

Chairman Michael McCaul
Opening Remarks
As Prepared for Delivery

JOINT HEARING
Homeland Security Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management
Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere

Merida Part Two: Insurgency and Terrorism in Mexico

October 4, 2011, 2:00 pm, Room 2172 Rayburn House Office Building

Good morning Chairman Mack. Thank you for hosting this joint hearing. Over the past five years more than 40,000 men, women, and children have been brutally murdered by terrorists. This includes 12 mayors, a gubernatorial candidate, US citizens and law enforcement officers. Local governments are harassed and intimidated, while the bodies of those who stand up against these terrorists are hung from bridges and tossed in the streets.

I am not speaking about Al Qaeda or the Taliban. I am describing the acts of Mexican Drug Cartels. They are terrorists.

Mexico's President, Felipe Calderon, declared war on drug cartels when he took office in 2006. He described the violence in his country as "a challenge to the state, an attempt to replace the state." And he said in response to the recent Casino Royale fire in Monterey, claiming 53 lives, "We are facing terrorists."

In 2008 the United States launched the Merida Initiative to assist Mexico in its war against drug cartels. Over \$1.5 billion has been appropriated but to date only a third of this money has been

delivered. According to reports issued by the Government Accountability Office the Merida Initiative lacks essential goals, performance measures, and accountability.

Mexico is at war and we have problems with Merida. I would like to know:

- What is our strategy and plan to help Mexico win their war?
- Is it now time to move beyond Merida?
- What do the federal agencies need from Congress to accomplish this mission, that we all agree is vital to our national security.

United States efforts need re-examination. We are under-resourced along our border with Mexico. There have been threats and attempts to kill US citizens and federal and state law enforcement officials.

As a Member of Congress, I have had the privilege to travel and meet with our combat troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. But during one visit to the El Paso Intelligence Center I requested to go across the border to Juarez. However, the State Department told me they could not guarantee my safety. Earlier this year I did visit Juarez but we were given security similar to what I had in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The cartels have not only breached our border, but are now creating a narco-safe haven in Texas. This is the conclusion of a recent report by Generals Barry R. McCaffrey and Robert H. Scales. They also say the cartels are using Texas prisons as recruitment centers, and Texas cities for drug operations. Both Generals will testify before my Subcommittee next week.

Additionally, a report by the Department of Justice reveals drug cartels operate in more than 1000 US cities. They control distribution of most heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamines. These terrorists, both in Mexico and the United States, are a threat to national security and they should be treated as such.

I introduced legislation requiring the State Department classify drug cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. This would limit the groups' financial, property, and travel interests and prosecute individuals who provide them any assistance. The legislation must also be tied to fighting the cartels both here and abroad using every means available.

The drug cartels intimidate and coerce the civilian population, affect the conduct of the Mexican government and threaten the national security of the United States. This is the very essence of "terrorism."

There is a real war happening along our border and the enemy is covertly infiltrating our cities. We must treat this threat seriously and take decisive action. Today Chairman Mack and I combine our efforts to take the first steps toward finding solutions.

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