



“We also resolve to continue confronting the urgent threat to our common security from the drug cartels that are causing so much violence and death in our countries. As I have said on many occasions, I heartily commend President Calderón and his government for their determination and courage in taking on these cartels.”

*Barack Obama
President of the
United States*

In 2008, the Mexican government embarked on a comprehensive reform of its prison system. Merida Initiative funds are supporting this effort, through programs focusing on training, specialized equipment and technical assistance.

These programs will enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of Mexican prison officials and staff, and provide them with tools and methodologies needed to monitor and interdict criminal activities operating within Mexican prisons. The programs will also enhance protections for the rights of prisoners, improve conditions for the Mexican prison population, and broaden coordination with prison systems in the United States.

Some highlights of Merida-Initiative funded prison reform programs:

- With Merida Initiative support, the Mexican government opened the Mexican National Academy for Penitentiary Administration in Xalapa, Veracruz in May, 2009. The Academy has already trained 650 newly-recruited federal corrections officers and plans to train up to 1,000 officers in 2010 when the program will include state corrections officers.
- Merida Initiative funding is also providing training and certification for corrections instructors at the New Mexico Corrections Academy. In 2009, 115 new corrections instructor were trained and certified. More instructors will be certified in 2010.
- 73 correction officers have undergone training in case management and classification at the Colorado Department of Corrections in Denver.
- Training equipment including blocking dummies, training arms and protective gear has been delivered to the Xalapa Penitentiary Academy.
- The delivery of ten prisoner transport vans in 2010 will be critical to the launch of a new comprehensive transportation program.
- A new course for 2010 will focus on building the management skills of mid-level officials who will be assigned to open and operate new federal prisons.

