

**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Chairman Richard G. Lugar**  
**Opening Statement for hearing on**  
**North American Cooperation on Border Security**  
**July 12, 2005**

Today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee meets to examine cooperation between the countries of North America on border security. Our nation is inextricably intertwined with Mexico and Canada historically, culturally, and commercially. The Department of Transportation reports that goods worth more than \$633 billion crossed our land borders in 2004. According to the Census Bureau, more than 26 million of the 39 million individuals of Hispanic-origin who are legal residents in the United States are of Mexican background.

The flow of goods and people across our borders helps drive our economy and strengthen our culture. But our land borders also serve as a conduit for illegal immigration, drugs, and other illicit items. Given the threat of international terrorism, there is great concern that our land borders could also serve as a channel for international terrorists and weapons of mass destruction.

The threat of terrorist penetration is particularly acute along our southern border. In 2004, fewer than 10,000 individuals were apprehended entering the U.S. illegally through our 5,000-mile land border with Canada. This compared with the more than 1.1 million who were apprehended while trying to cross our 2,000-mile border with Mexico. The Department of Homeland Security reports that about 996,000 of these individuals were Mexicans crossing the border for economic or family reasons.

The Homeland Security Department refers to the rest as "other than Mexicans," -- or "OTMs." Of the approximately 100,000 OTMs apprehended, 3,000 to 4,000 were from so-called "countries of interest" like Somalia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, which have produced or been associated with terrorist cells.

A few of the individuals who have been apprehended at our southern border were known to have connections to terrorists or were entering the U.S. under highly suspicious circumstances. For example, one Lebanese national, who had paid a smuggler to transport him across the U.S.-Mexican border in 2001, was recently convicted of holding a fundraiser in his Michigan home for the Hizbollah terrorist group.

In July 2004, a Pakistani woman swam across the Rio Grande River from Mexico to Texas. She was detained when she tried to board a plane to New York with \$6,000 in cash and a severely altered South African passport. Her husband's name was found to be on a terrorist watch list. She was convicted on immigration charges and deported in December 2004.

Since September 11, 2001, progress has been made in deterring cross-border threats, while maintaining the efficient movement of people and cargo across North America. The United States signed "Smart Border" agreements with Canada and Mexico, in December 2001 and March 2002, respectively. These agreements seek to improve pre-screening of immigrants, refugees, and cargo. They include new documentation requirements and provisions for adding inspectors and updating border security technologies. We also have established Integrated Border Enforcement Teams to coordinate law enforcement efforts with Canada.

Additional initiatives are included in the Presidents' Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America Agreement announced on March 23, 2005, at the North American Summit meeting in Texas. But,

additional work lies ahead. We must sustain attention and accountability at home for enhancing our Continental security, and continue to press our neighbors for improved cooperation in combating security threats.

To advance these goals, earlier this year I introduced the “North American Cooperative Security Act,” S. 853. This bill seeks to:

- Improve procedures for exchanging information on border security with Canada and Mexico.
- Establish a program that will assess the needs of Guatemala and Belize in maintaining the security of their borders and provide technical and law enforcement assistance to aid in the maintenance of the Mexico-Guatemala and the Mexico-Belize borders.
- Improve our military-to-military relations with Mexico.
- Establish a database to track the movement of members of Central American gangs between the United States, Mexico, and Central American countries.

Among other provisions, the bill requires U.S. government agencies to develop a strategy for achieving an agreement with the Mexican government on joint measures to impede the ability of third country nationals from using Mexico as a transit corridor for unauthorized entry into the United States.

In essence, with this legislation, I am emphasizing that greater cooperation with our neighbors is necessary to achieve border security.

This morning, we are joined by three distinguished panels to discuss cooperation on North American border security. First, we welcome our Congressional colleagues, Senator John McCain, Senator Ted Kennedy, Senator John Cornyn, and Representative Katherine Harris. Representative Harris is the sponsor of the companion bill to S. 853 in the House. Each has worked extensively on issues related to border security and immigration. We are pleased that they are with us.

On the second panel, we will hear from two distinguished former Foreign Ministers from Canada and Mexico who have dealt extensively with border issues. We welcome the Honorable Perrin Beatty, former Foreign Minister of Canada, and currently the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association; and the Honorable Jorge Castañeda, former Foreign Minister of Mexico and currently an independent candidate for President of Mexico.

On the third panel, we will hear from two Administration witnesses with key responsibilities for securing our borders. We welcome Roger Pardo-Maurer, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Western Hemisphere; and David Aguilar, Chief of the Office of Border Patrol in the Department of Homeland Security.

We thank all of our witnesses and look forward to their insights.

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