

**Ranking Member William R. Keating (D-MA) Opening Statement**  
**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT, INVESTIGATIONS & MANAGEMENT**

***Hearing: "A Call to Action: Narco-Terrorism's Threat to the Southern U.S. Border"***

10 A.M., Friday, October 14, 2011

Without a doubt violence in Mexico has reached astronomical proportions. Fortunately, according to the Uniform Crime Reporting from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Texas Law Enforcement Agencies, the murder rate in Texas border communities remain at an all-time low.

In fact, according to FBI data, the homicide rate along the U.S. side of the southwestern border has actually decreased by as much as 14% over the last three years. On the other side of the border, in the Mexican city of Juarez, more than 2,700 murders occurred in 2010, while there were only 4 murders in El Paso during the same time frame. Likewise, there were 472 murders in Tijuana, while only 29 occurred on the other side of the border in San Diego, California.

These numbers show a clear distinction between political rhetoric and proven facts. They also give credence to the fact that violence spilling over from Mexico into the United States, while something to prevent against, has been minimal. Furthermore, kidnappings in Southwestern states, which are not included in the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports data, are on the decline.

The FBI's Southwestern offices identified 62 cartel-related kidnapping cases on U.S. soil that involved cartels or illegal immigrants in 2009. Fortunately, that number fell to 25 in 2010 and 10 so far in 2011. Moreover, I am told that the FBI, along with its state counterparts, are continuing to beef up efforts to keep these numbers as low as possible.

What is unfortunate, however, is that the great strides, which the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice have taken through the FBI, ATF and DEA risk immense setbacks due to cuts made to these agencies' budgets this Congress.

Plans to cut funds for border security by more than \$350 million and to reduce approximately 1,000 border security agents will not lead us in the right direction.

The presence of Customs and Border Protection agents, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, along with state and local law enforcement deters violent actors from crossing over into our border communities, and I therefore thank these brave men and women for their service. Yet, I am certain that living in border communities adjacent to a country where violence has taken a stronghold, must have its challenges.

I therefore respect our witnesses who have travelled a long way to tell their story and I look forward to not only hearing their testimony, but following up with real action, and continue to do my part on this community to keep our Nation safe and our borders secure.

But having said that, I do have concerns about the methodology that was used to produce the report that is the subject of this hearing. While I applaud the efforts of the Texas legislature for tasking its Department of Agriculture with formulating an assessment of the violence along the U.S.-Mexico border and whether it has an impact on the Texas agricultural industry, I must say that this report misses the mark. A discussion of the agricultural industry is strangely absent and the alarming conclusions contained within the report appear to be more grounded in anecdotes, hearsay, and the personal opinion of a limited few than any real scientific basis. Moreover, it appears to go well beyond its appropriated purpose and seeks to employ a "military-style strategy" that does not fully address the triple threat that lies at the heart of Mexican violence: drugs, guns and money.

We also need to address the flood of guns from the United States into Mexico that feeds narco-terrorism, until then we will be fighting a losing battle.