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SUBJECT: THE MEXICO MERIDA INITIATIVE AT EIGHT MONTHS - A SNAPSHOT OF WHAT WE HAVE DELIVERED AND WHAT TO EXPECT

1. (U) THIS CABLE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

2. (SBU) SUMMARY: In the eight months since the signing of the Merida Initiative Letter of Agreement (LOA) with Mexico, NAS/Mexico has initiated 41 of the 46 projects and seen deliveries in 18. We have overcome inter-agency coordination issues, inadequate staffing on both sides of the border, lack of a bilateral architecture to facilitate the pace and the complexity of Merida programming, and in some cases lack of absorptive capacity. We now have well-functioning bilateral working groups that are delivering results across the board. Remaining personnel for the working groups will be assigned or arrive in the coming months and by the end of year one of the Merida Initiative, the bilateral implementation office will be operative with a bilateral team working daily on implementing Merida programs.

3. (SBU) Noteworthy deliveries since the signing of the LOA include:

- Five ZBV x-ray mini-vans for the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP), currently on the border awaiting delivery instructions;
- 35 passenger luggage and mail package x-ray machines for air and maritime Ports of Entry;
- Twenty-four armored vehicles for the SSP, Mexican Attorney General's Office (PGR), and Mexican Customs (SAT/AGA);
- A document forensics lab for the Mexican immigration service (INM);
- A major international training program involving 100 instructors from five countries underway for 1,500 new Federal Police Investigators;
- A corrections/penitentiary reform program that has yielded the first set of trainers who have now trained their first group of 200 corrections officers, as well as a set of Mexican Classifications, staff that is modernizing policies and procedures in this critical area, and a regional corrections conference;
- An arms trafficking working group which has developed a work plan that threads the various Merida programs into a coherent strategy;
- Extradition training for Mexican police;
- Trainers schooled in the culture of lawfulness program that imparted courses to new federal police investigators;
- An agreement between the UN Office of Human Rights and Secretariat of Defense (SEDENA) to work together on human rights (in anticipation of imminent Merida funding);
- Technical exchange support to twenty three Mexican state prosecutors, Attorneys General and Citizen Participation Council members to learn from Italian officials and citizens on their experiences in fighting organized crime;
- 390 judges, prosecutors, and public defenders trained in judicial reform;
- Victim restitution training for 53 officials;
- Technical assistance provided to PGR and Customs for their canine academies;
- First Lady Margarita Zavala hosted the first national forum of the Citizens Participation Council in Cuernavaca June 15-16 for 200 civic leaders, educators and politicians.

4. (SBU) Noteworthy deliveries expected by the end of calendar year 2009:

- Some if not all of the five Bell helicopters for SEDENA;
- Four IBIS units for arms trafficking ballistic traces;
- Body armor and protective gear for SSP and PGR;

- Installation of new immigration document verification software system;
- Servers installed in the new national command center;
- Software for Project Constanza judicial case tracking system;
- First tranche of 19 mobile gamma ray detection vans for SSP and SEDENA;
- 30 ion scanners for SEDENA;
- Ten x-ray mini-vans (5 for SSP and 5 for Customs);
- First tranche of gamma ray detection devices for Customs;
- Second and possibly third iterations of investigator training for SSP (1,500 trainees each);
- Continuation of training and exchanges for prosecutors, judges, and public defenders;
- Equipment for canine units;
- More programming for pre-trial case resolutions;
- Two arms trafficking strategy sessions, one in the south focused on the Mexico-Guatemala border, and one in the north focused on the U.S.-Mexico border;
- Training for mid and senior level Federal Police leadership;
- As part of their expanded bilateral collaboration, the Conference of Western Attorney's General (CWAG) and PGR will be sponsoring the Alliance Partnership conference with the participation of 20 US AGs and 26 Mexican state AGs;
- Training for new members of the Federal Investigative Agency (AFI)

5. (SBU) Deliveries will continue at a consistent pace into 2010 with FY09 Merida regular and supplemental budgets seamlessly augmenting current funding. Implementation will still be marginally slower because of continuing staffing gaps on both the U.S. and Mexican sides, the pace of U.S. contracting, the complexity of some products (many of which must be built to order), and challenges with planning, particularly within the GOM. Despite these setbacks, we are poised to move the Merida Initiative forward within a truly bilateral framework and will soon reach the point where we can say "it is as good as it gets" and should focus on what to do next rather than asking "where is our stuff?" The stuff is coming, the real issue is do we have the right institutions in place to use it?
END SUMMARY

WHERE IS OUR STUFF?

6. (SBU) Over the last few months discussions with senior GOM officials about the Merida Initiative have been legitimately dominated by a concern with slow implementation. Merida Initiative assistance has not been delivered as fast as anyone would have liked, but it is important to consider the pace in the context of other intervening factors, to take stock of what has been delivered so far, and to review what is set for delivery in the coming months as we look to the end of the first year of implementation.

7. (SBU) There has always been a false expectation in terms of Merida delivery, born largely of the simple timeline of an initiative first announced in June 2007 but unfunded until December 2008. This "delay", according to former Deputy Former Minister Andres Rozenhal, has led to a damaging of the Merida "brand," well before the initiative even began. Expectations notwithstanding, a number of factors have delayed Merida implementation on both the U.S. and Mexican sides:

- Staffing: Our system for obtaining personnel with the expertise to work these programs is tedious and augmenting support staff for

Merida by approximately 300 percent was destined to be a long process. Mexico was also slow to bring in additional staff, both in SRE, a key coordinator for many issues, and in other agencies, who were often reluctant to recognize the need for dedicated personnel. In many cases we curtailed engaging with SRE for fear of overwhelming their limited staff. By the end of August all entities will have adequate (if still minimal) staffing.

-- Inter-agency Coordination: Both sides have suffered from inter-agency coordination issues. IAAs to access the expertise of other agencies on the U.S. side have taken months to finalize and rivalry between agencies within the GOM have slowed projects and led to unnecessary duplication of effort. In initial talks on Merida, SRE brought agencies to the table with U.S. counterparts one at a time so as not to spark inter-agency competition. The level of inter-agency coordination on both sides has improved however, evidenced by the recent fully inter-agency aviation talks and arms trafficking discussions.

-- Development of Working Groups: There was reluctance in many GOM agencies to delegate authority over Merida programs to the appropriate level, forcing coordination with one central contact

("ventana unica") for a mix a specialized projects. This person would then route communication to the right experts after a convoluted process. We have since engaged in direct liaison with experts across the board.

-- Absorptive Capacity: Several GOM entities were not prepared to implement their corresponding programs. For example, the National Council against Addictions (CONADIC) Nueva Vida centers are not prepared to receive the computer network we will be placing there. Delays in the promulgation of asset forfeiture legislation and justice reforms have also left the competent agencies unable to implement Merida programs.

-- Decision Making: Some programs were delayed because of slow decision making on the GOM side. Customs was asked in late January for their decision on which Non-Intrusive Inspection Equipment to procure with Merida funding but did not produce a definitive list until mid-May. The Center for National Security Investigations (CISEN) produced a list of requirements for their three projects under Merida but they were too generic to implement and had to be re-worked.

-- Technical Level of Projects: Most of the IT projects are technically sophisticated by nature; Mexico is working at the highest level of technology, and much of what we are doing involves made-to-order software or systems. For example, there simply are no shortcuts for Project Constanza -- a Mexico-specific database management system for thousands of judicial system records to support Mexico's transition to oral argumentation in its judicial system.

-- Organizational Issues: There are organizational issues in play when working with certain GOM agencies that are simply a reality. CBP and ATF facilitated a trip to Front Royal for all GOM entities with canine units intended to assist in the planning for their own academies, a core part of the Merida canine project. Customs, PGR, and SSP all signed up and submitted names of participants, but SSP pulled out at the last minute citing problems with their internal selection. Two weeks later they asked to reschedule, requiring a very complicated second course.

-- Contracting Process: We have an extremely well-oiled machine between NAS Mexico, RPSO in Ft. Lauderdale, the Brownsville Logistics Center, and Main State. There is little time lost between the development of requirements here, the issuance of contracts from Washington, and the actual contracting. But the process of fair and open bidding simply takes time and there are few shortcuts. Even routine procurements cannot be done quickly. The selection process can also sometimes be problematic. We recently released requirements for ten x-ray mini-vans, five for the SSP and five for Customs. Customs has now rejected the vendor selected because of frustration with previous orders. This will lead to long delays as we respond to the GOM complaint.

WHAT HAS BEEN DELIVERED TO DATE

8. (SBU) There are 46 Merida Initiative projects organized into eight program areas being implemented by bi-national teams of Mexican and US experts. Of these, 41 are moving forward and five are stalled because of lack of staffing, lack of definition, or security concerns. Of the 41 projects that are moving, 18 have seen deliveries.

Noteworthy deliveries:

9. (SBU) Non-Intrusive Inspection Equipment (NIIE): Since December 2008 the NAS Border and Ports Security Program delivered: 35 passenger luggage and mail package x-ray machines in June for Mexican Customs to use at air and maritime Ports of Entry (POEs), and 5 X-ray Backscatter Vans with 5 Forward Scatter Trailers in July for SSP to use on highways and secondary roads.

10. (SBU) Federal Police Investigator Training: Under the new police law the SSP will undergo a major restructuring and has requested help training 9,000 new investigators. In a matter of two months a U.S. inter-agency team was able to develop a curriculum, enlist 90 instructors from six U.S. federal agencies, U.S. state and local law enforcement and five countries (Colombia, El Salvador, Spain, Canada), implant a logistics team in a city where we have never worked, and begin delivering training to the first tranche of 1,500 new university trained investigators in a five-week specialized course. The training also involved providing a week long instructors course to 50 Mexican federal investigator instructors who will team teach with our agents and lead the course over the long term. These new investigators will form the core of the new Federal Police.

11. (SBU) Demand Reduction: In June, NAS invited U.S. subject-matter experts to work closely with CONADIC in the advancement of a project to create a wide-area network (RENADIC) that extends web-based interconnectivity to 300 of CONADIC's Nueva Vida Centers. They have provided a detailed acquisition strategy of communications hardware needed to complete the RENADIC system.

12. (SBU) Corrections/Penitentiary Systems Reform: This project is being managed by the former director of prisons for the State of Colorado, who sits under NAS contract in the SSP department of prisons. Twenty-three SSP Corrections Instructors graduated from the New Mexico Corrections Academy in April; 30 additional instructors are currently in training at NMCA. SSP National Penitentiary Training Academy opened on May 1. The first class of 160 Corrections Officers completed basic training on June 23 and are now in intermediate training under the tutelage of the U.S.-trained Mexican instructors. Additional basic corrections courses underway

will train 1,000 corrections officers in the next 15 months. U.S. classification experts from the State of Colorado Corrections Department are also assisting SSP to develop a modern classification system.

13. (SBU) Canine Training: In April and May, CBP and ATF canine experts completed an extensive assessment of the canine units within SSP, Customs and the PGR, identifying immediate needs for equipment and training shortfalls. In June, NAS funded two PGR canine handlers to attend a 6-week "Train-the-trainer" Basic Explosive Detection course in Front Royal, hosted by ATF. Starting July 27, with ATF monitoring the course, the two PGR trainers will train six Estado Mayor canine teams for explosive detection during 10 weeks. In May and June, NAS funded CBP and ATF canine experts to conduct site surveys for SSP and Mexican Customs future Canine Academies. Based on recommendations that stemmed from the visits, both GOM agencies have moved forward on the solicitation process to identify a proper contractor to begin the construction phase of their respective academies.

14. Justice Sector Modernization: Since the start of the year 390 judges, prosecutors, and public defenders have been trained in justice reform, 120 judicial officials were provided training in pre-trial case resolution, 53 individuals were trained in victim restitution, and 306 police were trained in basic criminal investigations under the new justice system.

15. (SBU) Arms Trafficking: This is the first working group developed to use the Merida architecture in a non-project area. In April, the first Bilateral Arms Trafficking Strategy Session was co-hosted by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano and their Mexican counterparts Attorney General Medina Mora, Secretary of Public Security Garcia Luna, and Customs Director Bravo Moises in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Three bilateral Arms Trafficking Working Groups were established to cover: 1) Information Sharing, Investigations and Tracing; 2) Judicial Coordination; 3) Interdiction/Non-Intrusive Inspection Devices. A follow-on session in Mexico City in July further defined the working groups and parameters of our joint strategy. Other sessions are planned for Tapachula, Mexico to focus on the southern border in August and San Antonio, Texas for the northern border in September.

16. (SBU) Internal Controls: A team of experts from USDOJ completed assessment of PGR and SSP in July in the areas of Office of Inspector General/Professional Responsibility. Other teams are assisting designated Mexican agencies establish standards, policies and procedures for their polygraph programs as well as conducting several hundred polygraphs of Mexican officials and polygraphers. Bilateral teams have carried out initial surveys and site visits to various states to assist SSP develop a national registry for over 400,000 Federal, State, and Local law enforcement officers and continue to explore how the system will tie together.

17. (SBU) Asset Forfeiture: In January asset forfeiture experts from the U.S. Department of Treasury traveled to Mexico to conduct an initial assessment of the project. Further work was pending passage of asset forfeiture legislation which went into effect May 29, 2009.

18. (SBU) Aviation: Configuration and design for SEMAR Maritime Patrol Aircraft is being completed by experts from the GOM and USG. Blackhawk UH-60 simulator refresher courses were provided to three

SSP pilots at Ft. Rucker, Alabama.

19. (SBU) Culture of Lawfulness: In May, in cooperation with SSP and a leading Mexican NGO (Mexico Unido Contra la Delincuencia), we created a detailed syllabus and Instructor's manual for the new SSP Basic Investigators course. These materials may also serve as a model for other federal Culture of Lawfulness education initiatives and police integrity education at the state level. In Nuevo Leon, a Culture of Lawfulness integrity course is now part of the required academy curriculum for both new preventative and investigative police. The Governor of Nuevo Leon has also requested our assistance in accrediting state police instructors. As Chairman, he plans to introduce this new requirement at the next Border Governors' meeting scheduled for late August.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE NEXT FOUR MONTHS

We can expect to see the following in the next four months as we complete the first year of Merida programming:

20. (SBU) NIII: We expect delivery of 30 Portable Ion Scanners and 1 Mobile Gamma Radiation Truck for SEDENA for use at military check points in August, Five X-ray Minivans for Customs to be placed at various POEs in October, Five X-Ray Minivans for SSP to monitor commercial bus passenger luggage in October, and Seven (approximately) of 18 Mobile Gamma Radiation Trucks for SSP from August-November to use on Mexico's commercial highway network.

21. (SBU) Demand Reduction: By November, NAS will purchase equipment such as routers, an interactive voice response platform, and telephones for the RENADIC project. INL is completing the grant process with CICAD to create a certification process, continuous training activities and a detailed Spanish-curriculum which will enable the Mexican government to develop a certification system for substance abuse counselors who staff thousands of unlicensed treatment programs in Mexico (August-September).

22. (SBU) Aviation Training: Contractor will provide initial qualification, instructor, and NVG training for up to 10 pilots in Mexico using SSP provided aircraft. DoD will train additional Blackhawk pilots, instructor pilots, maintenance officers, and maintenance pilots starting in October. ODC signed an LOA for five Bell 412 helicopters with SEDENA in April and a purchase contract with Bell Helicopter Textron was signed on June 1, 2009. Delivery of the aircraft is scheduled by the end of the year.

23. (SBU) Senior-Level, SSP State Coordinators: SSP will establish a senior Federal Security Coordinator in each Mexican state and will train eight additional officers for a total of 40 new senior officials. Senior-level training is scheduled to start in early

August, with the US providing 3-4 weeks of executive-level training in the United States.

24. (SBU) Mid-Level Officer Training: SSP is screening and selecting 300 of its "best and brightest" officers to assume greater responsibility in the new Federal Police. These officers will start an 18-week instruction course at a Mexico City university including at least one week provided by U.S. instructors.

25. (SBU) OASISS: The Operation against Smugglers (and Traffickers) Initiative on Safety and Security (OASISS) program already in use along the U.S.-Mexico border requires new software to allow for

automated information exchange between the two agencies responsible for stopping and prosecuting alien smugglers. Delivery of the software application is anticipated by August 15, 2009.

26. (SBU) Project Constanza: A proposal for an assessment of the PGR's current development concept and status of the Project Constanza is expected by August 7. Based on this assessment the software will be delivered by November 2009.

27. (SBU) Biometrics: The INM project for issuance of biographic and biometrical identification credential (migratory form) for frequent visitors and temporary workers on the Mexico-Guatemala border began in June, starting at three points on Mexico's southern border (Ciudad Hidalgo, Talisman, and El Ceibo). Delivery of project plan to the GOM was finalized June 16, and procurement of biometric equipment is complete. We are currently awaiting an import certificate from the GOM. Next milestones include physical installation of biometric equipment at all three sites expected to take place early September, 2009. Technical training and the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures will take place late October, 2009.

28. (SBU) SIOM: The Mexican database for the INM System for Immigration Operations (SIOM) project is underway with the detailed gathering of GOM requirements and creation of a draft procurement document. An accepted and final purchase order is expected to be in place by the end of September, 2009. Phase 1 of SIOM re-engineering is expected to be delivered late March, 2009.

29. (SBU) Digitalization of Forms: The INM Digitalization of Forms Project is underway. A detailed gathering of GOM requirements and the creation of a draft procurement document is currently in process. An accepted and purchase order is expected to be in place by the end of October, 2009.

30. (SBU) CISEN Technical Enhancements: A final determination of equipment purchases is expected by the end of August, 2009. This project will provide a major revamping of CISEN telecommunications systems, and will better integrate information captured from entry points by INM as well as allow for rapid data retrieval, and analyses, including link analysis capabilities. Partial delivery of equipment is expected to take place early December, 2009.

31. (SBU) SSP National Command Center: Finalized delivery of approximately \$3.9 million in server equipment which will provide the National Command Center (Bunker) the capacity to integrate with Plataforma Mexico. NAS is currently carrying out a discovery and requirements analysis to identify all requirements for the under-ground bunker facility. Final analysis expected to be delivered for review to NAS late September, 2009.

32. (SBU) Canines: Expected delivery of transport kennels, pseudo-aromas, veterinary equipment and training materials in August to PGR, SSP and Customs.

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