

**Testimony of Frank O. Mora
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**Before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management
The Committee on Homeland Security
United States House of Representatives
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I would like to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to testify today and for your interest in U.S. defense cooperation with Mexico. I value the insights and work of this committee in ensuring the security of our homeland and recognizing that an important part of this effort is to strengthen our relationships with critical partners such as Mexico. My hope is that I can help you in your work by being transparent in mine, and that my testimony today is responsive in this regard.

Mexico is facing a serious challenge as it confronts transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that seek to operate with impunity inside Mexico, and we admire President Calderon's commitment to the fight. Although we are concerned about the escalating violence, we are confident that Mexico's democracy is strong. In fact, one important reason why TCOs have increasingly turned to violence and intimidation of law enforcement officers and the Mexican public is because the Government of Mexico has made progress in countering the TCOs. As a result of these efforts, several of the major drug trafficking organizations are fighting with each other to ensure survival while others have splintered into smaller intra-warring factions.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the U.S. Government's principal vehicle for coordinating security cooperation with Mexico is the Mérida Initiative. The Defense Department plays a supporting role to the Department of State and U.S. law enforcement agencies, but is nonetheless working on a number of fronts to assist the Government of Mexico in its brave fight. Under Mérida and other cooperative programs, DoD provides training, information sharing, and operational support to Mexican military and other security forces, as well as to U.S. law enforcement agencies' activities in Mexico. I am pleased to report that U.S. – Mexico defense cooperation has reached unprecedented levels as of late.

In February 2010 we hosted the first of what we expect to be regular meetings of a Defense Bilateral Working Group with Mexico. Our hope is that this develops into a robust mechanism for structured, strategic dialogue. In this first meeting, for example, one promising initiative that the Mexican military recommended was the establishment of a sub-group to discuss the Mexico-Guatemala-Belize border region, and this sub-group has already met twice. Addressing security issues in this region is becoming even more important as TCOs seek to diversify their criminal activities and extend their presence throughout the region, which is why we are working in conjunction with the State Department, U.S. Northern Command, and U.S. Southern Command to develop a joint security effort in the border area of these three countries.

Increased information-sharing and multi-domain awareness capabilities are also critical components of our cooperation, and are indispensable as we work to ensure that our efforts on both sides of the border and throughout the region are coordinated. We have made particularly impressive strides on this front by signing a number of agreements that will facilitate information sharing and improve domain awareness. The Department also provides training and exchanges of expertise to help Mexican forces learn how to plan and carry out multi-agency intelligence driven support to law enforcement efforts against TCOs.

The Department continues to partner with Mexican forces in their efforts to improve tactical and operational proficiency, as well as their air mobility, maritime law enforcement, communications, reconnaissance, and associated capacity with training and technical support. As part of the Mérida Initiative, we have provided non-intrusive inspection equipment for mobile checkpoints, delivered eight Bell 412 transport helicopters for the Mexican Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA), and accelerated the anticipated delivery of three UH-60M Blackhawks for the Mexican Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR) by two years to September of this year. Our delivery of four CASA 235 maritime surveillance aircraft remains on target.

The U.S. Navy, working with the Coast Guard and other partners, has increased cooperation with SEDENA and SEMAR on aerial, maritime, littoral, and amphibious counternarcotics operations. The frequency of planned U.S.-Mexico maritime counternarcotics cooperative operations increased from four in 2008 to 10 in 2009 to 24 in 2010. I am also encouraged that SEDENA posted a liaison officer at U.S. Northern Command headquarters in 2009, and SEMAR has liaison officers posted at Joint Inter-Agency Task Force (JIATF)-South and Fleet Forces Command, in addition to U.S. Northern Command.

In addition, and as a complement to our efforts under Mérida, the Defense Department's counternarcotics (CN) program estimates that it will program approximately \$51 million in fiscal year 2011 to support Mexico. The Department's CN support has concentrated on helping Mexican forces improve their air mobility, maritime law enforcement, and reconnaissance capacities. This allocation is a dramatic increase from previous funding levels for Mexico. Before 2009, for example, funding for Mexico was closer to \$3 million a year.

Finally, I think it is appropriate to note that the Government of Mexico recognizes as a priority the protection of the human rights of its citizens, especially as Mexico's armed forces have joined law enforcement agencies in the serious fight against violent criminal organizations. The U.S. Northern Command has therefore partnered with SEDENA and SEMAR to increase human rights training by conducting executive seminars.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by emphasizing that this is a snapshot of our cooperation with the Government of Mexico, but I hope it has provided you with a sense of the strategic importance that the Defense Department places on its cooperation with Mexico. Although I believe that the initiatives described above strongly demonstrate our commitment to supporting the Mexican government in its efforts to combat these violent transnational criminal groups, I also want to underscore that the Defense Department assists and collaborates with the Government of Mexico to address its requests of us. As Secretary Gates has noted previously, we will take our lead from the Government of Mexico on the speed and the extent of our cooperation.

Finally, on behalf of the Department of Defense, I would like to reiterate that thanks to the tireless work of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of Justice, and other U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement and other authorities, we have no evidence of so-called "spillover violence" into the United States. The Department of Defense is committed to providing continued support, as requested, to the law enforcement agencies that protect the safety of U.S. citizens in our country. Thank you, and I very much look forward to your questions.