



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

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U.S. -Mexico Migration Talks And Plan of Action for Cooperation on Border Safety

Presidents Vicente Fox and George W. Bush, in the "Guanajuato Proposal" issued following their meeting in February, characterized migration as one of the major ties that bind Mexico and the United States. Accordingly, our respective policies should work to create a process of orderly migration that guarantees humane treatment of migrants, provides protection of their legal rights, ensures acceptable work conditions for migrants and also recognizes the right of nations to control the flow of people across their borders.

For this purpose, the two Presidents directed the Secretary of State and the Attorney General of the United States, and the Secretaries of Foreign Relations and of the Interior of Mexico, to engage in formal high-level discussions to reach short and long-term agreements on migration and labor issues between Mexico and the United States. Both governments recognize that migration and its relationship with border safety are a shared responsibility.

The initial meeting of the High Level Working Group on Migration occurred in Washington, DC on April 4. The two sides began talks aimed at achieving the goal of safe, legal, orderly and humane migration as set forth by our Presidents in Guanajuato. The binational agenda includes discussion of border safety, the H-2 temporary worker visa program, ideas on regularization of undocumented Mexicans in the United States, alternatives for possible new temporary worker programs, and efforts on regional economic development.

The tragic deaths of fourteen Mexican migrants in the Arizona desert in May highlighted the pressing need for coordinated efforts to ensure safe and legal movement between Mexico and the U.S., and for considering and evaluating the potentials and consequences of expanded avenues for legal entries of Mexican nationals to the U.S.

A binational working group met June 6 in San Antonio, Texas, to address border cooperation and safety. A second meeting took place on June 8 in Washington to continue our discussions of all migration-related issues on the binational agenda and to establish a timeframe for future action. As a result of these meetings, we agreed to increase immediately existing efforts to ensure safety on the border and to review our respective border policies in order to develop ways to accomplish our common goal of reducing risks and eliminating deaths of migrants along the border.

These unprecedented cooperative efforts will be guided by a plan of action whose progress and implementation will be subject to regular review and evaluation. We have instructed our respective border authorities to implement immediately the following actions:

- Strengthen public safety campaigns to alert potential migrants of the dangers of crossing the border in high-risk areas;
- Reinforce operational plans for the protection, search and rescue of migrants along the border, including the increased aerial surveillance of desert areas on the U.S. side and increased presence of Grupo Beta elements on the Mexican side;
- Implement a cooperative, comprehensive and aggressive plan to combat and dismantle human smuggling and trafficking organizations; and
- Initiate a pilot-program on use of non-lethal weapons by Border Patrol agents.

In order to coordinate special bilateral efforts to protect lives during the summer season, Mexican and U.S. officials held meetings in Tucson, Arizona, on June 14 and will hold additional meetings in the next several weeks in high-risk areas of California (San Diego and Calexico) and Texas (El Paso and Laredo).

We are committed to making progress in preparing a comprehensive package of possible alternatives to address all migration-related issues on the binational agenda for consideration by our two Presidents when they meet in Washington in September.

Plan of Action for Cooperation on Border Safety

1. Both governments agree to coordinate their efforts toward addressing border safety concerns in order to reduce risks to migrants, law enforcement authorities and border communities. Such coordination is the only way effectively to achieve our common goal of enhancing public safety in the U.S.-Mexico border region.
2. Both governments agreed that combating human smugglers, traffickers and criminal organizations should be given the utmost priority. Only cooperation in this regard can ensure the full success of this new comprehensive plan. To that end, Mexican and U.S. law enforcement agencies will be instructed to embark on an unprecedented joint effort to dismantle and penalize with all the weight of the law these criminal organizations.
3. The Mexican Government commits to intensify immediately comprehensive actions in its territory designed to accomplish the following: reinforce border safety programs; consider actions to prevent access to crossing in high-risk areas; alert potential migrants of the dangers associated with non-authorized entries into the U.S; and underscore the serious consequences for migrants when they engage smugglers and criminals who only exploit their vulnerability.
4. The U.S. Government commits to review immediately existing border control operations such as Gatekeeper, Hold the Line, Safeguard and Rio Grande, and to consider appropriate adjustments or alternatives to promote safety for migrants, law enforcement authorities and border communities and to prevent migrant deaths in the border region.

In addition to the above-mentioned agreements, the Plan of Action for Cooperation on Border Safety includes the following:

I. National and Binational Programs for Migrant Safety

- Develop a comprehensive set of binational programs and actions in areas of immediate concern to eliminate extreme risks to migrants. The deserts in Western Arizona, the All American Canal and the Rio Grande should be a priority in this regard.
- Strengthen public safety campaigns in Mexico to alert potential migrants of the imminent dangers of crossing the border through high-risk areas.
- Develop and implement specific operational plans for the search and rescue of migrants in dangerous areas along the border.
- Reinforce training programs on safety and migrant search and rescue operations.
- Map high-risk areas along the border to have an accurate portrait of new routes and implement preventive actions to reduce migrant risks.
- Activate additional cooperative binational actions on both sides of the border, like operations "Sky Watch II" -- a programs of aerial surveillance in the Arizona desert -- along with the reinforced presence of Beta Group elements in the Mexican side.
- Schedule periodic meetings, as needed, with Mexican and U.S. border consulates and law enforcement authorities to review regularly the results and the progress of local coordination efforts on border safety.

II. Targeting Alien Trafficking

- Strengthen binational coordination among law enforcement agencies to fight human smugglers and traffickers on both sides of the border.
- Expedite and reinforce the exchange of bilateral information that targets migrant smugglers and traffickers.
- Review operations to that end (Denial, Crossroads, and Mexican operations).
- Embark on an unprecedented binational effort to combat and dismantle alien smuggling, trafficking and criminal organizations.
- Oversee and evaluate the outcomes of the implementation of such bilateral programs by holding periodic meetings.

III. Border Violence

- Implement the U.S.-Mexico Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation against Border Violence (Mérida, February 15, 1999) and corresponding Guidelines (Washington, June 8, 2000) for cooperation between Mexican consuls and U.S. Attorneys in the border region. These memoranda facilitate the investigation of diverse violent incidents occurring at the border.
- Initiate a pilot program on use of non-lethal weapons by Border Patrol agents.
- Strengthen bilateral cooperation on preventive actions in order to:

- Reduce incidents of aggression against Border Patrol agents;
- Prevent assaults against migrants and border authorities;
- Deter migrant detentions by civilians.

IV. Incursions

- Agree on an immediate plan of action that reduces incursions and incidents on both sides of the border
- Develop a binational program for demarcation at isolated areas to avoid incursions

V. Cooperative Responses to Border Region Emergencies

- Agree on a Rapid Response Program that guarantees early alert and information exchanges between authorities of both governments for the immediate attention to critical border incidents.
 - Such a program should aim to coordinate actions between central (Washington-Mexico City) and local authorities (Mexican consul-INS/BP) including measures to ensure that proper investigations are conducted.
- Develop cooperative mechanisms to respond to emergencies at the border, such as Emergency Management and Response Mechanisms:
 - At border crossing points and international bridges in cases of bomb threats or trans-border pursuit of criminals.
 - During weather related and natural disaster emergencies (wild fires, snow storms, rainstorms, heat waves,) for search and rescue coordination, publication of weather advisories, etc.
- Enhance coordination to attend to injured persons during emergencies:
 - Consider installation of dedicated telephone alarm system tied to emergency services

VI. Safe and Orderly Repatriations

- Review, via the Interior Consultative Mechanisms (ICM), the appropriate implementation of the six existing local Safe and Orderly Repatriation Arrangements, including:
 - Coordination of removals from the U.S. interior to the border, and
 - Prevention of the removal to Mexico of non-Mexican nationals.

VII. Repatriation of Ex-Convicts

- Reinforce cooperation and coordination through the appropriate authorities for an orderly, legal and safe return of ex-convicts to Mexico.
- Meet, as needed, in order to review commitments and adjust existing programs.

VIII. Border Liaison Mechanisms

- Enhance the role of the ten Border Liaison Mechanisms as bilateral coordinating entities at the local level.

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