



One Hundred Twelfth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

December 9, 2011

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary
US Department of State
2201 C. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the findings related to our October 4th joint hearing concerning the State Department's Mèrida Initiative. As a result of this and previous hearings, we request your department conduct a top to bottom review of the Mèrida Initiative and work to make necessary changes to the program, which strengthens US and Mexican Government's efforts against Mexican drug cartels.

The hearing, "Merida Part Two: Insurgency and Terrorism in Mexico," focused on the development of Mexican transnational criminal organizations and how they use terrorist tactics to threaten Mexico and the United States. Moreover, the hearing examined the need for a reassessment and tactical change in US policy for the region, specifically the requirement to determine if the Mèrida Initiative is working.

The Mexican Government, led by President Calderon, has sought to crack down on the activities of the drug cartels. The cartels' response has been one of unrepressed violence, resulting in the murders of over 40,000 Mexican citizens since December of 2006. This shocking disregard for human life, coupled with the cartels intent to undermine the Mexican Government should serve as a wake-up call for the United States. It is clear these transnational criminal organizations are using terrorist-style tactics to achieve their goals.

Introduced in 2007, the Mèrida Initiative was designed to stem the activities of drug cartels, by disrupting organized crime, institutionalizing the rule of law in Mexico, building a twenty-first century border, and facilitating strong, resilient communities. Though the program has seen some success in eliminating drug kingpins and establishing more international cooperation between the United States and Mexico, Mèrida requires reassessment so that it is reflective of the evolving threat. Cartels are now full-blown transnational criminal and terrorist organizations.

The Mèrida Initiative also lacks certain stated goals and metrics. Indeed, there needs to be an effective overarching counterinsurgency strategy for Mexico. This strategy should be developed in close coordination with the Mexican government.

The Mexican drug cartels present a dangerous terrorist threat to our national security. I strongly urge you to use every capability of the US Government to counter this threat, which affects our economy, our security, and the well being of our citizens. Equally as important, we must ensure Mexico does not become a failed state and yet another haven for terrorists. Our staff point of contact is Dr. R. Nicholas Palarino, Subcommittee Staff Director for Oversight, Investigations, and Management. He can be reached at (202) 226-8417.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight,
Investigations and Management

cc: The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Secretary, US Department of Homeland Security
The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr., Attorney General, US Department of Justice
Mr. Thomas Donilon, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs