

Arturo Sarukhan & Alan Bersin Address NDN/NPI on a 21st Century Border

CUNNINGHAM: I'd like to welcome everyone to a very special program here at NDN's Latin American Policy Initiative. I'm Nelson Cunningham, I'm the chair of the Latin American Policy Initiative here at NDN, which is an effort to try to link together US foreign policy with domestic politics, and to make our foreign policy particularly in Latin America relevant politically, understandable politically, and to link together domestic political forces here in a way that reinforces the interests of the United States in better relations with Latin America. I think this program that we have this afternoon embodies perhaps better than any other program that we have had here at _____, that intersection of politics and policy, because our topic today is a topic that is inherently, uh, as they say "intermestic" it's not international, it's not domestic, it's intermestic, it's our border, here in the United States with our neighbor to the South, Mexico.

Let me welcome all of those who are watching this on the web, and also I understand that we have watch parties in El Paso, San Diego, Chulavista, Lareda, Albuquerque, Guadalajara, and Mexico City. We're set up to take questions from all of our watch parties in from the web, so we ask all of you who are watching who have questions to pose to our two guests, send them in, through some magic they'll be transmitted to me and I'll be able to pose them to our guests. Our format today will be highly informal, it will be a conversation, it's a conversation intended for our members here at NDN, I know we have some members of the press here and we're delighted that you're here, but we'll ask you to hold your questions until we insure that all of our NDN members have had the chance to communicate and ask their questions to our two extremely distinguished guests. Let me turn to them now. First, ambassador Arturo Sarukhan. Mexico's ambassador here in Washington, he was previously Consul General in NYC, he's a career foreign service officer in the Mexican Foreign Service, he also I think very propitiously took a leave of absence from the foreign service to become the chief foreign policy advisor to presidential candidate Felipe Calderon. That was a wise decision on his part, and it is in part what has led to his serving here as president Calderon's ambassador here in Washington, DC. And we're delighted to have him here, ambassador thank you for joining us. Our other guest is someone who has had so many careers that I think if I were to list them all it would take up most of our time, so I'm just going to shorthand it. Harvard, Rhodes Scholar, Yale Law School, Munger Tahlis and Olsen, US Attorney in San Diego, Superintendent of Education in San Diego, Chief of Education for all of California, Assistant Secretary for International Affairs at DHS, and now the Commissioner for Customs and Border Protection at DHS. Because of the rich background that Alan Bersin brings in the Southwest, on the border, not only living on the border but working it from so many different angles, It is very logical that the President and Secretary Napolitano have asked him to be the guide on the US side for this very complex project of re-imagining the border between the US and Mexico and for coming up with a new way of thinking about problems that are longstanding but seem to be getting more and more difficult all the time. A couple of quick facts and then let me turn it to each of them to say a few words and then we'll get the questions going. The facts, the border is 2000 miles long, 1 million border crossings a day, almost, almost a billion dollars of trade across the border every day, Mexico is our 3rd largest trading relationship, 2nd, when the Canadians are not in the room and the Chinese are not in the room Mexico is 2nd or even first, our 2nd largest supplier of petroleum (he agrees with that). Under Nafta, US exports to Mexico have tripled, Mexican exports to the US have more than quadrupled, this is a relationship which is as rich and dense across the border as any in the world in fact there's probably no border that exceeds it. We've all been aware over the last several years of the dramatically escalating violence across the border, and this has brought not only a post 9-11 sensibility to how we on the US side

think of the border, but it has also brought a very peculiar dynamic on the border. I think we all have our statistics, the one that I have here, 24000 have been killed in the drug wars along the border in the last 4 years, 10 000 were killed just last year, and this year we're on track to exceed that very high number by 30%. In the last decade, our response on the US side, has included a 100% increase in US border patrol agents, greater reliance on physical barriers, dramatic increases in new interdiction technologies that can help us do things that we simply couldn't do before, and then I think perhaps trying to knit this all together on the US side, the Merida initiative started under the Bush Administration, picked up I think strongly by the Obama Administration. A 1.4 billion dollar multi-year commitment to strengthening US-Mexico law enforcement border interdiction efforts. The issue for us to discuss today is what does this border look like, what should it look like, and why should a border of the 21st century be different from the border of the 20th century. Why don't I start with you Ambassador Sarukhan, and then I'm going to sit down and we'll try to make this as much of a conversation as possible, including all of you here in the room and all of you out there on the web.

SARUKHAN: Thank you. Thank you Nelson, and it's a distinct privilege to be here with my dear friend Alan Bersen, with whom we have had such a successful partnership over the last year and with whom we are working so hard to ensure that this border does provide the opportunity for both countries to not only ensure security, but guarantee that this is a region which triggers and generates economic growth and development.

You mentioned a word that I think is key, Nelson, because I think it not only explains what we're trying to do in particular as it relates to the border but it defines the nature of the bilateral relationship between Mexico and the US, and that's the word "intermestic" and that's a term that was coined by a US political scientist in the 1970's, Bayliss Manning, who coined this term to try and explain the mix between foreign and domestic policies and that's why he called them "intermestic" for both international and domestic. And one of the salient features of Mexico's relationship with the United States is that it is probably, with the exception of Canada, the only two countries on the face of the Earth that don't have a foreign policy and a domestic policy vis-a-vis the US. They are truly "intermestic" and they are the only two countries I think on the face of the Earth that have that type of relationship with the US. One of the reasons obviously is the fact that they are the second and third largest contiguous land borders on the face of the Earth, and NAFTA is also another reason why the foreign policies and domestic policies of these three nations are so intertwined with one another and this presents a lot of opportunities but also a great deal of challenges to our relationship. What we have been trying to do since President Calderon assumed office in December of 2006 and in particular with this administration, the Obama administration, is to move forward with something that previous Mexican governments and US administrations had tried to do and which for whatever reason, bureaucratic politics, the layout of the government, the priorities of the agenda, had not been possible, and that is to provide, to design and implement a holistic vision for the border. One that doesn't just pigeonhole the different issues, whether it's security, whether it's immigration, whether it's infrastructure, whether it's competitiveness, what we are doing and one of the important results of the visit by President Calderon last week to Washington is that we have advanced and released a document on the 21st century border that we are both trying to design, which for the first time in the bilateral relationship between the US and Mexico, lays out the guiding principles that will allow both countries in the coming months and years for the first time in their history, to develop a holistic vision for the border. Not only in terms of where we need to be and what the border needs to look like, but of

ensuring that the bureaucracies in Mexico City and in Washington DC are designed to be able to push that vision forward. And that's why we thought that this was a unique opportunity, I'm sure that Alan will also address this, to underscore how important (the visit obviously touched upon a whole range of issues in the bilateral relationship) but I have started by this one because I think it really underscores what's at stake and how both countries, by renewing their understanding of how to take on these challenges, can move forward in a holistic and strategic fashion in ways that we probably haven't done since the days of when NAFTA was devised, designed, negotiated, and voted for in Washington DC on Capitol Hill, Alan.

BERSIN: I'm also delighted to be here and want to thank NDN for convening this group and Nelson for actually sitting between two partners who hopefully this afternoon with your help will help us expand on this notion that received last week a tremendous validation by our chief executives. I would not underestimate and since you know that the ambassador when he once heard me describe this period in US-Mexican relations as the greatest period of collaboration in the history of our two countries he corrected me by saying "No that was actually NAFTA." So for him to state what he just stated in terms of the way ahead between our two countries should suggest to all of us that we are at one of those turning points in history, and we take advantage of that but we recognize that history is unforgiving to those that do not turn. So what is the trajectory here what is the basis for, on the one hand this cooperative border that is juxtaposed with domestic US politics, in which the border is considered by some to be out of control and threatened by the violence occurring in Northern Mexico and reciprocally by those in Mexico who continue to look at the US through the lens of a 20th century sovereignty which while remaining important, has given way to a notion of co-responsibility, and since most political change starts with an intellectual reconstruction or a re-imagining of a relationship, I think it's important that we grasp the extent to which President Calderon and President Obama have re-defined the way in which we need to think about the bilateral relationship and the border relationship which is the thermostat for so much of that relationship. In the past those of us who live and work on the border as I have for more than 25 years now were always struck by the fact that what took place at the physical borderline whether it related to immigration or to drugs or to many other problems identified in the interior of both countries actually had nothing to do in the larger sense with what was happening at the border. So for example the supply of narcotics by Mexican cartels was a function of organized criminal organization in Mexico and the consumption of drugs in the US which actually drove that criminal organization were seen as two separate phenomena, happening away from the border but that had so much effect on the way in which we live and perceive the border. Similarly with regard to immigration, the lack of a legitimate labor market between the US and Mexico, we have a labor market albeit illegitimate, was accounted for by the so-called pull into the US by the labor magnet, the willingness of US employers to hire undocumented Mexican labor, and the push from Mexico given the industrializing nature of the Mexican economy in the 20th and now 21st centuries. But none of that was connected, they were seen as separate phenomena, which then gave occasion to the finger pointing exercise that occupied so much of 20th century US-Mexican relationship and political dealing. While very friendly to be sure, there was nonetheless an inability on the part of the politics of both countries to accept a co-responsibility. So imagine the dramatic acceptance of a co-responsibility by the Mexican political system and the US political system embodied in statements by the leaders of those systems that says, drugs and guns and cash coming North and going South are actually part of the similar cycle of organized criminal activity that we need to confront as a common problem and once accepted intellectually begins to become translated in the kinds of activities and actions that we've seen culminating in last week's events. And it's happened on a whole series of fronts that have created a

ver exciting opportunity for US-Mexican relations, to see the border not as something that divides us but that is actually the place in which we take cooperative action that brings our bilateral relationship much closer together, a fundamental shift. You know maybe I could follow up on that last very excellent point and get concrete with you, I reeled off the statistics earlier about the tragic deaths along the border because of the narco-trafficking. How do you see the trend lines, start with you Commissioner Bersen, how do you see the trend lines there on our effort cooperating with the Mexicans in controlling that violence? Do you see it at this point as accelerating or do you feel that we've turned a corner? I think the cooperative efforts are at a high point and will intensify over the coming months as we go forward. The remarkable contrast between Ciudad Juarez, arguably now the most murderous city in the Western Hemisphere, with El Paso across the Rio Grande / Bravo River which is the 2nd safest city in the US after Honolulu, in the past would have been the occasion to say "Aha, what's going on in Mexico?". For the first time we see the kind of cooperative approach and the co-responsibility as looking at Juarez and El Paso in a single lens that asks the question and leads to cooperative activities between law enforcement on both sides of the border. So Nelson I think in fact the violence in Mexico, the consequence of a heroic, historic decision on the part of President Calderon to challenge organized crime, has led to yes unprecedented violence because of the civil war between the cartels and between the government and the cartels, that has led to the bloodshed that we've seen. A stage that I would remind while not as bloody in the US was also part of our struggle with organized crime in the 1920's and 1930's and 40's, and actually continuing up until the time in which we made a national commitment to reduce the power of Cosa Nostra in this country. So the stage of violence yes is continuing and may even intensify but the cooperation and the commitment of the US at the request of Mexico and in concert with Mexican plans and programs has never been greater, and is a tribute to this notion of co-responsibility, seeing the border as a dynamic not as a juridical line dividing us.

SARUKHAN: Also Nelson, if I can step in on this one, it also underscores what is happening as two governments approach the issue which is understanding that it's not just about drugs and thugs. Yes it is true that security may be at the center of the US-Mexico bilateral agenda today but the US-Mexico bilateral agenda is about more than just security. And I underscore this because this vision that we've developed for the border not only seeks to take on the corrosive and violent power of organized crime but is trying to understand how organized crime is mutating and changing as we seek to shut them down, and the impact it has on other issues which occur on the border, for example, trafficking of human beings. As we have squeezed the drug syndicates and prevented them from bringing in particularly cocaine into the US market across land ports of entry from Mexico, the fact that they can't make the money that they used to has forced them to look elsewhere to be able to turn a profit. Ergo, the rise that we have seen in kidnappings, in extortion, but more importantly they have been pushing out, muscling out, the mom and pop coyote operations that for decades characterized the border, they're pushing them out of the business and now you're starting to see transnational organized crime trying to control the flow of people across that border and that completely changes the dynamics not only of immigration flows but also of what we've got to do on both sides of the border to shut down organizations which are trafficking human beings. But it also implies that we have to understand the root causes of most of the violence that we are seeing there, are also social economic driven policies. We have to make sure that as we take on organized crime we are reconstructing the social fabric and the resiliency of society on both sides of the border. You look at Juarez and El Paso, no one I think in this room will challenge the fact that you will be able to control Juarez when you've also on the other side of the border shut down the safehouses, the stores owned by

members of the drug syndicates, the schools to where the children of those families go, the safehouses that they have, we have to develop this holistic vision that will allow us using all the instruments at our disposal, whether they're law enforcement, whether it's by creating economic, social and educational opportunities in Ciudad Juarez, whether it's by ensuring that those who have a visa no longer have a visa to go back and forth across that border. It is this holistic approach that we are developing that for the first time can ensure that Mexico and the US can change the name of the game along the border, and given that the issue of violence on the border has become such an important narrative in newspapers, especially in this country, if it bleeds it leads unfortunately, but given that narrative and how it is plugged into the issue of undocumented immigration into the US, there is, let me state two very powerful things, number one, despite the violence on the border, this border between Mexico and the US has never been more secure than it is today, never in the history of this bilateral relationship, simply because of what we've been doing together since 9/11 to ensure that this border isn't used by potential terrorists to undermine the security of Mexico and the US, and because of what we've been doing together to shut down the border to organized crime but second, that the best way to ensure security on the border will be through comprehensive immigration reform, it will be a critical component in these efforts, and this way of holistically understanding the border is what I think has made a dramatic difference in the way that the Obama and Calderon administrations are working together and how we interact along that 3000 km border that we share.

CUNNINGHAM: I'm certain that comprehensive immigration reform was a key topic in the discussions last week between President Obama and President Calderon, anything you're free to tell us about that?

SARUKHAN: [laughs] Nice try. I'll say this, Obviously this is a central issue on the bilateral agenda, we are convinced that President Obama fully understands the importance of getting immigration reform right, as did his predecessor, George W. Bush, I think was a president because of where he came from being a former governor of Texas fully understood how important this issue is to the future well-being of both our countries, and I may say there is no issue in the long run more important to the future competitiveness and well-being of our two countries than getting immigration reform right. I think that a lot of the discussion obviously had to do with the politics of what this issue looks like today in America. I'm not going into rocket science by underscoring that a lot of this discussion is tainted by a political electoral process in this country November, by the fact that the party in power no longer controls the senate in the same way that it controlled it several months back when it lost that seat that Ted Kennedy used to occupy in the Senate, but I think A) there is a full commitment by the administration in moving forward on this issue when the political landscape of this country allows it B) What the presidents have said and acknowledged in public, this issue as most of the tough issues that America faces needs bipartisan support. This will not be achieved by one party alone. It has to be bipartisan because it is an issue that has profoundly polarized and divided American public opinion. But at the end of the day this issue that Alan was referring to, co-responsibility, how we have built co-responsibility into the narrative of what we do in the fight against drugs, also has to be the cornerstone of how we take on the challenge of immigration because we in Mexico are also co-responsible in ensuring that we get this done right, why? Because we have to create enough well-paying jobs in Mexico so that Mexicans don't have to cross the border into the US in search of a better paying job, B) because at the end of the day Mexico's endgame with or without comprehensive immigration reform is very simple and very powerful: A) we need to ensure that every single Mexican that

crosses the border into the US does so A) legally and B) through a designated port of entry, that has to be the endgame for Mexico.

BERSIN: And part of that has got to be to accept co-responsibility for illegal immigration. And I think we begin to see that as we have done so with regard to these other items as the ambassador underlined, so we have to do so with regard to taking responsibility jointly for illegal immigration. Because in fact there will be economic flows of people necessary as the attraction of the US labor market will continue to draw people, you can do that illegally or you can do that legally and what's important is that we create the conditions together in which we can do it jointly and responsibly by taking co-responsibility for the security of the border, by taking co-responsibility for the flows of workers to ensure that they are legal, and to provide the means and methods by which the needs of the American economy can be satisfied while the Mexican economy is growing to supply those jobs at home.

CUNNINGHAM: I'd like to begin turning now to our audience members and I'd like to invite those who are watching us remotely to if you have questions that you'd like to pose to either of our guests please get those going now, as a housekeeping matter I think we need to end at 1:15 Washington time Commissioner Bersin has to head to the airport and we want to try to keep him on schedule and not missing any connections. We have some questions that came from our Mexico City watch party which they sent to us in advance and one of them I'd like to turn to you, Commissioner Bersin, the question is about the virtual border concept and how the two countries can help to promote it. What are the top 3-5 points that the virtual border concept includes?

BERSIN: Well When we talk about a virtual border we talk about moving and re-imagining to use a hackneyed term the creation of a new paradigm, of looking at the border not as a juridical line, not as a political boundary, although they are and sovereignty remains necessary to respect in this process, but we look more of the border as secure flows of people and goods, cargo and things, so when we say a virtual border we say that in fact if there is in fact sufficient security and if we segment traffic between people and goods that we know, from cargoes and passengers about whom we know less or nothing at all, we can expedite the flow of people and passengers, cargo and things, about which we have reason to trust and in which we have confidence and limit our inspection activities at the actual physical border to those people and passengers, cargo and things about which we either have derogatory information or about which we know less. The notion of pushing our borders back to be doing free clearance of passengers and cargo in the interior of both countries so that in fact once cleared and secured with the kinds of seals on containers or passports and documentation with passengers, people should be able to move back and forth across the North American economic space from Mexico to the US without having to stop at the physical border.

CUNNINGHAM: Do you mean something similar to for example when you return from an airport in Canada? All people flying from international airports in Canada will clear customs and immigration on the Canadian side and then can travel domestically to the US.

BERSIN: It's actually not all Canadian airports or Canadian airlines but many Canadian airports and several of the airlines will permit you to have free clearance, which you would have your American immigrations and customs cleared before you get on the plane from Canada. That's something that we need to work through in order to discuss how to do this, taking into account the fact that we are at the beginning of a

long journey. So we need to pick the right projects in the wake of the presidential declaration, and the declaration about the 21st century border but the concept is exactly that.

CUNNINGHAM: I'm going to turn to our audience for my next question but let me ask you, ambassador Sarukhan, the Merida initiative money, the 1.4 billion that has been committed, I understand 1.3 billion of it has been appropriated by Congress but a far smaller percentage of that has actually gotten spent. Are we doing enough on our side to get that money out into Mexico and what can the two governments do to try to help make that process faster?

SARUKHAN: This has certainly been an issue of concern for Mexico in the past, remember those 1.3 billion, a bit less than 1.3 are actually for Mexico, the rest are for Central America. So all the moneys that need to be appropriated for Mexico have been appropriated the problem is ensuring the in kind equipment, training, software, arrives in time. This has been a challenge we are cognizant of the fact that some of the equipment has been backed up because of the demands that are being put on the United States' footprint in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, where for example most of the airframes, the rotary and fixed wing craft that are part of the Merida initiative need to get into the hands of the Mexican police and law enforcement. That's why I think it was an important piece of news, we were able to obtain as a result of the visit that the Obama administration has been able to accelerate the delivery of all of the airframes that were needed as part of the Merida initiative, instead of being delivered in '13 or '14, they will be delivered some of them at the end of this year some of them next year which is a very important issue, so we will continue to work both with Congress and with the administration to try and make sure that those bottlenecks that exist in the procurement process can be eliminated so the equipment can reach Mexico as quickly as possible so that we can build upon the attrition rates that we have triggered against organized crime and use that equipment, use that training, use that software, right now which is when we need it. The virtual border concept that you were discussing (I think this ties in) is going to require a tremendous investment in infrastructure, you have to create crossing points that are not on the border but are away from the border, you have to create secure methods of communication, you have to create the clear lanes to permit goods or people to move back and forth from within the countries through the border smoothly and efficiently. Where are we going to find the money to do that? This is the problem that we perennially have with regard to the way in which we build ports of entries right now, in which notwithstanding the 700+ million that the Obama administration made available through the American Recovery and Re-Investment Act for the ports of entry, both on the Mexican border and on the Canadian border, we're always 6 billion dollars behind in terms of infrastructure needs. It's a little bit like the lesson we learned with Robert Moses in the power broker, in which "if you build it they will come and you will soon need more." So the genius I think of thinking about the border as secure flows, is to say this should not be an exclusively governmental function, but that in fact we need to permit the market and the public/private partnerships to make determinations about where and how to build this infrastructure that will accommodate a 21st century border. This is a very big change in the traditional way of looking at border infrastructure, but it is absolutely critical if we are ever to build the infrastructure capable of supporting the bilateral economy that has developed as the result of NAFTA.

SARUKHAN: That and may I add a very important concept which has to be built into this holistic border vision of the 21st century which is that it has to be risk driven, because if on any given day you've got 75,000 trucks reaching our common border in both directions imagine if you're going to try and open up

every single one of those trucks, what's going to happen to the legitimate flows of services and people going back and forth across this border and if the endgame and all of this is about triggering economic well-being and social prosperity on both sides of the border, imagine what this does to North America's ability to compete on a global scale if we can't ensure that our border is secure, but at the same time is efficient, it has non-intrusive means of inspection, it is risk driven, then we're simply going to shut down the border because we won't be capable of providing that "just in time" ability to deliver merchandise across our common borders.

CUNNINGHAM: Let me turn to our audience members and we'll ask the friends in the Press to hold back for now. Yes please stand up and identify yourself and your organization.

Diana Negroponte, the Brookings Institution: My question is for Ambassador Sarukhan. Ambassador you referred to the socio-economic programs that are now being developed for Ciudad Juarez to be included within Merida which means that they would be in part US funded, could you be specific and share with us how the Mexican government and the state of Chihuahua, envisages US participation in social programs in Mexico.

SARUKHAN: Well that Diana has still not been part of the formal funding request for Merida, the first 1.3 billion dollars for Mexico of the initiative was obviously targeted at law enforcement institutional capabilities because we needed, as part of this strategy to roll back organized crime, we needed to create enough breathing space so that then you could start applying socioeconomic programs in places like Ciudad Juarez, so a lot of what is happening in Juarez on the socio-economic front today is driven solely by the Mexican Government. The programs that have been implemented as part of the 'Todos Somos Juarez' program, most of you know that Juarez is sort of a Dickensian 'Tale of Two Cities', it is a city which because of the presence of the maquiladoras as a result of NAFTA had a huge very quick economic development but at the same time is lagging in schools, hospitals, clinics, nurseries, theatres, cinemas, the fabric of the city did not correspond to the wealth that was created in Ciudad Juarez as a result of its boom as a maquiladora town after NAFTA was approved. So a lot of what the government is trying to do now through the 'Todos Somos Juarez' program is to ensure that we are attacking some of the socioeconomic causes that either create or foster crime or that don't provide young people in that city with opportunities to grow, to have an education, to go to school, to be able to access a clinic. A lot of this is being done by the Mexican government, as we have discussed with the US administration, the next steps in the cooperation with the US, one of the pillars that we have designed for the next phases of the Merida initiative, whether we call it that or call it something else, the next phases of our bilateral cooperation, that's where I think there will be the possibilities of looking at programs that can be applied with the US as a partner in creating economic growth or jobs or strengthening civil society. We've seen a bit of that as part of the Merida program, in terms of strengthening the role of NGO's and their ability to play a watchdog capability over programs, funding, effectiveness, benchmarking, we're seeing it as some NGO's in Mexico receiving funds to be able to improve their ability to monitor judicial processes, we're seeing it in the role that NGO's are playing in supporting law enforcement by using SMS and mobiles to be able to alert authorities to criminality or of conditions that could lead to criminality so I think a lot of these components are the ones that we are going to start looking at. Both presidents agreed in the joint communique to expand the presence of the Peace Corps program in Mexico, which for many years did not exist in Mexico, which we started creating several years back with the Bush Administration and which I think has proven to

have an important success ratio, as to how it's interacting with both public and private actors in Mexico and Mexico City, so I think some of this will start bleeding into how we design the next phases of how Mexico and the US deepen law enforcement cooperation and the fight against organized crime.

CUNNINGHAM: I have to ask you Commissioner Bersin because even though part of this topic, the social development part, is not under your current portfolio as commissioner of Customs and Border protection, as a former educator, as the superintendent of schools in San Diego, as the Secretary of Education in California, you've thought a lot about social development along both sides of the border, many of the students who were under your care were Mexican both legal and illegal immigrants, I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts on this.

BERSIN: There's no question that the social and economic foundations of a community or a city depend on the appropriate services and the appropriate education of its young. The difficulty that you face and the problem that we confront is that this is a generation-long developmental process. You can have milestones along the way in which you will see progress, but the progress cannot be accelerated beyond a certain point. But the important point is the one I think that the Ambassador made, the one that I think the Mexican government has made through the administration of President Calderon, which is to acknowledge that dealing with the symptoms of those deficits cannot over any conception of the long term provide a solution, that we must start down the longer journey of building up social and economic and educational foundations. It's a very important point and one that was not given enough emphasis before.

CUNNINGHAM: Yes sir, please identify yourself and your organization.

Stephen Donahue, McClarty Associates: for Mr. Bersen. One of the challenges is the number of assault weapons that flow from North to South. It's a political challenge for some pretty clear reasons but, how long will it be before the administration decides to take this on? Is this another issue like the one that the Ambassador talked about with immigration reform that we have to wait after the political season and how many people have to die at the hand of assault weapons and how many police forces like we had last week have to resign en masse because of the violence that these cause?

BERSIN: I think the President has been very straightforward first in assuming co-responsibility as I indicated before, recognizing that the fueling of violence in Mexico and the fueling of organized criminal activities is something for which we bare a fair portion of the responsibility. I think he has also been very candid in recognizing as I think President Calderon and the Ambassador recognizes in the Mexican context that while we are "intermestic" we have separate domestic politics, and the nature of our domestic politics is such that the banning of assault weapons is not a feasible political act not because it may not be desirable to many people but because it's not within the current political calculus. Having said that I think that Secretary Napolitano and Attorney General Holder have been very straightforward and very specific in taking actions that were never taken before such as to assume responsibility for outbound movement of vehicles and persons, which has led to a large increase in the number of weapons and cash that have been seized going North in connection with this cycle of criminal activity. The expanded activities of the ATF, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, through the Department of Justice I think has also been a very important step forward. So yes, I think the prohibition that some would seek is not judged to be a viable option at

this point but it certainly has not been the excuse for not taking dramatic action trying to stem the flow of weapons going into Mexico.

SARUKHAN: Can I obviously jump in and add something here on this issue which I think is important especially in light of the President's speech to the Joint Meeting of Congress and some of the things that have been said as a result of that speech. Let me be very clear, regardless of whether I think you need to buy armor piercing ammo to hunt deer, which is a separate issue from the second amendment, the Mexican government is not seeking to undermine or challenge the Second Amendment. That's a sovereign decision of the American people and a sovereign decision of Congress. But what the Mexican Government is saying is that we don't believe the founding fathers drafted the Second Amendment to allow transnational organized crime to A) illicitly buy weapons in the US, B) illicitly cross them over an international border and C) sell them to individuals where those calibers or types of weapons are prohibited, so what the Mexican government is asking the US to help us with is to enforce what's in the books, help us enforce current laws to slow down the trickle of weapons which are providing the drug syndicates in Mexico with the firepower to intimidate and to kill.

CUNNINGHAM: I've got a question here from Mexico City which I think is fascinatingly phrased, let me ask you ambassador, "what are the major roadblocks to creating a more efficient border." Is that we want to create, an 'efficient border'?

SARUKHAN: I think it's certainly one of the legs of the stool that we have to build, we need an efficient border and othe challenge that we face is that as we seek to enhance security, this sometimes can be at odds with efficiency. We have seen it in certain border crossing points where because of what we are doing South-North and North-South now that the US is also helping to track, monitor, and intercept weapons going into Mexico, we've created very large queues of trucks trying to cross over into the border, so the challenge that we face is how do we ensure that by securing the border we don't shut it down, that we ensure the efficiency of the border in permitting the flow of legitimate goods and services, that is why we are looking at border infrastructures, one of the critical components of this 21st century border vision, but not only building more ports but making sure that we have the fast lanes that allow us to do non-intrusive, pre-cleared inspection of conveyances and containers going back and forth because if we can do that then we can have our cake and eat it too. We can have a much more secure border but we can also have a much more efficient border that ensures that trade in North America continues to flow in the volume that it needs to flow so that we can remain competitive on the world stage.

BERSIN: This is a critical point, in the past, even those of us who've lived and worked on the border have thought of security and trade facilitation or promotion as being mutually exclusive, and that in fact it was a zero sum game and that if you enhanced facilitation you necessarily detracted from the level of security that you had. This is a proposition that we must dismiss and rather understand, because it's not simply a rhetorical device it is an operational reality for border inspection officials, because if you segment the traffic as I indicated before and you move the traffic about which you know something and in which you have confidence, you then can actually spend more time on those persons and cargoes about which you know very little at all. That's the way in which you enhance security, spending the same amount of time on every person and every cargo is self-defeating and will keep us from being able to enhance our level of

security. So the Ambassador is exactly right, and it's one of the few places in life in which you can have your cake and eat it too, so we should feast. ::Laughs::

CUNNINGHAM: I asked Ambassador Sarukhan about one of the topics that surely came up last week between President Obama and President Calderon, which was immigration reform, another topic that also surely came up perhaps cuts the other way, which is the trucking issue and how we resolve that, is there anything you're free to tell us today about the conversation between the presidents?

BERSIN: It remains an issue of great concern to both governments and both governments, particularly speaking for the US government, is committed to finding a solution that is practical and successfully resolves the dispute. It is an ongoing work of this administration.

CUNNINGHAM: Other questions? Yes ma'am. Wait for a microphone.

Lina Graber, National Immigration Forum: My question is, As you talk about a revised border and improved security and social and economic development as part of that, how do you see dealing with the need for the 5 million Americans and 6 million Mexicans approximately that live on the border, allowing fluidity and community relations between the civil society that's not just about business, that's about the cross border volleyball games and the festivals and the need for those people to go outside their city without having to go through a checkpoint, and to live in a place where they feel they have equal rights similar to those who live in the rest of the interior of America?

BERSIN: I think this is again in the context of the border and the community and being someone who lives in San Diego and who for many years considered Tijuana the other side of town, I understand what you're getting at and the nature of the risk segmentation if you will is slightly different, what we need to do in the context of border communities that are divided by a juridical line but have much in common in terms of families, foods, recreation, and culture, is to develop this idea that we do have to have trusted programs that permit the rapid passage across. So for example in San Diego and Tijuana today 25 percent of the people who cross the border at San Isidro are in the Century program, they've actually gone through the program that permits them a relatively rapid passage, ida y vuelta, across the border. The bargain that has to be struck is that neither the Mexicans nor the Americans like to share information with their governments. Each in separate traditions have a hesitance to turn over information, the bargain has got to be that families living on the border in this context, although it can be applied more generally, have to be prepared to provide a lot more information about themselves, some of their habits, some of their crossings, to the government in exchange for which the government has two reciprocal obligations, one is it will use the information only for the purpose intended, it will maintain the confidentiality and the privacy of that information, and the second is to provide for the expedited flow back and forth across a single border.

CUNNINGHAM: We have time for one more question and Fernando you've been patient, let's give it to Univision.

Fernando Pizarro, Univision: Thank you, I will ask this question in English but if the ambassador could be so kind as to respond to the question in both languages for the benefit of the audience. Basically a follow-

up on what you said that President Calderon made a very specific request respectfully for the US congress to re-instate the ban on assault weapons. What is the Mexican government's reaction to the fact that the Obama administration on Friday stated the next day that they would not look for such a ban in Congress?

SARUKHAN: This comes as no surprise. President Obama has on previous occasions clearly stated the fact that the administration is not seeking to reinstate the ban, but that does not mean that the Mexican Government stops underscoring how important this ban would be, simply because there is a direct connection between the expiration of the Assault Ban in 2004, and the exponential increase in the seizure of semi-automatic and fully automatic assault weapons in Mexico. We have seen the connection and the cause and effect connection between the expiration of the ban and the increase in assault weapons in Mexico so we will continue to underscore how important this would be for our ability to shut down that flow and access in Mexico.

(End in Spanish)