

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN HENRY CUELLAR, as prepared
Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Border, Maritime,
and Global Counterterrorism *and* the Committee on Foreign Affairs'
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere
JOINT HEARING on

**“U.S.-MEXICO SECURITY COOPERATION:
NEXT STEPS FOR THE MERIDA INITIATIVE”**

May 27, 2010

The issues before us are of great concern to both subcommittees, and I anticipate a thoughtful and productive discussion.

I would also like to welcome the new Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism, my friend Candice Miller of Michigan.

Both of us represent districts along our Nation's borders, and I know we have several issues of mutual interest.

I very much look forward to working with her in the weeks and months ahead. That brings us to today's hearing on the Merida Initiative and U.S.-Mexico security cooperation. This hearing could not be more timely.

It comes on the heels of Mexican President Felipe Calderon's State visit and address to Congress last week.

It also follows this week's announcement by the Obama Administration regarding sending 1,200 National Guard troops to the southern border and requesting \$500 million in supplemental border security funding.

Since the introduction of my bill in the 110th Congress, the Prosperous and Secure Neighbor Alliance Act of 2007, which laid the ground work for aid to Mexico. I have long been a staunch supporter of the Merida Initiative, and was greatly encouraged by the dialogue during President Calderon's visit last week.

As the witnesses are well aware, I have also long expressed my concern that the \$1.3 billion for Merida has not been allocated nor put to use as soon as possible.

Many of us would like to see Merida funding deployed more quickly, given the urgent nature of the problem. So I look forward to working together in the coming months to facilitate an increase in the pace of the funding.

As President Calderon said in his address to Congress last week: “Restoring public security will not be easy and will not be quick. This is a battle that has to be fought because the future of our families is at stake.”

That is why it is essential that we continue the good work we have initiated with Merida by supporting continued-funding to ensure the security of the Southern Border going forward.

An important part of the House War Supplemental is also to continue funding this vital program.

Those of us who live in southern border communities are at the frontlines of U.S. Mexico Policy.

Continued funding for Merida benefits not just Mexico, but ultimately U.S. security and prosperity as well.

Representing the Texas border, I support the President's supplemental funding request to augment efforts to secure America's southern border.

In April, I joined many of my border colleagues in requesting over \$500 million in emergency funding to support our law enforcement capabilities on the ground.

It is gratifying to see that our request was heard and that swift action is being taken.

I am keenly interested in learning more details about the President's proposal for the deployment of National Guard to the southern border.

This deployment will allow our Federal, State, and Local law enforcement agencies to accomplish more.

For today's hearing, I look forward to hearing our witnesses' perspectives about implementation of the Merida Initiative up to now and their thoughts on the next steps for the program.

I also want to hear about their impressions regarding the ongoing violence in Mexico, the potential for increased violence along the Southern Border, and ways that we can improve infrastructure and ensure a safe environment for our families and businesses.