

**Statement of Ranking Member Henry Cuellar
Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security**

**Hearing on
“Using Resources Effectively to Secure Our
Border at Ports of Entry –
Stopping the Illicit Flow of Money, Guns and
Drugs”
April 5, 2011**

- Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.
- I appreciate you calling today’s hearing on security at America’s ports of entry (POEs).
- As I have said before, as Members representing border districts we have several areas of common interest.
- Probably chief among them are issues related to our Nation’s land ports of entry and ensuring Customs and Border Protection has the resources necessary to operate the POEs efficiently and effectively.
- These issues are also of great importance to my colleagues, Rep. Higgins and Rep. Clarke, who

represent major ports of entry along the northern border.

- As Members representing border districts, we have special appreciation for U.S. Customs and Border Protection's task in achieving security while ensuring travel and commerce continues to move expeditiously.
 - I represent a part of the United States where border commerce has become a part of daily life. In the border region of South Texas, families understand and value our ability to exchange goods with neighboring Mexico and how that benefits them at home.
- In my hometown of Laredo, Texas, the nation's largest inland trade port and 6th largest trade port, has experienced a stabilizing effect in local unemployment, in large part due to border commerce. While national unemployment rose, Laredo's unemployment has remained steady at around 8.6%, despite a 30% poverty rate.

- At its peak before the economic downturn, over 13,000 trucks crossed Laredo's border everyday.
- Every day, \$1 billion is generated in trade between the United States and Mexico, with 10,000 trucks crossing Laredo's border every 24 hours. American goods are exported to Mexico as important Mexican goods move into the United States.
- In a time of rising deficits and widespread unemployment, trade continues to generate revenues and jobs for the United States. These are revenues that we'd otherwise have to make up with widespread tax hikes or with jobs we'd struggle to recreate.
- In fiscal year 2010, for example, CBP welcomed nearly 105 million conveyances and 352.3 million passengers and pedestrians through the land ports of entry.

- The security of people and goods entering this nation is of the utmost importance, both for our homeland security and our economic security.
- That's why I have long supported investing in personnel, technology, infrastructure, and programs for the POEs – even when others often focus exclusively on securing the areas between the ports of entry.
- Efforts to enhance security at our ports of entry in recent years are paying dividends.
- For Fiscal Year 2010, CBP seized:
 - 394,985 kilos (over 870,000 lbs.) of drugs at all ports of entry;
 - \$79.8 million in currency both inbound and outbound at all ports of entry (\$33.6 million at the land ports of entry, inbound and outbound);
 - 227,330 inadmissible aliens encountered at ports of entry;

- 57,414 arrests made at the ports of entry (includes administrative arrests).

- As impressive as these numbers are, it is important to remember that we must not unnecessarily impede legitimate travel and commerce in our efforts to secure the POEs.
- Cross-border travel and commerce is the lifeblood of districts like mine and others along our Nation's borders, and is essential to America's economy.
- Fortunately, achieving security and facilitation are not mutually exclusive.
- To the contrary, the personnel, technology, and infrastructure that are necessary to secure the POEs are the same resources required to facilitate travel and trade.
- The more we invest in these resources, the more we can enhance both security and facilitation.

- As a side note, I encourage CBP to send me the complete staffing model for CBP's Office of Field Operations, despite multiple requests.
- This information is vital to our oversight of CBP's operations, and I would reiterate my request for the relevant documents.
- Madam Chairwoman, I look forward to continuing to work with you on these issues and I thank the witnesses for joining us today.