

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Joint Statement by President Biden and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico on the 2022 U.S.-Mexico High-Level Security Dialogue
October 14, 2022

This year we celebrate 200 years of bilateral relations between the United States and Mexico and the first anniversary of the U.S.-Mexico Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health, and Safe Communities. The Bicentennial Framework, launched by our governments at the 2021 High-Level Security Dialogue, established a comprehensive, innovative, and long-term approach to guide our bilateral security cooperation.

The United States and Mexico remain committed to an enduring partnership based on mutual trust and respect for each country's sovereignty and independence. The Bicentennial Framework reaffirmed our commitment to take concrete actions on both sides of the border to address the shared security challenges affecting our communities, including human trafficking and smuggling, violence and illicit firearms, as well as substance use disorder and illicit drugs.

The United States and Mexico recognize our shared commitment to uphold the rule of law through enhanced law enforcement cooperation and protect our communities from transnational criminal organizations. We reaffirm our respect for human rights, our intolerance for corruption, and our commitment to address the underlying causes of violence and addiction in our communities. We have set ambitious goals within the Bicentennial Framework and developed detailed action plans to achieve our shared objectives. During the 2022 High-Level Security Dialogue, both governments decided to establish benchmarks to assess progress under the Bicentennial Framework and communicate results to our citizens.

In our first year under the Bicentennial Framework, we *protected the health of our citizens* by expanding our collaboration to reduce substance use disorder and its associated harm. The United States invested \$25.1 billion in drug treatment and interdiction of illicit narcotics. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services allocated nearly \$1.5 billion to address the opioid crisis and support individuals in recovery. Both governments launched complementary education campaigns on the dangers of fentanyl, the consequences of mixing drugs, the life-saving power of naloxone, and the importance of reducing stigma around substance use disorder to support treatment and recovery. Mexico's National Strategy to Prevent Addictions reached over 25 million people through prevention and community activities. We established a binational panel of public health experts to exchange best practices, improve surveillance tools, and monitor drug use trends.

We built forensic capacity to identify victims of forced disappearance, improved law enforcement and justice services for gender-based violence victims, and strengthened our shared commitment to protect journalists from criminal organizations through the National Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists. We worked together to reduce impunity for high-impact crimes, including homicides.

We intensified efforts to *prevent transnational criminal organizations from harming our countries*. We implemented mirrored patrols along our shared border to disrupt narcotics and firearms trafficking and human smuggling. The Department of Justice created Joint Task Force Alpha, which increased coordination with the Department of Homeland Security and other law enforcement partners, including in Mexico and Central America, to disrupt human smuggling networks. In 2021, the United States prosecuted 5,046 defendants for human smuggling, a 23 percent increase over 2020, and arrested four individuals suspected of involvement in the deaths of 53 migrants in San Antonio, Texas in June.

Our deepened law enforcement cooperation and bilateral information sharing supported drug interdiction activities in both countries. Mexico doubled cocaine seizures and arrested dozens of organized crime leaders. In 2022, Mexico made historic seizures of fentanyl, including confiscating more than 800,000 pills in Sonora. In 2021, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency seized more than 20.4 million fake pills and 15,000 pounds of fentanyl powder, and Customs and Border Protection seized an average of more than 800 pounds of fentanyl each month in 2021. Mexico extended its surveillance watchlist to include 72 dual-use substances, facilitating the seizure of over 955 tons of chemical precursors under the current government. We signed a memorandum of understanding between Mexico's National Customs Agency and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's National Targeting Center to improve information sharing on air cargo shipments. Mexico also joined the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's Global Container Control Program to minimize the use of maritime containers for the illicit trafficking of drugs.

To curb firearms trafficking, our law enforcement agencies traced 40 percent more firearms with a U.S.-Mexico nexus over the past year. These firearm traces yielded criminal intelligence that resulted in nearly 300 percent more criminal referrals in the United States over the past twelve months, the seizure of thousands of firearms in the United States and Mexico before they could reach criminal groups, and dozens of criminal convictions related to firearms smuggling. In Mexico, law enforcement agencies seized over 32,000 weapons, 17 million rounds of ammunition, and 2,300 grenades since 2019. U.S. local, federal, and state law enforcement agencies seized over 600,000 firearms in 2021. The U.S. Congress passed landmark legislation to strengthen laws against firearms trafficking and straw purchases and provided funds for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives to hire 600 new agents.

We pursued criminal networks by cracking down on transnational money laundering networks and extraditing criminals. Working together, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control and Mexico's Financial Intelligence Unit blocked thousands of accounts linked to drug traffickers, arms traffickers, and human smugglers. A binational illicit finance working group collaborated on cases involving chemical precursor trafficking. Mexico implemented an innovative approach to prosecute drug traffickers on tax evasion charges and the U.S. Office of Foreign Asset Control issued the first sanctions for firearms trafficking.

The U.S.-Mexico Bicentennial Framework for Security, Public Health, and Safe Communities

Nearly 108,000 people died of drug overdoses in the United States last year, driven primarily by the consumption of synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Firearms crossing our common border continue to generate extreme levels of violence. Over the next year, we must redouble our efforts to protect our people, prevent transborder crime, and pursue criminal networks through the following actions:

1. Expand our investment in public health, security, human rights, and justice sector institutions.
2. Strengthen evidence-based prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.
3. Increase the number of municipalities in Mexico using crime prevention methods to guide at-risk youth and disrupt cycles of violence.
4. Reduce impunity for homicides and high-impact crimes using data, analysis, prioritization, and task forces focused on investigating specific crimes.
5. Dismantle human smuggling organizations through coordinated efforts such as Joint Task Force Alpha and mechanisms that strengthen information exchange.

6. Commit to and implement an action plan to prevent the consumption and trafficking of synthetic drugs, specifically fentanyl and methamphetamines.
7. Sign a memorandum of understanding to exchange information and expand capacity in chemical regulation and importation processes.
8. Implement the recommendations of a shared study to address smuggling of people and goods across the border.
9. Expand eTrace access and share best practices for prosecuting firearms cases.
10. Prepare a collaborative report on arms trafficking to identify routes, organizations, and tactics used to traffic firearms.
11. Enforce the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act provisions on firearms trafficking.
12. Expand the number of investigators to support prosecutions across the range of criminal activity identified in the joint statement.
13. Develop a work plan to advance cybersecurity and infrastructure security cooperation between the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and Mexico's National Guard.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to Homero Zamorano, Jr., Christian Martinez, Juan Claudio D'Luna-Mendez, and Juan Francisco D'Luna-Bilbao, who were arrested on suspicions of human smuggling following the discovery of a tractor-trailer containing the bodies of 53 migrants in San Antonio, TX, on June 27.

Categories: Joint Statements : Mexico, President López Obrador.

Names: D'Luna-Bilbao, Juan Francisco; D'Luna-Mendez, Juan Claudio; López Obrador, Andrés Manuel; Martinez, Christian; Zamorano, Homero, Jr.

Subjects: Drug abuse and trafficking : Education and prevention efforts; Drug abuse and trafficking : Opioid epidemic, efforts to combat; Law enforcement and crime : Illegal arms trade, reduction efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Trafficking in persons, efforts to combat; Law enforcement and crime : Transnational criminal organizations; Mexico : Counternarcotics and drug interdiction efforts; Mexico : President; Mexico : Security cooperation with U.S.

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