



Fact Sheet Progress and Impact

The Mérida Initiative is an unprecedented partnership between the United States and Mexico to fight organized crime and associated violence while furthering respect for human rights and the rule of law. Based on principles of shared responsibility, mutual trust, and respect for sovereign independence, our efforts have built confidence that is transforming our bi-lateral relationship.

Mérida was conceived in 2007 as a multi-year, \$1.4 billion effort. The U.S. Congress has appropriated \$1.3 billion since the program's inception in FY 2008.

The U.S. and Mexican governments have built on the foundations of the Mérida Initiative to establish four strategic areas to guide our cooperation and institutionalize our partnership: Disrupt Organized Criminal Groups; Strengthen Institutions; Create a 21st Century Border; and Build Strong and Resilient Communities in Both Countries.

Among the major successes against organized crime, by each state with bi-lateral support, are the following:

Some Successes in Mexico

- **Removal of Key Drug Trafficking Organization Leaders by Mexican Security Forces:**
 - Arturo Beltran Leyva (killed during attempted arrest) December 2009 (Beltran Leyva Cartel).
 - Arrest of Carlos Beltran Leyva, December 2009 (Beltran Leyva Cartel).
 - Arrest of Eduardo Teodoro "El Teo" Garcia Simental, January 2010 (Arellano Felix Cartel).
 - Arrest of Jose Vasquez-Villagrana, or "Jabali," in Mexico City in February 2010. Jabali was indicted for smuggling 50 caliber Barrett Anti-Aircraft machine guns from the U.S. into Mexico, and the smuggling of multiple tons of cocaine from South America into the US and Mexico.
 - Arrest of heroin supplier Jose Antonio Medina Arreguin, known as the "Don Pepe" and the "King of Heroin" in March 2010 (La Familia Michoacana).
 - Arrest of Gerardo Alvarez Vasquez, or "El Indio," in April 2010 (Beltran Leyva Cartel).
- **Legal Cooperation:**
 - Mexico extradited 107 fugitives to the United States in 2009, exceeding the number of 95 in 2008.
 - Sinaloa Cartel Lieutenant Vicente Zambada Niebla was extradited to the U.S. in February 2010.
- **Government of Mexico Statistics on Seizures:** (December 2006 – March 2010)
 - 92 tons of cocaine, 6,500 tons of marijuana y 949 kilos of heroin.
 - 30,752 small arms, 38,926 large caliber arms and 4,971 grenades.
 - 299 million pesos and 389 million dollars.

Some Successes in the United States

- **U.S. Project Coronado:** 303 alleged members of the Familia Michoacana were arrested in October 2009, with 1,186 arrests made over the 44 month project.
- **U.S. Operation Xcellerator:** A multi-agency, multinational effort that targeted the Sinaloa cartel, which resulted in the seizure of \$59 million in currency, hundreds of firearms, more than 12,000 kilograms of cocaine, and 12,000 pounds of methamphetamine. More than 750 individuals associated with the Sinaloa cartel were arrested in February 2009.
- **Economic Sanctions Against Key Drug Trafficking Organizations Pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act:** Since 2008, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has designated 5 Tier I Kingpins (1 individual, 4 organizations) and 171 Tier II's (131 individuals, 40 entities) tied to the financial and commercial networks of: the Arellano Felix Organization; the Beltran Leyva Organization; the Sinaloa Cartel; and La Familia Michoacana.
- **U.S. Interagency Border Architecture:** This was created for coordinating infrastructure, planning and prioritization, secure flows of cargo and goods, and corridor security initiatives.

As a direct result of bi-lateral cooperation, both countries have achieved the following goals:

Disrupt Capacity of Organized Crime to Operate

- **Currency Seizures:** In FY 2009, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) seized more than \$37.2 million in southbound currency- a 270 per cent increase over FY 2008. In FY 2009, over \$17 million in currency was seized as a result of investigatory cooperation between U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Government of Mexico. ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will continue to

conduct Operation Firewall through FY 2010. To date, the operation has yielded over \$24 million in cash seizures in Mexico.

- Arms Trafficking: ICE and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms (ATF) are working jointly on weapons seizures, including through “*Armas Cruzadas*” and Project Gunrunner. ATF also rolled out the pilot Spanish language e-Trace to Mexico and Central America. This system allows Mexican investigators to trace weapons known to originate from the United States.
- Intelligence Exchange: Strengthening the mechanisms to share information has contributed to actions taken by both countries.
- 5 Bell 412 Helicopters for the Mexican Army/Air Force (SEDENA): Delivered December 2009 to provide rapid mobility for security forces for counternarcotics and other security operations.

Strengthening Institutions

- Criminal Justice Reforms: The United States is supporting Mexico’s implementation of comprehensive criminal justice reforms through the professionalization of police and prosecutors, systems development, judicial exchanges, and partnerships between Mexican and U.S. law schools.
- Training: As of March, 5,500 federal and state officials of all levels from law-enforcement and judicial agencies participated in newly designed training programs. Over 4,300 police officers graduated from the Federal Police (SSP) Basic Investigation Techniques course in San Luis Potosi and are deployed throughout Mexico.
- Professional Exchanges: Through expert-to-expert exchanges, programs, and workshops, Mexico’s criminal-justice institutions are working with U.S. law- enforcement and prosecutorial offices to build capacity to combat organized criminal activities that impact both Mexico and the United States. Focus areas include investigation and prosecution of complex cases; trial advocacy skills, including evidence collection and preservation; extradition and fugitive apprehension; witness protection; internal integrity; advanced witness interview techniques; officer safety and protection; and asset forfeiture and asset management.
- Corrections System Reform: 115 Mexican instructors completed course work at the New Mexico State Corrections Academy that enabled them to deliver courses to 650 basic trainees at the Mexican National Corrections Academy. The Colorado Department of Corrections also provided training to 73 SSP officials to develop and implement the objective Classification System.
- Criminal Justice Reforms: 87 judges and prosecutors have attended a specialized course on oral trials. Plans are under way to take this course to all Mexican states.

Building a 21st Century Border

- Mexican Customs: Mexican Customs, with CBP support, will establish a Customs training academy in Mexico to promote professionalization of new customs inspectors. DHS has provided assistance to Mexican Customs including: training of 44 canine teams, training on inspection techniques, and curriculum development on customs investigations, with investigative training to begin this year.
- Document Verification Software and Biometric Equipment and Training: Delivered to the Mexican Immigration Service (INAMI), these tools will be used on the Mexican southern border with Guatemala to increase document security and improve the detection of false documents.
- Hi-tech Inspections at Ports of Entry: Scanners, X-ray machines, and other non-intrusive inspection equipment have been provided to enhance Mexican authorities’ ability to detect illicit goods at key checkpoints at land and air ports of entry.
- Rescue Equipment: Radios and navigation equipment have been delivered to support training for 45 Mexican immigration officers in search-and-rescue teams.

Build Strong and Resilient Communities in Both Countries:

- Demand Reduction: The Office of National Drug Control Policy and the U.S. State Department co-hosted a Bi-national Drug Demand Reduction Conference in February 2010 to gain a greater understanding of the use of media in successful demand reduction efforts as well as share best practices between the U.S. and Mexican participants.
- Culture of Lawfulness: Mexican federal police (SSP) is implementing Culture of Lawfulness training for its 32,000 person force. A train-the-trainer course for the SSP completed in May 2009 enabled the training of the first 3,000 officers. Culture of Lawfulness education is now a part of the school curriculum in 23 states.
- NGO Dialogue: The Government of Mexico has held 8 meetings with NGOs to exchange points of view on the implementation of the Mérida Initiative.
- Citizen Participation Councils: Mexico and the U.S. have sponsored national networks of Citizenship Participation Councils, engaging citizens and the media in reporting on and prevention of violence.