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U.S. Security Assistance to Mexico FY 2008-2018

This document lays out the main areas of U.S. assistance to Mexico over the past decade with the aim of providing a picture of where the funds have been allocated, the agencies involved, and both governments' priorities for cooperation. It does not assess the impact of this assistance or the validity of U.S. support for these areas in Mexico.

MÉRIDA INITIATIVE

In October 2007, then-Presidents George W. Bush and Felipe Calderón Hinojosa announced the Mérida Initiative, a multi-year U.S. security assistance package to Mexico developed in response to the Calderón administration's request for increased U.S. support for the country's efforts to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. The U.S. Congress has appropriated nearly \$2.9 billion for Mexico under the Mérida Initiative since the funding stream began in FY 2008. These funds are provided through the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Acts and are administered through the Department of State, which may then transfer funds to different U.S. agencies to implement specific programs or to deliver hardware. While Mérida Initiative funds make up only 2 percent of Mexico's total security budget of \$10 billion per year,¹ the aid package has become the centerpiece of bilateral security cooperation between the two countries.

EVOLUTION OF THE MÉRIDA INITIATIVE

During the first phase of the Mérida Initiative, between FY 2008-2010, U.S. assistance focused primarily on equipment delivery to Mexico's federal security forces engaged in counterdrug efforts. U.S. agencies delivered \$590.5 million of support for aircraft and helicopters,ⁱ more than \$125 million worth of non-intrusive inspection equipment, and 400 canine teams to support the interdiction efforts and rapid response activities of the Federal Police and armed forces.² Assistance also included technology transfers to improve and secure communications systems that collect criminal information.³ A smaller portion of assistance provided support for technical advice and training for Mexico's justice and police agencies, as well as community programs aimed at

ⁱ Aerial equipment deliveries included four CASA 235 maritime surveillance aircraft to the Mexican Navy (SEMAR), one Dornier 328 surveillance aircraft to the Federal Police, nine UH-60M Blackhawk helicopters (three to SEMAR and six to the Federal Police), and eight Bell 412 helicopters to the Mexican Army (SEDENA).

addressing the root causes of crime and violence.⁴ During this three-year period, the U.S. Congress appropriated nearly \$1.5 billion for the Mérida Initiative.⁵

In 2011, the Obama Administration and the Calderón government broadened the scope of the Mérida Initiative. Officials from both governments recognized the need to increase support for institutions at the state and local level, rather than providing assistance primarily to the federal government.⁶ The two administrations also agreed to shift Mérida Initiative priorities beyond equipment and technology transfers and to increase support for institutional reforms, especially in the criminal justice and law enforcement sectors.⁷ This new phase of the Mérida Initiative is centered on a four-pillar strategy:⁸

- Pillar I: Disrupting the operational capacity of organized crime
- Pillar II: Institutionalizing the rule of law while protecting human rights
- Pillar III: Creating a “21st-Century Border”
- Pillar IV: Building strong and resilient communities

Under the Peña Nieto administration, the U.S. and Mexican governments have continued this four-pillar structure. By mid-2013, the two governments agreed to prioritize tackling money laundering (Pillar I); institutionalizing justice, police, and corrections reforms, and providing institutions with forensic equipment and training (Pillar II); increasing security along both of Mexico’s borders and strengthening migration enforcement within Mexico (Pillar III); and reducing drug demand and addressing the root causes of crime and violence through community-based programs (Pillar IV).⁹

Pillar II, Institutionalizing the rule of law while protecting human rights: While the first years of assistance were directed towards equipment and hardware delivery, primarily for Mexico’s armed forces, since FY 2011, the bulk of U.S. assistance to Mexico has focused on Pillar II, strengthening Mexico’s institutions to build up the rule of law and respect for human rights.¹⁰ Over \$400 million in training, courtroom infrastructure, and technical assistance have been allocated to support Mexico’s transition to an adversarial criminal justice system.¹¹ U.S. agencies have trained over 230,000 preventive and 30,000 ministerial police in how to conduct their work under the new system, and funds have been used to equip more than 120 courtrooms in 21 states with audio and video recording technology to record the new oral trials. Some \$24 million in assistance have been devoted to helping police institutions root out corruption by implementing codified standards, establishing internal affairs units, centralizing personnel records, and adopting vetting procedures.¹² An additional \$5 million in infrastructure improvements and equipment transfers have been invested in federal, state, and municipal law enforcement academies in five states.¹³ The Mérida Initiative Corrections Program has focused on Mexico’s federal and state penitentiary systems: since 2008, more than 42 prisons have received accreditation from the American Correctional Association (ACA).¹⁴

Pillar I, Disrupting the operational capacity of organized crime: Funding for Pillar I has focused largely on supporting Mexico's intelligence-gathering and information-sharing efforts, including in the areas of biometrics and telecommunications.¹⁵ Combating money laundering and illicit finance has been a large focus of this support under the Peña Nieto administration.¹⁶ Mérida Initiative funds have been used to train Mexico's Financial Intelligence Unit's personnel and to provide the Unit with sophisticated analysis software and the accompanying computer hardware. Funding for Pillar I continues to support drug interdiction and eradication operations, efforts to strengthen Mexican agencies' capacity to detect and destroy drug labs, and investigating drug traffickers and organized criminal networks.¹⁷

Pillar III, Creating a "21st-Century Border": U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has helped to establish a Mexican Customs training academy to train Customs officials on inspection techniques and methodologies, and to enhance border officials' ability to interdict illicit narcotics, arms, and money.¹⁸ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has also trained Mexican officials on immigration enforcement. Assistance for Pillar III has included the transfer of more than 400 canines to assist with inspections along Mexico's borders.¹⁹ Over \$100 million in Mérida Initiative funds have also been allocated to help secure Mexico's southern borders with Guatemala and Belize. Most of that support has been delivered in the form of non-intrusive inspection equipment, mobile kiosks, canine teams, vehicles, and immigration enforcement training. By late 2018, these funds are expected to have helped build a secure communications network for agencies along Mexico's southern border. These funds are also expected to help all of Mexico's migration stations to collect biometric information that can interface with U.S. databases by 2019.²⁰ The U.S. Department of Defense has also contributed funds for the telecommunications network and biometric equipment.²¹

Pillar IV, Building strong and resilient communities: Under Pillar IV, the U.S. and Mexican governments have worked together to bolster the capacity of federal, state, and local governments to prevent and reduce crime and increase engagement with at-risk youth. Initiatives like the State Department's Culture of Lawfulness (COL) program aim to educate on the importance of upholding the rule of law from the ground up. The program offers a civic education curriculum that is now part of the junior high school curricula in all Mexican states. U.S. support has helped establish community anti-drug coalitions across the country, as well as citizens' watch booths in 73 district attorney's offices in Mexico City.²² Assistance has also helped train hundreds of drug counselors, fund research on drug use, and establish at least 25 drug courts in Mexico.²³

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID) PROGRAMS

USAID has four development objectives for Mexico: 1) strengthening the rule of law and human rights, 2) reducing drug-related crime and violence, 3) promoting government transparency and integrity, and 4) supporting Mexico's Global Climate Change Program. Funding for the first three objectives is allocated through the Mérida Initiative.²⁴

Crime and Violence Prevention: USAID is currently implementing \$90 million in crime and violence prevention projects in Mexico.²⁵ This assistance has helped to strengthen the capacity of local authorities to employ evidence-based prevention models, bolster the federal government's ability to design and monitor prevention practices and policies, and build up community programs that engage with at-risk youth. Community-based programs in the high-crime municipalities of Ciudad Juárez, Monterrey, and Tijuana have reached 35,000 at-risk youth in those three cities. 70 percent of at-risk youth that have participated in USAID's after-school activities or employability programs in target cities now have a formal job or internship and/or are enrolled in school. On average, in municipalities where USAID has implemented tertiary prevention programs, which aim to reintegrate formerly incarcerated youth and decrease stigmatization of detained youth, recidivism has been reduced to 1.25 percent, compared to the national average of 60 percent.²⁶

Rule of Law: USAID is currently implementing an \$87 million rule of law program that provides assistance to state and federal authorities in all of Mexico's 31 states and the Federal District.²⁷ This includes a five-year (2014-2019), \$68 million justice project that promotes the implementation of the new adversarial justice system.²⁸ An additional \$26 million in assistance are designated to support civil society efforts to combat corruption, advance human rights, and promote government transparency and accountability in the implementation of the reforms.²⁹ USAID's support for the justice reforms has helped train lawyers, professors, and bar associations to ensure that legal curricula and technical standards meet the requirements of the new justice system. In states USAID has targeted, pre-trial detention rates have decreased by 27 percent and the use of alternative dispute resolution has increased by 21 percent, which has allowed Mexico's courts to devote more resources towards addressing violent crimes. USAID support has also helped Mexico's state attorney general's offices increase case disposition in target jurisdictions: in 2016, the number of cases resolved increased from 1 to 120 cases a month for gender-based violence cases in Villahermosa, Tabasco; from 11 to 68 cases a month for robbery cases in Zacatecas City, Zacatecas; and from 8 to 45 cases a month for robbery cases in Chihuahua City, Chihuahua.³⁰

Human Rights: USAID has provided \$6.6 million to Mexico to support freedom of expression and protection of journalists in Mexico.³¹ This includes \$5.1 million that were provided to Freedom House-Mexico from 2011 to 2016 to improve protections for human rights defenders and journalists. This assistance funded trainings on self-protection techniques and support for Mexico's federal Mechanism to Protect Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, which currently provides protection measures to 727 beneficiaries.³² These activities have reached beneficiaries in 22 states and have trained over 1,400 journalists on self-protection and digital security.³³ The agency is currently implementing \$25 million through 2018 for these efforts and other human rights programs.³⁴ USAID funds have supported the Mexican government's efforts to implement its National Human Rights Plan for 2014-2018 through technical assistance, and have helped to build up the capacity of government institutions and more than 30 local civil society organizations dedicated to addressing cases of torture and enforced disappearances and improving access to

justice and the wellbeing of victims.³⁵ Recently, funding has also been provided to organizations in Chihuahua to support the implementation of Mexico's new General Law on Disappearances and to strengthen state forensic capacity to identify disappeared victims.³⁶

Government Transparency and Integrity: USAID is increasingly co-financing Mexican civil society organizations and private sector leaders to carry out projects promoting government transparency and accountability at the federal and state level. This includes a \$6.2 million project to support open government information standards and improved transparency in public procurement processes. This project also provides assistance for the implementation of Mexico's new National Anti-Corruption System, as well as trainings for journalists in data mining and analysis to improve investigative journalism of corruption cases. Another \$3.8 million project is providing state entities with technical assistance in drafting anti-corruption laws and helping civil society demand greater accountability of state lawmakers, with an emphasis on northern border states. Other USAID projects related to government transparency are focused on support for Mexico's Ministry of Public Administration, developing appropriate codes of ethics and conduct for public servants, strengthening federal and state-level transparency secretariats, and galvanizing citizen action for reforms.³⁷

FUNDING STREAMS

Funding for Mérida Initiative programs has been derived from three appropriations accounts administered by different bureaus within the U.S. Department of State:

International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE): INCLE supports efforts to strengthen law enforcement capacity, dismantle organized criminal networks, and combat drug trafficking and terrorism. In Mexico, funds have also been allocated to support federal-level criminal justice reforms. INCLE is by far the largest account through which the U.S. Congress has appropriated funds for Mexico over the past decade. This account funds the operations of the CBP and ICE in Mexico. It also funds the U.S. Department of Justice's work to provide training and technical assistance programs within Mexico's criminal justice sector through the Criminal Division's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT).³⁸ INCLE is administered by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

Economic Support Fund (ESF): Under the Mérida Initiative, ESF has helped fund institutional reforms, particularly state-level criminal justice reform, crime prevention and community-building initiatives, human rights programs, and anti-corruption efforts. While the Bureau for Western Hemisphere Affairs administers this account, USAID implements most of its programs.

Foreign Military Financing (FMF): The FMF account has funded the Mérida Initiative's training and equipment programs for Mexico's armed forces. The Bureau for Political-Military Affairs administers the FMF account, although the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) manages its

implementation. As seen in Table 1, by FY 2012, FMF was no longer considered part of the Mérida Initiative but rather bilateral military cooperation.

Table 1: Estimated Mérida Initiative Funding, by Account, FY 2008-2019 (in millions)³⁹

Account	ESF	INCLE	FMF	Total
FY 2008	20.0	263.5	116.5	400.0
FY 2009	15.0	406.0	39.0	460.0
FY 2010	9.0	365.0	265.2	639.2
FY 2011	18.0	117.0	8.0	143.0
FY 2012	33.3	248.5	n/a	231.8
FY 2013	32.1	190.1	n/a	222.2
FY 2014	35.0	143.1	n/a	178.1
FY 2015	33.6	110.0	n/a	143.6
FY 2016	39.0	100.0	n/a	139.0
FY 2017	40.9	90.0	n/a	130.9
FY 2018	39.0	100.0	n/a	139.0
Total	314.9	2,133.2	428.7	2,876.8

MÉRIDA INITIATIVE UNDER THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Nearly two years into President Trump's term, the Mérida Initiative has continued under the framework of the four-pillar strategy. However, as part of the Trump administration's efforts to scale back the State Department and reduce foreign aid, the administration's FY 2018 budget request aimed to decrease total U.S. assistance to Mexico by 45 percent from FY 2017 levels. In regards to Mérida Initiative funds, the bill requested \$85 million, a 39 percent drop from FY 2017's \$130.9 million funding level.⁴⁰ Despite this request, there continues to be bipartisan support for the Mérida Initiative in the U.S. Congress: the final FY 2018 spending package increased funding for the Mérida Initiative to \$139 million, and funding priorities have appeared to remain relatively stable.⁴¹ Though the FY 2019 budget has not yet been approved, the Trump administration again requested a decrease in Mérida Initiative funds, this time requesting only \$76.3 million for the program.⁴² Congress is currently reviewing this request.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD)

DOD supports the Mexican military through training and equipment programs, including those provided through the State Department's FMF account. The Defense Department provides funds to Mexico through accounts that are restricted to counter-drug assistance and anti-terrorism. As discussed above from, since FY 2012, funding through the FMF account has continued, but it is no longer considered part of the Mérida Initiative. FMF funding to Mexico totaled \$5 million in FY

2018. Since FY 2008, the U.S. Congress has allocated some \$471.3 million to Mexico through the FMF account.⁴³

Table II: Estimated FMF funding, FY 2008-2018 (in millions)⁴⁴

FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	Total
116.5	39.0	265.2	8.0	7.0	6.6	7.0	5.0	7.0	5.0	5.0	471.3

A number of other funding streams support DOD programs in Mexico. The State Department's International Military Education and Training (IMET) account also provides training programs for the Mexican military, including courses provided in the United States. Funding for this account over the past decade has totaled \$12.8 million, including the \$1.5 million that were allocated for FY 2018.

Table III: Estimated IMET Funding, FY 2008-2018 (in millions)⁴⁵

FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	Total
0.4	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	12.8

Aside from funds allocated through the State Department, DOD provides counternarcotics support to Mexico through its own Drug Interdiction and Counterdrug Activities budget. DOD's Mexico programs are overseen by U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). This support has included training courses on information fusion, surveillance, interdiction, cybersecurity, and professional development, as well as non-lethal equipment such as night vision technologies, boats, communications tools, and aircraft modifications.⁴⁶ Support to Mexico through these programs has totaled \$630.8 million since FY 2008, including \$63.3 million in FY 2018.

Table IV: Total NORTHCOM Support to Mexico, FY 2008-2018 (in millions)⁴⁷

FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	Total
12.2	34.2	89.7	84.7	83.5	63.3	43.1	43.9	54.8	58.1	63.3	630.8

HUMAN RIGHTS REQUIREMENTS ON U.S. ASSISTANCE

Two statutory provisions known as the "Leahy laws" prohibit the U.S. government from providing assistance and training to foreign security force units where there is credible evidence that those units have engaged in gross human rights violations. The U.S. Congress has included the Leahy law in its annual appropriations act since 1999. The law allows for an exception only in the case that: 1) the secretary of defense determines that the foreign government has taken all necessary corrective steps, or 2) the U.S. assistance is essential to disaster relief or other humanitarian or

natural security emergencies. Since 2008, the U.S. Congress has also placed human rights requirements on a percentage of State Department assistance to Mexico. While the requirements have changed over the years, they continue to require that the secretary of state report to the Appropriations Committees of the House and Senate that the Mexican government is taking steps to address key human rights issues before the funds can be released.⁴⁸

In FY 2018, the following requirements applied to 25 percent of FMF funds to Mexico:⁴⁹

- The Government of Mexico is thoroughly and credibly investigating and prosecuting violations of human rights in civilian courts, including the killings at Tlatlaya in June 2014 and the disappearance of 43 students at Ayotzinapa in September 2014, in accordance with Mexican law.
- The Government of Mexico is vigorously enforcing prohibitions against torture and the use of testimony obtained through torture.
- The Government of Mexico is searching for the victims of forced disappearances and credibly investigating and prosecuting those responsible for such crimes.

¹ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10578.pdf>

² <https://mx.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/the-merida-initiative/>; <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>;

³ <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/scp/2008/107912.htm>

⁴ <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10837.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a528272.pdf>

⁶ https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Brownfield_Testimony.pdf

⁷ https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/the_evolution_of_the_merida_initiative_and_the_policy_of_shared_responsibility_in_u.s.-mexico_security_relations_0.pdf

⁸ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10578.pdf>

⁹ CRS factsheet, January 10, 2018 (not available online)

¹⁰ https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/the_evolution_of_the_merida_initiative_and_the_policy_of_shared_responsibility_in_u.s.-mexico_security_relations_0.pdf

¹¹ CRS factsheet, January 10, 2018 (not available online)

¹² <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>

¹³ <https://mx.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/the-merida-initiative/>

¹⁴ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10578.pdf>

¹⁶ https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Brownfield_Testimony.pdf

¹⁷ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>

¹⁸ https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Brownfield_Testimony.pdf

¹⁹ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>

²⁰ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10215.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.wola.org/analysis/wola-report-mexicos-southern-border-security-central-american-migration-u-s-policy/>

²² <https://mx.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/the-merida-initiative/>

²³ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.usaid.gov/mexico/our-work>

²⁵ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>

²⁶ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/DO1FactSheet_March2018.pdf

²⁷ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>

²⁸ https://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/Mission%20Unaccomplished-Justice%20Reform%20Mexico_WOLA.pdf

²⁹ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1869/Mexico%20CDCS%202014%202018.pdf>

³⁰ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/DO2FactSheet_March2018.pdf

³¹ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/violence-mexico.pdf>

³² https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/392965/Informe_Estadistico_Agosto_2018.pdf

³³ <https://www.usaid.gov/mexico/human-rights>

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- ³⁴ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>
- ³⁵ <https://www.usaid.gov/mexico/human-rights>
- ³⁶ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1869/Mexico%20CDCS%202014%202018.pdf>
- ³⁷ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1862/OITFactSheet_March2018.pdf
- ³⁸ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>
- ³⁹ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42917.pdf>
- ⁴⁰ <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/271013.pdf>
- ⁴¹ <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20180319/DIV%20K%20SFROPSSOM%20FY18-OMNI.OCR.pdf>
- ⁴² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/budget-fy2019.pdf>
- ⁴³ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/687736.pdf>
- ⁴⁴ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42917.pdf>
- ⁴⁵ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>; <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20180319/DIV%20K%20SFROPSSOM%20FY18-OMNI.OCR.pdf>
- ⁴⁶ <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41349.pdf>
- ⁴⁷ Information provided by CRS (not available online)
- ⁴⁸ <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/fs/2018/279141.htm>
- ⁴⁹ <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP00/20180620/108462/HMKP-115-AP00-20180620-SD002.pdf>