

**Ranking Member William R. Keating (D-MA)  
Opening Statement**

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT, INVESTIGATIONS & MANAGEMENT**

**Joint Hearing:  
“Merida Part Two: Insurgency and Terrorism in Mexico”**

**2:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 4, 2011  
2172 Rayburn House Office Building**

As a member of both the House Committees on Foreign Affairs and Homeland Security, I appreciate the opportunity to jointly examine this very important topic.

Our combined presence indicates the extent to which we take the security of our Southern border seriously, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee on this topic.

Mr. Chairman, we are here today to examine the progress of the Merida Initiative, and how effective it has been in halting the flow of violence related to the criminal activities of Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations, known as DTOs, in moving illegal drugs and weapons across the Southwest Border.

That being said, the brutality of these DTOs has overshadowed a number of facts that are relevant to our discussion today. As we seek tangible solutions to the increasing levels of violence in Mexico, let us remember that those responsible for the growing rates of violence, particularly against women, are not distinctive.

We cannot paint the battle between the drug cartels and Mexican law enforcement in black and white.

It is no secret that the drug cartels, in many instances, are enabled by the very local police force and military that the Merida Initiative supports.

In some cases, these corrupt officials receive payment in exchange for their loyalty from the very criminals they need to be defending their country from. And, in other more disturbing cases, these officials commit heinous crimes themselves, including rape and murder, and go unquestioned due to the Mexican military's policy of impunity.

In two widely publicized cases, Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú, two indigenous women were raped by soldiers from the Mexican Army in the municipality of Ayutla, Guerrero state, in 2002.

However, to this day, the State has refused to admit that the two women were raped.

This is not acceptable.

And, unfortunately, these are not isolated instances of violence perpetrated by the military.

The National Human Rights Commission says it has received more than 5,000 complaints about alleged abuses by the military since the offensive against the drug gangs began in December 2006.

I note these cases, not to discredit President Calderon, who has taken steps to reform the judicial system in Mexico, but for us to go into this hearing with a complete picture of what is happening on the ground in Mexico and what President Calderon is up against.

At a time where we are all trying to tighten our belts, we need to monitor funding to the Mexican police and military closely, lest we add to the suffering of innocent victims, who unfortunately have nowhere to turn.

For this reason, I strongly support the training assistance that we provide to the Mexican military and police force. Our men and women on the border have the potential to be a truly positive influence in Mexico and prevent any violence from spilling over.

The U.S. and Mexico have made great strides in developing strong working relationships from the diplomatic levels down to field agents patrolling both sides of the Southwest Border.

At present, more than 17,500 Border Patrol Agents, 1,200 National Guardsmen are cleared for deployment along the border, and over 250 Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agents are assigned to securing the border.

Certainly, this does not mean that incursions along the border do not exist and undoubtedly more work can be done; however, this is the highest number of personnel to ever protect our border in this region and these numbers represent a step in the right direction.

In fact, more effort and resources are deployed along the Southwest border today, than ever before.

By the end of FY 2011, according to the State Department, the U.S. will have invested almost \$900 million in equipment and training to advance the Merida Initiative and assist our neighbor South of the border.

Since FY 2008, the U.S. has contributed approximately \$1.6 billion overall to the Initiative, while Mexico has allocated \$26 billion to promote public safety and security within its borders.

Furthermore, a new effort is now being implemented to strengthen Mexican civil society institutions by offering training and technical assistance.

I hope that these advances in the Merida Initiative are furthered along with efforts to strengthen our borders as opposed to making them more vulnerable with strangling budget cuts.

Although, we need to be incredibly weary of the money that goes to the Mexican government, this is not the time to decrease the number of border patrol agents and thus have the effect of making the Southwest Border less safe.

I urge my Republican colleagues to stand against such cuts.

Real progress has been made since the inception of the Merida Initiative and I am interested in hearing about documented results of America's participation in this program, which, with proper oversight, can lead to real success.

It is vital that we as Congress work closely with our diplomatic and federal agency personnel to ensure that they have the resources they require to continue partnering with Mexico to fulfill the goals of the Merida Initiative while combating crime and injustice on all sides.