



# U.S. - Mexico At a Glance

## Merida Initiative - Administration of Justice

“...our basic objective is to provide security, safety for the Mexican people. This is something that Mexican people are entitled to; that their families and their children can go out into the streets, they can go out to play, they can go to school, they can progress, and fulfill their aspirations; that Mexico be a free country, free of delinquency, free of violence; that Mexico will be a safe country.”

*Felipe Calderon  
President of Mexico*

In 2008, Mexico passed a Constitutional amendment to reform its judicial system, embarking the country on a comprehensive plan to reform major elements of the entire system. The reforms will provide a new level of transparency across the legal system and complement many changes taking place within Mexican law enforcement. Among the biggest changes is the transition from closed, paper-based trials to public, oral ones where evidence is presented and argued before the court, using an accusatorial system of justice.

### How is the Merida Initiative Helping?

The Merida Initiative is funding both training and expert exchanges to assist Mexico with its reforms. Examples include:

- **Alternative Dispute Resolution:** Funding has been allocated to provide training and technical support to justice sector personnel (judges, prosecutors, and public defenders) and human rights NGOs to expand the use of pretrial case resolution alternatives, such as plea bargaining, mediation and restorative justice.
- **Modernization of Forensic Labs:** Equipment and training are being provided to modernize the country's capabilities in forensics and promote greater reliance on scientific evidence in the prosecution of crimes.
- **Extradition/Fugitives:** Training by U.S. prosecutors, law enforcement agents, and other federal officials is helping build and enhance Mexico's extradition and fugitive return program. This program is assisting Mexican authorities improve their ability to request and obtain the return of fugitives to Mexico from the U.S. Seventy PGR prosecutors participated in the initial course in December.
- **Police Training:** Training courses have been developed at the Federal Training Center in San Luis Potosi to train Federal Police and investigators. The training relates to oral advocacy and teaches them how to testify in oral trials and how to react under cross-examination.

### What's ahead?

The U.S. will continue to be a resolute partner to Mexico as it carries out its reforms, providing training, equipment and other assistance. In 2010, for example, 5 different courses will be given in all 32 Mexican states (160 total) to train several hundred federal and state judges and prosecutors in oral trials as well as police, investigators and other court personnel in a variety of subjects. Additional training and subject matter expertise will be offered to law students and universities to provide the next generation of legal professionals the skills to effectively manage the new judicial system.



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