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THE HONORABLE FERNANDO GOMEZ-MONT
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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. SINGER: Good afternoon. I'm Audrey Singer. I'm a senior fellow here at Brookings in the Metropolitan Policy Program, and I want to thank you all for being here today and thank you for staying. We apologize for the delay, but we're all here and ready to go now. And we're honored to have two distinguished guests today: U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and her Mexican counterpart, Secretary of the Interior Fernando Gómez-Mont.

I want to welcome our guests and the discussion that we'll have this afternoon.

As we meet today, the debate over immigration has been reignited in our country. That debate raises important questions about how we control our borders and beyond, to how we define ourselves as a nation. In events around the country this week, Secretary Napolitano's been very busy dealing with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the attempted bombing in Times Square, as well as the response to the new immigration law in her former home state of Arizona.

To say that we face increasingly complex challenges on the Southwest border is certainly an understatement. Shortly after assuming office, Secretary Napolitano asked for a review of DHS's Southwest border enforcement efforts. She was already well acquainted with many of the issues having previously served as the U.S. Attorney for Arizona, as the

Arizona attorney general, and most recently as governor for that state.

From that review she led the Administration's new strategy, the Southwest Border Initiative. A little more than a year old, this strategy emphasizes three aspects of border security: personnel, technology, and infrastructure. The goals of this strategy are to counteract illegal smuggling of goods, people, drugs, weapons, and currency, while simultaneously supporting these efforts with more effective technology and infrastructure.

The challenges have taken center stage, but we must also recognize that there are many opportunities on the Southwest border, especially if we recognize them as they operate in a 21st century, interconnected, globalized world. Our close relationship with Mexico, with more than \$1 billion in cross-border commerce taking place every day and with a long history of migration, means that trade, security, and immigration are of great importance to both countries.

Secretary Napolitano and Secretary Gómez-Mont have forged an unprecedented collaboration around law enforcement and have focused their efforts on dismantling drug cartels and honing in on our mutual and transnational security threats.

Fernando Gómez-Mont was appointed as Secretary of the Interior in November 2008. Prior to that he was a lawyer and served as an advisor to President Ernesto Zedillo.

Secretary Napolitano and Secretary Gómez-Mont are here

today to speak about the continued, coordinated efforts and the strengthening partnership that the United States and Mexico share. They will both offer brief remarks which will be followed by a moderated discussion with questions from the audience and questions that were submitted in advance online from several sites around the U.S. and Mexico.

Now I'll turn the mike over to my colleague, my Brookings colleague, and *Washington Post* columnist, E.J. Dionne, who writes on a range of issue affecting U.S. politics in American life. He'll moderate the session, which is also being webcast.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much, Audrey. I'm -- all of you know that Secretary Napolitano was not late because she was tarrying at lunch. She had a meeting at the White House on some important matters. I don't know why she would want the job she has. A friend this morning described it as the head of the Department of Plague, Pestilence, Violence, and Political Pressure, and you could add to that list locust, frogs, and any other things that came to mind.

And we will turn to you -- and I just want to say, for those of you who don't know Fernando Gómez-Mont, I asked my assistant to do some research for me to help me out for today. And she came in with a stack of papers and she looked at me and said, "This is one tough guy." And the quote she pointed out to me, which I will read to you just to give you a sense of where he is coming from, he said, "The federal government does

not ever dialogue, does not negotiate, does not reach deals with any criminal organization. There is no other alternative for their members, but to submit to the law." So, that gives you a little bit of a sense of where he's coming from.

I want to turn first to Secretary Napolitano and then to Minister Gómez-Mont and then I'll have a few questions. I do -- one other point I just want to make quickly is we do have watch parties going on for this event at the University of Texas at Brownsville, the University of Texas at El Paso, Arizona State, the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico City, and the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce. I'm going to include some of their questions as we go.

Welcome, Secretary Napolitano.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Well, thank you, E.J. And again, my apologies for being late, but I'm glad I'm here and I'm glad I'm here with my good friend and colleague, Gómez-Mont. I think over the last years we have formed a very strong working partnership recognizing that the goals we seek, which is to have a safe and secure border region, a border area that's really defined by the needs of the 21st century, and in addition our joint interest in breaking up the drug cartels in Mexico, the drug cartels which are a violent crime plague within Mexico, but also have fingertips which reach well into every community, almost, in the United States. And so, only by working together are we really going to achieve those two goals:

security and a 21st century border.

Let me, if I might, begin with the security issue. The United States has and will continue to fund training and also other programs through the Merida Initiative. We will continue to work with the Calderon administration on operational partnerships that make sense and fit into an overall strategy aimed at security, security within Mexico, security in the border region.

We have expanded law enforcement cooperation beyond anything I have ever seen before, and I've been working this border now -- I became the U.S. Attorney in 1993, so -- and I've lived in a border state almost my entire life. I grew up in New Mexico and after law school I moved to Arizona, so I can say without equivocation that this border region is vital. It is something that deserves our mutual attention at all times.

We have entered into historical agreements on sharing information, sharing cartel related information and intelligence, sharing felony history information about those who are being repatriated to Mexico, that was not being done before, and establishing a cross-border law enforcement communications network that allows intel to be shared on a real time basis.

We recently engaged in a joint operation, for example, going after the camionetas, which are basically the bus companies that transport illegal immigrants and others between the border and into the interior of the

United States, and we were able to repatriate 47 individuals back to Mexico under that case.

But we also have been working on the issue of the border region as an economic entity. Mexico is one of our largest, if not largest, trading partners. Twenty-two states have Mexico as either number one or number two in terms of trade, and that equates to jobs and it's an area that we recognize, that port management. Every delay at a port is cost and a cost, of course, affects competitiveness.

So, we have established a framework for a bi-national port security management committee. Well, what does that mean? It sounds like gobbledygook. What it means is, at these big land ports across the Southwest border, there will be joint management so that we're working goods and commerce and people coming up from the south and also that going north, making sure things go as smoothly as possible.

We're harmonizing our customs clearance processes and also harmonizing some of the trade documents and other things, all of which add cost and delay to what are really huge and operational ports. So, in both of these areas, security and really creating a 21st century border, where trade, commerce, tourism, families who have members on both sides of the border can see their family members, can go back and forth easily, have been, I think, joint goals that we share. And again, it's the work with Mexico and the cooperation and coordination with Mexico that is an ingredient and a

strength that is a really new and reenergized element of this partnership.

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Thank you very much. It's an honor for me to appear with Janet Napolitano before you in this institute which has been known for the seriousness of the investigation and the projection of the best of the thinking in American society.

Well, we have to recognize one thing. I think we have let the times in which we thought that a secure border was a demand from the U.S. Government and not the demand of both the Mexican government as well. A secure border is needed for both governments, on both sides of the border. We are suffering the defects of a border in which arm controls are brought into Mexico, fueling the violence process, and we believe that with this rejoined cooperation, finding out the common ground of our responsibility in order to avoid the criminal practices that damage both of our nations in which is the best way to approach a common responsibility.

I have to say, though, I'm younger than Janet. I'm glad that we have a level of cooperation in which both sides maturely recognize the need for cooperation and the need to enforce their own responsibility on each side of the border in order to have and reach a common goal, that is a secure border that facilitates trade and legal immigration and at the same time is able to fight the dynamics of violence and crime that are fed from both sides of the border.

We believe that in this endeavor, we are partners. We believe

that on the side of nationality, there is human rights issues that we have to preserve and defend because we are both democratic nations that believe in such values as universal values that should be kept and preserved. And that we believe as democratic countries that through the law enforcement, the rule of law, the basic freedoms and rights are duly guaranteed. So, we're working on that. We are involving our agencies in a margin of cooperation that certainly in this intensity is new for both our countries, and we believe this is a positive experience by which we may achieve common goals and that this is the only and best way in which we'll obtain a secure border for both countries by which we can build on progress for both nations.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. In addition to all the good people we have in this room, we have a whole lot of elephants in this room and I think some -- there are just a couple of questions I'd like to ask right at the beginning to deal with the elephants in the room.

You just came back from an important meeting in the White House. Within, I guess you said, coming in it took us 53 hours to apprehend the man who allegedly drove that truck in Times Square. Can you talk about -- you said, I guess this Sunday, that you hoped it was a one-off or thought it was a one-off. Can you tell us what transpired today? Because I know all my friends in the media, and I'm one of the media, care a lot about that.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Well, obviously this was the work of a lot of good law enforcement, a lot of good law enforcement by the

New York Police Department, the FBI, but in particular Customs and Border Protection, CBP, who were able to ascertain by a variety of methods that I'm not going to detail, but that Shahzad, the suspect, was actually -- had just boarded a plane at JFK and were able to get the plane back to the gate and get him un-boarded and under arrest, and that began, then, the criminal process.

When I said on Sunday that this was a one-off, I think it was in the context of did we know and have specific evidence of other plots that were underway or currently underway, and the answer is, no, we didn't have any evidence that he was other than operating by himself. But E.J., I think we all recognize that we live in an environment where the threats against the United States and our way of life are ever present and ever changing.

So, we had a good session at the White House and with others, not just about this, but I've also got under HSPD5, which stands for Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, but the Secretary of Homeland Security, that would be me, is the overall federal official for the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Of course, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Thad Allen, reports up to me and then hence the President.

So, lots of issues going on today.

MR. DIONNE: You don't get to cut ribbons very much.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Not anymore.

MR. DIONNE: I just want to tell the audience we're going to

have Q&A from the audience.

And the other elephant in the room I wanted to ask both of you about is the Arizona law and I wanted to ask what do you make of the amendments? It was a law in various forms. You vetoed this when you were governor. What effect do you think this will have and what effect might it have in changing the national immigration debate?

And I'd like to ask the minister how this law has been viewed in Mexico.

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Well, first, we have great concerns about 1070 law in Arizona. We believe that it induces racial profiling and that it will disrupt the way in which legal Mexican migrants live in Arizona. And then we think that some issues about human rights that are so caring for American society will be raised in relation with the law.

We respect that, and understand that this is a national issue that has to be resolved, but in which we are very concerned because of our emotional links to the ones that may suffer the excesses of this law. We have recognized (inaudible) the preoccupation of President Obama and Secretary Napolitano, and though I understand that by the view of Ms. Napolitano, this will take proper good effort to enforce other violent crimes. It will make us face the application of the law, concerns about tolerance and other values that are very careful to a democratic society. So, yes, we don't like this law. We believe it affects Mexican nationals, even those that may

reside legally in Arizona, and we believe that we may have much more problems than solutions on its behalf.

We believe, and this is very important, that the immigration issue should be told differently. We understand that this is a sovereign decision by the U.S. and we respect that, but we want to make the case that Mexican immigration, most of it has been good, has complemented, has tried to adapt and be constructive and productive, and is forming part of the American society in a very important way. And we believe we should find a way in which legality broadens the avenues for migration within two economies and two countries that have a long history together, and that may complement rather well in which the good work of a labor of people may benefit most of American residents in the United States. We believe that. Even so, we know it's a difficult issue, but trust and confidence has worked much better for both of our countries than mistrust and intolerance within our societies. I really believe that.

I worry. I understand, I'm a lawyer, so I understand the procedures within. And I'm not just a lawyer, but a great admirer of the process of law in the United States, so I'm curiously watching legal procedures in order to see what's going to happen with this law within the scope of the American justice system.

MS. DIONNE: Can you satisfy his curiosity?

MS. NAPOLITANO: Well, obviously the Justice Department

is taking a look at it and, quite frankly, I was a little occupied over the weekend and was not exactly following the language changes that were made by the Arizona legislature.

It is true that I did, when I was governor, veto some similar laws and I did that for a number of reasons. One not mentioned by my friend is that I think it's bad for law enforcement. I think it doesn't allow law enforcement to set the right priorities depending on what are local needs within different areas of the state, and I don't think that's good. It's one of the reasons why the Association of Chiefs of Police and others would come see me when those laws would pass and talk to me about that. That's one of the reasons why the sheriff of Pima County, which is Tucson, which is 100 miles north of the border, and he's been the sheriff there since forever, has basically said that it's not a good law. It's not a good law for him, not for law enforcement, not needed.

That being said, let me add just one point, however, and that is this: I understand the frustration of Arizonans. They remain -- it remains one of the gateway states into the country for narcotics and contraband and illegal immigration and we have put many resources into Arizona over the last 15 months, more men, more technology, more infrastructure, more money for local law enforcement like sheriff's departments. We obviously need to be looking at what else needs to be done because Arizonans deserve a border that is safe and secure.

It is as safe and secure as it's ever been, but it can be more safe and more secure, and that's what we are working on.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. I want to ask the Interior Secretary what -- one of the causes of anxiety on this side is the violence that's going on in Mexico, which you've dedicated yourself to stopping in going after the drug gangs. And you noted about a week ago that the violence which has largely been among the gangs themselves, recently turned onto the public authorities down there.

What can the United States do to help stop this violence? And in particular, how big a problem is easy access to guns in the U.S. getting over the Mexican border so they arm the gangs -- how big a part of the problem is that?

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Well, it's a very important part of the problem. We have to recognize the commitment of the federal government which has put much more agents trying to stop this. We are working on some programs, bi-national programs, that helps us give information of arms seized in Mexico, that is fed to the intelligence systems in the USA so they can trace and try to find the roots. How this commerce, which is legal within the United States, becomes illegal when it is organized to export the weapons to a country in which their possession is not legal. So, that's a moment in which that activity becomes illegal within the USA. So, we understand that.

I know my government has been working a great deal with the Department of Justice and with the Homeland Security Department to find a much better ground for intelligence. These things take time. I know we are building an important effort in order to achieve some important results. In order to prevent this, it's hurting us though we believe that violence has been overexposed in Mexico, hiding other parts of our nation as a productive country in which we constantly are involved in legal commerce and legal activities which are supported by the most important majority in Mexico. We understand that this violence hurts us, but we can and we shall overcome it. We are involved in a very important institutional reconstruction and rebuilding in Mexico. We are discussing a political reform. We are discussing how to enhance and fortify our public security institutions at the local level. We are discussing a possible constitutional reform in order to redistribute competence by the federal, local, and municipal authorities in order to be more efficient and invest our resources, public resources, in a much better way.

And I think one of the most important things that has to be foreseen here is that, yes, criminal guns are confronting with Mexican authorities in a much more often fashion than before because they recognize that Mexican authorities are their enemies. They are involved in crushing their activities. They are committed to stopping them and to stop their criminal organizations. And that vigor is part of what represents the

new Mexico we're building in which the respect for law is a national demand that we are building on and that even -- and I can say, it may not only be attributed to President Calderon administration because we have had very important support in Congress by the three most important political parties in the process of making legal reforms that help the authorities to be more efficient and in the allocation of public resources in order to strengthen our public security institutions.

And one thing that has been very important for us in this process is having the assistance of U.S. authorities and the Merida Initiative in which our fortitudes are getting stronger by the cooperation of a nation that has developed better instruments in terms of public safety within a democratic context. And so the assistance we receive is important and the assistance we're giving the American authorities for them to detect the risk factors that resides within the U.S. territory.

MR. DIONNE: Can I ask you, Secretary Napolitano, I asked the Secretary about this before you came here, and it's something -- 80 percent of the weapons are coming from the U.S. into Mexico, most of the assault weapons. What can we do to stop this? Can we reinstitute the assault weapons ban? How can we stop exporting the guns that help keep the violence going?

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Well, I think, E.J., there's probably not much appetite in Congress for reinstituting the assault weapons

ban, so what we have really looked at is what can be done on the ground to slow or impede arms trafficking.

So, about a year ago, we began inspection of southbound traffic, inspecting all trains, putting canine teams down at the border who are trained to sniff guns as well as bulk cash, and they have had some very, very significant seizures in that regard. So, just by the pure application of law enforcement on target, we have been able to, I think, impede some of the flow of weapons to the south.

But it's, you know, it's a very simple traffic. It's money and guns south and drugs north. And, you know, and Fernando is working on the drugs coming north with us, but really at those cartels that are exporting the drugs, and we're really working at the illegal export of the guns and the bulk cash to the south. And that is a traffic that has gone on for many years. I actually think we are beginning to show some real signs of progress and we just need to keep at it and need to be thinking of other things we need to do to deal with that north-south traffic because the legal trade, the legal traffic, is huge and a huge opportunity for us.

MR. DIONNE: And, in fact, I'm glad you said that because I wanted to include commerce as part of the title of this event. I wanted to include two questions from the two Chambers of Commerce, one from the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce: How can business people on both sides of the border assist you and your departments in facilitating

legitimate trade between our two countries? And then from the Chamber of Commerce in Mexico: Is facilitating trade a priority for Homeland Security and what does the Mexican government have planned in this regard? And they are very specific down there at the Chamber in Mexico: Please mention a few concrete steps that have been taken.

Do you want to -- go ahead.

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Well, we're making inspections southbound and northbound as never before, and at the beginning I understand that they may implement some bothering to legal commerce. We will be getting more efficient as we get involved. We are acquiring non-intrusive technology that can make the process much faster, but it is important to understand why we're doing so, and this is to clearly detect and to clearly state the importance of legal commerce within both our countries and that the best way to keep it in that way is being more efficient in order to detect and prevent and fight against what's illegal in both our countries.

We believe that a safe border is a border that makes and keeps efficient for legal commerce, but at the same time is efficient in order to prevent the commission of crimes from both sides of the border. And I know that in the way we are cooperating, this is being accomplished in a very much important way and you have to understand, for us, evidently we have committed to fight drug cartels in Mexico, but the problem for us is not

just drug cartels, but the damaging affect they have on the whole public security issue in Mexico. They have -- they change the way they operate. They are not just committing to put drugs within the U.S. market. At the same time they were paid by their providers with drug and not with cash, they started to act on the local markets and to sell to the local markets and to become involved in other illegal activity.

So, we are very committed to make the border safe for both countries. We are very committed in order to rebuild our institutions to bring back public safety in Mexico and to submit these criminal organizations and prevent them from damaging Mexican people. This is not just a matter of good will and cooperation within both governments. For us, it's a very important issue to strengthen security within a democratic context and in our political transition we kind of did not look to that issue until recently with the seriousness and commitment in which this government has and that has brought on to the Mexican political system a real will to establish the rule of law all over the country and that will surely happen when we can bring violence down, and we will.

We are weakening this organized crime, and they are involved in a very self destructive process. There is a lot of inner confrontations that explain part of the violence. Most of the violence is the fight within them. Something you lived a very, very long time ago in some cities in the United States in which that experience helps build the legal framework by which

now we are gaining an efficiency in order to prevent and fight against this organized crime.

So, let me be very clear about it. It's not just international cooperation that moves us, but our national interest demands from the authorities derived from the democratic process to be efficient in providing security to the people because one of the most basic human rights that we have to prevail is security and the rule of law in order to provide and guaranty the other exercise of freedoms.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Indeed, and E.J., on some of the commerce issues there's some very exciting initiatives that are underway, initiatives to examine and secure cargo within the interior of Mexico so that all that work doesn't need to actually be done at the border, initiatives to expand the land ports to really accommodate the traffic that goes back and forth. I think, for example, of the Mariposa Gate. "Gate" doesn't really describe it. It's a huge port of entry at Nogales, Arizona, which under the Recovery Act funds is being greatly expanded as are other land ports along the Southwest borders.

The greater use of technology to move goods and commerce through, I mentioned work to try to standardize forms or to do more by -- without paper so that things move more smoothly, more easily back and forth between the two countries, the efforts to put more technology at the ports that will move the traffic more quickly. It's a whole toolbox of things

that we're really focused on for this 21st century border concept.

One point was made, and I don't want it to be overlooked, which is to say that in terms of, you know, kind of a new addition to all the things that have been going on between the United States and Mexico in terms of cooperation has been the pilot project, as it were, for Mexico to install its own customs and border patrol on that side of the border to catch things moving south, so that just because you get through the port of entry in Texas or California, wherever, doesn't necessarily mean that there won't be effective law enforcement on the other side.

MR. DIONNE: I'm going to just ask a couple more before I go to the audience. Do we have a mike going around the room? I know that I've seen the reporter for the New York Times up front here. Why don't I give a colleague the first question? But let me ask one question to each of you before I turn to the audience. I may come back in.

There's a very interesting question, I think interests a lot of Americans, to the Minister from the University of Texas at El Paso. The question is, what actions is Mexico taking to contain the undocumented movement of migrants to the U.S.? What economic actions? What educational actions? What social actions? Again, the question continues, after four years of the Calderon Administration, how do you measure your success in each of these dimensions? And I suppose, just do so in a handful of minutes.

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Very easy questions. Well, we are acting in the border with a much more global vision, much more comprehensive approach to the public security issues. Especially in Ciudad Juarez we are taking a very important program now in which we want to get the community to be involved in the reconstruction and rebuilding of their own institutions. We believe that the problem of public safety in Juarez is different than in other kind of the countries. It's a geopolitical situation and the way the immigration works on the culture of the population demands a different approach. And we are trying to fight the labor market by which criminal organizations obtain -- they recruit members. We are reinforcing public education there, university education, and we are reinforcing economic activities and public -- the recuperation of public spaces and the rebuilding of community. Policing and community, they're the social cohesion that the -- that Juarez demands.

Juarez presents itself, a very different model basically, and we are sure that not all the parts of the border have the violence that Juarez has presented. We believe other parts of the border present successful cases of public enforcement and legal enforcement and in which the social cohesion is working differently.

We are committed to help the people from Juarez to rebuild their own institutions, to rebuild their own public safety through community activities and we are having very important cooperation with the U.S.

agencies in order to see, understand, and react to the dynamic of criminal activity on both sides of the border. And even through painful events, like the killing of American citizens which were linked to the Mexican consulate in Juarez, we have been working on successful investigations in order to punish those responsible for such violence.

So, we believe that Juarez, as a very specific case, is facing a different approach on public safety than in other places because we believe that there are different conditions there.

And, well, we believe that -- let me tell you, the increasing violence at this moment shows that, first, public institutions are not -- public security institutions or officials, or corrupt officials, has not the success that they had in the past in protecting illegal activities, that the separation between public safety institutions and criminal activity is much more clear now than ever, and that is important for the Mexican rebuilding process, and that the commitment of public safety officials to prevent and act against crime is much clearer now. And criminal organizations are facing and acknowledging this fact so that's why confrontation of these criminal activities against public officials is increasing.

And, well, it's a sad sign of institutional evolution that is happening in Mexico. I see it should happen long ago, but it's happening now because now is when Mexican people decided to commit to this battle, and we are committed to this battle.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. And then before I turn to the audience, I just have to ask you about my colleague Gene Robinson's column in the Post this morning. Gene basically wrote that those who say we just need to secure the border ought to go down to Arizona and take a look or consult a map or just read up on what is happening on the border. He quotes the Pima County sheriff saying the border has never been so secure, the assistant police chief in Nogales saying that there hasn't been a spillover of violence from Mexico into the United States; border crossings from undocumented immigrants have declined sharply over the last decade. Sadly, some of that's because of the economic downturn.

Could you talk about, you know, what your sense is of how secure the border is now and to what extent is there more to be done? How much more can be done?

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Well, I can say he was right in the sense that it's more secure now than it ever has been. Every congressional benchmark that has been set, you know, number of border patrol agents, miles of fence, and the like, have all been deployed and so there is that. I think I quoted Sheriff Dupnik as well, and like I said, he's been the sheriff there for about 30-some odd years.

Nonetheless, here are -- just to give you a sense of numbers, there is some more work to be done and we've had the issues of the murders in Juarez recently. We also had the tragic murder of a rancher in

southern Arizona by a sniper who appears to have crossed the border and then gone back. So, there's always more to be done and there's always new thinking to be done when you're talking about border and border security. But in terms of what's on the ground, what's been done, the commitment, the absolute laser-like focus on that border from San Diego across to Brownsville, I think what we are seeing here is that on both sides there's never been so much focus as there is today.

MR. DIONNE: Where's my New York Times colleague? I saw her -- yeah, there you are. And here's a mike.

SPEAKER: Hello, Madam Secretary. Nice to see you, Mr. Secretary. Thanks for doing this. We know how busy you are.

I wanted to ask you about the whole enchilada.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: The what?

SPEAKER: The whole enchilada, the comprehensive immigration reform. The President has said time and again that he wants it. The timeline for delivering it seems to keep slipping.

I wonder if you think that it's realistic, that such a policy is realistic when you have Arizona passing more restrictive laws and you have polls showing that 51 percent of Americans believe they probably did the right thing. And if you do think it's realistic, how and when?

Thank you.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Yeah, I saw that poll and we

can all, you know, debate polls. But here -- I've also seen other polls, and these polls have been consistent over years and those polls demonstrate by a 2-to-1 margin that Americans appreciate and understand the need for comprehensive immigration reform. They understand that that includes enforcement, and we do need to update and expand some of the enforcement tools that we have. That it includes some measure of temporary worker flow back and forth, and that needs to be adjusted as economic circumstances warrant. And they understand that we are not going to deport those who are already here illegally, but that instead what ought to be done is that they get right with the law, that they come out of the shadows, that they register, they pay a fine or some, perhaps, surcharge on their taxes, that they provide their biometrics so their criminal histories can be run. And I've seen poll after poll -- I used to take some of those polls myself when I was running for elective office in Arizona, and focus groups -- and they are consistent across states and across time.

So, that, by the way, what I just outlined is basically the framework for immigration reform and it's the framework that was suggested by Senators Schumer and Graham, who have been working on what such a thing would look like in actual legislative language and we have been working with them and their staffs to provide such language. And the President has said he would support a bill that included or was designed along the lines of that framework.

So, you have two key bipartisan leaders of the Senate who have indicated this is what the framework looks like. You have the President of the United States saying, I agree with that framework. And you have polling that's been done over years of the American people that basically say, yeah, that's what we appreciate; that would give us a good, strong, fair immigration system, and then we want to work to sustain that and have confidence moving forward that we're not going to have in 20 years another 10 or 12 million in the country illegally.

So, what is missing in that recipe? What's missing in that recipe is basically bipartisan support to move immigration because, as the President recognizes, as Senators Schumer and Graham have recognized, as anyone who lives in this town and works with the Hill recognizes, such a bill will not pass without bipartisan support, and that doesn't exist right now.

So, how will that be managed? What will happen? I do not know. I do not know whether there will be an attempt to go ahead and move it before the midterm or shortly thereafter. What I do know is that the President intends to keep working this issue and what I do know is that the President doesn't give up easily. I think we saw that with health care, which took a lot longer than anyone predicted at the outset, but nonetheless, got done.

So, the President's behind it. I think ultimately we will get there.

MR. DIONNE: Can I get a mike up front here to Darryl West?

MR. WEST: Thank you. How can we have an informed debate in the United States on immigration? Because each of you have pointed out that we've made great progress on border security, the number of immigrant flows from Mexico to the United States actually are down when you compare this over the last 20 years.

In terms of the polling data, there is support for a pathway to legalization under the right circumstances with the various conditions you just noted being attached to it, but yet, at the same time, immigration is such an emotional issue for many Americans. The media don't help us too much. The media sometimes enflame the passions on this issue. So, how can we - not E.J., but some other people -- how can we elevate the level of civic discourse on this so we can actually have a debate on the facts of immigration as opposed to the emotions surrounding it?

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: I wish I had a better answer because it is an important issue. You know, it is an important part of our sovereignty, who is allowed in the country, who is allowed to become a citizen. Every country has the right to enforce its own immigration law. Mexico enforces its immigration laws.

So, it shouldn't be a debate about commitment to enforcement. I mean, there is a commitment to enforcement. What should be a discussion, or what we would like to have discussed more, is how do

you do that in the current circumstances and really thinking about what the immigration system needs to be, not just for this year, but for the decades coming up. And how do you do that and at the same time create the 21st century border that Fernando and I have just been talking about which is safe and secure for people who live in those border areas, but also facilitates the movement of trade and commerce?

I think, you know, the most I can suggest is to keep harping on the facts, that this is -- we are committed to enforcement. I'm a former AG and a former U.S. Attorney in a border state. I mean, I've supervised the prosecution of more immigration cases than everybody in this room combined. I know this area very well. I've ridden that border on a horse. I've walked it. I've flown over it. I've driven it. I really know it like the back of my hand, but we will not fix immigration by only talking about the border. We need to keep working the border and then open up the discussion really about all the other issues that immigration entails, and that's issues about family unification, it's issues about labor, labor needs, different kinds of labor needs, and how do people, under the rule of law, move back and forth.

MR. DIONNE: Could I ask Mr. Gómez-Mont a follow- up, if you will, and also just -- a lot of governors in the region, I think when you were governor, have called for sending the National Guard -- asked authority to send the National Guard to the border. How would Mexico view that?

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Well, let me tell you first, we

are committed (inaudible) with a secure border. As I established, it's in our own interest for reasons I've stated that we achieve so.

Secondly, the Mexican government is very involved in its own economic recovery. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created in this first trimester and we believe that if we focus and discipline ourselves enough, we may find economic recovery which is good for our nation and which would decrease importantly immigration pressures to the United States.

Third, we believe that we have to be very discreet in this debate. It's a sovereign issue that you have to solve, but at least we would be very -- we are -- we would like you to see, at the same time, the fact that most of that immigration has been good for America, most of it, and that you're a country that has fought against racism in a very important way and you are a symbol of the world in that matter. And we only hope that you don't get mingled in racial issues in that, and as part of a universal nation system we believe that that may be approached. You have done greater things, so we are hopeful in that matter.

And -- but we believe that part of a secure border is defined by the legal framework by which you define a secure border, and that's part of the immigration debate you have to take on here.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Over here, please?

MS. NEGROPONTE: Diana Negroponte of the Brookings

Institution. My question is for Secretary Gómez-Mont.

Secretary Gómez-Mont, a few days ago the armed forces of the military were withdrawn from Juarez and yet within a matter of days young police recruits were murdered brutally with a list of their compañeros attached to their shirts indicating that they were next. Did you withdraw the armed forces too soon?

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: We believe that we had to change the model from military patrolling to more police abilities in order to regain Juarez. You see, when the army entered into Juarez we were looking at armed convoys of organized crime activity walking through Juarez without being stopped or controlled, so the army entered there in order to prevent that kind of (inaudible). But when the problem of public security changed and most of the public security issues were related with gangs, we understood that the abilities needed to prevent, control, and confront that kind of ability were more linked to police skills than to military skills.

So, secondly, we have not withdrawn the army. What we have changed is the leadership, the focus of the leadership of the public security effort from army to police, but still there's an important presence of military over there that -- which will be targeting much the way to prevent that these kind of convoys of organized crime will re-circulate in Juarez and to work much more with the investigation of gangs there.

Most of these gangs have some links both sides of the border,

so the intelligence sharing we are accomplishing there is important, and to fight on the dynamics of (inaudible). I think we did the right thing, but the confrontation is not going to disappear from one day to another. The problems of the lack of social cohesion in Juarez are important. We have to (inaudible) with them. What I'll tell you, Juarez will not have a real solution without community participation and we're trying to work on that and we're trying to put our government's problems linked with community leadership there in order to restore social cohesion.

You know, that's not from one day to another. We believe we are in the right track, but we understand that there are times in which that track will be painful.

MR. DIONNE: Over here. My colleague on the right.

MR. CÁRDENAS: Thank you. Mauricio Cárdenas from Brookings.

Secretary Gómez-Mont, is Mexico winning the war on drugs? Can we say that the worst is over? Or the news that are arriving are worse every day? And I say this because when you look at the crime indicators, homicide rate, et cetera, there is not much sign for hope. So, what's your assessment on that?

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: I think the violence issue is important -- is an important issue for the government, but let's put it in its right perspective. Most of Mexican population is not involved in violence or

crime, they're involved in legal activities, they're involved with legal jobs, they are involved in trying to get their life moving on and trying to prosper and progress, and that's the part of Mexico that has to be seen as well. As I told you, in the last trimester we found more than 250,000 jobs that, for the size of our economy, implies an important recovery and we are committed to that. We are in an unemployment rate which is lesser than other economies in the world and we have to see that we passed through the crisis last year with much less damage within the economic and the labor market in Mexico than in other parts of the world.

So, we believe that we are a very strong society. We are very committed to living in peace. And violence, yes, violence hurts us because we're a peaceful population. We are not accustomed to that and we won't get accustomed to that. We are going to overcome this because we are really committed to build on a prosperous country and coexistence based on peace and mutual tolerance.

And as I told you, for many years the security institutions within the democratic context were not duly attended by the political class in Mexico. Now they're doing so as part of the learning curve of their political transition, and in doing so they are consolidating a democratic evolution.

So, while we have to face now the cost that we didn't incur in the past, but such cost is worth it and we shall prevail. I don't have any doubt about it.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Yeah. I think one point that needs to be emphasized is that we have a joint interest in this success and because in the United States we need to do more to reduce the demand for drugs, which is the foundation for that drugs-guns-money dynamic I was talking about earlier, there is some responsibility there as well. But, you know, having a safe and secure Mexico, trading partner, geographic neighbor, is important for the United States from any number of perspectives, from security to justice to commerce, et cetera. And so I think there has not been enough public dialogue about the joint interests that are implicated in what Fernando's talking about.

MR. DIONNE: There's a gentleman way in the back there who has been very patient.

MR. RISEN: Thank you all. My name is Tom Risen with the National Journal.

Secretary Napolitano, you mentioned the possibility of workers giving biometric information a few days ago when that provision was discovered in the comprehensive immigration draft it made some headlines, and you've encountered this as governor of Arizona and now as the Secretary of Homeland Security. How do we reconcile these privacy concerns with the security concerns to document the undocumented?

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Well, I think they're not inconsistent. I think that having as part of the sanction for having come into

the country illegally the requirement that you provide biometrics is part of a reasonable and strong package. After all, we need to know from a security perspective who is in the country. That's part of the reason why, with a wink and a nod, pretending like we're somehow going to export 12 -- or deport 12 million people from a security perspective doesn't make any sense. And so when I referenced it, I was referencing it in terms of knowing who is in the country, having done their background checks and paying other sanctions in exchange for the ability to stay in the country legally.

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Within the context of Merida Initiative, we have acquired from the U.S. Government some biometric technology that we're implementing in the south of the border. Now, we are taking biometrics of all illegal immigration coming from Guatemala and Central America into Mexico and, first, we don't have any knowledge that it has been -- that no one has been offended by it. They believe that it's a condition to exercise a right to travel to another country and we believe that privacy issues should be well preserved from undo access to persons to such private data. But the right to identify yourself and the right to enter through legal proceedings to another country, I believe it's part of the thing you have to work on in the new international context because migration is part of the economic process that is going on in the whole world. And we have to try to find the best way in which it will happen.

MR. DIONNE: One more in the back and then I have -- right

over here. And then I'll -- yup, come on up. Thank you. Is that Hattie Babbitt? How are you?

MS. BABBITT: I'm fine. Yes. This is Hattie Babbitt.

My question went to not the drugs coming north or the arms going south, but the money going south. And Secretary Napolitano talked some about bulk cash transfers, but neither of the two secretaries have talked about the electronic transfers of money and the other routes for money going south. Drug cartels are, of course, selling drugs in order to get money. And I wonder if the upcoming meeting between our two presidents will involve any march forward, any additional indicators of what we in the United States are willing -- able to do and able to do with our Mexican partners in limiting the funds going south.

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Well, one of the things with money laundering practices, in order to prevent money laundering practices in most countries is that they are quite successful, so they induce the use of cash as a way to prevent and try to give the way around to the controls.

We believe, though, we always may get smarter, that part of the problem with the bulk cash as a part of the criminal process is because the money laundering preventing going in both financial systems have really -- make it much more difficult to criminal activity organizations. And the problem with a cash process is that it's much more difficult to control. It goes within the black markets, illegal markets, so we are trying to find ways

to detect, even to measure what's the effect on an economy of these illegal activities. There is a lot of ciphers going on and calculations of this size is -- depends on who is guessing, but we're trying to work on that. And let me tell you that there is important cooperation with the proper authorities in order to be more effective. But the problem is much different (inaudible) to bulk cash because that's much a matter of policing than financial inspection in the banking systems.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: I think in the upcoming presidential visit, the agenda is still being constructed in terms of the items that will be discussed. I think it will be a very robust discussion that touches a number of areas and I don't know whether money transfers, per se, will be specifically denominated, but I think generically, as part of a cluster of issues, that may arise.

You know, the easiest thing to do is to find the bulk cash that's secreted in car trunks and hidden compartments and what have you going south. I mean, that's -- you know, that's the canine teams I discussed. That's more inspections, better intel about who's moving it. But these cartels, they're big organized crime organizations. They've separated product from cash. A lot of times the couriers -- most times the couriers are just that, they are couriers. They are not people making any operational decisions at all, much less kingpins. And so you've got that phenomenon.

There are a lot of interesting techniques that have been

employed, for example, going after the money remittances in transfers and having better coordination and control over that such as the Western Union-style cases. That's one way. You know, one real logistical difficulty is the ability to separate legal money out from illegal money when you're talking about large amounts of money going back and forth. We've just described all of this legal trade and legal commerce and legal tourism and families going back and forth legally and separating out what's legal from illegal in terms of stopping that flow is difficult, but I think from a physical dimension, i.e., just looking for it, getting better yield there because it's more informed by intelligence about where money is going, using different techniques like the Western Union approach. And then I would lastly add to that that the respective finance ministers are also -- treasury, finance -- have also been entering into some discussions about how to monitor or see if there are some indicators there all part and parcel of that problem.

MR. DIONNE: I want to ask in closing a question to both of you, it's the same question to both of you. It's like, it's the best of times, it's the worst of times. If you look at the list of bilateral agreements you have signed together or the Mexican government and the U.S. Government, we probably have never gotten along better in terms of cooperating on these problems. There's probably more security at the border than there's ever been. And yet we have the problems with the drug gangs in Mexico. We've got what appears to be a higher anxiety in the United States about

immigration. How do these two stories coexist? How do you bring, if you will, what seems like the good news of the first story to bear on the second story of anxiety and worry? When are we going to see payoffs from all of these things?

SECRETARY GÓMEZ-MONT: Well, I think perseverance is very important. I mean, there is no decent alternative to what we are doing, that is enforcing the law and trying to submit criminals to the prosecution and bring them -- prosecute them in our system of law. We are working on the transformation of our criminal system in order to be more efficient, to process these cases, and, at the same time, respect basic human fundamental rights. And, well, sometimes we want to do things as fast as we can in order to obtain results, but we have to be very solid about this. I mean, we are duly committed for these things to work and we believe that the cycle of violence will decrease at some time in the next months because at least the acceleration of the violence is getting slower. So, we believe that we are going to see diminishing ciphers maybe at the end of this year. And then we believe that we -- it will be occurring which it will be held by institutional strength and by institutional process that will make this a stable figure.

MR. DIONNE: How are you going to bring it all together?

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Well, I think a couple of things. One is, first of all, this is a marathon, not a sprint, and we know that and

we're jointly committed to it and in a very determined way because the stakes are very high. You quoted it's the best of times, it's the worst of times. I would say as well that failure is not an option, that we all have, as I mentioned, a very fundamental stake in this.

Secondly, I think from an optics as well as on the ground standpoint, the establishment, if I might use that word, or reestablishment of safety, particularly in Ciudad Juarez, will have, I think, an enormous impact. And I think progress is being made there, but that has become such a focal point from, I think, within Mexico and within the United States.

Thirdly, I think that we need to continue from the U.S. side to keep demonstrating progress, progress in terms of removal of criminal aliens, progress in terms of worksite enforcement done in the right way, progress in terms of fewer people trying to cross the border illegally, progress in terms of seizures of drugs and money and arms, and to continue to make that case. And then continue to make the case as well, and it's a case we know that the American people understand, that we are a nation of immigrants and we are a nation of law and that both of those goals need to be appreciated and articulated in our national debate.

MR. DIONNE: I want to thank Secretary Napolitano and Secretary Gómez-Mont. It is big news. Governor Rick Perry visited with Secretary Napolitano this week. And those of you who know Governor Perry's attitudes toward the Obama Administration, his saying nice things

about anybody in it is sort of like a Bostonian praising the New York Yankees. And after meeting with Secretary Napolitano he said he had a "real good feeling" and he said that "she gets it." So, if that sort of bipartisanship can ever be achieved, then you can solve all these impossible problems. And I just want to thank you very, very much for joining us tonight.

SECRETARY NAPOLITANO: Thank you, E.J.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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