



U.S. - Mexico At a Glance

The Merida Initiative

June 2009

“At a time when the Mexican government has so courageously taken on the drug cartels that have plagued both sides of the border, it is absolutely critical that the United States join as a full partner in dealing with this issue, both through initiatives like the Merida Initiative, but also on our side of the border, in dealing with the flow of guns and cash south.”

*Barack Obama
President of the
United States
April 16, 2009*

Since President Calderon took office in December 2006, Mexico has taken significant action to fight drug trafficking and criminal organizations. The Merida Initiative is an historic program of cooperation that acknowledges the shared responsibilities of the United States and Mexico to counter the drug-fueled violence that has threatened citizens on both sides of the border. Following requests from President Bush and President Obama, the U.S. Congress has funded the Merida Initiative with wide bi-partisan support; to date over \$1.1 billion dollars has been appropriated for Mexico.

In December 2008, the United States and Mexico signed a formal agreement committing to the first phase of the Initiative. The roll-out of projects started almost immediately with the inauguration of a document analysis and verification laboratory, the first of a network of sixty such laboratories for the Mexican Migration Institute.

Other Merida projects are also well underway:

- The first bilateral Arms Trafficking Conference was held in April 2009, hosted by the Mexican Attorney General and attended by the US Attorney General and Secretary of Homeland Security. Additional conferences are planned for September to continue implementing the bilateral plans resulting from the first conference.
- A National Corrections Academy opened in the state of Veracruz in May with the initial training course for some 200 newly-recruited corrections officers. The instructors at the new academy were trained at the State of New Mexico Corrections Academy.
- The first 1,500 of 9,000 new Federal Police Investigators began basic police training in June, and will begin intensive investigations training in July, taught by a cadre of international instructors from the United States, Colombia and other countries. Similar career training programs are being planned with the Attorney General's office.
- Deliveries of non-intrusive inspection equipment, ion scanners, and canine units for Mexican customs, the new Mexican federal police and the military to interdict trafficked drugs, arms, cash and persons will start in July.
- Other Merida Initiative programs will provide advanced technologies and secure communications systems to improve data collection and storage, thereby ensuring that vital information is accessible to law enforcement agencies.
- The first Merida Initiative-funded aircraft are scheduled to be delivered in December 2009 to support interdiction operations by Mexican security forces.



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