

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“The Merida Initiative: Examining U.S. Efforts to Combat Transnational Criminal Organizations”

June 5, 2008 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism Subcommittee hearing entitled “The Merida Initiative: Examining U.S. Efforts to Combat Transnational Criminal Organizations”:

“Hardly a week goes by without news reports of violence attributed to organizations trafficking narcotics, people, and weapons across our borders. With so much money to be made on illegal drugs and other contraband, it comes as no surprise that these organizations are putting U.S. citizens and border agents at risk.

In Mexico, more than 4,000 people have died in drug-related violence since 2006 when President Calderon launched his campaign against the drug cartels. In light of these numbers, a recent article in *The Economist* declared, ‘the war on drugs has never seemed less like a metaphor.’

Fortunately, there are brave men and women in the United States, as well as in our neighboring countries, who make it their mission to combat the cartels on a daily basis. Mexico, Central America, and the U.S. have a shared interest in combating these organizations. Therefore, it is fitting that we are here today to discuss the Merida regional security proposal.

As reflected in H.R. 6028, legislation working its way through the House, the Merida Initiative would provide equipment, software and technical expertise to Mexico and Central America to enhance the security of our region. As proposed, the Department of Homeland Security stands to play a key role in those efforts.

Therefore, it is inexplicable that this Committee has not had the opportunity to consider H.R. 6028. As outlined, DHS personnel and assets would be dedicated to strengthening regional security in an effort to bolster our nation’s own border and homeland security.

Successful implementation of the Merida Initiative will be challenging, however. A sound strategy, effective coordination among agencies, and real transparency and accountability are necessary to the success of the Initiative. Ensuring that Congress and the relevant Federal agencies are active players in the process is also essential.

Finally, we must make certain that we do not overtax our limited resources. Whether the Administration can resolve these important issues will determine the future of the Merida Initiative, both in Congress and beyond.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security

H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499

<http://homeland.house.gov>