

**STATEMENT BY  
Gregory B. Starr  
Department of State  
Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
COMMITTEE  
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Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings, and distinguished Committee members – Good Morning. Thank you for your invitation to appear today to discuss the security situation near U.S. Consulates at the border in Mexico. I share your concerns regarding the security of U.S. personnel in Mexico, and I look forward to discussing these issues with you today.

Our national interests often require us to serve in dangerous places around the world. However, it is clear that the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Mexico are exceptionally important platforms for diplomatic and consular engagement to advance our national interests. I was in Mexico a few weeks ago and can bear witness to the hard work and dedication of U.S. personnel serving along both sides of the border. I also saw the challenging circumstances in which many of our people operate.

Environments such as that in Mexico involve constantly shifting threats that require comprehensive planning, agile decision making, and deft diplomacy. Most of all, they require us to be present, fully engaged, and 100 percent committed to the security of our people and facilities. In Mexico, we engage with and seek support where necessary from a host government that recognizes Mexican and American vital interests are linked and that bilateral cooperation is required to counter the threats posed by transnational criminals. Every incident, threat, and attack in Mexico only underscores the continued importance of strong bilateral relations and comprehensive security cooperation. Our Embassy and Consulates in Mexico play a critical role in providing services to American citizens, issuing visas, and implementing key foreign policy objectives.

I work closely with my colleagues in the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) as the Department builds diplomatic missions in Mexico that

increase safety and security. These new facilities are vital diplomatic platforms, all of which meet rigorous Overseas Security Policy Board (OSPB) standards. During my recent visit to some of the border consulates, I walked with the principal officers and the regional security officers to view the additional security measures taken and the augmented host country police presence protecting our facilities. These protective features allow us to operate necessary programs that strengthen Mexican police capacity, reinforce critical law enforcement cooperation, and improve security along our southern border. These consulates also aid the expansive bilateral trade that supports both countries, totaling over \$500 billion annually.

But it is simply not enough to improve physical security. We are also training the Foreign Service community on how to better respond in these environments. All officers under Chief of Mission authority at our border posts and Monterrey are required to take the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat training course, also known as FACT, which teaches hard security skills. As a result, personnel at our missions are better prepared for operating in challenging environments, and we are working towards making FACT training universal for all Foreign Service personnel at our posts overseas regardless of threat level.

I recognize the hardships that our people and their families endure in such environments. It is a testament to their courage, their commitment, and the important work they are accomplishing abroad. Having served over 30 years in the Foreign Service, I understand wholeheartedly the sacrifices our people make; it is simply woven into the fabric of what uniquely defines the Foreign Service community. Knowing the challenges ahead, they willingly and courageously step up to fill important positions in Mexico and throughout the world.

We look forward to working with Congress to ensure that our personnel serving abroad continue to have a safe platform for advancing our national interests. I want to thank Congress for the resources and support that you have provided over the years, and we look forward to your continued support in years ahead. Thank you and I will be glad to answer any questions you have.



**Gregory B. Starr**  
**Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security**

Gregory B. Starr became Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security on November 18, 2013. In this capacity, Mr. Starr is in charge of the security and law enforcement arm of the U.S. Department of State.

Diplomatic Security is responsible for providing a safe and secure environment for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy throughout the world. Mr. Starr leads a force of Special Agents, Diplomatic Couriers, Security Engineering Officers, Security Technical Specialists, general service staff, and other specialists.

He previously served as Director of the Diplomatic Security Service from April 2007 until his retirement in May 2009. He returned to Diplomatic Security on February 1, 2013 as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security, Director of the Diplomatic Security Service, and acting Assistant Secretary.

From May 2009 until January 2013, Mr. Starr served as United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security. In that capacity, he oversaw the formulation of security policies and the implementation of programs to ensure the conduct of activities in a secure environment at U.N. headquarters and overseas locations around the globe.

Other domestic assignments for Mr. Starr have included Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Countermeasures (2004-2007), the Director of the Office of Physical Security Programs (2000-2004), Division Chief for worldwide local guard and residential security programs (1995-1997), and assignments to the Secretary's detail, technical security operations, and the New York Field Office.

His overseas assignments have included Senior Regional Security Officer at the U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv (1997-2000), as well as Senior Regional Security Officer position in Tunis, Tunisia and Dakar, Senegal; and was assigned to the Regional Security Office in Kinshasa, Zaire (presently the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Mr. Starr is the recipient of Department of State awards including Senior Foreign Service Performance awards, and Superior and Meritorious Honor awards. He began his career as a Special Agent in July 1980 and joined the ranks of the Senior Foreign Service in 2001. Before his retirement from the U.S. Department of State in 2009, Mr. Starr held the rank of Minister Counselor in the Senior Foreign Service.

A New York native, Mr. Starr received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and a Masters degree in Forensic Science from the George Washington University.