
The Merida Initiative

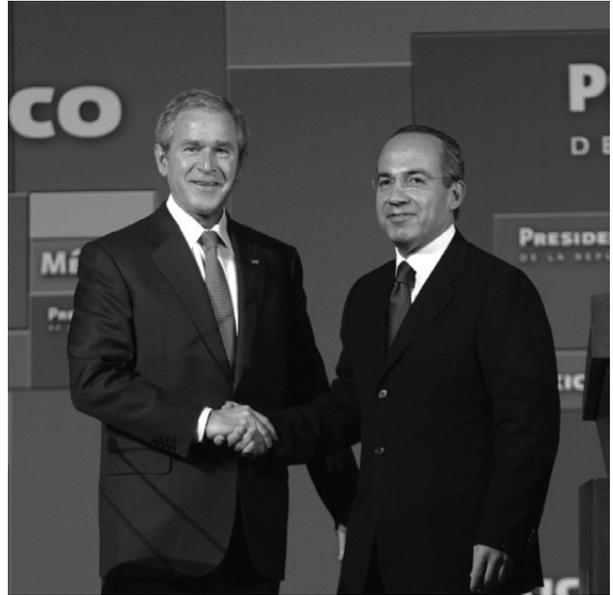
Fact Sheet

**U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, DC, August 6, 2008**

The Merida Initiative demonstrates the United States' commitment to partner with governments in Mexico and Central America to confront criminal organizations whose actions plague the region and spill over into the U.S.

The Initiative's Scope

The Merida Initiative is a multi-year program to provide equipment and training to support law enforcement operations and technical assistance for long-term reform and oversight of security agencies. This year, Congress approved an initial \$400 million for Mexico and \$65 million for Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti, which was passed in the FY08 Supplemental. The President's FY09 budget proposal for the Merida Initiative includes \$450 million for Mexico and \$100 million for Central America.



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U.S. Domestic Efforts

The Merida Initiative complements U.S. domestic efforts to reduce drug demand, stop the flow of arms and weapons, and confront gangs and criminal organizations. The initiative also complements broader efforts by the Governments of Mexico and of Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti to engage on every front in the battle against organized crime.

Why Now?

Daily developments on the ground in Mexico, Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti demonstrate the urgent need for action. The criminal organizations, under great pressure by law enforcement agencies, are behaving in increasingly violent ways. Our partners in the region are confronting transnational gangs and criminal organizations at great personal and financial costs. It is in the national security interest of the U.S. to support our partners' fight against this scourge, prevent further violence from spilling over our border, and make our streets safe once again from drug and gang-related crime. They are doing their part – we must do ours.

Components

The Merida Initiative will provide funding for:

- Non-intrusive inspection equipment, ion scanners and canine units for Mexico and Central America to interdict trafficked drugs, arms, cash and persons.
- Technologies to improve and secure communications systems that collect criminal information in Mexico.

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- Technical advice and training to strengthen the institutions of justice – vetting for the new police force, case management software to track investigations through the system, new offices of citizen complaints and professional responsibility, and witness protection programs to Mexico.
 - Helicopters and surveillance aircraft to support interdiction activities and rapid response of law enforcement agencies to Mexico.
 - Equipment, training and community action programs in Central American countries to implement anti-gang measures and expand the reach of these measures.

Regional Solutions

By working collaboratively with Mexico, Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti we confront this regional threat with a regional solution, and undermine the ability of criminal organizations to adapt their behaviors and evade justice.

