

the space for the incoming workers, but was satisfied that additional construction costs will not hamper expected savings to the taxpayers.

"They said there's still significant payback by doing that," he said of the BRAC staff's review of the move, "and that was the major objection that they had."

He said the commission felt it was only fair to keep open the Arsenal's 251-job Civilian Personnel Office and Civilian Human Resource Agency. It was originally slated to move to Fort Riley, Kan., as part of a sweeping consolidation of defense personnel offices.

But Mr. Skinner urged the panel to delete it because it was targeted as part of a complete closure of the Rock Island Arsenal, and the move was never re-examined after the Pentagon decided to keep the Arsenal open.

"They had no chance to be heard, it wasn't even considered, and on that basis it wasn't fair. So we got a little life," Mr. Skinner said.

He also defended the closure of the Arsenal's 301-job Defense Finance and Accounting Service office. The commission voted to keep other offices open that the Pentagon targeted for closure, but Mr. Skinner said they were on bases of higher military and had the worst economic closure impact among DFAS locations.

He said the overall result for the Arsenal was better than it could have been. "They dodged a major bullet. Not perfect, but it could have been a lot worse."

GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION AND PROGRAM PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we are facing times of record spending. Whether it is in the form of relief to the hurricane ravaged gulf coast, financing the war on terrorism, or meeting our obligations to seniors with the Medicare prescription drug benefit, Federal spending is higher now than ever. We have committed ourselves to funding these priorities.

In doing so, I believe we must also look for ways to save in other areas to offset some of these costs. I would liken our current fiscal situation to that of any common American household. When emergencies or unforeseen obligations arise, such as an illness or a major repair, you find a way to pay the bill. But in doing so, you must also look at your household budget and find places to save.

So I come to the Senate floor today to speak a little bit about legislation I recently introduced to require regular review of Federal programs with the goal of identifying areas where savings can be made. S. 1399, the Government Reorganization and Program Performance Improvement Act, will create the necessary mechanisms to require Congress and the executive branch to regularly and formally examine whether Federal programs and agencies are achieving, or have achieved desired results for the American people, and make the necessary adjustments.

The bill would do this through the creation of a sunset commission and individual results commissions. The sunset commission would hold the Federal Government accountable for per-

formance by reviewing and providing recommendations to retain, restructure, or end Federal agencies or programs. Congress and the President would enact a 10-year schedule for the administration to assess the performance of all Federal agencies and programs. Acting on those assessments, the seven-member bipartisan sunset commission, appointed by the President in consultation with Congress, will recommend ways to improve effectiveness and spend taxpayer dollars more wisely.

The commission will provide an important framework to facilitate the reform, restructuring, or possible elimination of those agencies or programs unable to demonstrate expected performance results during their scheduled review. It will also help to identify those programs that have achieved their intended purposes or outlived their usefulness.

A second key feature of this important measure is the creation of individual results commissions targeted at specific programs or policy areas where duplication and overlapping jurisdiction hinder reform. Again, these seven-member bipartisan commissions, appointed by the President in consultation with Congress, will consider administration proposals to improve the performance of various programs and agencies by restructuring and consolidation. This will reduce unnecessary costs and waste paid for by the American taxpayer.

We need to continue to evaluate the way the Federal Government operates and look for ways to make it more cost effective for the long term. I believe this legislation presents a good step toward dealing with the large number of Federal programs out there, many of which are, frankly, wasteful and unnecessary. Many also duplicate other Federal, State and private efforts. S. 1399 provides a commonsense framework for reorganization and review of Federal programs, and provides for a way to abolish them if determined unnecessary.

S. 1399 is a good government measure. It is about efficiency, accountability to the American taxpayer, and identifying potential savings. It is a fiscally responsible measure that will provide a way for the Federal Government to save even as it meets its spending obligations in the future. I invite my colleagues to take a serious look at this proposal and to join me in advancing this effort.

AUGUST 2005 CODEL TO LATIN AMERICA

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, from August 14 to the 22, I traveled to Latin America to investigate first hand important issues relating to national security, immigration and the war on drugs. I would like to share the details of this trip and some of the insights I gained with my colleagues.

On Sunday, August 14, we flew to Havana, Cuba. Upon our arrival we drove

to the U.S. Mission where we met with James Cason, our chief of mission, and members of his staff. I started off the meeting by asking my hosts if Cuba could help the U.S. combat the smuggling of illegal drugs into our country. Mr. Rod Rojas of the U.S. Coast Guard, who currently serves as the U.S. Drug Interdiction Specialist based in Havana, noted that there is a good working relationship between the Coast Guard and the Cuban Border Guard on drug issues. It primarily takes the form of the Cubans sharing information with the United States as to suspicious ships passing through its territorial waters. The United States then interdicts these ships when they cross into U.S. waters. While the number of such reports has fallen in recent years, Mr. Rojas believes that this is a testament to the success of Cuban efforts: now that they know they will be reported, drug smugglers seem to be avoiding Cuban waters.

These reports confirm my long-held view that we should be working more closely with Cuba on drug interdiction efforts. This is why since 2001 I have sought to include language in the Foreign Operations appropriations bill to fund joint drug interdiction efforts between our two countries. This language is in the Senate version of the fiscal year 2006 bill, and I intend to press to secure its retention in the bill through conference.

From this positive report on the drug interdiction situation, our conversation turned to a troubling report on the current human rights situation in Cuba. Mr. Cason told us that there has been a deterioration of human rights in Cuba in recent years as Castro has cracked down on political dissidents. In 2003, Castro jailed 75 dissidents and has thus far released fewer than 20 from this group. These arrests were followed by others including the arrest of over 30 dissidents earlier this year. In addition to arrests, Castro has begun to employ other atrocious practices including having dissidents assaulted on the streets and generating demonstrations at the homes of dissidents to prevent them from stepping outside.

This repression has spread to the economic realm as well. In the late 1990s, Castro had opened a very limited window to free enterprise in Cuba by issuing licenses for private businesses. Had this trend continued, Cuba could have followed the path of China and Vietnam towards a limited market economy and higher living standards. Instead, Castro has abandoned this liberalization and cut back the number of licenses for private business. Both politically and economically, there are signs that Cuba is going backwards.

Finally, our conversation turned to the issue of immigration. In an effort to provide a legal outlet for immigration and avoid the massive boatlifts of the past, the United States allows 20,000 Cubans to legally immigrate every year. This number includes family reunifications, visas given out by

lottery, and approximately 5,000 visas granted to individuals accorded refugee status because they are found to face persecution if they remain in Cuba. Yet this legal outlet is still overwhelmed by the desire to leave Castro's Cuba: every year thousands of Cubans who cannot secure these visas still come to the U.S. by sea and, increasingly, overland via Mexico.

On Monday, August 15, we returned to the airport in the morning and flew an hour and a half from Havana down to our military base at Guantanamo Bay. Upon arrival we were met by White House Counsel Harriet Miers, Department of Defense General Counsel Jim Haynes, and a contingent of my Judiciary Committee staff. The base commander, MG Jay Hood, greeted us all and loaded us into a boat for the trip across the inlet from the airstrip to the operational center of the base.

Our visit began with a briefing by General Hood and members of his staff about many of the individuals being held and interrogated at Guantanamo and what they were learning from them. The briefing also reviewed the many cases on record of individuals we released from Guantanamo who immediately returned to the ranks of the terrorists once free. This briefing was an important reminder of the difficult balance that must be struck in our handling of these detainees. While we must strive for fair processes, we must remember that the individuals we are dealing with are often our most vicious enemies.

After our briefing, we drove to a mess hall for lunch where I had the opportunity to meet a number of Pennsylvanians who are serving with distinction at the base. We then visited one of the buildings used for interrogation and met with a group of interrogators who have been assigned to work with the Saudi prisoners. The interrogators informed us that their progress was slow. I asked these interrogators about the tactics they used. They were adamant that they did not use coercive tactics. They added that such tactics do not work. On the contrary, they told us that they have found the most effective method of interrogation to be developing a relationship with a detainee, treating him with respect, and winning him over through positive reinforcement.

On August 1, the New York Times ran a front page story detailing the allegations of two senior prosecutors at Guantanamo that the trial system for detainees had "been secretly arranged to improve the chances of conviction and to deprive defendants of material that could prove their innocence." After our tour of the base, I questioned General Hood, DoD General Counsel Jim Haynes, and Brigadier General Thomas Hemingway of the DoD Office of Military Commissions about these allegations and other complaints about the military justice system. White House Counsel Miers was present. Since our conversation was classified, I

will not comment in this forum on what was said. After this meeting we returned to Havana.

On Tuesday, August 16, we returned to the U.S. Mission to meet with two brave Cuban dissidents: Vladimiro Roca and Martha Roque. Mr. Roca is the President of the Social Democratic Party of Cuba. Knowing that I would meet with President Castro later in my trip, I felt it important to meet with the dissidents so that I would hear from both sides. I learned after my visit that the Governor of Nebraska, who was in town at the same time I was, also met with Castro but declined to meet with the dissidents.

Since political parties are banned in Cuba, Mr. Roca's "party" has only 35 members. Mr. Roca was jailed by Castro for 5 years from 1997 to 2002 for criticizing his government. Yet Mr. Roca continues to speak out and to criticize the regime. Although free, Mr. Roca has been the subject of intimidation and demonstrations designed to keep him from leaving his home.

Like Mr. Roca, Ms. Roque has also been jailed for expressing her strong anti-Castro views. She spent 3 years in jail from 1997 to 2000. Upon her release from prison she immediately returned to her activism. In 2003, she was arrested for a second time while attending an anti-Castro demonstration and sentenced to twenty years in jail. One year and five months into her term, Ms. Roque suffered a heart attack and was released.

While both Mr. Roca and Ms. Roque had trials, neither process sounds as if it was worthy of the name. According to Mr. Roca, he was told prior to his trial what the verdict and sentence would be. Mr. Roca and Ms. Roque are not alone. They inform me that there are still 81 prisoners of conscience languishing in Cuban jails for doing nothing more than exercising a right to free speech that their government refuses to recognize.

Following this meeting we drove to a luncheon meeting with President Fidel Castro. I had met with Castro during two prior visits to Cuba in 1999 and 2002 and found the experience to be worthwhile. As before, I found Castro to be an engaging host. He has an easy wit and enjoys a good-natured exchange. Yet beneath the joking was a serious undercurrent. Having just come from a meeting with dissidents, I pressed Castro to release the political prisoners in his jails. Castro tried to shift the topic of conversation from his prisoners by bringing up the case of five Cubans convicted of spying in the U.S. whose convictions were recently overturned by the 11th Circuit. I suggested to Castro that far from being an example of American wrongdoing, this kind of fair process is exactly the type of justice he should be offering to his own people. I also pressed Castro to open his country to democracy and dissent. He listened, but my exhortations obviously had no effect.

Much of Castro's conversation focused on his efforts to provide health

care to third world countries. Castro discussed this topic at length, and it quickly became clear that he believes this effort will be his central legacy. Cuba, a country of 11 million, has 70,000 doctors due to Castro's early emphasis on providing medical care to his own people. Castro has in recent years started sending thousands of these doctors abroad to help serve the underprivileged. Venezuela is the leading recipient of this medical largesse and hosts the majority of Cuba's overseas medical corps. According to Castro, Cuban doctors in Venezuela live and work in the slums and provide crucial medical care to those who would otherwise go without. For example, Castro told us that 6,000 Cuban eye doctors will perform 100,000 eye operations on poor Venezuelans this year. In addition to providing care, Castro told us that his doctors also provide an education, teaching Venezuelans to be doctors both in Venezuela and in Cuba. Castro then read off to us a list of the many countries in which Cuban doctors are living and serving from East Timor to Haiti and including many African and Latin American countries.

It must be noted that Castro's motives are not entirely altruistic. Our Embassy in Caracas informed me that in exchange for these medical services he is given a generous supply of free oil and his doctors are paid a subsidy which is remitted back to the state. Yet it is doubtful that Castro's arrangements with poorer countries such as Haiti bring similar financial rewards. While there is much to criticize about Castro and his regime, this humanitarian effort is to be respected. To underscore the personal importance of this effort to him, Castro ended his discourse by stating that "history will vindicate us."

When we left Castro we proceeded to the airport and flew to Caracas, Venezuela. On Wednesday, August 17, we had breakfast with our Ambassador in Caracas, William Brownfield. Mr. Brownfield is a career diplomat with an obvious passion for his work and a deep knowledge of his subject. Ambassador Brownfield sets forth a pragmatic approach to Venezuela. While fundamental differences exist between our two countries, he argues, we can and must cooperate on those issues where we share an agenda, namely oil and drugs.

On oil, Venezuela lacks the infrastructure to refine more than one-fourth of the oil it produces. Venezuelan oil is heavier than most and needs special refineries, and these refineries are located in the United States. In addition, Venezuela is relatively close to the United States when compared to other United States suppliers and other Venezuelan markets. Thus continued cooperation on oil is imperative for both nations.

Secondly, both nations share an interest in combating drugs. There have been some recent conflicts over the specifics of fighting drugs. Only a week

before our trip, President Chavez announced that he was suspending all cooperation with our DEA. The United States, in turn, suspended the visas of three high ranking Venezuelan law enforcement officials. Yet beneath the conflict, the shared interests and goals remain and can serve as a motivation to overcome these differences and proceed with the important work of drug interdiction.

The Venezuelan President, Hugo Chavez, has been criticized for governing in an anti-democratic fashion. While in Caracas, I wanted to hear directly from those who held this view and arranged a meeting with an activist named Alejandro Plaz and one of his associates. Mr. Plaz is the President of Sumate, a Venezuelan non-governmental organization dedicated to electoral observation and what he calls "democratic observation"—i.e. monitoring the leading indicators of a healthy democracy such as human rights and freedom of speech. These activities have stirred the ire of President Chavez's regime. Mr. Plaz has been charged with conspiracy to destroy the Republican system in Venezuela and if convicted would face 8 to 16 years in prison. The core element of the allegation of "conspiracy" is that Mr. Plaz accepted a \$31,000 grant from the National Endowment for Democracy. The Venezuelan Government argues that since teaching about democracy is a political activity, and since political activities cannot be funded from abroad, Mr. Plaz has violated the law. By all accounts, however, including an analysis conducted by the American Bar Association, this is a political trial aimed to intimidate a man perceived to be a political opponent.

Mr. Plaz also detailed how Chavez loyalists in the legislature used a simple majority vote to change the rule requiring a supermajority to amend certain basic laws of the nation. Having thus lowered the threshold, the legislature has used simple majorities to expand the number of seats on the Supreme Court and pack these seats with Chavez loyalist as well as to fill the election boards with Chavez loyalists.

We next drove to the Venezuelan foreign ministry where we met with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Ali Rodriguez Araque and the Venezuelan Minister of Interior and Justice Jesse Chacon. Foreign Minister Araque started things on a positive note by stating that despite the differences which the United States and Venezuela may have in the political sphere, our two nations have many shared interests in oil and drug interdiction and must emphasize our commonalities. Interior Minister Chacon picked up on the theme of drug interdiction and went on at some length about Venezuela's efforts to fight the use of its territory as a transit point for Columbian drugs. According to the Minister, Venezuelan authorities seized 57 tons of cocaine and heroin in 2004 and 42 tons in 2003. He then spent some time discussing the recent controversy

between our DEA agents in Venezuela and the Venezuelan government. He set forth his government's side of the story, and focused on alleged inappropriate actions by our DEA agents including the use of "controlled deliveries" to ship illegal drugs out of Venezuela in contravention of Venezuelan law.

Immediately following this meeting, we drove to Miraflores Palace where I met with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. We were joined by the two Ministers with whom I had previously met as well as U.S. Ambassador Brownfield. President Chavez began the meeting with an extended discussion about the importance of drug interdiction to both of our countries. He noted that drugs are a destabilizing force in the countries victimized by them. He then spoke about the deteriorating relations between the United States and Venezuela. He expressed concern in particular about statements coming from the U.S. government that he is trying to destabilize Latin America. He also said he is concerned about his U.S. ambassador's lack of access to the White House and high ranking executive branch officials.

Chavez commented about having met President Clinton on three occasions, one of which was at the United Nations. President Chavez believed that his relations with President Clinton were good and would like to see similar relations with President Bush. President Chavez also spoke about Venezuela's oil resources and his plans for billions of dollars of investments to increase oil production.

After the President's extensive opening statement, I responded that good relations between the United States and Venezuela are very important to both countries. I told the President that we appreciate his help in stopping the flow of drugs from Columbia and South America. I also noted the importance of Venezuelan oil to the United States and the world. I expressed my view that United States companies would be willing to invest substantial sums to improve Venezuelan oil production and help them produce oil for the world and help Venezuela generate revenue money to fight poverty. I then took up the dispute between Venezuelan narcotics officers and the DEA and suggested that all facts should be put on the table to determine exactly what occurred so that both parties are then in a position to decide what steps could be taken to resolve the dispute. President Chavez said that this was a good idea and that consideration ought to be given to having a new agreement on drug interdiction.

President Chavez later spoke at some length about President Castro and his efforts to provide extensive medical personnel to Venezuela. Chavez commented that Castro had discussed my meetings with Castro and thought that they were productive. Chavez then returned to the topic of oil and pointed out that a Venezuelan company, pre-

sumably Citgo, had 13,000 gas stations and 8 refineries in the United States. He then reiterated his concern about statements from the U.S. regarding Venezuela destabilizing Latin America. Chavez said that public opinion in Venezuela was running against the United States because of these statements.

At the conclusion of our meeting, President Chavez agreed that it would be useful for his Foreign Minister and Minister of the Interior to meet with our Ambassador the following week to try to resolve United States/Venezuela differences on drug enforcement. Previously, all of our Ambassador's efforts to arrange such a meeting had been rejected.

On Thursday, August 18 we flew to Liberia, Costa Rica. Our first meeting that afternoon focused on the drug issue. We sat down with Paul Knierim, our top DEA agent in Costa Rica, and his Costa Rican counterpart, Allen Solano, who is the Director of the Costa Rican Drug Control Police. Although no drugs are grown or processed in Costa Rica, the nation and the rest of Central America serve as a crucial transit route for smugglers bringing South American drugs to the markets in North America and Europe.

Drugs are transported overland on Costa Rica's roads, by sea through both its Pacific and Caribbean territorial waters, as well as over Costa Rica's airspace in private planes and on passenger jets. These operations are often sophisticated. In one smuggling ring that was uncovered, re-fueling ships met the smuggling boats at fixed points along the Costa Rican coast so that the boats would not have to risk detection by coming ashore.

The region faces its own set of issues. The Trans American Highway, an important overland route for drugs, passes through this region and has been the site of increased drug traffic in recent years. Also, the Daniel Oduber international airport outside of Liberia has seen growing passenger traffic in recent years, especially to and from the United States, as the local tourist industry and real estate markets have developed. This increased traffic provides an opportunity for smugglers to blend into the crowd. Thus authorities have found that drug traffickers are sending more smugglers on the planes to transport drugs northward. These "mules" typically transport the drugs by placing them in latex and swallowing them, a practice which can prove fatal if the latex bags break.

I was pleased to learn that in Costa Rica cooperation between our DEA and the local authorities is excellent. We have five of our agents stationed in country where they work with the Costa Ricans to investigate and interdict drug shipments. Success is difficult. Mr. Knierim of our DEA told me that they know they are having an impact, since their actions force the smugglers to change their tactics. But he also realizes that they have not been able to defeat the smugglers. The battle continues.

Later in my visit, I met with Dr. Rolando Herrero, a leading cancer researcher who has been a pioneer in the exploration of the connection between viral infections and cancer. In particular, in a series of studies conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s, Dr. Herrero demonstrated a connection between the Human Papilloma Virus, HPV, a sexually transmitted disease, and cervical cancer. Having proven this connection, Dr. Herrero is now conducting a trial of an HPV vaccine that could prevent the spread of the virus and thus significantly lower the incidence of cervical cancer. This vaccine trial received \$5 million in NIH funding through the National Cancer Institute this year. Given the prevalence of the HPV virus among sexually active young Americans, and the enormous expense of pap smears and treatments, this trial has obvious importance for the protection of women's health in the U.S.

Dr. Herrero has conducted his studies, including the current vaccine trial, in the Guanacaste Province in northwest Costa Rica. He explained that because of the relative stability of the local female population aged 18–25, this region allows for the extensive yearly follow up that would not be possible in the more mobile societies of America and Europe. As a result of his extensive prior work in the region, Dr. Herrero also has an impressive infrastructure in place to allow for effective follow-up studies by a highly professional team of 150 scientists and health care workers who know the local population and its habits well.

Finally, we drove to the offices of Mr. Bernardo Rojas, the Director of Ecodesarollo, a private company which has been given a concession from the Costa Rican government to develop an area known as the Papagayo Peninsula on the Pacific Coast of northern Costa Rica. The work being done by Mr. Rojas and this innovative public/private partnership can serve as a model for other countries wishing to develop their tourism industry while preserving the environment and respecting local populations.

Specifically, the Ecodesarollo Company has been given the rights to develop and manage an 840 hectare peninsula for a period of 49 years, with a right to renew the concession for another 49 years. In return, however, the company must meet a series of significant requirements. First, it must build 9 hotels and 3 golf courses in this area within a 28-year period which began in 1999. To date, two hotels and one golf course have been built to very impressive standards and have begun attracting tourists from around the world.

While conducting extensive construction, the developers are required to preserve the environment. They must preserve 70 percent of the green areas and set aside two conservation zones. They have also put into place extensive water treatment and recycling and a project to repopulate the local forests

with local species of plants. The developers have focused on the prevention of forest fires with great success. Before the project began, there were 18 consecutive years of forest fires during the dry season. Since development began, there have been six dry seasons without any fires.

Finally, they must assist the local population. The company is required to build 2,000 residential units in the region. It must also provide additional funding and programs to the local schools and colleges.

While in Costa Rica I learned that the day after my meeting with Venezuela's President Chavez, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made some critical comments about the Venezuelan leader during a visit to Peru. I was concerned that Mr. Rumsfeld's rhetoric had the potential to erode the progress we had made with President Chavez during our visit. Accordingly, I wrote to Secretary Rumsfeld and informed him of my meeting with Chavez and my belief that a window of opportunity had been opened to resolve our disagreement with Venezuela over drug interdiction policy. I suggested that, at least for the time being, we should have a moratorium on adverse comments about Venezuela.

Our next and final destination was Mexico City, Mexico. Given our long common border, Mexico presents the greatest challenges and opportunities in the war on drugs and terror and on the immigration issue. Good relations with Mexico are crucial to both of our nations, and I was very glad for the opportunity to learn about these issues first hand.

On my first morning in Mexico we were met at our hotel by our Ambassador, Antonio Garza. Prior to his assignment to Mexico, Ambassador Garza was elected Railroad Commissioner of Texas and appointed by then Governor Bush to be Texas's Secretary of State. Ambassador Garza has a detailed knowledge of the issues facing our two countries, and I believe he is serving us very well in Mexico.

From the hotel we drove to the Mexican Foreign Ministry for a breakfast with a group of Mexican government officials to discuss the two most important issues before us: drugs and immigration. The group included Geronimo Gutierrez, Mexico's Under Secretary of Foreign Relations for North America, and Eduardo Medina Mora, the Director of Mexico's Center for National Security Investigations, Mexico's equivalent of the CIA.

I began our breakfast by asking my hosts about the problem of the drug cartels and the recent violence in Nuevo Laredo, a town just south of the border with Texas, where rival cartels have been fighting each other in the streets with machine guns and rocket launchers. Mr. Mora informed us that the Mexican authorities have successfully prosecuted the leaders of some of the country's largest drug cartels, including a major cartel in Baja, Cali-

fornia and the Gulf Cartel operating south of Texas. I was also informed that the U.S. has been providing crucial assistance in this effort. We have helped to train, equip and fund a new, professional Federal police force to replace its corrupt and inefficient predecessor. The new force currently stands at 7,000 members. According to Mr. Mora, the next big challenge facing the Mexicans in the war on drugs is to replicate at the state and local level what they have accomplished at the Federal level by replacing ineffective and/or bribed police forces with professional police forces capable of winning the fight against the cartels. I was informed that the U.S. can be helpful in this effort much as we were in building the Federal police by providing money, equipment and training.

Extradition of drug lords to the U.S. is a key component in this fight against the drug cartels. Mexican prisons fail to deter the drug lords, and there are stories of many who, through bribes, have been able to get everything they need to manage their empires from behind bars. I have been told repeatedly, however, that Mexican drug lords are terrified by the prospect of being jailed in U.S. prisons where they serve hard time.

Unfortunately, the Mexican courts have created a serious impediment to extradition to the U.S. Like many European countries, Mexico is opposed to the death penalty and will not extradite an individual to the U.S. if that individual may face the death penalty upon conviction. Yet the Mexican courts have extended this policy in a unique way. Three years ago the Mexican Supreme Court held that life imprisonment without the possibility of parole is the equivalent of the death penalty since the prisoner will die in jail, and therefore a prisoner who would face a life sentence in the U.S. cannot be extradited. Other Mexican courts have gone so far as to declare that a 20-year sentence is the equivalent of the death penalty when imposed on a 60-year old convict, since someone of that age will likely die in prison.

My Mexican hosts expressed displeasure with these court decisions and tell me they will seek their review. Still, despite these setbacks, extraditions are at their highest level ever, exceeding thirty a year in recent years. I suggested to my Mexican counterparts that we in the Judiciary Committee can work with our Department of Justice and local prosecutors to encourage them to file charges in a way that will facilitate extradition. U.S. prosecutors have secured the extradition of murderers from Europe by taking the death penalty off the table, and we can take similar steps to alleviate the concerns of the Mexicans. For example, Mexican law allows for a sentence as long as sixty years in the case of "aggravated homicide." Thus if U.S. prosecutors agree not to seek a penalty greater than 60-years imprisonment, or to seek life imprisonment but with the

possibility of parole, it may well facilitate the extradition while still providing a serious sentence for the offenders.

On the immigration front my hosts assured me that Mexico is making a serious effort to reduce the traffic of illegal immigrants from Mexico into the United States. These efforts are largely focused on limiting the flow of illegals from third countries as opposed to the flow of Mexicans themselves. Before they seek to illegally enter the United States, hundreds of thousands of would-be immigrants from South and Central American must first illegally enter Mexico. But Mexico is cracking down on these illegals and is deporting them back to their home countries in large numbers. I was informed that last year the Mexicans deported over 200,000 such illegals. The Mexicans are also requiring visas for visitors from countries such as Brazil and Ecuador who did not previously need them.

The Mexicans have also agreed to permit the U.S. to implement an interior repatriation program. Typically, when we catch an illegal immigrant, we deposit them on the other side of our border with Mexico where they are tantalizingly close to the United States and likely to try again to enter. Under the interior repatriation program, we fly those illegals who wish it all the way back to their home towns and villages. Once home, far away from the border, they are far less likely to try again. So far, this program has returned 13,000 illegal immigrants to their homes in Mexico.

From the Mexican Foreign Ministry we drove to the United States Embassy, where I was greeted by over 30 representatives of the Embassy and other U.S. agencies for a briefing on our drug and counter-terror efforts. This briefing largely confirmed what I had learned earlier in the day from the Mexican officials. Larry Holifield, the regional director of the DEA for Mexico and Central America, described the great cooperation between our DEA and their Mexican counterparts, including permission to conduct wiretaps and joint operations where vetted Mexican police units act on U.S. intelligence tips to take down members of the drug cartels. He and others spoke about the help we have provided to the Mexicans in building their police force and how effective this has been.

Greg Stephens of the Department of Justice confirmed that the Mexicans are getting better on extradition. As of 6 years ago the Mexicans had never extradited a Mexican citizen to the United States. Last year the Mexicans extradited 34 people to the United States and are on track to extradite a similar number this year. Renee Harris of U.S. Customs and Border Control spoke about the internal repatriation program and agreed that it was working, although she would like to see more help from the Mexican government in publicizing the program to its citizens. In response to my question

about what more we can do to stem the flow of illegal immigrants, Ms. Harris responded with a familiar refrain: we can provide more technology, equipment and training.

Following this meeting, we drove to the offices of the Mexican President, Vicente Fox. Before our meeting with the President began, I had the opportunity to sit down with Mexican Attorney General Daniel Francisco Cabeza de Vaca. I asked Attorney General Cabeza de Vaca about the extradition issue and if it would help if we agreed not to seek a sentence of longer than 60 years for anyone extradited to the United States from Mexico. The Attorney General thought this would help, and told me that he had discussed this topic directly with Attorney General Gonzales. He also believed that the problematic Supreme Court decision would be reviewed.

I asked the attorney General about the situation in Nuevo Laredo, and he expressed confidence that the situation was improving. He told me that the Federal Government had sent over 1,500 police to the city and that some important arrests were made just last week. He praised the sharing of intelligence with the United States which has helped them to identify and detain targets. He said there were two phases to combating the violence in Nuevo Laredo. The first phase was to ensure the permanent presence of the Federal police and the army in the City. This has already been accomplished. The second phase was to improve local law enforcement and create a new and professional local police force which was not owned by the cartels. He expected to see a reduction in the level of violence very soon. The Attorney General also asked for my assistance in the matter. He told me that the warring cartels were using very high powered weapons, including 50 caliber machine guns and rocket launchers, and that these weapons were coming from the United States. I agreed to contact the ATF to see what could be done to stem the flow of such illegal weapons to Mexico.

Next I was received by President Vicente Fox. Fox started off our meeting by telling me that it is vital for the United States, Canada and Mexico to work together on a variety of problems including immigration, counter narcotics, and terrorism. He noted that our three nations were losing jobs to Asia and needed to work jointly to bolster our economies.

On the issue of violence in Nuevo Laredo and elsewhere, the President told me that Mexico has both a short term and a long-term approach. In the short term, Mexico has jailed 40,000 members of the drug cartels in a 4-year period. Among those in prison are six of the country's major drug lords. The President complained, however, that even while in jail some drug lords have been able to continue to run their syndicates by bribing prison guards for access to telephones and other means of communication. Fox then spoke in

more general terms about the problem of police corruption at the local level. He noted that police earn a salary of \$600 a month but are offered bribes in the thousands. In Nuevo Laredo alone, 1,100 policemen were fired from their jobs last month for corruption. The Federal Government has moved 1,000 policemen into the area to stem the violence.

In the long term, President Fox told us that he is trying to foster greater cooperation between the Mexican Federal Government and the Mexican states. To do so would require passage of legislation that has long been pending in the Mexican Congress. President Fox's party controls neither house of Congress and so far this legislation has not been enacted. To emphasize the importance of better cooperation from local police, President Fox pointed out that there are approximately 400,000 local police and only 10,000 Federal police. He also noted that approximately 95 percent of all crime consists of violation of state and local laws, while only 5 percent is Federal.

On the issue of extradition, President Fox told me that he would like to extradite more criminals to the United States but is limited by what his Supreme Court has done. While he would like to see this opinion overruled, he is sensitive not to take any action which would be counter productive. But he is working hard in the fight against drugs. He told me that earlier that day he spent 2 hours with his counter narcotics experts. He plans to meet with the governors of Arizona and New Mexico to discuss the states of emergency that they have declared in response to the influx of illegal drugs and immigrants.

On the violence in Nuevo Laredo, President Fox stated that the cause was the fight between rival drug cartels for control of the city. He is using his military in Nuevo Laredo. I told President Fox that I was not optimistic that the war over the drug cartels could be won having observed the problems in Colombia since the early 1980s and having now seen the problems in Venezuela and Costa Rica. I asked the President if he felt that war was winnable. President Fox replied that it would be very difficult to win the war on drugs as long as the demand for drugs remains strong. But he believes that the fight must continue.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING RALPH CURTIS

• Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize one of my constituents, Mr. Ralph Curtis. Mr. Curtis has served as manager of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District for 25 years. He took over the managerial position when the organization was very small, consisting of just Ralph and one other employee. The time and energy that Ralph has given