reduction programming, as well as funding by local stakeholders.

USAID has attracted significant private sector investment in crime and violence prevention programming, particularly by local businesses who bear the costs of the crime and violence and have seen the results firsthand. Indeed, USAID's work with the private sector has frequently filled a gap where government resources are lacking.

The lack of consistent and targeted funding from state and federal governments is a core constraint to scaling. Local officials often prioritize investments in more visible security expenditures such as patrol cars, cameras, and equipment, over the systems and processes for youth intervention and community engagement that are supported by evidence but take time to develop and refine. To bolster scaling, USAID also promotes peer-to-peer exchanges between

municipal governments and shapes national policy through sharing evidence-based tertiary prevention programming successes.

A lesson learned by USAID over the past strategy period is the need to move beyond proofing “models” to working systemically with not only government, but also civil society and the private sector so that together, they own the problems; seek, lead and co-finance solutions; and thereby scale and sustain impact based on the local context.

Question:

In the past, the U.S. has withheld portions of its security assistance due to lack of progress by the Mexican government on human rights. Currently, human rights conditions apply to 25% of foreign military financing (FMF) funds provided to Mexico. The preliminary results of an ongoing Government Accountability Office (GAO) study suggest that INL and USAID have reduced their local human rights vetting of non-security personnel with sensitive positions. Are you aware of this practice being scaled back, and if so, can you explain why?

Answer:

Leahy vetting of security personnel on Gross Violation of Human Rights (GVHR) continues and is managed by the Political Section in the Embassy. U.S. Embassy/Mexico stopped local GVHR vetting on non-security personnel in 2017, due to staffing shortages and because such vetting is not legally required under the Leahy Amendment. The Consular Section performs name checks to determine whether USAID beneficiaries (those planning to attend trainings, conferences, etc.) have committed drug trafficking-related offenses. These checks can identify other credible derogatory information, including GVHR, which USAID may determine disqualifies the official for government-funded training.

Question:

In the Government Accountability Office (GAO)'s 2010 report on Merida Initiative performance indicators, the GAO recommended the adoption of outcome-based measures, rather than solely output measures. It also highlighted the importance of collecting baseline data and developing clear progress benchmarks. In what specific ways were GAO's 2010 recommendations incorporated into your monitoring and evaluation efforts? How do you measure the overall impact of the Merida Initiative? Are the Department of State and USAID planning on performing any impact assessments of the Merida Initiative? How are you linking project-level output indicators with indicators of the broader impact of the initiative?

Answer:

USAID has put in place systems for assessing the impact of our Merida Initiative programs in all stages: strategy, project and activity design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. We set clear objectives and measure actual results (both outputs and outcomes) using, among other things, indicator baselines, and targets specified in monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plans for our work in rule of law, crime and violence prevention, human rights, and anti-corruption.

The Results Framework outlined in the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for Mexico frames and guides all Mission project and activity designs. The Mission also maintains a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) covering the entire CDCS; the PMP is a Mission-wide tool for monitoring progress toward USAID's goals, project performance, programmatic assumptions, and operational context; evaluating performance and impact; and learning and adapting from evidence. The PMP informs individual project and activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plans, which are updated regularly and as needed. Implementing partners report on outputs and outcomes in quarterly and annual reports, using indicator data and other information, in accordance with the applicable MEL plan for that activity, and depending upon data availability and the frequency of data collection. The Mission

aggregates and tracks these results data reported by implementing partners and, when appropriate, commissions data collection by independent third parties (e.g., through a survey). These monitoring data inform portfolio reviews that are conducted twice per year. The Mission also reports to Washington on annual progress towards Strategy objectives through qualitative and quantitative data in an annual Program Performance Report (PPR).

There are several examples of how USAID measures the outcomes of its Merida programs:

- For our criminal justice system programs, the Mission's outcomes indicators include prosecution rates, the use of plea bargains to settle lesser crimes, and the use of alternative dispute resolution in the states in which we operate.
- Regarding prevention of crime and violence, the Mission tracks crime recidivism rates for at-risk youth as well as private sector investment in local crime prevention systems.
- For human rights, the Mission tracks the number of investigations, indictments, and convictions for human rights abuses, and the number of human remains processed and identified (in response to forced disappearances).
- Finally, for anti-corruption programs, the Mission tracks the number of states with functioning anti-corruption systems, prosecutors appointed, and analyses and investigative journalism reports that expose major acts of corruption.

USAID plans for and conducts independent and rigorous performance evaluations of all Merida investments by objectives (i.e. rule of law, crime and violence prevention, human rights

and anti-corruption), and publishes completed evaluation reports on our website. For example, in 2014 USAID contracted Vanderbilt University to conduct an impact evaluation of crime and violence prevention programs in Mexico. The Mission completed an evaluation of three human rights activities (the Constitutional Human Rights Practice, the National Campaign to Prevent Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment and Protecting Human Rights and Freedom of Expression in Mexico) in 2016. Finally, the Mission completed a mid-term evaluation of its rule of law activity in 2018. A performance evaluation of the Mission's new anti-corruption portfolio is currently ongoing, and the Mission will conduct an external performance evaluation of its major crime and violence activity in the coming year.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
U.S. State Department Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Hugo Rodriguez by
Representative Joaquin Castro**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

1. During the hearing, I asked State Department for the number of individuals who are currently at the Mexican border pursuant to the Migrant Protection Protocols and was promised a follow up response; afterwards the State Department's Legislative Affairs Bureau referred me to the Department of Homeland Security. Has the Department of Homeland Security provided the State Department with any information on the number of individuals currently in Mexico? Which offices and individuals at the Department of Homeland Security has the State Department communicated with regarding the Migrant Protection Protocols?

2. What programs are the Department of State and USAID implementing to support the well-being and security of asylum seekers subject to the Remain in Mexico policy and Migrant Protection Protocols, including shelter, healthcare, access to food, and transportation?

3. Under the Migrant Protection Protocols, the Department of Homeland Security has requested the Mexican government provide asylum seekers subject to the program with humanitarian protections. What steps is the Department of State taking to monitor and assess the Mexican government's provision of these protections?

4. The State Department has designated Tamaulipas state with a Level 4: Do Not Travel Advisory, stating that "organized crime activity" is "common along the northern border and in Ciudad Victoria," that criminal groups target individuals, including through kidnapping, and that "heavily armed members of criminal groups" "operate with impunity" in the border region. What information on criminal activity and safety in Mexico have you shared with the Department of Homeland Security to support its design and implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols in Tamaulipas and other states that also have travel advisories?

5. What efforts, if any, does the Department of State take in coordinating with the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and state governments including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in monitoring and ending the flow of firearms from the United States to criminal organizations in Mexico?

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
U.S. State Department Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Hugo Rodriguez by
Representative Joaquin Castro**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

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Answer 1:

The Department communicates regularly with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on various aspects of the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). The Department understands DHS has returned approximately 60,000 migrants to Mexico pursuant to the MPP but does not receive information on how many individuals returned under MPP remain in Mexico at any given time, awaiting the results of their U.S. immigration proceedings. We refer you to DHS and the Department of Justice for additional information on MPP implementation.

Question 2:

What programs are the Department of State and USAID implementing to support the well-being and security of asylum seekers subject to the Remain in Mexico policy and Migrant Protection Protocols, including shelter, healthcare, access to food, and transportation?

Answer:

The Department, through the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) is funding programs that support asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons, and vulnerable migrants, including individuals subject to the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP). This funding supports the activities of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to promote access to asylum and local integration opportunities, as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support local and government shelters in Northern Mexico and access to emergency assistance for individuals transitioning out of shelters. PRM funding for IOM also includes Assisted Voluntary Returns throughout the country, including for individuals who wish to withdraw their MPP applications and need assistance returning home. In FY 2019, PRM's funding totaled over \$79 million in assistance.

Question 3:

Under the Migrant Protection Protocols, the Department of Homeland Security has requested the Mexican government provide asylum seekers subject to the program with humanitarian protections. What steps is the Department of State taking to monitor and assess the Mexican government's provision of these protections?

Answer:

In the June 2019 U.S.-Mexico Joint Declaration, the Government of Mexico (GOM) committed to providing work authorization, access to healthcare, and education to migrants returned to Mexico under MPP. The Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) conducts regular field monitoring where it is funding activities, and also coordinates closely with Embassy and Consulate colleagues on shifting needs and broader conditions on the ground. PRM also has a regional refugee coordinator based in Mexico City who assists with field monitoring and humanitarian diplomacy. Since the June Joint Declaration, Mexico has established new shelters in Matamoros and in Tijuana and is working on plans for additional shelters in other locations along the northern border. In response to many migrants choosing to stay in informal camps near the international bridge in Matamoros despite available shelter space, the GOM installed temporary roofed structures with toilets and showers, which have electricity and hot water near the informal camp. The GOM is encouraging people to move to the new space and offering new tents. The Department continues to engage with Mexican authorities to encourage them to continue improving humanitarian and security conditions.

PRM provided more than \$51 million to UNHCR in FY 19 and has provided an additional nearly \$21 million so far in FY 20 to support asylum capacity building for the

Government of Mexico. With UNHCR's support, the Mexican Refugee Assistance Commission (COMAR) increased its asylum processing by 23 percent in calendar year 2019.

Question 4:

The State Department has designated Tamaulipas state with a Level 4: Do Not Travel Advisory, stating that "organized crime activity" is "common along the northern border and in Ciudad Victoria," that criminal groups target individuals, including through kidnapping, and that "heavily armed members of criminal groups" "operate with impunity" in the border region. What information on criminal activity and safety in Mexico have you shared with the Department of Homeland Security to support its design and implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols in Tamaulipas and other states that also have travel advisories?

Answer 4:

We refer you to the Department of Homeland Security on questions related to the design and implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Glenn by
Representative Joaquin Castro**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

1. While the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement provides some assistance to Mexico to build its capacity to interdict and seize illicit firearms, such as the donation of inspection equipment and detection canines and the training of forensic personnel on the use of the ATF eTrace system, how does the State Department assess the efforts of the Mexican government to effectively leverage this assistance?
2. What efforts, if any, does the Department of State take in coordinating with the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and state governments including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in monitoring and ending the flow of firearms from the United States to criminal organizations in Mexico?

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Glenn by
Representative Joaquin Castro**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

Question 1:

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Answer 1:

INL supports Mexico's efforts to enhance the interdiction, investigation, and prosecution of illicit firearms and firearms traffickers through training on serial number restoration and ballistics, as well as donated non-intrusive inspection equipment (NIIE) and canines. We are working with Mexico and the U.S. interagency to expand these efforts as part of a comprehensive approach to countering transnational criminal organizations. Mexico has made tackling arms trafficking one of its top priorities and has committed to increasing patrols and checkpoints at and around key ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border. They have also committed to expanding the use of eTrace to trace the origin of seized weapons.

We encourage Mexico to ensure full and effective use of previously-donated NIIE and permanently increase inspections of southbound traffic. Working together, we can enhance joint screening along our shared border to modernize and improve our ability to seize drugs before they enter the United States and disrupt the movement of arms south into Mexico. The U.S. government will continue to coordinate closely with Mexico through the arms trafficking sub-

group of the bilateral High-Level Security Group to reduce the amount of illicit firearms, weapons parts, and ammunition crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

Question 2:

What efforts, if any, does the Department of State take in coordinating with the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and state governments including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in monitoring and ending the flow of firearms from the United States to criminal organizations in Mexico?

Answer 2:

The Department of State coordinates closely with our U.S. interagency partners on the issue of illicit firearms trafficking. To advance efforts to combat our shared security challenges, the United States and Mexico have developed the Mexico City-based High-Level Security Group (HLSG). The HLSG is chaired by U.S. Ambassador Landau and Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations Ebrard and Secretary of Security and Citizen Protection Durazo. Under the umbrella of the HLSG, one of the eight bilateral working groups focuses on arms trafficking. Through this group, the U.S. government is working closely with our Mexican counterparts, as well as members of the U.S. interagency, to reduce the amount of illicit firearms, weapons parts, and ammunition crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

I would defer to my federal law enforcement colleagues on their coordination with state governments related to the flow of firearms across the U.S. border.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
USAID Bureau for Latin America and Caribbean
Deputy Assistant Administrator Barbara Feinstein by
Representative Joaquin Castro**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

1. What programs are the Department of State and USAID implementing to support the well-being and security of asylum seekers subject to the Remain in Mexico policy and Migrant Protection Protocols, including shelter, healthcare, access to food, and transportation?

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Question:

What programs are the Department of State and USAID implementing to support the well-being and security of asylum seekers subject to the Remain in Mexico policy and Migrant Protection Protocols, including shelter, healthcare, access to food, and transportation?

Answer:

Efforts to support the well-being and security of asylum seekers in Mexico are not within USAID's purview. As noted in my testimony, the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau is working in this space.

Question 3:

Under the Migrant Protection Protocols, the Department of Homeland Security has requested the Mexican government provide asylum seekers subject to the program with humanitarian protections. What steps is the Department of State taking to monitor and assess the Mexican government's provision of these protections?

Answer:

In the June 2019 U.S.-Mexico Joint Declaration, the Government of Mexico (GOM) committed to providing work authorization, access to healthcare, and education to migrants returned to Mexico under MPP. The Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) conducts regular field monitoring where it is funding activities, and also coordinates closely with Embassy and Consulate colleagues on shifting needs and broader conditions on the ground. PRM also has a regional refugee coordinator based in Mexico City who assists with field monitoring and humanitarian diplomacy. Since the June Joint Declaration, Mexico has established new shelters in Matamoros and in Tijuana and is working on plans for additional shelters in other locations along the northern border. In response to many migrants choosing to stay in informal camps near the international bridge in Matamoros despite available shelter space, the GOM installed temporary roofed structures with toilets and showers, which have electricity and hot water near the informal camp. The GOM is encouraging people to move to the new space and offering new tents. The Department continues to engage with Mexican authorities to encourage them to continue improving humanitarian and security conditions.

PRM provided more than \$51 million to UNHCR in FY 19 and has provided an additional nearly \$21 million so far in FY 20 to support asylum capacity building for the

Government of Mexico. With UNHCR's support, the Mexican Refugee Assistance Commission (COMAR) increased its asylum processing by 23 percent in calendar year 2019.

Question 4:

The State Department has designated Tamaulipas state with a Level 4: Do Not Travel Advisory, stating that "organized crime activity" is "common along the northern border and in Ciudad Victoria," that criminal groups target individuals, including through kidnapping, and that "heavily armed members of criminal groups" "operate with impunity" in the border region. What information on criminal activity and safety in Mexico have you shared with the Department of Homeland Security to support its design and implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols in Tamaulipas and other states that also have travel advisories?

Answer 4:

We refer you to the Department of Homeland Security on questions related to the design and implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Glenn by
Representative Joaquin Castro**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security and Trade
Thursday, February 13, 2020**

1. While the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement provides some assistance to Mexico to build its capacity to interdict and seize illicit firearms, such as the donation of inspection equipment and detection canines and the training of forensic personnel on the use of the ATF eTrace system, how does the State Department assess the efforts of the Mexican government to effectively leverage this assistance?
2. What efforts, if any, does the Department of State take in coordinating with the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and state governments including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in monitoring and ending the flow of firearms from the United States to criminal organizations in Mexico?

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Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary Richard Glenn by
Representative Joaquin Castro**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
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Question 1:

While the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement provides some assistance to Mexico to build its capacity to interdict and seize illicit firearms, such as the donation of inspection equipment and detection canines and the training of forensic personnel on the use of the ATF eTrace system, how does the State Department assess the efforts of the Mexican government to effectively leverage this assistance?

Answer 1:

INL supports Mexico's efforts to enhance the interdiction, investigation, and prosecution of illicit firearms and firearms traffickers through training on serial number restoration and ballistics, as well as donated non-intrusive inspection equipment (NIIE) and canines. We are working with Mexico and the U.S. interagency to expand these efforts as part of a comprehensive approach to countering transnational criminal organizations. Mexico has made tackling arms trafficking one of its top priorities and has committed to increasing patrols and checkpoints at and around key ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border. They have also committed to expanding the use of eTrace to trace the origin of seized weapons.

We encourage Mexico to ensure full and effective use of previously-donated NIIE and permanently increase inspections of southbound traffic. Working together, we can enhance joint screening along our shared border to modernize and improve our ability to seize drugs before they enter the United States and disrupt the movement of arms south into Mexico. The U.S. government will continue to coordinate closely with Mexico through the arms trafficking sub-

group of the bilateral High-Level Security Group to reduce the amount of illicit firearms, weapons parts, and ammunition crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

Question 2:

What efforts, if any, does the Department of State take in coordinating with the Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and state governments including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in monitoring and ending the flow of firearms from the United States to criminal organizations in Mexico?

Answer 2:

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I would defer to my federal law enforcement colleagues on their coordination with state governments related to the flow of firearms across the U.S. border.

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