



## Secretary Napolitano Visits Major Port of Entry, Addresses Southwest Border Security Efforts

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Laredo, Texas—U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano, making her final stop of a three-day tour of the Southwest border and Mexico, addressed today her recent announcements designed to boost cash and weapon seizures and improve DHS coordination with state, local and Mexican law enforcement.

"Here in Laredo, five major bridges between the United States and Mexico pose a significant challenge to border security," said Secretary Napolitano. "I am confident that the Department of Homeland Security, working side-by-side with state, local and Mexican law enforcement, will rise to that challenge. Through the initiatives we unveiled last week, we are striking a major blow against cartel violence in Mexico by intercepting the flow of cash and firearms across the Southwest border."

Laredo, where five international bridges span the Rio Grande and connect the United States and Mexico, is the southern border's busiest commercial port of entry.

Secretary Napolitano was joined by Texas Congressman Henry Cuellar at a press conference, where she reiterated the major points of her recent announcements detailing the deployment of a variety of DHS personnel and technology to the Southwest border in response to escalated violence in Mexico.

Secretary Napolitano also provided updates on Southwest border seizures by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). So far, in fiscal year 2009, CBP and ICE have combined to confiscate \$55.5 million in U.S. currency, 641 firearms and nearly 125,000 rounds of ammunition headed south into Mexico.

On March 19, CBP officers working in Laredo seized more than \$3 million concealed inside a commercial passenger bus. On March 25, CBP officers in Laredo seized approximately \$500,000 in U.S. currency during an outbound inspection of a tractor-trailer. That same day, CBP officers in Otay Mesa found nearly 5,000 kilograms of marijuana hidden alongside a shipment of toilet paper. Earlier in the month, CBP officers in Laredo seized a cache of weapons bound for Mexico. Secretary Napolitano has strongly emphasized the importance of stopping arms and currency, major sources of fuel for cartel violence in Mexico, from leaving the United States.

DHS will shift more than 360 officers and agents to the border and into Mexico, and place technology strategically at key locations—deployments that will realign up to \$184 million in total resources but that will not require new funding. The efforts will include: doubling assignments to Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BEST), from 95 to 190; tripling the number of intelligence analysts working at the border; and boosting ICE Attaché personnel—agents who work in troubled areas of Mexico such as Ciudad Juarez and Hermosillo—by 50 percent, from 24 to 36 agents.

Ports of entry, including Laredo, will see enhanced CBP resources, including more mobile X-ray units, additional Border Patrol agents, and teams of "cross-trained" canines that can detect both weapons and currency. Furthermore, DHS will send new technology, such as Secure Communities biometric identification systems and non-intrusive screening equipment for railcars and other vehicles, to the Southwest border.

In recent weeks, DHS has focused on outreach to state and local law enforcement authorities including a two-week tour of the region to speak directly with local police chiefs and sheriffs. DHS also continues to hold bi-monthly classified conference calls with local authorities to share intelligence.

Following the press conference, Secretary Napolitano and Congressman Cuellar planned to hold a meeting with community leaders and greet U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers and U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents before returning to Washington.

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