



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas)
Committee on Homeland Security**

“Taking Down the Cartels: Examining United States – Mexico Cooperation”

Just last month, the Pena Nieto Administration, in coordination with U.S. law enforcement, took down the biggest drug kingpin in the world. ‘El Chapo’ Guzman was responsible for thousands of deaths, and for violence that stretches across the globe. Leading up to Guzman’s capture, Mexican authorities also arrested a series of his lieutenants. This past July, President Pena Nieto’s administration also captured Miguel Angel Treviño Morales, the leader of the Los Zetas cartel. This was the most significant arrest prior to Guzman’s and is indicative of President Pena Nieto’s commitment to bringing down the cartels. Now we have an opportunity to examine the bilateral cooperation between our two nations that resulted in this progress, and how we can build upon these successes to further combat the cartels.

I applaud Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for their participation along with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Marshals, the U.S State Department, and Mexican authorities for this capture. The involvement of our agencies stems from the fact that Guzman’s reach went far beyond Mexico’s borders. He is public enemy number one in Chicago and carries indictments in California, New York, and my home state of Texas.

As we all know, the capture of this drug lord was significant both symbolically and operationally to the Sinaloa Cartel, however we know that drug trafficking organizations like this one will continue on, and are nowhere near extinction. The best way for us to counter them is by working together, and today we are here to examine U.S. – Mexico cooperation in battling the cartels, and the cartel’s effects on our homeland security.

Americans understand that the threat posed by drug traffickers is particularly intense along our Southwest border. These organizations compete against each other for smuggling routes into the United States – creating a war zone that engulfs innocent people living in the region. The spillover violence in the United States stems from a variety of criminal activities which bring people and illicit goods into the country.

Drug trafficking organizations are highly agile. With billions of dollars in capital, these cartels are capable of corrupting officials and responding violently when targeted by law enforcement. Additionally, these organizations are not constrained by boundaries, so often their crimes pass through many jurisdictions – creating an often challenging landscape for law enforcement – and reinforcing the need to work together to counter these criminals.

Cartels like the Sinaloas and the Zetas in Northern Mexico are growing their capabilities and infrastructure and in doing so can facilitate the illicit flow of people, drugs, and weapons across our borders. There is the constant risk of these organizations partnering with Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO), and the past arrest of an Iranian national suspected of plotting to assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador in the United States allegedly involved Mexican cartel members. This depth and coordination of criminal activity highlights the need for heightened awareness of the narco-terrorist nexus within the Mexican cartels.

Because of the threats to both the United States and Mexico stemming from organized crime, both of our nations share security objectives for our borders – keep threats out, but ensure the expeditious flow of commerce. Our respective law enforcement agencies have been working closely together to come to a common understanding of how to synchronize enforcement operations on each side of the border. However, we cannot just focus on our shared border, Mexico must stop criminals long before they reach us. As Mexico's economy improves, it is now seeing an increase in immigration from Central and South America. This will place a great burden on Mexico to better secure its southern border, and we are working through the Merida initiative to assist in not only technology applications, but operational planning and training to support President Peña Nieto's goals as well as those of the United States.

As we saw last month, the ability to share information between U.S. and Mexico's law enforcement agencies, as well as plan and conduct bilateral operations, is critical to achieving our mutual goal of combating the cartels. As part of that effort, I and other members of this Committee, recently sent a letter to Attorney General Holder and Secretary of State Kerry encouraging them to request Guzman's extradition to the United States pursuant to the extradition treaty between our two nations. As with several other extraditions of narcotics traffickers from Mexico to the United States in recent years, this cooperation ensures these criminals will never threaten the law abiding citizens of our two great nations ever again.

With the support of President Peña Nieto, we have the opportunity to work together to continue to strengthen our partnerships and enhance our mutual security. We understand the sensitive nature of the cross-border cooperation, and I want to once again thank all of the agencies involved in Guzman's capture. Now, we have an opportunity to further that collaboration and build on the momentum that already exists.

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