



Written by on March 18, 2009

A Call to Secure Mexican Border's Southward Traffic

"Mexico and America are in this together, and there is enough blame to go around," said Senator Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), the subcommittee chairman and the Senate's assistant majority leader. "The insatiable demand for illegal drugs in the United States keeps the Mexican drug cartels in business." Durbin also stated that the Justice Department has found that three Mexican drug cartels — Federation, Gulf Coast, and Juarez — are active in Chicago, East St. Louis, and Joliet, Illinois. And he stated that lax U.S. gun laws and poor enforcement had created an "iron river of guns" that had armed "Mexican drug cartels to the teeth."



Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D.-Calif.) seemed to relish the opportunity to use the hearings as a forum to push for more domestic gun control: "It is unacceptable to have 90 percent of the guns that are picked up in Mexico and used to shoot judges, police officers, mayors, kidnap innocent people and do terrible things come from the United States," said Feinstein. "I am appalled that you can buy a 50-caliber sniper weapon anywhere and it's not restricted to a federal firearms dealer — you can just buy it."

An "assault weapons" ban originally sponsored by Feinstein expired in 2004 and there has been opposition in Congress to renewing it.

Feinstein advocated a continuation of funding for the security aid package known as the Merida Initiative signed by Mexican President Felipe Calderon and former President George W. Bush. During the past month, Congress appropriated \$300 million for this program. Congress also approved \$10 million for the ATF's Operation Gunrunner anti-smuggling program in the economic stimulus bill.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* quoted Rep. Zoe Lofgren, (D-Calif.), chairwoman of the House Judiciary Committee's panel on immigration and border security, who criticized the Bush administration's policy of focusing on northbound immigrants while neglecting southbound arms and drug money that some people contend are arming and financing Mexican drug cartels. "It was a priority policy decision that tens of thousands of agents would go arrest dishwashers and busboys, meanwhile letting the machine guns get smuggled into Mexico, which has contributed to a very serious problem in Mexico that should concern all Americans," said Lofgren.

Lofgren continued: "Nobody is for people not adhering to the rules, but if I had to say what's more threatening to me, some guy busing my table or some guy shipping machine guns down to the drug cartels, I'd say it's the latter."

The Obama administration has signed in on this issue. Like Senator Feinstein, Attorney General Eric Holder has turned the drug war into an appeal for more gun control. "As President Obama indicated during the campaign," Holder recently said, "there are just a few gun-related changes that we would like to make, and among them would be to reinstitute the ban on the sale of assault weapons. I think



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that will have a positive impact in Mexico, at a minimum."

Holder's statement drew a rapid response from CNN's conservative commentator, Lou Dobbs, who quite accurately observed: "Attorney General Eric Holder is willing to sacrifice our gun ownership rights under the Constitution for the benefit of a foreign government, in this case Mexico."

There are several factors to keep in mind in evaluating these pleas/arguments. Starting with our favorite reference point — the Constitution — our founding structural document authorizes the federal government to protect each state against invasion. A natural part of that protection would surely include securing our borders and repelling any unlawful entry into the United States of persons unauthorized to come here. Historically, this role has included protection from invasion by foreign armies (as in the War of 1812), as well as controlling our points of entry against illegal immigration.

That our federal government has failed utterly in fulfilling the latter responsibility would be to belabor the obvious. Yet, there are those in Congress including Rep. Lofgren, who believe that our government has devoted too many resources to "arresting dishwashers and busboys," instead using those resources to "letting the machine guns get smuggled into Mexico."

Impassioned rhetoric aside (yes, restaurant dishes do seem a bit less threatening than machine guns), the failure of our government's efforts to prevent the 9/11 terrorist attacks was due precisely to the fact that our immigration officials did not know the nature of the terrorists or their purpose. Might not the next Mohammad Atta work as a dishwasher or busboy while planning his next hijacking? If the 9/11 hijackers could accomplish their mission while here *legally*, how much easier might potential terrorists hide among the masses of illegal aliens hiding in our midst?

In an interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle* related to the Washington hearing. Rep. Loretta Sanchez, (D.-Calif.), who is hardly a hard-liner when it comes to cracking down on illegal immigration, nevertheless made some pertinent points. One observation she made was, "The same routes and the same methods used to traffic drugs can be used to traffic undocumented workers."

Left unsaid, however, was that an unsecured border is an unsecured border, regardless of which direction an individual seeking to breach it is traveling. Therefore, a border across which gun smugglers can bring arms into Mexico is probably vulnerable enough for illegal aliens and drug smugglers to enter the United States.

Sanchez also commented on the ease with which one can cross the border going south, "What happens is that they do what we call a random check: Your car comes across, you roll down your window, you push a little button. If it gets a red light, you get taken over into secondary (for a further screening). If it gets a green light, you keep going."

This writer can verify the lack of border control on the Mexican side. When crossing the border over a pedestrian bridge from San Ysidro, California, to Tijuana, Mexico, in 1991, my family and I descended a flight of steps on the Mexican side, passed through a single-direction, gated turnstyle, and we were in Mexico, without ever having seen a Mexican official of any kind.

Perhaps the most important point that needs to be made about those (like Senator Feinstein) who want to make solving Mexico's illegal arms problem a U.S. problem, is that patrolling the other side of the border is Mexico's responsibility, not ours. Our Constitution tells our federal government to protect California and Arizona and New Mexico and Texas against invasion — not Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, and the rest of Mexico.



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If terrorists were to bring Russian-made AK-47s into America, the solution would lie in making our borders stronger, not demanding that Russia ban "assault" weapons. And a member of the Federal Assembly of Russia who suggested that Russia should ban weapons so they would not fall into the hands of U.S. drug dealers would probably be given an all-expenses-paid vacation in Siberia!

The fact of the matter is, Mexico has neglected its border with the United States for years because it does not care how many Mexicans emigrate illegally into the United States. The money that illegal workers send back to Mexico is a boon to our neighbor's economy. But now that the flow of contraband has reversed, and weapons are finding their way to Mexico's drug cartels, even members of our own Congress who have ignored our leaky borders for years suddenly want them plugged!

One thing we can all agree upon is that secure borders are a necessity for the protection of every sovereign nation. Let us secure our side of the border, and let Mexico secure its side. And let us safeguard our constitutionally guaranteed right to keep and bear arms so that Americans can defend themselves from drug cartels and other threats.

Then, maybe, our nations can continue to live in peace.



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