



UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON
**HOMELAND SECURITY
& GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Senator Tom Carper, *Chairman*

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HEARING: Border Security: Measuring the Progress and Addressing the Challenges

WASHINGTON – *Today, Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Carper (D-Del.) convened the hearing, “Border Security: Measuring the Progress and Addressing the Challenges.” Chairman Carper’s opening statement, as prepared for delivery, follows:*

“To our witnesses and guests, welcome to the first of what will be several hearings this committee will hold on border security. As Congress wrestles anew with immigration reform this year, the security of our borders will be closely examined. This conversation is likely to be quite different than the one we had seven years ago when we last debated immigration reform. That is largely due to the substantial investments we have made to secure our borders over the past decade, particularly our southern border with Mexico.

“Despite all of the money, people, and attention we have poured into these efforts, we are still facing what I believe is a lag between perception and reality—much like what has happened with the American auto industry. By the beginning of the century, the quality of the vehicles that Detroit was making had begun to markedly improve, greatly narrowing—and then eliminating—the quality gap between our vehicles and those produced in Japan and Europe. However, it was only in the last few years that the public recognized this fact, allowing the perception of quality in American vehicles to catch up with the reality. Likewise, despite the tremendous improvements that have been made in border security over the past decade, the public’s perception of these improvements lags behind reality.

“According to Doris Meissner, one of our witnesses today, we will spend \$18 billion this year enforcing our immigration and customs laws. That’s more than we will spend on all other federal law enforcement—the FBI, DEA, ATF, the U.S. Marshalls, and the Secret Service—combined. Think about that. And since 2000, the Border Patrol alone has more than doubled in size, and its funding has almost quadrupled. This enormous investment reflects just how important effective border security is to our nation.

“Last month, I visited portions of the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona with one of our colleagues, Senator John McCain. We were joined there by Representative Mike McCaul of Texas, who chairs the House Committee on Homeland Security. Later that same week, I toured other parts of that border with Secretary Janet Napolitano. Based on what I saw there, I believe that our

efforts, and especially those of the dedicated men and women who work along the border, are paying off for the American taxpayer—and they need to.

“As it turns out, illegal immigration has dramatically decreased. Some experts estimate that more undocumented immigrants now leave the United States each year than enter unlawfully. Border Patrol apprehensions of undocumented immigrants – our best current measure – are at their lowest level in decades. Now some part of these decreases may be due to the great recession we endured, which reduced the number of jobs available for immigrants. But I believe that we can attribute a lot of this success to the security gains that we have made—which deter people from crossing the border whether there are jobs here for them or not.

“Having said all that, I returned from the border wondering if apprehensions is the metric we should be using to measure our progress in border security and to guide our future investments there. I’m not convinced that it is. I am convinced, however, of the wisdom of the old adage: ‘you can’t manage what you can’t measure.’ The truth is that we need to refine and strengthen the metrics we use to determine how secure our borders and ports of entry are to ensure that our security efforts are both effective and as cost-efficient as possible. This is especially necessary when budgets are tight, as they are today. We simply cannot afford to keep ramping up resources for the border at the rate we have in the past. We must be strategic with our investments—and we can be.

“When I was in Arizona, I heard a number of frontline agents say that we need to focus our efforts on giving them technologies and tools that can serve as force multipliers. This includes a wide range of cameras, sensors, and radars that can be mounted on trucks or put on fixed towers to help the Border Patrol deploy its agents more efficiently. More aerial surveillance assets, including blimps and aircraft such as the C-206 are also needed to help the Border Patrol identify people crossing the border illegally and track them until agents can catch them.

“We also need to ensure that the investments we have already made are fully utilized, and not wasted. I was surprised, and frankly disappointed, to learn that the Border Patrol has four drones deployed in Arizona but only has the resources to fly two of them—and even then they cannot fly them every day of the week.

“Another critical issue is the growing sophistication of drug smuggling networks along the border and the problems they create for the Border Patrol. Agents in Arizona told me that the cartels actually put spotters with encrypted radios on top of mountains to help smugglers on the ground avoid law enforcement. We need to do a better job of using our resources, including drones and other aircraft, to find these spotters and send agents to arrest them.

“Stopping these criminal networks must be a high priority. Finding the criminals that guide drugs and immigrants across the border can be like finding a needle in the haystack. If we can reform our broken immigration system to open up more effective legal channels for those looking to come to our country for economic or family reasons, I believe we can make that haystack smaller. This will allow law enforcement to focus on the true bad guys.

“Finally, I’d also note that a lot of the smuggling seen on the southern border is being pushed to the ports of entry. These border crossings have received far less attention, and resources than the Border Patrol over the past decade, but they are just as important to our security and economy. Additionally, local mayors that I met with all told me that the lack of investments at border crossings is causing long wait times, which hurts their communities—and the country as a whole. We must make sure our ports of entry are secure, but we must also ensure that they are effective conduits for the legal travel and trade that are essential to our national wellbeing.

“Ultimately, I hope that we can help the Department of Homeland Security be so effective at securing the border that we can begin shifting our resources towards staffing and modernizing our ports of entry. In closing, I hope today’s hearing facilitates a frank conversation about how border security has improved since the last time immigration reform was debated, and helps us identify what more needs to be done. I support the efforts underway to reform our immigration laws.

“Looking ahead, I believe that this Committee can contribute significantly to the conversations that are taking place now by informing them and ultimately enabling the Congress and our President to hammer out a thoughtful and effective immigration policy for America in the 21st century.”

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