

**Violent Crime and Firearms Trafficking Summit**  
**Albuquerque, NM**  
**June 30, 2009**  
**Prepared Remarks of Lanny A. Breuer**  
**Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division**

Good morning. It is an honor to be among so many dedicated career law enforcement professionals. Thank you for your warm welcome.

You just heard from my partner at ICE John Morton; we're all in great hands over there. John and I worked briefly together in the Criminal Division, where John was a Deputy Assistant Attorney General before becoming Assistant Secretary at ICE. He's a spectacular public servant. It's my privilege to share a podium with John and all my distinguished colleagues from DHS and DOJ, including the Deputy Attorney General from whom you will soon hear.

As many of you know, a little over two months ago, the Attorney General stood on Mexican soil with his law enforcement counterparts from the Mexican government. At that time, the Attorney General announced a firm commitment by the U.S. government to work with Mexico to attack the plague of gun trafficking and related violence that has infected the U.S./Mexican border and regions deep in Mexico itself.

Since the Attorney General's visit to Cuernavaca, the Justice Department, under the leadership of the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General, has taken a number of positive steps to address the southwest border issues, including increasing the resources that are focused on the southwest border and, specifically, firearms trafficking. And, in the last fiscal year, Congress funded 30 attorneys who were dedicated to narcotics prosecution and 50 attorneys broadly dedicated to southwest border prosecutions of all types. The Criminal Division's Gang Unit also added attorneys to prosecute gang and gun trafficking cases in the southwestern United States.

In addition, the Criminal Division, in coordination with agencies within the Justice Department and with our other federal partners, has spent the last two months developing proposals that would increase intelligence sharing and investigative coordination between agencies, components, and with our Mexican counterparts. We've also been working on ways to enhance and expand illegal firearms trafficking prosecution and increase the quantity and quality of firearms trafficking training initiatives for federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement, as well as for our Mexican law enforcement counterparts. I am in the final stages of making my recommendations to the Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General. All of these efforts are aimed at stemming the illegal flow of firearms to Mexico.

These are all very positive steps, but we must continue to expand our partnership with President Calderon, work collaboratively with domestic law enforcement at all levels, and treat firearms trafficking by Mexican cartels as the organized criminal law enforcement threat that it is.

Of course, coordinated investigations and arrests alone will not solve the problem. I firmly believe that the United States government can most effectively disrupt and dismantle these criminal organizations and reduce the violence that is caused by quick and easy access to firearms, through a tough, firm, and predictable prosecution strategy that also employs innovative and effective prevention programs.

Moreover, we need skilled prosecutors to carry these investigations to successful conclusion. I am well aware that our southwest border prosecutors and many others across the country are largely overworked, which imperils our ability to focus on all the important matters that require prosecutorial attention. We in Washington are working to provide you with all the tools and resources you need to attack this threat, and I hope that, by working together, we can do even more to advance our important prosecutorial interests.

The Department of Justice is dedicated to attacking border gun trafficking and violence with the same vigor and determination that is evident in President Calderon's administration. This determination cannot, however, be directed solely from Washington to the front lines of the conflict in Albuquerque, Nogales, or McCallen. While it is important that Main Justice explore possible solutions to the constantly evolving threats surrounding illegal firearms trafficking, it is equally important that the Department *listen* to the experts—you all who have come here today, who see day in and day out the very real challenges that we face. For example, it was law enforcement personnel from the southwest border who identified border tunnels as an appropriate subject of legislation. Border tunnels are not just law enforcement headaches relating to drug, gun, or human trafficking; they pose a serious threat to the United States because they are a surreptitious means to smuggle almost anything—including terrorists—into our country.

I've seen firsthand the insight and perspective that being on the ground provides. Two weeks ago, with my DHS colleagues Alan Bersin, the Assistant Secretary for International Affairs, and David Aguilar, the Chief of the Border Patrol, I visited the port of entry in El Paso, Texas, and border and tribal regions in southern Arizona. I saw how intertwined the border challenges are; and I also came to better understand how the problems in southern Arizona differ from those faced by our partners here in New Mexico or in west Texas. I listened to the different problems on the ground across the region. Let me assure you that we will continue to listen and work together to develop smart, effective solutions that work well for the AUSA in McCallen and the prosecutor in Las Cruces alike.

The smuggler is versatile and creative; well-funded and determined—but so are we. Together we can have a meaningful impact on the violence that flows from illegal firearms trafficking.

I look forward to working together as we move forward. Thank you for your hard work, dedication, and leadership in this effort.