

Ranking Member William R. Keating (D-MA) Opening Statement

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT, INVESTIGATIONS & MANAGEMENT

“On the Border and In the Line of Fire: U.S. Law Enforcement, Homeland Security and Drug Cartel Violence”

10:00 a.m., Wednesday, May 11, 2011

I am looking forward to receiving an update on the strategy utilized by our Federal Government to secure the border and the extent to which State and local law enforcement agencies are incorporated in this effort.

We are all troubled by drug-related violence occurring in Mexico.

To that end, I am particularly interested in hearing from our witnesses regarding measures that are being deployed on the Federal, State and local level to prevent this violence from spilling over into the United States.

I believe that we are fully able to continue the valuable assistance we can partner with the Government of Mexico in their fight against daily acts of violence in their country; take actions to keep our border secure from this threat; and face head on domestic challenges at home.

Any suggestion that we are not capable to do these things simultaneously discredits the admirable job performed by the Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Custom Enforcement and myriad Federal, state and local partners that work tireless to keep our border secure and implement immigration laws.

President Obama and Secretary Napolitano’s visit to El Paso and Austin Texas yesterday to discuss both border security and comprehensive immigration reform show a commitment to both concepts.

As we move forward in our discussion on the best way to address drug-related violence in Mexico, I am fully open to new ideas and concepts; with the ultimate goal of ensuring that our homeland security is not threatened by the actions occurring in our neighboring country.

Our Government has successfully used the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act to sanction Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations, and I have been assured that this Act provides the U.S. with the best available tool for imposing economic sanctions against Mexican DTOs.

It is my hope that moving forward we can work toward initiatives that support bilateral efforts with Mexico, one of our closest allies, and maintain needed humanitarian aid provided to Mexicans by the United States.

Finally, we cannot have a full discussion on a Southwest Border counternarcotics strategy and how best to protect our border security personnel without also discussing the demand for drugs in the United States and the use of U.S. firearms in the violence occurring in Mexico.

As a member of the Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus, I am supportive of the various efforts to reduce the demand for drugs in the United States, and I look forward to working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to address that issue.

As I've stated before, as long as the demand exists here the violence will continue there.

I look forward to hearing from our Federal witnesses on how demand reduction factors into our overall strategy.

Moreover, I am gravely concerned that 90% of the guns seized in Mexico -- including the firearms allegedly used in the recent killing and wounding of two Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents -- come from the United States.

As the President noted yesterday at the border, for the first time, we are now screening 100% of the southbound rail cargo to reduce the threat of gun trafficking to Mexico.

With that said, once again, to my disappointment, we do not have a witness from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives on the panel.

I would encourage our Department of Justice witness, to the extent that she is able, to address the interplay of guns from the United States and Mexico's rising violence.