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## Senator John Cornyn

### *Senate Floor Speech on U.S. Delegation Visit to Mexico*

delivered 21 March 2023, U.S. Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.



**AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED:** Text version below transcribed directly from audio

Mr. President,

My state, the great state of Texas, shares 1200 miles of common border with America's southern neighbor. Along the border, you will see big cities, small towns, rural farms, and ranches. You'll find successful businesses that depend on free flowing, legitimate trade and travel with our southern neighbor. And you'll meet countless people who are proud of the strong ties our country has with Mexico and many who have relatives on both sides of the border. These influences can be seen throughout our state from the names of cities like San Antonio to the food we eat, the music we enjoy, and the diversity of people in our communities.



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A strong U.S.-Mexico relationship has been a boon to Texas, but it's also vital to the rest of the country. Mexico is our second largest trading partner for both imports and exports. It's a major market for American energy, machinery, chemicals, and agricultural products. And we import everything from transportation equipment to avocados. It's not uncommon for certain products, such as automobiles, to cross the border multiple times throughout the production process before eventually making their way to consumers in the United States.

A strong relationship with Mexico is important to our economy. But Mexico isn't just a trading partner. It's not just about the economics between our countries. Mexico is also a necessary and vital security partner. Because our countries share in total a 12 -- a 2000 mile border and work together to protect the safety and security of our communities on both sides of the border, it's critical that we work in a complementary fashion. The United States has supported Mexico's efforts to counter cartel violence and root out corruption in its judicial system. Mexico in turn has worked with the United States to ensure orderly migration and stop illicit drugs from coming into our country.

Obviously, what we are doing is not nearly enough on either side of the border. But over the years our security cooperation has promoted safety and security in both countries. And as the Mexican people are seeing every day, the Mexican Government is unfortunately failing to meet its side of the responsibilities. We can see that because people coming through Mexico, coming to the United States, have come in unprecedented numbers, which is a devastating humanitarian and public safety crisis. And then there are things like fentanyl and other dangerous drugs that have been manufactured in clandestine labs in Mexico and smuggled across our border every day. And, of course, these same criminal organizations are terrorizing law-abiding citizens in Mexico through their violence and their territorial disputes.

And earlier this month, an out-of-control cartel violence incident harmed American citizens who were visiting Mexico. Four Americans were caught in a deadly shootout and kidnapped; and two of those individuals were killed. In the face of these growing problems, the Mexican Government has not shown, in my view, enough willingness to work together to address these problems. And make no mistake -- this is not something that we can do, or they can do, alone. We have to do it together.



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The Government of Mexico hasn't expressed adequate concern, in my opinion, over the cartel violence, the drug trafficking, or the migration crisis.

Unfortunately, in public Mexican President López Obrador has underplayed the security problems in his own country. I believe he knows differently based on the conversations we had when the TV cameras were not present. He's falsely claimed that "Mexico is safer than the United States." We know that's not true. And he said that Mexico is not responsible for the fentanyl coming into our country. We know that's also not true. It's a well known fact that the vast majority of illicit fentanyl comes to the United States from Mexico, manufactured by precursor chemicals coming from China.

Well, here's the disparity between what you see in public to the TV cameras and what actually happens on the ground. Just weeks before claiming Mexico doesn't have a fentanyl problem, the Mexican Government raided what its army described as the, quote, "highest capacity synthetic drug production lab on record,"<sup>1</sup> close quote. That's what the Mexican army Sedena, said. It seized nearly 630,000 fentanyl pills, along with hundreds of pounds of powdered fentanyl and methamphetamines. At that time, President López Obrador said the lab seized by elements of the Mexican army, that lab had a value of roughly 80 million U.S. dollars. But just a few weeks later, the same Government said it had no record of fentanyl production in Mexico.

It doesn't take a detective or an investigative journalist to see that the Mexican Government is not taking these problems seriously enough. And it's to the detriment of their own citizens. Throughout Mexico, law abiding citizens are being terrorized by these cartels. Migrants, we know, are being extorted and abused by the very people who are smuggling them up through Mexico into the United States. And we know that communities across this country are experiencing waves of drug overdose, or what some call fentanyl poisoning, from the drugs that are smuggled from Mexico into the United States. And frankly, the López Obrador Administration is not doing nearly enough to work together with us in this problem that we share in common, sadly to say.



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Given the severity of these challenges, there's a clear need for action. But we've got to proceed carefully -- because, while Mexico ultimately has many problems, it is our southern neighbor and our economies are connect -- interconnected through the -- the US-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement -- the successor to NAFTA. And we know that its success, Mexico's success, will ultimately benefit the United States in terms of a better economy, more prosperity, more trade, more jobs. Our countries are inextricably linked together in terms of security and prosperity, and we need to find a productive path forward. Countering cartel violence will require more cooperation with the Mexican Government. Stopping the fentanyl epidemic will require Mexico's cooperation. Addressing the border crisis will require Mexico's cooperation.

Now, although it may make us feel good at times, we can't just simply lash out in anger or say, "We're going to do this," knowing that maybe it might get you a hit on TV but it doesn't actually solve any problems. We need to make strategic decisions together with Mexico that will lead to real change.

As the presiding officer knows, we had a bipartisan congressional delegation to Mexico this weekend to learn more about the ongoing security challenges so we can figure out with our Mexican counterparts what kind of changes need to be made and what exactly those changes would look like.

We had 12 members of Congress, House and Senate, join the trip. From the Senate, we had Senators [sic] Moran, Senator Lee, Senator Capito, Senator Coons, Senator Murphy, Senator Sinema, Senator Welch, and myself. From the House, we had a bipartisan delegation -- Congressman Cuellar, Congressman Tony Gonzales, Congresswoman Escobar, and Congresswoman Salazar.

Well, suffice it to say between the 12 of us, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate, we have varying political views and many differences of opinion on a host of topics. But on this weekend trip to Mexico, we all agree [sic] the ongoing crisis in Mexico is unsustainable,



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and something needs to change. We wanted to visit Mexico so we could learn for ourselves what the facts are, not as they're spun by either elected officials or by the media. Before you solve a problem, you gotta understand the full scale of what you're up against -- and that was the goal of this trip.

We got briefings from American intelligence officials, leaders from the Drug Enforcement Administration, and others about their work in Mexico. The Mexican -- The U.S. Embassy in Mexico is the largest embassy in the world, and employs 3,400 people in nine consulates and the main embassy in Mexico City. We spent some time with our outstanding Ambassador, Ken Salazar, a former colleague of ours here in the Senate, who went on to be Secretary of Interior and now serves as our representative in Mexico. Ambassador Salazar was delighted that we could come visit because he knows firsthand the challenges that Mexico faces, and the challenges that the US.-Mexico relationship create and the importance of finding solutions to those differences and those challenges.

I want to thank President López Obrador, even though I've said some critical comments here about how he has misrepresented the security situation in Mexico and the United States. I want to thank him publicly for meeting with us for a total of four hours. We not only met with President López Obrador, we met with the entire cabinet. That would be as if a delegation, let's say from Mexico, of 12 Senators and House of Deputies members came up and sat down with President Joe Biden in his cabinet for four hours. It was [an] unprecedented exchange of information and points of view, and I think demonstrated the Mexican Government's desire to have a closer working relationship with the United States Congress and the United States of America.

At the top of the list of the things we talked about were the ongoing security challenges which have had a deadly impact on both countries. Members of our delegation didn't pull any punches. We did it respectfully, but we forcefully presented our frustration with the ongoing cartel violence, the drug trafficking, and unchecked migration. That's what friends do, Mr. President: We have frank exchanges, even when we disagree. But we are friends with Mexico



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and we have to work this out together. And we have to start with a common understanding of what the facts and the challenges are.

We told President López Obrador that his Administration must do more to address these challenges, and we emphasized that the failure to do so will have a negative impact on our historically strong and important partnership. There are many ways to improve the security cooperation between our countries and our delegation stressed our willingness to work with President López Obrador's Administration and the Government of Mexico to support their efforts to defeat the cartels. Overall, our conversations with the Mexican President were extremely candid and tough, but they were respectful -- respectful not only [because of] the high office of President López Obrador holds but also [because] of the fact that we were dealing with the head of a sovereign country.

We've seen the positive impact in my state of a strong relationship with Mexico but it also redounds to the benefit of the nation. And the better -- as I said earlier -- the better Mexico does, by defeating the cartels, by interdicting the drugs and the precursors that come from other parts of the world, the better the quality of life, the safety and security will be for the people who live in Mexico -- the Mexicans [sic] people. And it will also be to our benefit here in the United States, because, ultimately, what I believe both countries want are a safe and prosperous country.

And we can do this together.

Our close ties are extremely beneficial to both countries, and I hope President López Obrador took our good faith and candid comments about the failures to deal with security and migration to heart. We certainly expressed our views and, as I said, in a candid and a civil and respectful way, but I think we delivered the message clearly, and I hope he will take that to heart.