



An IFPA Workshop

The Mexico-U.S. Partnership
Enhancing Our Common Security

Final Report

From a Workshop Organized by
The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, Inc.

December 2005

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FOREWORD

Over the past several years, the partnership between Mexico and the United States has become increasingly vital for dealing with economic, political, and security challenges in the Western Hemisphere. However, since the attacks of September 11th, 2001, preventing future terrorist strikes against the U.S. homeland has been the primary security objective in Washington, while Mexico City has continued to view drug trafficking and organized crime as top priorities.

These differing threat perceptions must not be allowed to affect security cooperation between Mexico and the United States adversely. A strong and stable Western Hemisphere is dependent on continuing cooperation between the two countries. In fact, with the establishment of the Security and Prosperity Partnership in March 2005, Mexico, the United States, and Canada have taken a major step toward linking security with the trilateral economic relationship that was launched in January 1994 under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

In light of this recent development and the importance of keeping the lines of communication open between and among these regional allies, the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA) and the Mexican Embassy in the United States, with the sponsorship of the Richard Lounsbery Foundation, convened a meeting entitled *The Mexico-U.S. Partnership: Enhancing Our Common Security* on December 2, 2005, in Washington, D.C. This event was the second in a series that consisted of a similar Workshop on *The Canada-U.S. Partnership* in March 2005.¹

The following Report summarizes the proceedings of the Mexico-U.S. Workshop. Perhaps the most important conclusion was that neither country can fully secure its homeland alone. We do not know when and where the next major threat to our common security will emerge, be it a terrorist attack, natural disaster, or other crisis. In the meantime, however, it is essential for Mexico and the United States to continue assessing the bilateral relationship, and decide how it can be strengthened to meet a broad spectrum of twenty-first-century threats and challenges.

Please note that the views expressed in this report do not necessarily represent those of the Workshop organizers or sponsor.

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¹ Additional information on the U.S.-Canadian meeting including a Workshop Report is available on IFPA's website at www.ifpa.org/confwrkshp/canadawkshp/wrkshp.htm.

Assessing the Mexico-U.S. Partnership

- In terms of security priorities, the United States is primarily concerned with terrorism while Mexico remains focused on organized crime, drug trafficking, and money laundering.
- These threats are related in several ways. Terrorist groups seek to exploit smuggling networks that transport persons illegally across the Mexico-U.S. border, and use funding from the drug trade to finance their operations.
- Therefore, efforts to mitigate one threat also help combat the other. For example, joint Mexico-U.S. initiatives to secure the border against smuggling and drug trafficking can also serve to prevent terrorist incidents.
- Effective consequence management and disaster response are an essential part of homeland security for both countries. Terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and industrial accidents can produce many of the same effects, requiring common response procedures and capabilities.
- There are institutional and political obstacles to maintaining and improving the Mexico-U.S. security partnership. Organizations within each country have different capabilities and approaches to fulfilling their mission, making cooperation more difficult and complex in many circumstances.
- A sustained public relations and outreach campaign should be developed to inform the domestic populations and legislative and executive branches of government in each country regarding the value of bilateral security cooperation. This is especially relevant given the fear that progress toward greater Mexico-U.S. cooperation may fall victim to domestic politics in the run-up to the Mexican presidential elections in July 2006. Similarly, there is also concern that security initiatives will not receive adequate funding if their utility is not explained and clearly understood.
- There is a need to articulate a coherent and comprehensive vision of security cooperation among the countries of North and Central America that includes economic and political development. The Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) can serve as a guide in this regard.

Next Steps for the Mexico-U.S. Partnership

- Together, Mexico and the United States must develop realistic crisis scenarios that may be encountered in the future. In addition, they should hold joint tabletop and other exercises to plan and prepare for these contingencies.
- Demographics and economic development in the Western hemisphere are issues that must be addressed, particularly with regard to alleviating the causes of immigration to the United States. Securing the Mexico-U.S. border and implementing a guest worker program in the United States is ultimately futile without a larger effort to improve the economies of Mexico and other Central American countries. Robust national economies would make labor less apt to immigrate in the first instance and more likely for them to return after their U.S. working permit expires.
- Securing the Mexico-U.S. border while ensuring fast and efficient transit of legitimate persons and goods is an enormous challenge. Efforts such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative are underway to identify known persons and goods so they can be moved across the border quickly.

- Mexican participation in the International Counterproliferation Program (ICP), a U.S. initiative lead by Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) to assist foreign countries in combating the transit of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) materials across their borders, should be pursued by both nations. Partnering with Mexico in the ICP would help develop more consequence management and related capabilities that would address the threat concerns of both nations and could serve as a catalyst for more robust bilateral security cooperation.

Workshop on The Mexico-U.S. Partnership: Enhancing Our Common Security

The Challenge of Differing Threat Perceptions

Mexico and the United States view the threat facing their respective nations differently. After 9/11, efforts to combat future terrorist attacks against the U.S. homeland became the top domestic security priority in Washington. Mexico is focused on the issues that provided the rationale for Mexico-U.S. security cooperation before 9/11, including trafficking in drugs, weapons, and persons; money laundering; and youth gangs.

- Differing threat perceptions in any bilateral security relationship make the allocation of resources complicated. In order to establish effective defense cooperation a shared vision regarding the common threat is necessary.
- The United States has faced strong resistance not only from Mexico, but also from other Central American and Caribbean states in its effort to achieve a common, hemispheric security paradigm based on terrorism. Like Mexico, these nations are primarily concerned with domestic and international crime.
- One American commentator noted that there will be a significant decrease in the FY 2006 budget for U.S. operations in the Caribbean dealing with narcotics trafficking and other smuggling issues. This “is a function of priorities, and it reflects the wide gap between officials in Washington and those in Mexico City on where the emphasis should be.”
- One participant suggested that Mexico does not feel threatened, particularly with respect to terrorism. There are, however, very real threats that do exist simply because of Mexico’s geographic proximity to the United States.

Despite these differing security priorities and threat perceptions, several proposals were outlined at the Workshop on how to deal with them. Most importantly, differing priorities require that homeland security cooperation be a “balanced act,” as one commentator put it. In other words, the Mexico-U.S. partnership would be much stronger if both parties were able to express their own security concerns and to have those concerns addressed in a meaningful manner by the other country.

Accordingly, there was general agreement among Workshop participants that there are important linkages between international terrorism and international crime. If these linkages were acknowledged, both Mexico and the United States would be far more likely to act on each others’ security concerns. One of the key Workshop findings was that “if you work effectively against transnational crime, you actually make a great deal of progress in combating international terrorism.”

- For example, terrorist operatives seeking to enter the United States might look to exploit the smuggling networks that are effective in transporting people across the Mexico-U.S. border. Recognizing that a more secure border will help combat the terrorist and organized crime threats simultaneously is a positive step on the road to enhanced bilateral cooperation.
- Moreover, organized crime activities such as the drug trade, counterfeiting, and piracy are also used to finance terrorist groups.
- These examples highlight the need to address not only the nature of the threats facing Mexico and the United States, but also the infrastructure, financial resources, and tactics that facilitate them, which are often common to both terrorist groups and organized crime.

It was generally agreed that in order to advance bilateral cooperation, less emphasis should be placed on the delivery systems (i.e. organized crime and terrorist groups) for the threats, and more on what the two countries share as interests and values. For example:

- The most prominent shared interest is the increased prosperity that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has brought to Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Ninety percent of Mexican exports go to the United States, and a substantial amount of U.S. goods are exported to Mexico. The NAFTA dynamic has tied the three economies together in such a way that if one link is shut down – perhaps by a terrorist attack resulting from persons or goods emanating from one of the countries – it would be devastating for all three partners. Therefore, security cooperation is in the interest of all three countries, because preventing a future attack also averts the economic damage that would be inflicted as a result.
- The impact of a terrorist attack on tourism also illustrates the connection between security and prosperity. There are several thousand U.S. citizens visiting Mexico at any given time, representing a major source of revenue for Mexico. A terrorist incident (or natural disaster) that included U.S. casualties could be devastating for Mexico's tourism industry. Mexico also has an interest in protecting Mexican citizens who happen to be in the United States during a terrorist incident or natural disaster, which would not discriminate on the basis of nationality. Consequently, it is in the interest of both countries to reduce the potential for terrorist strikes (and to prepare for the impacts of natural disasters, e.g., the evacuation of the citizens of one nation similar to what occurred with U.S. tourists stranded in Cancun during Hurricane Wilma) in order to ensure continued benefits under NAFTA and to protect citizens that may be present in the other country during an incident.

Identifying the crisis response capabilities that would be required for both natural disasters and terrorist attacks – possibly including the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – is another way to overcome the challenge of differing threat perceptions between Washington and Mexico City.

- As already noted, in the event of a man-made or natural disaster in one country, there will very likely be citizens of the other country among the victims. A disaster that hit a U.S. city with a large Mexican population, such as Los Angeles, would require evacuation protocols, pre-existing legal arrangements, and institutional capabilities to enable the government of Mexico to ensure the safety of its citizens as well as those of the United States. The above cited evacuation of several thousand Americans from Cancun during Hurricane Wilma is a case in point.
- Within this context, it will be necessary to identify the gaps and symmetries that currently exist between Mexican and U.S. crisis management architectures. One participant presented a risk-management perspective on this issue, suggesting that the potential threats should be examined with regard to their effects or consequences, and then to work backwards to determine the common capabilities necessary to respond to and mitigate these consequences.
- In this regard, several participants urged greater use of scenario development, tabletop exercises, and larger scale simulations which would facilitate joint planning and preparation for future incidents and help assign risk and potential consequences for various incidents. The need to develop crisis scenarios and conduct exercises was an issue that emerged several times throughout the proceedings (more below).

Other threats that must be planned for by both countries include the spread of infectious disease (e.g. an Avian Flu pandemic), industrial accidents whose effects could spread across a wide geographic area, and potential attacks on the critical infrastructure (e.g. maritime ports and border crossings) that would curtail the flow of persons and goods across borders.

Institutional and Political Obstacles to Bilateral Cooperation

The differing concerns and priorities between Mexico City and Washington are complicated by the unpredictable nature of the twenty-first-century security environment. Institutions and political systems (particularly democratic governments) have difficulty assigning resources and attention to a wide variety of potential threats, including acts of terrorism that use our own resources against us – as occurred on 9/11 with commercial airliners – to carry out imaginative and devastating attacks.

- Each country and its government institutions react to these threats and risks in a unique way. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the reorganization of the intelligence community in the United States are cases in point. The same holds true in Mexico.
- Currently, there is no objective way to measure which potential threats are more likely to occur, especially considering that the enemy could either repeat certain methods of attack it has used previously, or try completely new methods.
- The interagency process makes resource allocation even more difficult, as different organizations bring different perspectives, objectives, and tactics to the table. This problem is further compounded at the national level, where government personnel must assign political values to certain targets and contingencies. The dilemma becomes particularly acute at the international level, when two countries attempt to collaborate on homeland security and defense; overcoming differences in threat perception between the countries becomes especially important here.

At the institutional level, there are structural and operational concerns that impede bilateral security cooperation.

- Different military structures and cultures make cooperation between the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the Mexican Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (SEDENA) difficult. However, as several participants noted, there has been improvement in military-to-military interaction over the past several years. It was also acknowledged that much more needs to be done.
- An American commentator opined that there is “historic, cultural, and political dissonance between the two countries, particularly within the defense and military institutions.”
- Complicating matters on the U.S. side, there are two military commands that have a valid interest in working with Mexico. U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) has official responsibility on paper, but U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) also has an interest due to its engagement in the Caribbean and Central America. One U.S. participant agreed that it would be advantageous for SOUTHCOM to work more directly with Mexico.
- There are also profound asymmetries with regard to the size and capabilities of the defense architectures of the two countries, further complicating cross-border cooperation. For instance, the U.S. military employs more advanced technology than the Mexican military in areas such as aerial surveillance and satellite communications that would make interoperability between the two difficult.

Bilateral political interaction on security cooperation programs may be more difficult than the operational aspect. Each agency interacts with its cross-border counterpart under a very specific operational mandate. But there is no overarching entity to develop and communicate the underlying rationale for the Mexico-U.S. security partnership.

- One workshop participant suggested that the lack of political awareness of the value of security cooperation results from the fact that the institutions meant to handle international relations – the Department of State in the United States and the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) in Mexico – are not as involved in managing the security relationship as they used to be.
- There are also political sensitivities in Mexico that must be addressed. Mexicans are concerned with their sovereignty and do not want to be, in either fact or perception, subordinate to the United States.

A Mexican panelist noted that greater efforts must be made to “sell” the value of Mexico-U.S. security cooperation to the legislative branches of government because this is how new initiatives and existing programs are funded. Essentially, a public relations and outreach campaign should be developed to highlight the need of maintaining and improving the Mexico-U.S. security partnership. This will also encourage active participation by state and local governments and greater awareness within the general public. Such an effort will also help insulate bilateral security programs from partisan politics which is especially important given the upcoming July 2006 presidential election in Mexico.

- One participant pointed out that there has not been a serious debate about defense and security in Mexico, and that there may not be a unified view of security issues between SEDENA and the Mexican Secretaría de Marina (SEMAR). The United States should encourage Mexico to have this debate in order to advance a shared vision of twenty-first-century security cooperation.
- One Mexican participant also stressed that “we must keep in mind that security is a concern, not because it is being demanded by the United States, but because we need to have a secure country, and it is in our own national interest to cooperate with other countries.”
- Another commentator, returning to the issue of differing threat perceptions, pointed out that the level of awareness and concern in Mexico about the terrorist threat would change – as would the political will to address it – if for example Mexico (and the United States) suffered frequent terrorist incidents as is the case in Israel, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Thus, even given the horrific events of 9/11, most Mexicans do not perceive terrorism as substantially impacting their everyday lives or well-being. This perception makes it difficult for Mexico to establish an adequate institutional infrastructure to address the terrorist threat.
- The need to “balance” the bilateral relationship is also critical. If Mexican citizens, for example, feel that their national resources are being allocated to a security partnership with the United States that focuses primarily on terrorism, and fails to address Mexico’s security priorities such as narco-trafficking and organized crime, it will be much more difficult to achieve the level of legislative political support that is required to fund and sustain bilateral homeland security initiatives
- A participant noted that in Mexico, Congress and the media have become increasingly vocal – frequently negatively so – regarding the Mexico-U.S. security relationship. This development makes it even more important for politicians and officials to counteract this trend, articulating the rationale and benefits for Mexico why it is important to continue and strengthen the bilateral relationship. The same participant seconded the requirement to develop a compelling outreach program in Mexico emphasizing that this is particularly true in the run-up to the presidential elections.

A Coherent, Comprehensive, and Integrated Strategy: Beyond the Security and Prosperity Partnership

Several Workshop participants lamented the lack of a comprehensive strategy to defend the North and Central American regions. A general consensus emerged that such a vision is critical for an effective security partnership between Mexico and the United States and for security in the Western hemisphere more generally.

- Globalization has connected countries, regions, and cultures to each other through trade and travel in such a way that economic and political interactions cannot be isolated from international security. Prosperity depends on security, and vice versa.
- One Mexican participant stressed that “we lose something when all the individual operational interactions add up to a package that is not necessarily coherent.” For example, as will be discussed later, initiatives to secure the Mexico-U.S. border against illegal immigration are ultimately futile if they are not complemented by a development program that addresses the root causes of immigration, namely the lack of adequate economic opportunity in Mexico.
- To develop a comprehensive and integrated Mexico-U.S. security strategy, several questions must be addressed, including: What are the gaps in capability? What are the overlaps? Where do the two countries disagree on objectives and methods?
- Establishing an integrated strategy will depend, first and foremost, on building trust between the two countries. It may be helpful to think of linked homelands not only between Mexico and the United States, but also with the countries in the broader Caribbean Basin.
- Military intelligence structures that facilitate collaboration, interoperability of equipment, and interoperability of doctrine will also be required among the linked countries.

One Workshop panelist presented a framework for defending the “Southern Approach” to the United States. The Southern Approach is the most complex of the four geographic pathways into the American homeland. It encompasses a region of friendly nations but also includes countries with which the United States has political difficulties, i.e., Cuba, Venezuela, and Haiti. The threat in this region includes smuggling, trafficking in drugs and humans, organized crime, and a potential link between violent youth gangs and terrorist groups with global reach.

- The Southern Approach concept takes into account the entire Caribbean Basin, which includes the Caribbean Sea in addition to its land border areas, the archipelago, the Central American mainland, the northern part of South America, Mexico, and the United States.² Implementation of this concept would provide the United States with geographic depth to its south that is comparable to that of the Northern Approach (i.e. the Canadian mainland).
- Comprehensive and integrated regional cooperation should be “locally-owned” to respond to regional security concerns, and not focused primarily on counterterrorism. Local and state governments should develop military and police capabilities that can contribute to a regional security architecture. While the United States should provide financial, political, and technological assistance, it is important that the Southern Approach concepts not be dominated by Washington.

2 Countries that are part of the Southern Approach include Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela.

- Thus, the Mexico-U.S. security relationship actually involves much more than the two countries themselves. Mexico also has a valid concern about its own southern border given that it is a key area for smuggling and drug trafficking operations. Mexico is beginning to work more closely with the Central American and Caribbean states, and even with Colombia, to manage these threats. This broader regional perspective needs to be encouraged.

While acknowledging that a coherent and comprehensive bilateral security strategy does not currently exist, several Workshop participants agreed that the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) can serve as a guide or framework toward that end. The SPP process is a commitment to enhance common security in North America, while promoting economic and social development.³

- Three themes underlie the security pillar of SPP: (1) secure North America from external threats, (2) prevent and respond to internal threats, and (3) streamline the secure, low-risk flow of people and goods through ports of entry.
- These themes are incorporated throughout the ten goals, forty objectives, and over 300 individual deliverables contained in the security work plan.
- The SPP includes aspects of security cooperation among Mexico, the United States, and Canada, such as enhancing public safety and infrastructure along the shared borders. In addition, the security issues have been linked to the economic ones, which sends a clear message that they cannot be isolated from each other.
- The SPP also provides a structure for U.S.-Mexican security cooperation, fostering greater dialogue and shared objectives.⁴ In addition, given Mexico's need for greater access to new technologies, the SPP also represents an opportunity to engage in bilateral/trilateral science and technology efforts.
- However, it is important to realize that the SPP is in its nascent stages, requiring officials from the three nations to articulate why the process makes sense both institutionally and politically. A Mexican participant, fearing that the SPP process might not endure beyond the July 2006 presidential election, underscored the need to de-politicize the bilateral security relationship, and insulate it from partisan politics. Other participants felt confident that the initiatives and security issues outlined in SPP will endure no matter what happens in the upcoming election.
- Securing adequate funding to support SPP objectives will be a challenge. It will require leadership at the highest levels of government and the support of the legislative branches. As noted earlier, it will necessitate a concerted outreach effort that spells out the near- and long-term benefits of security cooperation.

An integrated Mexico-U.S. security strategy will also require each country to cooperate more extensively by incorporating lessons learned and best practices. For example, the Mexican military has more experience preparing for and responding to natural disasters than its U.S. counterpart. The United States, however, has more experience planning and preparing for WMD contingencies. It also has access to greater assets, capabilities, and technologies for a range of consequence management tasks including WMD detection. Thus, information sharing will be critical to the identification of best practices as will cooperative research and development programs (more below).

3 The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America was announced by U.S. President George W. Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, and Mexican President Vicente Fox on March 23, 2005, at a U.S.-Canada-Mexico trilateral summit in Waco, Texas. For more information, see www.spp.gov.

4 To illustrate just one example, Mexico and the United States have agreed to host a bilateral agro-terrorism conference in January 2006.

One participant proposed the development of a political agreement on a Caribbean Basin homeland security partnership that would eventually lead to the creation of a Mexican-Caribbean Basin surveillance system that could be headquartered in Mexico and staffed by military and police officers from participating countries. This system would link with North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), but importantly, would not be subordinate to it.

However, another participant expressed some reservations with regard to a broad, regional approach to security. It may be very difficult for some of the countries in the region, especially Haiti, to contribute under such an architecture. Nations would have to meet a minimum standard of government/political stability and military capability in order to participate. Significant asymmetry in capabilities would immediately become a magnet either for organized crime or terrorist groups to exploit the weakest link of the chain. To mitigate this risk, it will be especially important to incorporate the security dimension in a wider political/economic relationship among the countries of the Western hemisphere.

Developing Scenarios and Planning for Contingencies

As alluded to earlier, a consensus emerged that there is a vital need to develop scenarios and conduct bilateral training and exercises to plan and prepare for a joint response to a crisis, whether natural or man-made. This will foster an examination of the types of cooperation that would be necessary, and bring together the personnel who will actually deal with these contingencies should they occur. Before the 9/11 attacks, for example, New York City had undertaken numerous tabletop and other exercises that assembled many of the people who worked together during and after the crisis. This cooperation proved essential for an effective response.

Developing scenarios and conducting exercises can also help with the organizational aspects of crisis management and identify best practices by discussing what has worked and what has not. Scenarios/exercises also help develop shared interests, providing a better understanding of the priority and importance of certain issues, developments, or outcomes and their possible implications for mutual interests or individual countries.

An American participant suggested prioritizing potential contingencies by assigning a value to particular targets, types of attack, or natural disasters and then creating nuanced scenarios focusing on the most valued targets. This could consist of assessing contingencies based on (1) the threat, (2) the risk, (3) the probability, and (4) the effects or consequences. These criteria could serve as the basis for selection of scenarios.

What are some of the scenarios?

- A WMD-terrorist attack at the Mexico-U.S. border, where the destruction would significantly impact both countries
- An Avian Flu pandemic
- A hurricane that could cause destruction on the scale of Katrina
- A natural or man-made disaster that severely damages critical infrastructure like maritime ports, border crossings, or industrial plants

Several participants described bilateral and multilateral initiatives that could serve as models for a joint Mexico-U.S. incident planning architecture. For example:

- The Canada-U.S. Permanent Joint Board on Defence has experience in practicing for incidents such as WMD events.

- Three TOPOFF exercises have been held in the United States to plan for a terrorist attack.⁵ The TOPOFF 3 exercise in April 2005 included Mexican observers.
- The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Center is a NATO/EU initiative that plans and prepares for cross-border crises.

An American commentator pointed out that in developing scenarios and planning for future crises, we should consider that the reaction and subsequent response to the actual incident may make matters worse. Developing scenarios and conducting gaming exercises would serve as useful models to minimize an overreaction (or what was described as an unwarranted, self-imposed consequence) that could create more harm than necessary.

A Survey of Mexico-U.S. Security Initiatives

Mexico and the United States have pursued security cooperation efforts in a number of areas, including the prevention of trafficking in persons, sex tourism enterprises, criminal prosecutions, and restorative care for rescued victims of organized crime. Joint commitments have been made on real-time information sharing and border enforcement against smuggling organizations.

- Mexico has agreed to manage SPP commitments under the joint critical infrastructure protection framework for cooperation that was established with the U.S. Infrastructure Protection Office.
- Also within the context of the SPP, the Mexican Navy and U.S. Coast Guard are revitalizing cooperative efforts.
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has worked with Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional (CISEN) to establish the first Binational Alien Protection Unit (BAPU) to address human smuggling in the San Antonio region.⁶ The unit has developed, received, and analyzed information that has prevented criminals and contraband from penetrating the borders of the United States, and has implemented intelligence and interdiction investigation, prosecution, and removal proceedings.
- Bi-National Task Force working groups are addressing the following key initiatives: smuggling and trafficking, national security, financial crimes, assets seizure, information sharing, international coordination, and training of law enforcement personnel.

In August 2005, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), in cooperation with several branches of the Mexican government, announced the implementation of a bilateral human smuggler prosecutions program known as the Operation Against Smugglers and Traffickers Initiative on Safety and Security (OASSIS).

- OASSIS “expands existing efforts against violent human traffickers through exchanges of critical information, coordination of enforcement operations, and joint targeting of cross-border criminal activity.”⁷ The program seeks to identify and prosecute human smugglers under standardized guidelines.

5 The TOPOFF (or Top Officials) series is a Congressionally-mandated initiative to help improve U.S. crisis response capabilities in the event of a large-scale terrorist attack. TOPOFF 3 simulated the coordinated national and international response that would be required for such an incident, and included more than ten thousand personnel representing 200 Federal, State, local, tribal, private sector, and international organizations and agencies.

6 For more information on ICE, visit <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/index.htm>. For more information on CISEN, visit <http://www.cisen.gob.mx>.

7 Remarks by DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff at the Houston Forum, *DHS Press Release*, November 2, 2005, <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=44&content=4920&print=true>.

Operation Secure Mexico, launched in June 2005, deploys hundreds of Mexican federal agents and military personnel, in addition to state and municipal officials, to combat organized crime networks in select areas prone to gang violence and drug trafficking, including Baja, California (Tijuana and Mexicali), Tamaulipas (Nuevo Laredo, Reynosa, and Matamoros), Sinaloa (Mazatlan, Culiacan, and Navolato), certain cities in the central states of Michoacan and the State of Mexico, and the southern state of Guerrero (Acapulco and Zihuatanejo).

- Under this program, seizures of contraband bound for the United States have included firearms, marijuana, cocaine, heroine, cash, and vehicles. In addition, hundreds of members of the notorious “MS13” or Mara Salvatrucha gang have been captured and incarcerated.

The Mexico-U.S. Partnership in a Globalized World: Demographics and Development

Latin American countries have been wrestling with the unintended consequences of globalization: they need to radically restructure economies, political institutions, and societies to cope with increased global competition. As the United States continues to work with Latin America, and especially with Mexico, the challenge will be reconciling the consequences of globalization with its benefits.

- The Mexican growth rate has declined over the past several decades. Despite Mexico’s oil reserves and open trade with North America, its economy is underperforming.
- As recently stated in the Wall Street Journal, “Mexican businesses face crippling regulation and inadequate legal protections, weakening potential for market competition, investment, and productivity gains.”⁸
- Furthermore, peak growth of the Mexican labor force has arrived. It will continue to expand, but at a rapidly decelerating rate, resulting in a ten- or fifteen-year time period to capitalize on this demographic dividend where young workers are paying for retirees’ social security.

One commentator believes that “it is possible to bring the peoples of North and Central America together to create a region and a world that is stable, free, and prosperous. If achieved, this will be the anchor for global stability for the next fifty years.”

- The possibility of bringing together NAFTA and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) should be explored, but a convergence will be difficult. A strong resistance will likely exist in individual countries against this kind of convergence, particularly regarding issues of sovereignty.

One American participant pointed out that the real driver for immigration into the United States is the differential between the size of the U.S. economy and those of Latin America.

- The Central American and Mexican economies cannot absorb all of their available labor. The U.S. economy, however, is a magnet for this excess labor.
- If workers did not come from Mexico or Central America, U.S. employers would have to get them from somewhere else. At some point in the not-too-distant future, the United States will actually lament the lack of labor coming from Mexico. The United States should acknowledge this dynamic, i.e., the fact that labor from Mexico and other Central American nations is both a U.S. need as well as a problem. Doing so will add candor to the immigration debate.

8 Mary Anastasia O’Grady, “Why Latin Nations are Poor,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 25, 2005.

In keeping with one of the primary themes of the Workshop, a participant stressed the need for a comprehensive plan of economic and political development, linked with security, in Mexico and the broader Central American region.

- Tightened borders and a guest worker program make no sense if there is instability, poverty, corruption, and underdevelopment in the part of the world from where immigration flows.
- Thus, there is a need to improve the economies and create more jobs in home countries to minimize the initial rationale for immigration as well as to make them more attractive return destinations for those who are enrolled in the U.S.-proposed guest worker program.
- One American speaker opined that the comprehensive strategy might consist of something along the lines of a five-year plan, with funding between three and five billion dollars, that included measures to improve infrastructure, secure property rights, advance education, and promote public health in these nations.

Reconciling Security and Efficiency Across the Border

Roughly one million people and \$720 million in trade cross the border each day. Statistics from U.S. Customs and Border Protection indicate that, in 2004, 276 million people, 91 million vehicles, and 647,000 containers crossed the Mexico-U.S. border. The Mexico-U.S. Border Partnership Declaration, signed in March 2002, included a twenty-two-point action plan that has served as the framework to institutionalize border cooperation. The objective of the agreement is to mitigate the risks of illicit traffic in the border areas, and to ensure the fast and efficient flow of people and goods across the common border.

Through Operation Black Jack, launched in July 2005, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has partnered with Mexican law enforcement to target drug smuggling, money laundering, and arms and human trafficking that has sparked increased violence in the Nuevo Laredo area along the Mexico-U.S. border. A primary goal of the Operation is to improve information sharing among federal agencies and state and local officials responsible for border security.

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) seeks to identify known persons and goods being transported across borders, so that more time and resources can be devoted to examining unknown traffic that could pose a threat.

- WHTI will enable border management officials to review documentation quickly, efficiently, and accurately and determine eligibility for entry in a way that does not disrupt the critically important movement of people and goods across land borders.
- The Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act of 2004 requires the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. State Department to develop and implement, by January 1, 2008, a plan requiring all travelers (including U.S. citizens) to present a passport or other document, or a combination of documents, sufficient to denote identity and citizenship when entering or reentering the United States. Furthermore, all documents used for travel to the United States are expected to include biometrics, such as photographs that comply with facial recognition technology, or fingerprints that can be used to authenticate the document and verify identity.
- As of December 31, 2006, WHTI will apply to all air and sea travel to and from Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. By December 31, 2007, WHTI will extend to all land border crossings.

The Container Security Initiative (CSI) is part of DHS efforts to mitigate the risk associated with shipping cargo into and out of major ports around the world.⁹ No Mexican ports currently operate under CSI, but options should be examined for incorporating some of the major ones – such as Tampico, Veracruz, Guaymas, Mazatlán, or Manzanillo – into the program. These would not be the first CSI ports in Latin America: Santos, Brazil, and Buenos Aires, Argentina, are already part of the program. There may be important lessons to be learned from these two regional precedents that could be useful for proceeding with Mexico-based CSI ports.

Focus on Prevention: The International Counterproliferation Program

The International Counterproliferation Program (ICP), run by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency within the U.S. Department of Defense, seeks to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related materials across the borders and through the territories of participating nations. A consensus emerged that ICP could become a key element of the evolving Security and Prosperity Partnership framework in the Western hemisphere.¹⁰

- Since 1995, ICP has worked with many international partners to police borders and stop trafficking of WMD and related materials.
- ICP currently works in twenty-five different countries in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, from Estonian and Tajikistan to Croatia and Uzbekistan, and will soon be expanding to others in the Pacific Rim and Africa. Each country is unique, with its own objectives and capabilities.
- Over 5,000 law enforcement and government officials from the states of the former Soviet Union have been trained to improve their national capacity for WMD response.
- ICP works directly with DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in addition to many other organizations, including the Department of Energy (DOE) and the U.S. Coast Guard.
- ICP is a fully integrated program, employing FBI and CBP instructors; immigration, border patrol, and customs inspectors; and the FBI Hazardous Materials Response Unit.

Concerns regarding the security of WMD and delivery systems became a high priority of the U.S. government following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The U.S. Congress developed several pieces of innovative legislation to prevent the proliferation of these materials to organized crime organizations, terrorist groups, and rogue nations.

- In 1995, Congress directed DOD to work with the FBI to expand and improve U.S. efforts to deter possible proliferation and acquisition of WMD by organized crime organizations in Eastern Europe, the Baltic countries, and the states of the former Soviet Union.
- In 1997, Congress directed DOD to work with U.S. Customs (now Customs and Border Protection). These two programs – the DOD-FBI partnership and the DOD-CBP partnership – now fall under DTRA's International Counterproliferation Program.

9 The Container Security Initiative, first announced on January 17, 2002, by the U.S. Customs Service (now U.S. Customs and Border Protection), utilizes teams of customs professionals stationed in ports around the world to guard against container shipments that may be exploited for terrorist purposes. For more information, see http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/international_activities/csi.

10 DTRA is charged with safeguarding the United States and its allies from WMD by providing capabilities to reduce, eliminate, and counter the threat and mitigate its effects in the event of an incident. For more information, see www.dtra.mil.

- ICP's mandate was expanded in 2005 in the National Defense Authorization Act. It now allows the Secretary of Defense to act globally where ever he identifies or anticipates a WMD proliferation threat.
- The revelations concerning the A.Q. Khan network emanating from Pakistan demonstrated clearly that WMD proliferation is no longer exclusively a problem stemming from the former states of the Soviet Union. The knowledge to produce WMD exists worldwide as do scientists in several states willing and capable of conducting WMD research. Therefore, the capacity to develop, sell, and move WMD is a worldwide problem.

ICP efforts are focused on the counterproliferation of WMD-related materials. However, policing of borders transcends the WMD issue. The skill sets and equipment provided under ICP assist partner countries in monitoring their borders for WMD, but this also combats narcotics, weapons, and human trafficking. This dual benefit – securing borders to combat WMD proliferation and illicit trafficking activities – echoes one of the salient themes of the Workshop, namely that there are common capabilities that can and should be developed to combat both types of threat.

ICP offers partner countries the opportunity to work collaboratively with U.S. officials to train their law enforcement, customs, and border security personnel to the level desired by the partner country.

- ICP conducts assessments with the partner nation, and assists with whatever the country believes is a requirement for policing its own borders.
- To ensure the continued utility of ICP, there is constant communication with partner countries regarding timetables and objectives. For example, a partner country may decide it needs a particular type of equipment that the United States is willing to provide. Detailed discussions with the country's government organizations and periodic reassessments of its infrastructure ensure effective implementation of the deal.

The first step in the ICP process is often the WMD Executive Seminar, designed for mid- to high-level government officials. The Seminar consists of a series of discussions and lectures in a working-group format, after which the host nation charts a path for the development of strong border security infrastructure and practices.

- Currently, the ICP course curriculum ranges from law enforcement and criminal investigations to emergency response and WMD terrorism.
- The courses utilize specialized equipment that enables investigators, inspectors, and first responders to perform their duties more effectively. The high-end equipment, which is provided via a long-term loan, is the same offered to U.S. state and local municipalities. This aspect of ICP seems particularly relevant, considering the need expressed throughout the Workshop for better border and port security technologies in Mexico.
- ICP also conducts a series of exercises throughout its training program that culminate with a large, integrated interagency exercise. For example, a recent exercise in Estonia consisted of all ten government agencies in the country that respond to WMD trafficking. This event, which focused on countering a WMD threat at an airport and seaport, was the first time these various agencies had ever been brought together.
- These exercises also provided Estonia with an opportunity to invite representatives from neighboring countries Finland, Lithuania, and Latvia to observe its evolving capabilities for securing borders. As a result, Lithuania and Latvia have requested that DTRA conduct a similar exercise to advance their own capabilities.

- All ICP training is conducted in the host nation language, or host nation language of choice. All course materials are provided on hard copy and in electronic format. ICP pays for everything related to the course. There is no cost to the host nation government.
- ICP teams operate with a fairly small footprint of five to seven instructors. For nations that do not want training conducted within their country, ICP is currently exploring options for bringing teams to a third-party location.

Partner countries are pleased with the results of ICP, feeling far better prepared to respond to a range of emerging global threats. Thus, ICP could become an integral aspect of the SPP framework to help meet twenty-first-century challenges including WMD proliferation. One U.S. official expressed support for incorporating ICP into the SPP. DTRA has managed these programs tactfully and respectfully with a range of nations, and has the ability to take into account not only the technological needs of each nation but also the political needs/sensitivities as well to tailor a unique, country-specific program. ICP is conducted in close coordination with the embassies and with full respect for the laws of the partner nation.

Focus on Response: Joint Task Force-Civil Support, U.S. NORTHCOM

Joint Task Force-Civil Support (JTF-CS) at U.S. Northern Command is tasked with consequence management for a WMD event, terrorist attack, natural disaster, or industrial accident. The effects and impact of these events would not respect national borders or nationality. This reality reinforces the importance of effects-based planning for the Mexico-U.S. security partnership, as differing threat perceptions become less important when common requirements for preventing and responding to the threats are identified.

All JTF-CS troops that would participate in consequence-management have, as their primary role, a war-fighting mission. Ninety-nine percent of the units are war-fighters with special skills that can be used in consequence-management. JTF-CS is not a large-standing force for consequence-management, but there is a large force from which to draw on when needed that trains together and is ready to be deployed when needed. This includes Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve forces.¹¹

To execute this diverse range of missions effectively, DOD must ensure that this force of active and reserve components is:

- Timely in response and readily accessible. Homeland defense and civil support missions require a rapid response, often measured in hours, not days.
- Trained and equipped to achieve the highest degree of readiness in a broad array of mission sets.
- Transformed to meet terrorist challenges. Timely, trained, and equipped forces must be agile and interoperable, taking advantage of networked capabilities.

JTF-CS uses the term “CBRNE” (rather than WMD) consequence management:

- C = chemical agents
- B = biological agents

11 The June 2005 *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* defines this force as the Total Force which must be prepared to conduct the full spectrum of domestic civil support missions when directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense.” For more information see: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/policy/dod/d20050630homeland.pdf>

- R = radiological incidents, such as a dirty-bomb explosion or a scenario where nuclear materials are released in an industrial meltdown or other accident
- N = nuclear explosion
- E = high-yield explosives

The term “CBRNE” advances the idea that the effects of these incidents are the same, no matter what triggers them. Using the phrase “weapons of mass destruction” implies a man-made, intentional attack and therefore is a limiting concept in the crisis management context. A natural disaster can release CBRNE agents because hurricanes or earthquakes could damage the infrastructure that houses chemical or biological materials, which can subsequently be spread over a wide area, creating conditions similar to a bio- or chemical-weapons attack.

The United States has a layered and integrated consequence-management infrastructure. JTF-CS incorporates all components of the U.S. military – Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard – in addition to civilian agencies. U.S. National Guard personnel, who have extensive experience in consequence management, are also part of the team, along with state officials.

- JTF-CS provides military support to civil authorities, but only when requested by civilian leadership.
- Every disaster that requires consequence-management always starts at the local level. If local authorities and first responders become overwhelmed, they can request assistance from the governor, who calls upon resources that include the state emergency management agency, the National Guard, and the public health department.
- If the state cannot handle the crisis, the governor can contact the President of the United States, who may deploy assets from DHS including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the U.S. military.

Crisis response operations on the scale of an event like Hurricane Katrina require extensive, detail-oriented, and long-term planning. Questions must be addressed such as: What kinds of forces will be needed at the various levels of government? How will the various agencies and personnel that come together through JTF-CS operations work as a coherent unit? What communications resources will be required, and how can we protect the infrastructure that supports communications systems? Addressing these questions before a crisis situation occurs results in the ability to amass people and supplies rapidly where and when needed.

JTF-CS develops scenarios and plans for crises in accordance with the layered response architecture described above. There may be important lessons to be learned from JTF-CS for the Mexico-U.S. partnership with respect to contingency planning and undertaking simulations and exercises in advance of a crisis situation.

- JTF-CS recently conducted a scenario that included detonation of a small nuclear device by terrorists in an East Coast city. The plume of radiation destruction was plotted, and estimates were done on the number of people and amount of infrastructure affected. Highlighting the parallels between man-made and natural disasters, JTF-CS personnel identified several similarities between this nuclear explosion scenario and Katrina’s impact on New Orleans. These included the size of the quarantined zone and evacuation requirements.
- A simulation of this kind that examined a CBRNE incident at the Mexico-U.S. border would be very helpful for both countries to explore how best to work together to respond to such a

contingency, among other items, identifying shortfalls in capabilities and what procedures are effective, prioritizing tasks, and understanding how all potential participants would interact.

- Furthermore, getting into a disaster area and managing it may be easier than getting out. Therefore, an “exit strategy” must also figure into planning. When do you know your duties have been fulfilled and it is time to leave? How can this be communicated to the local population? How do you cede authority back to local authorities?

Such questions were identified at the Workshop. They form the basis for detailed planning that should be developed between Mexico and the United States as we address shared security needs.

Next Steps for the Mexico-U.S. Partnership

- Together, Mexico and the United States must develop realistic crisis scenarios that may be encountered in the future. In addition, they should hold joint tabletop and other exercises to plan and prepare for these contingencies.
- Demographics and economic development in the Western hemisphere are issues that must be addressed, particularly with regard to alleviating the causes of immigration to the United States. Securing the Mexico-U.S. border and implementing a guest worker program in the United States is ultimately futile without a larger effort to improve the economies of Mexico and other Central American countries. Robust national economies would make labor less apt to immigrate in the first instance and more likely for them to return after their U.S. working permit expires.
- Securing the Mexico-U.S. border while ensuring fast and efficient transit of legitimate persons and goods is an enormous challenge. Efforts such as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative are underway to identify known persons and goods so they can be moved across the border quickly.
- Mexican participation in the International Counterproliferation Program, a U.S. initiative lead by DTRA to assist foreign countries in combating the transit of WMD materials across their borders, should be pursued by both nations. Partnering with Mexico in the ICP would help develop more consequence management and related capabilities that would address the threat concerns of both nations and could serve as a catalyst for even greater bilateral security cooperation.



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