

*The Honorable Loretta Sanchez (D-CA)*  
*Chair, Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism*  
*Committee on Homeland Security*

**“Border Violence: An Examination of DHS Strategies and Resources”**

*March 12, 2009 10am*

*Opening Statement, as prepared*

Our panel today consists of witnesses from various agencies within the Department Homeland Security who are familiar with the situation on the ground at the border.

I am hopeful that this hearing will be a forum for an open and honest dialogue on the resources and strategies DHS has in place to address the growing violence on the U.S.-Mexico border.

This hearing is very timely in light of the fact that last week Mexico sent an additional 3,200 soldiers to the border, increasing the total number of Mexican soldiers combating drug cartels to more than 45,000.

To put that into perspective, that is roughly the same, if not more than, the number of troops the United States currently has fighting in Afghanistan.

With the Mexican government engaged in a violent struggle against well armed drug cartels that frequently resemble advanced military units, the United States and this Congress cannot ignore our role in assisting our neighbor and ally in this fight, and preventing this violence from spreading across our border.

A recent report by the former drug czar General Barry McCaffrey, which I would like to submit for the record, warned that “a terrible tragedy is going to take place in the coming decade if we don’t...develop a resourced strategy appropriate for the dangers we face” related to drug trafficking in Mexico.

I couldn’t agree more.

In developing a strategy to assist and deal with the drug cartel war in Mexico there are several key issues that must be addressed:

- How will we as a nation address the fact that 90 percent of guns found in Mexico come from our streets and stores?
- What role do we have in training, preparing and providing assistance to the Mexican government?
- How will we ensure that our shared trade and commerce routes that supply our country with many essentials products are safe from disruption in Mexico?

- And, how can we ensure that a variety of U.S. Departments and agencies work together efficiently and effectively to respond to this threat?

Furthermore, we must clearly assess whether or not the violence is spilling over to our border cities on a daily basis.

We must not over hype the dangers in border cities, such as El Paso, which has seen declining crime rates.

However, we know that cartel members are present in some 230 U.S. cities, often times masquerading as local gang members who engage in drug related kidnappings and home invasions.

In addition, it should be noted that over 200 U.S. citizens have been killed in this drug war, either because they were involved in the cartels or were innocent bystanders.

With those concerns in mind, it is essential that the Department of Homeland Security, along with other relevant Departments, continue to pursue a contingency plan to address “spillover” violence along our border.

I look forward to a constructive dialogue with the panel today and hope to gain further insight in to the situation at the border, a clear understanding of the challenges facing the Department of Homeland Security in coordinating a response with other U.S. agencies, and a vision of the path forward so that this Subcommittee can ensure that all necessary resources are available in counteracting this threat of border violence.