



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

STATEMENT

OF

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**U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

REGARDING A HEARING ON

**“DRUG TRAFFICKING VIOLENCE IN MEXICO: IMPLICATIONS FOR
THE UNITED STATES”**

BEFORE THE

**UNITED STATES SENATE
CAUCUS ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2010 -- 10:00 a.m.
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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Feinstein, Co-Chairman Grassley, and distinguished Members of the Caucus:

On behalf of Secretary Napolitano and Assistant Secretary Morton, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the role of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in public safety and Southwest border security. As the largest investigative agency in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), ICE protects national security and upholds public safety by targeting transnational criminal networks and terrorist organizations that might exploit potential vulnerabilities at our borders. Partnerships are essential to this effort, and ICE works closely with its domestic and foreign partners at the federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal level to create a united front to secure the border and dismantle transnational criminal organizations.

The escalation of violence by drug cartels and other criminal organizations just over our border with Mexico demonstrates the importance of this mission. As Secretary Napolitano has testified, the violence in Mexico is not solely an international threat; it is a homeland security issue in which all Americans have a stake.

I would be remiss if I did not speak about the recent tragic murder last month of a prominent Arizona rancher, Robert Krentz, near the Mexican border. I speak on behalf of the men and women of ICE in offering our condolences for Mr. Krentz's family and community, as well as the families of the three people associated with the United States Consulate who were recently brutally murdered in Ciudad Juárez. Together with our Mexican partners and domestic federal and state law enforcement partners, ICE is working to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice.

Addressing the increasing drug cartel-related violence on the Mexican side of the Southwest border, particularly around Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana, and along the Nuevo-León-Tamaulipas-Texas border, is vital to the interests of the United States.

ICE remains firmly committed to ensuring that our borders are secure and to curbing the bilateral flow of contraband including guns, money, and drugs. As detailed in the first Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR), delivered by Secretary Napolitano to Congress in February 2010, ICE plays a key role in border security and enforcing immigration law. ICE's efforts help protect the American people from illicit trafficking and related transnational crime through smart, tough, intelligence-driven law enforcement.

ICE's efforts along the Southwest border are guided by the Office of National Drug Control Policy's National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy, as well as DHS' Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement's strategic goals. These plans articulate a simple, yet powerful, message: we must reduce the flow of illicit drugs, money, and violence across the Southwest border, as well as sever the illicit pipeline of currency and arms from the United States that fuels the power and violence of drug cartels.

ICE's efforts along the Southwest border are conducted in close coordination with our partners at U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and our state, local, and tribal partners. ICE's work also directly supports the Mérida Initiative, which established a strategic framework to guide United States and Mexican cooperation. The Mérida Initiative institutionalizes this partnership by: disrupting organized criminal groups; strengthening institutions; creating a 21st century border; and

building strong and resilient communities. Our success in battling the violence on the Southwest border hinges on this partnership, both at home and abroad.

Finally, I want to stress that our working relationship with fellow law enforcement and civilian agencies in Mexico remains extremely positive and well-coordinated. We have forged productive working relationships, and President Calderon's leadership and commitment to defeat drug cartels remains a guiding light for the Government of Mexico and the public.

ICE's efforts to enhance public safety and reduce violence on the Mexican side of our shared border includes the ICE-led Border Enforcement Security Taskforces (BESTs), investigations leading to the dismantling of transnational criminal organizations and gangs, and the removal of criminal aliens who threaten our communities. I will start by highlighting our efforts to combat the increasing violence and illegal activities in Ciudad Juárez, immediately over the border from El Paso.

ICE's Efforts in Ciudad Juárez

ICE recognizes the severity of the violence and illicit activity in Ciudad Juárez. We intend to use, to the greatest extent possible, all of our available resources to address this problem strategically. As a result, ICE has initiated new programs, while simultaneously expanding and reorganizing existing programs, to address the escalating cartel violence in and around Ciudad Juárez.

First, since March 3, 2010, ICE has suspended until further notice the removal of Mexican nationals with criminal records to Ciudad Juárez. Temporary cessation of the removal of criminal aliens to Ciudad Juárez can reduce the number of individuals susceptible to recruitment or exploitation by cartels and criminal gangs upon repatriation to Mexico.

Second, we have expanded the Illegal Drug Program (IDP) to El Paso, Texas just this month in coordination with CBP and the United States Attorney's Office in El Paso. The IDP began last fall as a pilot program in Nogales, Arizona, with protocols between the Mexican Office of the Attorney General (PGR), ICE, and CBP. The IDP enables PGR to prosecute cross-border drug smugglers who the United States Attorney's Office declines to prosecute, often due to evidentiary issues involving the knowledge of the smuggler. The program became operational on October 24, 2009, and has already produced results in Nogales, Arizona. Since its inception, 24 defendants were arrested as a result of 17 separate seizures, with a total combined weight of 887.71 pounds of marijuana, 52.31 pounds of cocaine, and 6.11 pounds of heroin. The 24 defendants were referred for prosecution in Mexico. On March 11, 2010, the PGR notified ICE that the first two completed cases had resulted in a 10-year prison sentence for each defendant. This partnership has enabled us to increase enforcement against individuals directly involved with drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) operating in the area.

Third, the BESTs continue to play a critical role in ICE's enforcement efforts, especially in partnership with Mexico. The El Paso BEST is working collaboratively with Mexico's Tactical-Operative Intelligence Unit (UNITO) Juárez taskforce, and will address the following four primary threats in the El Paso-Juárez corridor: 1) narcotics smuggling; 2) weapons violations; 3) money laundering; and 4) human smuggling/trafficking. Similarly, the El Paso BEST has been divided into three teams. Our Operations team conducts investigations of criminal violations related to weapons smuggling, bulk cash smuggling, transnational gangs, and narcotics smuggling. The Human Smuggling/Trafficking team conducts long-term investigations involving criminal organizations that are smuggling or trafficking undocumented aliens. Finally, the Disrupt team addresses short-term or lower-level violent crimes.

I would like to share an example of the real results ICE is achieving in El Paso. From a significant, long-term investigation, ICE arrested 25 people, including the owner and two managers of the Gateway Hotel in El Paso, for conspiracy to smuggle and harbor illegal aliens for financial gain. These arrests are only part of a comprehensive approach to address the violence on the Southwest border and disrupt cross-border crime.

The Southwest Border Initiative

Since the launch of the Southwest Border Initiative (SWBI) in March 2009, information sharing between the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and Defense has increased, resulting in better intelligence capabilities and coordination with state, local, and Mexican law enforcement authorities to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations operating along the Southwest border. Between March 2009 and March 2010, seizures of weapons, money, and narcotics along the Southwest border have increased significantly compared to the same time period in 2008-2009. Specifically, ICE has achieved:

- A 64 percent increase in narcotics seizures in the Houston Area of Responsibility (AOR). The San Antonio AOR reports a 23 percent increase in narcotics seizures during the same period.
- A 40 percent increase (\$2.7 million increase) in currency seizures in the San Diego AOR. These seizures are critical, as they represent the profits from criminal activity and the means by which transnational criminal organizations fund their illegal activities of drug smuggling, weapons smuggling, and human trafficking.
- A 15 percent increase in the rate of criminal convictions prosecuted by DOJ in the Phoenix AOR.

- An 11 percent increase in administrative arrests of criminal aliens by ICE's Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) along the Southwest border. From March 2009 through March 2010, DRO San Diego, San Antonio, Phoenix, Houston and El Paso arrested 27,741 criminal aliens compared to 24,895 from the same period last year.

In September 2009, ICE and DHS bolstered efforts along the Southwest border through the Arizona Operational Plan, later designated as the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats (ACTT) initiative, in response to a surge in border crime in Southern Arizona. The ACTT plan builds upon ICE's investigative successes and supports the Mérida goal of building resilient communities by increased public safety and a culture of lawfulness. As a stakeholder in the ACTT effort, ICE is fully committed to the effort's primary focus of conducting intelligence-driven border enforcement operations to disrupt and dismantle violent cross-border criminal organizations that have a negative impact on the lives of the people on both sides of the border.

ICE investigations reveal that cross-border criminal organizations often engage in various criminal acts to support their smuggling activities. The ACTT was developed specifically to address serious felonies that significantly impact public safety in Arizona. These serious felonies include: smuggling of aliens, bulk cash, and drugs; document fraud; exportation of weapons; homicide; hostage taking; money laundering; and human trafficking and prostitution.

In conjunction with our ACTT partners, ICE has participated with CBP in productive interdiction operations that have yielded substantial enforcement results. Further, intelligence garnered from seizures has led to investigations targeting the command and control structure of large transnational criminal organizations.

Dismantling Cross-Border Criminal Networks through BESTs along the Southwest Border

ICE continues to expand BESTs, which currently operate in 10 locations along the Southwest border. Depending on the unique law enforcement needs within ICE's various areas of responsibility, BESTs often include members from other federal agencies such as CBP, DEA, ATF, the FBI, as well as state and local law enforcement agencies. A number of the BEST locations also include foreign law enforcement, including Mexican officers.

Last August, Secretary Napolitano announced the formation of the first-ever Mexico-based BEST. When fully operational, the Mexico City BEST will be a bilateral, multi-agency taskforce that enhances information sharing between ICE and the Government of Mexico, thereby increasing operational effectiveness. This vetted unit will be poised to investigate a wide range of criminal organizations using investigative methods such as undercover operations, intelligence collection, and financial intelligence exploitation to ensure prosecution.

Several highlights of the work of the BESTs at the border include:

- From November 19, 2009, through March 12, 2010, ICE BESTs seized 3,514 pounds of cocaine, 17,689 pounds of marijuana, 176 pounds of methamphetamine, 23 pounds of crystal methamphetamine, and 254 pounds of ecstasy. Over the same period, ICE BESTs seized 296 weapons, 125 vehicles, and \$965,000 in United States currency and monetary instruments.
- Developing communication and information-sharing protocols to identify human smuggling routes used by transnational criminal organizations through Mexico that could have an impact on our national security.

- Working with the United States Embassy in Mexico to design a consistent standard for vetting state and local officials, enabling these officials to work with ICE vetted units on the United States/Mexico border.

Our efforts to dismantle cross-border criminal organizations are producing results. For instance, in the area of weapons smuggling, in April 2009, the El Paso BEST, in collaboration with the El Paso Police Department and ATF, arrested two individuals identified as working for a drug trafficking organization in Mexico. BEST agents conducted an undercover meeting in which two Mexican individuals provided a list of weapons and a good faith deposit of \$148,000 for the firearms. The purchase wish-list included 20 revolvers, 75 semi-automatic handguns, 320 rifles, 300 machine guns, 52 grenade launchers, and several thousand rounds of ammunition. The individuals agreed to pay \$1.9 million in United States currency for the weapons. A total of four people were indicted in the investigation. Three have been sentenced; the fourth is a fugitive believed to be hiding in Mexico.

To combat human smuggling, ICE agents arrested 104 people on February 2, 2010, during “Operation Night Moves,” which targeted illicit transportation businesses that smuggled illegal aliens from Houston, Texas. Twenty-two people were charged for using their businesses to transport aliens recently smuggled into the country. ICE agents also seized 32 vehicles and 18 weapons, including one weapon that was reported stolen.

Recently, federal indictments were unsealed in the District of Arizona in Operation In Plain Sight, a case that was more than two years in the making. The operation resulted in 49 criminal arrests, the execution of roughly 30 search warrants, and the seizure of over 50 vehicles. The investigation targeted every level of a cross-border human smuggling organization that used the guise of lawful shuttle transportation companies to move illegal aliens from Tucson

to Phoenix after they were smuggled into the United States in the vicinity of Nogales, Arizona, with the intent of removing the entire infrastructure of the network.

Every federal law enforcement agency in the State of Arizona—the ICE Office of Investigations and Office of Detention and Removal Operations, CBP’s Office of Border Patrol and Office of Field Operations, along with FBI, DEA, ATF, the U.S. Marshals Service, along with the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the Phoenix and Tucson Police Departments, and the Pima County Sheriff’s Office, participated in the takedown operation. This case highlighted the strengthening ties we have been building with Mexican federal law enforcement agencies. Mexico’s Secretaría de Seguridad Pública (SSP) arrested one of the main targets in the case, and on April 15 executed search warrants and arrested organizational participants in Mexico simultaneously with our operation in Arizona.

Finally, ICE is deeply concerned about the threat of transnational street gangs, and especially their links to Mexican cartels. ICE agents in El Paso participated in “Operation Knockdown,” a coordinated effort by DEA, FBI, and El Paso law enforcement agencies targeting Barrio Azteca (BA) gang members from March 18-21, 2010. BA gang members are allegedly responsible for the murders of three individuals associated with the United States Consulate in Ciudad Juárez on March 13, 2010. BA gang members are also involved in smuggling drugs from Mexico into the United States for distribution throughout the country, and are suspected of committing assassinations for the Juárez Cartel. ICE agents have made a total of 23 criminal arrests of United States citizens and Mexican nationals for violations of federal and state law.

Dismantling a criminal organization requires robust criminal prosecution. To assist United States Attorneys with increased caseloads resulting from ICE’s increased enforcement, we are loaning ICE attorneys to serve two-year terms as Special Assistant United States

Attorneys (SAUSA). Currently, ICE has six SAUSAs stationed along the Southwest border. ICE has developed an agreement with the Department of Justice to increase this number in the coming months.

Intelligence Support to ICE Investigations along the Southwest Border

A robust intelligence and information sharing mechanism is critical to dismantling transnational criminal organizations operating along the Southwest border. ICE draws on its intelligence programs, such as the Border Violence Intelligence Cell (BVIC) and its Field Intelligence Groups (FIGs), to execute its law enforcement operations successfully. Over the past year, ICE deployed additional intelligence analysts and officers to our offices to the Southwest border, Mexico, and to the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). These key personnel support ICE investigations with their subject matter expertise on transnational criminal organizations engaging in money laundering, narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, alien smuggling, and counter-proliferation.

ICE's BVIC has served as a centralized mechanism to support operations conducted through the BEST teams and with the Government of Mexico. ICE co-located the BVIC at the EPIC to enhance information sharing between our law enforcement partners. ICE's partnership with ATF's EPIC Gun Desk, for example, has helped coordinate firearms tracing efforts and identified smuggling routes between the United States into Mexico.

With the recent upsurge in violence in Juárez, the BVIC is actively developing actionable intelligence on drug cartels and their associates, and is working with our interagency partners. For example, on March 31, BVIC research worked in concert with the EPIC Airwatch Command

to positively identify a known drug trafficker who was seeking to purchase a plane for ostensibly illicit purposes. The information resulted in the seizure of a small aircraft valued at \$1.1 million.

ICE's FIGs also play a critical role in building actionable intelligence against the DTOs. FIG El Paso, for example, supports DRO, BEST El Paso, and BEST Las Cruces. Following the murders of the persons associated with the United States Consulate in Ciudad Juarez, FIG El Paso was instrumental in identifying BA members who crossed into the United States following the murders. Additionally, Intelligence Officers assigned to support Operation Knockdown were responsible for arresting a high level BA member based on actionable intelligence.

In furtherance of information sharing to support ICE's law enforcement initiatives, ICE created a Weapons Virtual Task Force (WVTF). This cyberspace task force, comprised of ICE and Government of Mexico personnel, will post investigative information through a Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) portal. This initiative intends to use the HSIN WVTF portal as the primary mechanism for sharing firearms-related investigative information and intelligence that will lead to ready identification and the routine disruption of illicit trans-border activities that support weapons smuggling between the United States and Mexico.

ICE is committed to partnership in this critical area. To facilitate bilateral sharing of law enforcement information, ICE is supporting the Department's efforts to develop a stand-alone web-based tool, Law Enforcement Information Sharing Service International (LSI). This tool will allow task force personnel to better understand patterns and trends in international organized crime and promote early detection of organized crime threats. In addition, LSI will provide better identification of partner countries impacted by U.S.-based criminal organizations, resulting in earlier collaboration and better investigations.

Targeting Transnational Criminal Organizations and Pursuing Money Laundering and Bulk Cash Smuggling Investigations

Transnational criminals attempt to exploit lawful movement and transportation systems to create alternative, illicit pathways through which people and narcotics, illicit proceeds, and weaponry can cross the border. As the Department's largest investigative agency, ICE plays a critical role in the layered approach to border security. Our anti-smuggling operations, including Operation Armas Cruzadas and Operation Firewall, are critical to the identification, disruption, and dismantling of transnational gangs.

On Aug. 11, 2009, ICE officially launched the Bulk Cash Smuggling Center (BCSC), which is co-located at the Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) in Williston, Vermont. The BCSC is a 24/7 investigative support and operations facility providing real-time tactical assistance to the field. Since its inception, the BCSC has initiated 167 bulk cash smuggling investigations, which have resulted in over 35 additional arrests and over 70 additional seizures.

The final point on ICE's efforts in developing intelligence-driven investigations must include a mention of a key study ICE launched in October 2009 in conjunction with the DHS Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement, the Government of Mexico, and significant contribution from the DEA. This report was commissioned to study the movement of illicit proceeds between the United States and Mexico. I am pleased to report that the study was just recently completed and it provides a critical strategic overview of the criminal proceeds "supply chain." It identifies key nodes and vulnerabilities that we can use to disrupt bulk cash smuggling and money laundering. This first-ever bilateral study will assist United States law enforcement in developing strategic approaches to dismantling the financial infrastructure of transnational criminal organizations. The study's factual findings and results will be released at a joint United States/Mexico Money Laundering Strategy Planning meeting in a few weeks.

Operation Armas Cruzadas

Operation Armas Cruzadas is a comprehensive, collaborative, intelligence-driven, systematic effort in partnership with the Government of Mexico to identify, disrupt, and dismantle the criminal networks that illicitly transport arms across the border. From March 25, 2009, through March 12, 2010, Armas Cruzadas yielded the seizure of 125 firearms, 13,386 rounds of ammunition, and several criminal arrests. Since its creation, the Operation has resulted in the seizure of 3,877 weapons, 396,414 rounds of ammunition, and nearly \$10.5 million in U.S. currency and monetary instruments, as well as in the criminal arrests of 749 individuals. This bilateral law enforcement and intelligence-sharing operation between United States and Mexican law enforcement agencies has helped to curtail drug cartels and criminal organizations that seek to acquire powerful and dangerous firearms that perpetuate the violence along the Southwest border.

Operation Firewall

ICE's Operation Firewall disrupts the movement and smuggling of bulk cash en route to the border, at the border, and internationally. Through partnerships and collaboration with federal, state and local law enforcement officers, and international law enforcement partners such as Mexico, ICE targets the lifeblood of these criminal organizations. During fiscal year 2009, Operation Firewall efforts in Mexico resulted in nine seizures totaling over \$18 million and the arrest of five individuals by Mexican authorities. Thus far in calendar year 2010, Operation Firewall efforts at the Mexico City International Airport have resulted in five seizures totaling \$3.1 million. ICE Attaché Mexico City is receiving robust support from the Government of

Mexico in conducting Operation Firewall. Since its inception in 2005, Operation Firewall has resulted in 3,946 seizures totaling more than \$302 million and the arrests of 679 individuals. These efforts include 205 international seizures of more than \$112 million and 140 international arrests.

In September 2009, ICE agents and our international partners made the largest bulk cash container seizure in Colombian and U.S. history. More than \$41 million in U.S. currency secreted in shipping containers found in ports in Mexico and Colombia was seized as a result of this ICE-led investigation. Bilateral cooperation with our foreign law enforcement partners has significantly furthered ICE's mission to disrupt the criminal organizations that are smuggling narcotics into the United States, and smuggling bulk cash shipments out.

Investigations informed by operational intelligence continue to produce successful criminal prosecutions. For example, last month, a vehicle stop was initiated by St. Louis County, Missouri law enforcement based on surveillance of a vehicle that was suspected of transporting illicit currency. The BCSC was contacted to provide real time tactical intelligence to support the interdiction officers on scene. Ultimately, the information developed assisted officers in the seizure of \$283,080.00 and the indictment of four suspects with ties to Mexico. ICE's BCSC is able to quickly cross-check information received on bulk cash seizures against its various systems which track illegal border crossings, immigration status and other violations. Going forward, information regarding bulk cash seizures will be simultaneously shared between ICE's BCSC and the National Seizure System (NSS) at EPIC.

Transnational Gangs

Transnational gangs perpetrate numerous violations within ICE's purview, including human smuggling and trafficking, narcotics smuggling and distribution, identity theft and benefit fraud, money laundering, weapons smuggling and arms trafficking, cyber crimes, kidnapping, extortion, and export violations. These gangs often conspire with other dangerous criminal organizations, which allow them to mature from small autonomous criminal groups into larger, international criminal enterprises.

The key to ICE's success against gangs is our ability to use a multifaceted approach to attacking violent crime by applying appropriate investigative strategies and law enforcement authority. For example, in November 2009, under ICE's Operation Community Shield Program, ICE agents initiated "Project Big Freeze" to combat street gangs, prison gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs in the United States specifically conducting business on behalf of DTOs, including those that operate along the Southwest border.

The impetus for Project Big Freeze was the National Drug Threat Assessment report by the Justice Department's National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC). This 2009 report identified gangs as a significant threat to the United States. The report classified 28 gangs as exceedingly dangerous due to their involvement with cross-border criminal activity linked to Mexican and Asian DTOs.

Project Big Freeze involved more than 115 law enforcement agencies at the federal, state, and local levels, and resulted in the arrest of 517 gang members and associates from 88 gangs across 83 cities throughout the United States. Forty-one of the arrested individuals were present illegally in the United States and 240 were from 15 gangs affiliated with Mexican DTOs. As part of this initiative, agents seized 725 pounds of marijuana, 7 kilograms of cocaine, 142 grams

of heroin, 87 grams of crack cocaine, 29 grams of methamphetamine, 47 firearms, and more than \$100,000.

Initiatives with the Government of Mexico

In coordination with the Department of State, ICE is expanding its law enforcement training and outreach programs in Mexico and strengthening our efforts to curb illicit activity at the border. ICE coordinates multiple initiatives that involve direct coordination with the Government of Mexico.

In addition, in August 2007, the Mexican Tax Administration Service (SAT), Mexican Customs, CBP, and ICE signed a Bilateral Strategic Plan to fight cross-border crime. This plan strengthened our collaboration by expanding institutional cooperation mechanisms. Secretary Napolitano recently signed a Declaration of Principles with the Mexican Minister of Finance, and DHS, ICE, CBP, SAT and Mexican Customs signed an updated version of the corresponding Bilateral Strategic Plan, which identifies several priority initiatives. Under the December 2009 plan, ICE will begin next month an unprecedented investigative training course for Mexican Customs-enforcement personnel, modeled after the ICE Special Agent training, which is scheduled to be completed in June 2010. Funded by the Merida Initiative, this comprehensive curriculum will prepare Mexican Customs officials to assume expanded investigative responsibilities and graduates will better understand United States and Mexican customs laws and law enforcement best practices. Increased investigative capabilities will support the prosecution of criminal customs violations in Mexico and will improve bilateral information sharing and investigative efforts. These new capacities will enable the Government of Mexico to stem the abuse of the international shipping systems that bring contraband into the United States.

ICE participates in a bilateral arms working group, Grupo de Coordinacion-Armas, with United States Embassy law enforcement partners and the Government of Mexico. This working group focuses on efforts to combat arms trafficking/smuggling. Every two weeks, the ICE Attaché office in Mexico City obtains seizure summaries, including names of suspects and lists of arms and munitions seized, and provides that information to analysts.

ICE is also sharing critical information with Mexican authorities to assist them in their fight against the DTOs. On March 23, 2010, Secretary Napolitano signed an unprecedented agreement with Governance Secretary Gomez-Mont and Secretary of Public Safety General Garcia Luna in Mexico that memorializes DHS' effort to share criminal history information electronically with Mexican law enforcement about Mexican nationals who are being repatriated from the United States and who have been convicted of certain felonies in the United States. We worked closely with the Department of Justice and the FBI to ensure that all parties adhere to regulations on the sharing of this criminal record information and the agreement includes language that precludes Mexico from refusing to accept repatriation of Mexican nationals.

Finally, ICE is enabling Mexican law enforcement officials to perform their duties more effectively by providing training and technical assistance. For instance, among other programs, we have provided training on arms trafficking, cyber crimes, basic criminal investigative methods, special investigative techniques to SSP officers, as well as global trafficking in persons, child sex exploitation, and information-sharing platform training. We have also planned trainings in ethics and gang investigations. We remain committed to our cross-training efforts to build the investigative capacity of Mexican law enforcement entities.

CONCLUSION

Enhancing public safety along the Southwest border remains an enormous priority for the Department and ICE. We have taken important steps to improve security along the border by instituting several initiatives and pursuing strong partnership with other federal agencies, state and local law enforcement, and the Government of Mexico. We are beginning to see real results from our efforts, and we will continue to prioritize this important mission. I assure you that ICE takes this issue very seriously. We will continue to utilize our broad jurisdiction and ability to forge strategic partnerships with our fellow law enforcement agencies, both here and abroad.

I thank the Caucus for its continued support of ICE and our border security mission. Your support is vital to the work of ICE. Moreover, your continued interest and oversight of our actions is important to the men and women at ICE, who work each day to ensure the safety and security of the United States.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.