



Readout of Secretary Napolitano's Multilateral Meeting with Central American and Mexican Officials

Release Date: July 12, 2011

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
Contact: 202-282-8010

WASHINGTON—Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano today joined National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) Under Secretary Rand Beers, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner Alan Bersin, and other senior Obama administration officials to meet with officials from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama, as well as the Central American Integration System (SICA), to discuss the importance of strengthening international collaboration and to sign a regional letter of intent affirming cooperation on aviation security, increased information sharing, and border security.

"Ensuring the safety and security of our borders is a shared responsibility, and we will continue to work with our partners to ensure our mutual security and protect against the evolving threats we face," said Secretary Napolitano. "The United States is committed to working with our partners in Central America and Mexico to enhance security throughout the region while facilitating the flow of legal travel and trade that is vital to our economies."

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has worked closely with its partners through the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI)—a Department of State-led initiative to strengthen security collaboration with Central America—to fight drug trafficking, transnational gangs, organized crime, and related violence, as well as to enhance border security. CARSI also provides technical assistance in fraudulent document detection, bulk cash smuggling, money laundering, gang investigations, and trafficking in persons.

During her meeting, Secretary Napolitano reiterated the United States' commitment to strengthening aviation security cooperation through the Advanced Passenger Information System (APIS)—a CBP program designed to enhance border security through the collection and review of passenger information—and other programs that facilitate information sharing and help to deter and interdict criminals and terrorists exploiting global transportation systems.

Secretary Napolitano also highlighted DHS' ongoing efforts to combat the smuggling of humans and illicit goods throughout the region. Through Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BEST), which are operational at 21 locations in the United States and Mexico, DHS has brought together federal, state, local, territorial, tribal, and foreign law enforcement to collaborate to identify, disrupt, and dismantle criminal organizations that pose significant threats to border security.

Following today's meeting, Secretary Napolitano and the participating officials signed a regional letter of intent regarding continued regional cooperation and increased information sharing between the United States and its Central American and Mexican partners.

In March, President Obama announced the Central American Citizen Security Partnership, through which the United States has enhanced its support of regional security efforts and continues to work to improve coordination and information sharing.

###

This page was last reviewed/modified on July 12, 2011.