

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to address the escalating drug-related violence occurring along the U.S.-Mexico border. This past weekend, two U.S. citizens affiliated with the American consulate were murdered in Ciudad Juarez, which lies just across the border from El Paso, Texas. While we share the sadness you expressed in response to these murders, we recognize that they are part of a larger pattern of violence in the border region that demands greater attention.

Over the last few weeks, many local mayors, law enforcement officials, and community leaders have become alarmed about the increased violence in the border region. They fear for the safety of their communities, as well as those of our friends on the Mexican side of the border. We recognize that President Calderon has greatly increased efforts to combat Mexican drug cartels through the Merida Initiative, and that the United States is assisting Mexico to help stop narcotics trafficking and related drug cartel activities. Yet cartel violence continues to claim more innocent lives, and that violence is spilling over into the United States. Texans have even reported at least one recent Mexican military incursion into sovereign U.S. territory.

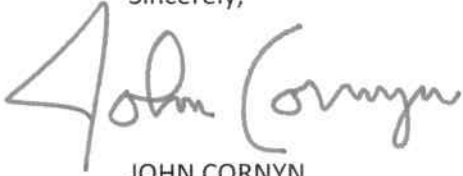
The spillover violence in Texas is real and it is escalating. Our border patrol agents and local law enforcement are more regularly engaged with gunmen associated with drug cartels, but our resources and personnel are limited. Local officials also report a recent surge in people crossing the border to escape the violence, and they place additional burdens on local communities.

We request that you take action in three ways, as quickly as possible. First, we request a joint intelligence briefing from U.S. Northern Command, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Central Intelligence Agency regarding the ongoing violence in Mexico, including an analysis of whether it poses a threat to the safety of other American citizens and to our overall national security. We would also like to learn more about the circumstances surrounding the double murder of the U.S. citizens in Juarez, as well as to receive a detailed accounting of violent incidents involving U.S. government employees in the border region over the past six months.

Second, we urge you to deliver a concrete plan to address the increasing violence across the border, and share it with Congress. A credible plan must include immediate measures, including the temporary deployment of additional resources to help local officials better protect their citizens and communities as well as minimize disruptions to travel and trade. A credible plan must also revisit our fiscal year 2011 funding and strategic priorities under the Merida Initiative, and ensure that we are prioritizing U.S. assistance to ensure maximum effectiveness in addressing violence in the border region. We need to know what resources Congress can provide to help implement your Administration's plan as quickly as possible.

Lastly, we invite you to join us on a visit to the border region soon, and to express your personal commitment to addressing drug-related violence. Such a visit would draw national attention to a national priority, and allow you to thank the federal and local officials who are doing heroic work to protect our communities.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of John Cornyn in black ink.

JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Kay Bailey Hutchison in black ink.

KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON
United States Senator