



## VIEWPOINT: BRINGING PEACE TO THE BORDER

### U.S. Attorneys General Learn of Sacrifice by Mexican Counterparts

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Over the past several years, the Conference of Western Attorneys General has worked through an Alliance Partnership to help prepare Mexican prosecutors and investigators for the country's switch to an oral advocacy system, akin to the court system we have in the U.S. USAID has provided funding for the effort.

This transition, from a paper-based and problem-prone system, is a complex transformation, but with our assistance and the perseverance of Mexican law enforcement, the country undoubtedly will have a better, more accountable and public justice system.

Throughout this process, I have had the pleasure of meeting dozens of Mexican prosecutors and investigators. Each of them has told me stories of unbelievable sacrifice as they grapple not only with a changing court system, but also with the country's surge in drug-related violence. Thousands of members of the police, public and army have died on the Mexican side of the border as President Felipe Calderón has applied pressure to the cartels and the criminal enterprises have fought back. The U.S. side of the border, too, has seen its fair share of cartel-fueled death and crime.

When Colorado prosecutor Sean May was gunned down outside his home in 2008, prosecutors and police reacted with horror. The killing of a prosecutor in the U.S. is the exception. It is a rare, brazen act by criminals because they know they will face severe consequences and a vigorous investigation and prosecution.

In Mexico, and more specifically along the border, these sorts of killings—and the murder of police officers—sadly have become all too common.

Our Mexican peers face constant threats to their lives. When I drive to work it is in a run-of-the-mill sedan that no one would every notice as odd. In Mexico, it is not unusual for a state's top prosecutor to drive to work in a heavily armored vehicle. It also is not uncommon for prosecutors to spend their nights in the U.S. where they are guaranteed a greater degree of safety.

The sacrifices of our Mexican counterparts also underline the importance of the close working relationship U.S. law enforcement must have with Mexican law enforcement. From working together to bring border-crossing criminals to justice to abating the flow of drugs and guns across our shared borders, we have a lot of work to accomplish.

There could be no greater memorial to the sacrifices of Mexican and American law enforcement alike than to meet these challenges currently facing our two countries and bring peace to our common border. 