

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****The U.S. Homeland Security Role in the Mexican War Against Drug Cartels***

March 31, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Oversight, Investigations, and Management subcommittee hearing entitled “The U.S. Homeland Security Role in the Mexican War Against Drug Cartels”:

“I want to thank our witnesses for being here today to discuss the United States’ role in responding to drug-related violence occurring in Mexico.

Over the past few years, this Committee has conducted several hearings on violence occurring on the Mexican side of the southwest border.

We have also examined the numerous efforts undertaken by our government to assist our Mexican allies in disrupting and dismantling Mexican drug trafficking organizations – otherwise known as DTOs.

In recent years, violence in Mexico has reached an all-time high; however, despite dire predictions, statistics and concrete evidence show that this violence has not spilled over into the United States.

In fact, the violence occurring in Mexico is highly concentrated and in many instances limited to drug trafficking corridors, some of which are hundreds of miles away from the United States border.

Last week, Secretary Napolitano visited ports of entry in El Paso, Texas. During that trip she stated “security on the southern U.S. border is better now than it ever has been” and that “violence from neighboring Mexico hasn’t spilled over in a serious way.”

She also assured the public that “border towns are safe for travel, trade and commerce and that violent crime rates have remained flat or decreased in border communities in the Southwest.”

Crime statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation corroborate the Secretary’s statement.

According to the FBI, the homicide rate along the U.S. side of the southwestern border has actually decreased by as much as 14% over the last three years.

The Mexican city Juarez sits directly opposite El Paso, Texas. In 2010, more than 2,700 murders occurred in Juarez, which has been coined the murder capital of the world, while there were only 4 murders in El Paso during the same time frame.

Likewise, there were 472 murders in Tijuana, while only 29 occurred on the other side of the border in San Diego, California.

These numbers show a clear distinction between political rhetoric and proven facts.

Our focus must remain on common sense strategies that will aid Mexico in responding to this very serious problem while respecting their status as a sovereign country, fostering the commerce that exists between the two nations, and acknowledging that Mexican authorities have been successful, with and without U.S. assistance, in arresting and eliminating the heads of some of the most dangerous Mexican DTOs.

As Members of Congress, we must also align our budget priorities with where we claim help is needed.

This Congress, the Majority introduced H.R. 1 which cuts \$350 million from the Department of Homeland

Security budget for border security, fencing and technology.

The Department of Homeland Security must have all the resources and authorities it needs to protect our borders.

Republican efforts to eliminate financial and human resources from DHS' border security mission will move us backwards.

Last month, we were all saddened by the senseless killing of ICE agent Jaime Zapata and the wounding of ICE agent Victor Avila.

Brave men and women like Agent Zapata and Agent Avila work tirelessly on our borders 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and I would like to take this opportunity to once again commend them all for their service."

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