

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 18, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St NW  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable James N. Mattis  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mattis,

We write to urge you to conduct a full and public assessment of U.S. security assistance to Mexico. We are concerned that U.S. funds may be furthering cycles of violence and enabling human rights violations by the Mexican military.

The Mexican government has deployed tens of thousands of Mexican soldiers in its counter-drug efforts. These armed forces are trained for warfare rather than for police duties, as confirmed by Mexican Defense Secretary General Salvador Cienfuegos.<sup>1</sup> Studies have shown that the deployment of Mexican military forces in law enforcement has led to increases in homicides. In 2017, Mexico experienced the highest homicide rate in its recorded history.<sup>2</sup>

The use of Mexican military forces in the war on drugs has also resulted in a dramatic increase in human rights violations, including torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions. Fewer than four percent of Mexican investigations of abuses allegedly committed by soldiers between 2012 and 2016 have resulted in convictions in civilian courts.<sup>3</sup>

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto institutionalized this militarized approach by signing the Internal Security Law in December 2017. This law enables the military to intervene in domestic criminal investigations and limits access to information regarding events that occur during military operations, including military abuses. National and international experts and institutions, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and Mexico's National Human Rights Commission actively oppose the Internal Security Law.

Between 2008 and 2017, the State Department appropriated more than \$465.9 million to Mexico's armed forces through foreign military financing.<sup>4</sup> In the last decade, the Department of Defense provided Mexico with more than \$550 million in counter-drug assistance.<sup>5</sup> We are concerned that this funding supports and encourages militarizing public safety, leading to higher levels of violence and impunity.

Protection of human rights and civilian security should be fundamental goals in the United States bilateral agenda with Mexico. We urge you to suspend any U.S. financing of armed forces involvement in Mexico's public security operations and focus on supporting efforts to advance the rule of law, investigate and prosecute human rights violations, and combat corruption, particularly along the trafficking route.

We urge you to conduct a full and public evaluation of the Merida Initiative, U.S. security aid and arms sales to Mexico to inform future funding decisions and ensure that U.S. security aid and trade do not support further human rights violations and violence. The evaluation should have clear metrics, include input from civil society, and address the implications for public safety, human rights and the rule of law.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.

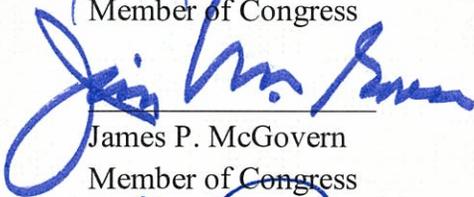
Sincerely,



Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



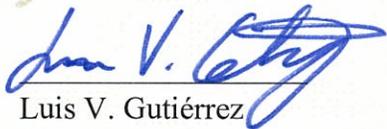
Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



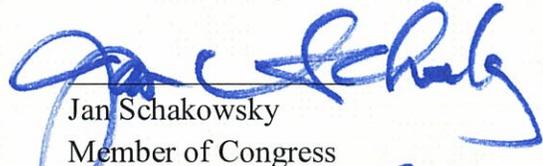
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



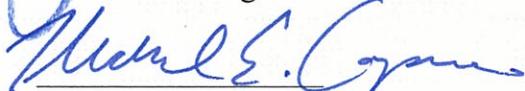
Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress



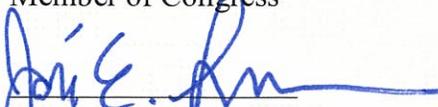
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



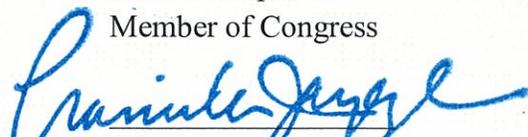
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Michael Capuano  
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano  
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

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- [1] Sedena: no estudiamos para perseguir delincuentes,” *Excelsior*, December 8, 2016, <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2016/12/08/1133011>.
- [2] Laura Atesta and Aldo F. Ponce, *Cómo las intervenciones de las fuerzas públicas de seguridad alteran la violencia. Evidencia del caso mexicano*, CIDE, 2016.
- [3] “*Overlooking Justice*, Washington Office on Latin America, November 2017, p. 6.
- [4] Congressional Research Service, *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond*, June 29, 2017, p. 30.
- [5] Ibid. and Security Assistance Monitor, [securityassistance.org](http://securityassistance.org).