



# COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**David Price (D-NC), Chairman, Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

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**OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DAVID PRICE**  
*Department of Homeland Security's Response to Violence on the  
Border with Mexico*  
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With over 6,000 dead in 2008, and over 1,000 dead in January 2009 alone, the violent clash of drug cartels in Mexico has caught the attention of many of us in Congress, and it certainly has for Americans living near the border. Mexico has sent its military to the border region and has assumed control of police in hot spots like Ciudad Juarez. As Secretary Napolitano testified last week, the situation “deserves our utmost attention.”

We should first be clear – we are not talking about anything like the raids of Pancho Villa during the Mexican Revolution, nor should we be raising fears of mass migrations northward. Nonetheless, while Mexican President Calderon dismissed reports that Mexico is at risk of becoming a “failed state”, concern is rising about impact of the violence on the region and beyond. The U.S. is providing assistance to Mexico through the Merida initiative; Defense Secretary Gates has offered to provide additional assistance to Mexico; Texas Governor Perry has asked for “federal troops” to provide immediate relief for his State; the State Department has warned U.S. travelers to stay away; and the Attorney General has promised to destroy the cartels. Secretary Napolitano testified that she has asked the National Security Advisor, Attorney General, and State and local law enforcement to review ways to help the Mexican

government stop the flow of guns and cash to the cartels, and identify areas where more resources may be needed.

While there have been some reports of contract killings and high-profile kidnapping in the U.S., statistics actually show declines in such violence in border communities such as El Paso and Phoenix, often cited as a hotbed for such activity. It appears – so far – that such violence is not yet systematically “spilling over,” as some have alleged. But the fact that the violence is largely limited to Mexico does not mean that it is not of grave U.S. concern. We hope that our witnesses today can help us understand why Mexican violence threatens the homeland security of the United States. Specifically, how is this violence affecting the cross-border coordination and collaboration on which border security depends?

Unfortunately, the U.S. plays a key role in fueling the violence by its huge demand for illegal drugs, and, as the State Department reported last month, as the source of the cartels’ weapons. We hope to hear today what the U.S. can do and how and why the U.S. government is getting more directly engaged.

This issue touches the missions of many agencies, not only DHS but also Justice, State, and Defense. In this panel, however, we will focus on the DHS role in helping to stem this violence, to confront its spillover on our borders and within our communities, and to prepare for contingencies. We welcome Mark Koumans, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs, to describe the Department’s interaction with its Mexican counterparts, and Marcy Forman, Director of the Office of Investigations for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, to discuss how ICE is helping attack cartel networks and organizations. We also welcome back our CBP witnesses from the first panel, Acting Commissioner Ahern and Border

Patrol Chief Aguilar, to discuss CBP's efforts to address the risk of violence and its impact on trade, immigration and border security. We also expect to hear about interagency and intergovernmental initiatives such as the Border Enforcement Security Teams, or BEST, which have been established in response to violence in areas such as Laredo, El Paso and Tucson. We will insert your complete statements in the hearing record and look forward to five-minute oral presentations, from Deputy Assistant Secretary Koumans, followed by Ms. Forman. We heard from the Acting Commissioner on the morning panel.

Let me turn now to the distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Rogers, for his comments.

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