

For immediate release

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No \$ To Mexico Until Accountability on Human Rights!

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Friends of murdered journalist demand hold on military aid pending investigation into his murder

The Friends of Brad Will, a network of friends and associates of Brad Will, the U.S. journalist, have urged House Speaker Pelosi and Eliot Engels, the Chair of the Western Hemispheric affairs subcommittee to oppose U.S. support for Mexican military and police forces. Mr. Will, the 36 year old reporter, was murdered in Oaxaca, Mexico a year ago, on October 27th, 2006. Witnesses and photographic evidence implicate members of the Mexican government, including a police chief.

On 10-21-07, President Bush announced a \$1.5 billion dollar "security cooperation initiative" proposal for Mexico that the President tucked into the Iraq supplemental spending package submitted to Congress. The initiative allows sharing of U.S. military intelligence information with Mexican military counterparts and provides weaponry and training with the notoriously corrupt and brutal Mexican military and police.

Brad Will's family and friends denounced plans to fund a "Plan Mexico" that would be more costly than the controversial "Plan Colombia" while in attendance at the 10-25-07 hearing. They pointed to the lack of any credible investigation into the murder of the U.S. journalist, who was in Mexico covering the protests of a popular movement of teachers and their supporters facing paramilitary violence deployed by the Mexican government and the governor of Oaxaca, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz.

"One year after the murder of Brad Will, no one has been arrested. Under the guise of stopping drug trafficking, US taxpayers could be funding human rights violations, corrupt local officials and Blackwater-style mercenaries in Oaxaca and elsewhere. This is exactly the wrong message to send at this time." said Harry Bubbins, a media representative for Friends of Brad Will.

Friends of Brad Will drew attention to testimony from today's panelist Jess T. Ford, Associate Director, International Relations and Trade Issues, made over ten years ago on September 12, 1996. "Overall, U.S. and Mexican interdiction efforts have had little, if any, impact on the overall flow of drugs through Mexico into the United States. According to U.S. officials, Mexican counter-narcotics efforts are hampered by pervasive corruption of key institutions...". Since then human right's abuses and the use of weaponry against civilians has only increased, making this aid proposal inappropriate.

"We are confident that Congress will ask hard questions about the murder of US reporter Brad Will, and not just rubber stamp this military aid package that could lead to further human rights abuses." stated Robert Jereski, a Congressional liaison for Friends of Brad Will.

