

The Merida Initiative: Expanding the U.S./Mexico Partnership



The Merida Initiative is an unprecedented partnership between the United States and Mexico to fight organized crime and associated violence while furthering respect for human rights and the rule of law. Based on principles of shared responsibility, mutual trust, and respect for sovereign independence, the two countries' efforts have built confidence that is transforming the bilateral relationship.

Enhancing Citizen Safety

Under the Merida Initiative, the United States has forged strong partnerships to improve citizen safety in affected areas to fight drug trafficking, organized crime, corruption, illicit arms trafficking, money-laundering, and demand for drugs on both sides of the border. Bilateral efforts are being accelerated to support Mexico's institutions, especially police and justice systems at both the federal and state level; to expand our border focus beyond interdiction of contraband to include facilitation of legitimate trade and travel; and to build strong and resilient communities able to withstand the pressures of crime and violence.

Merida Programs and Activities

The U.S. Congress has appropriated \$1.9 billion since the Merida Initiative began in Fiscal Year 2008. Under the partnership:

- Mexico's air mobility in counternarcotics and other security operations increased through the delivery of multiple aircraft for law enforcement and military entities.
- The United States is supporting Mexico's implementation of comprehensive justice sector reforms through the training of prosecutors, defenders, investigators, and forensic experts; and training civil society organizations on judicial reforms and the code of criminal procedures as well as laws protecting human and individual rights.
- Merida funding established 12 and strengthened 48 Alternative Justice Centers, which use alternative mechanisms, such as mediation, for minor offenses. This allows cases to proceed more quickly and reduces court congestion, allowing the system to focus on more serious crimes.
- The United States is helping to strengthen Mexican law enforcement institutions through trainings for Mexico's Accredited State Police units.
- The Mexican government, with Merida funds, established a corrections academy in Xalapa, Veracruz, to train Mexican federal and state correctional staff.
- The United States provided scanners, x-ray machines, other non-intrusive inspection equipment, and trained canines to enhance Mexican authorities' ability to detect illicit goods at key checkpoints and ports of entry.
- The United States launched a 30-month Crime & Violence Prevention project to strengthen Mexico's capacity to develop and communicate crime prevention policy at the federal, state, and community level. Support to localities will assist with the design and implementation of crime prevention plans, urban and social planning, and community policing.
- Merida funds support Mexican government and civil society efforts to protect journalists and human rights defenders.
- With Merida support, Mexico launched an Information Technology platform to link 400 addiction resource centers in support of a national drug demand reduction program.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF MERIDA

- Disrupt Organized Criminal Groups
- Strengthen Institutions
- Build a 21st Century Border
- Build Strong and Resilient Communities