

**STATEMENT BY
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**BEFORE THE HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
COMMITTEE
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Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings, and distinguished Committee members – Good Morning. Thank you for your invitation to appear today to discuss the security situation near U.S. Consulates at the border in Mexico. I share your concerns regarding the security of U.S. personnel in Mexico, and I look forward to discussing these issues with you today.

Our national interests often require us to serve in dangerous places around the world. However, it is clear that the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Mexico are exceptionally important platforms for diplomatic and consular engagement to advance our national interests. I was in Mexico a few weeks ago and can bear witness to the hard work and dedication of U.S. personnel serving along both sides of the border. I also saw the challenging circumstances in which many of our people operate.

Environments such as that in Mexico involve constantly shifting threats that require comprehensive planning, agile decision making, and deft diplomacy. Most of all, they require us to be present, fully engaged, and 100 percent committed to the security of our people and facilities. In Mexico, we engage with and seek support where necessary from a host government that recognizes Mexican and American vital interests are linked and that bilateral cooperation is required to counter the threats posed by transnational criminals. Every incident, threat, and attack in Mexico only underscores the continued importance of strong bilateral relations and comprehensive security cooperation. Our Embassy and Consulates in Mexico play a critical role in providing services to American citizens, issuing visas, and implementing key foreign policy objectives.

I work closely with my colleagues in the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) as the Department builds diplomatic missions in Mexico that

increase safety and security. These new facilities are vital diplomatic platforms, all of which meet rigorous Overseas Security Policy Board (OSPB) standards. During my recent visit to some of the border consulates, I walked with the principal officers and the regional security officers to view the additional security measures taken and the augmented host country police presence protecting our facilities. These protective features allow us to operate necessary programs that strengthen Mexican police capacity, reinforce critical law enforcement cooperation, and improve security along our southern border. These consulates also aid the expansive bilateral trade that supports both countries, totaling over \$500 billion annually.

But it is simply not enough to improve physical security. We are also training the Foreign Service community on how to better respond in these environments. All officers under Chief of Mission authority at our border posts and Monterrey are required to take the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat training course, also known as FACT, which teaches hard security skills. As a result, personnel at our missions are better prepared for operating in challenging environments, and we are working towards making FACT training universal for all Foreign Service personnel at our posts overseas regardless of threat level.

I recognize the hardships that our people and their families endure in such environments. It is a testament to their courage, their commitment, and the important work they are accomplishing abroad. Having served over 30 years in the Foreign Service, I understand wholeheartedly the sacrifices our people make; it is simply woven into the fabric of what uniquely defines the Foreign Service community. Knowing the challenges ahead, they willingly and courageously step up to fill important positions in Mexico and throughout the world.

We look forward to working with Congress to ensure that our personnel serving abroad continue to have a safe platform for advancing our national interests. I want to thank Congress for the resources and support that you have provided over the years, and we look forward to your continued support in years ahead. Thank you and I will be glad to answer any questions you have.