



**United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Office of Inspector General**

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## **Inspection Regarding the Diplomatic Transformation on the Southern Border of the United States**

The U.S. mission to Mexico includes nine consulates or consulates general that manage an impressive array of commercial, law enforcement, consular, cultural, environmental, and outreach activities, even though in many cases they were established primarily to issue visas and protect American citizens. With the signing and implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the tightening of cross-border processing, the five border consulates have broadened their responsibilities as advocates for U.S. interests and as liaisons between Mexican and U.S. authorities.

Cross-border problems have a direct impact on U.S. business interests, environmental safety, quality of life, and border security. The U.S. embassy in Mexico and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs emphasize border issues in their strategic plans. However, neither has dedicated sufficient staff or attention to the coordination of those issues. As a result, the border posts need additional positions to allow them to focus on solving the problems.

Due to the complexity and labor-intensive nature of visa and passport processing in the post-September 11, 2001, environment, consular personnel at the border are fully engaged in carrying out statutory consular responsibilities. Assigning nonconsular reporting and outreach responsibilities to consular officers cannot and should not be considered a substitute for an adequately staffed political, economic, management, or public diplomacy section.

With looming increases in consular workload and in demands on consular resources over the next five years, there is a need to address nonconsular issues and their priority in the operations of the border posts. If nonconsular issues are not properly managed now, it will be impossible to do so once the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative requires passports for all border crossings and the program to renew millions of border-crossing cards takes effect. On another matter, the decision to assign regional security officers to each border consulate has improved their security and enhanced the coordination of cross-border law enforcement issues.

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**OIG Report ISP-I-07-02, In the National Interest: Diplomatic Transformation on our Southern Border**  
The fieldwork for this report was conducted by the Office of Inspections in Mexico City and the border region between July 19 and August 11, 2006. This is an unclassified summary of a full report, which receives limited official distribution. Both the report summary and the full report reflect the conditions reviewed during the fieldwork.

### **Office of Inspector General**

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