



U.S. Embassy - Mexico

Merida Initiative Fact Sheet *Corrections Program*

The goal of the Merida Initiative's Corrections Program is to support the Government of Mexico (GOM) in improving the capacity of its prisons system to more effectively manage its inmate population and conduct meaningful reforms at the federal, state and municipal-level prisons and jails to prevent transnational criminal organizations from operating from penitentiaries. To date, over \$14 million has been committed in training, capacity building, and equipment.

A key goal of the Corrections Program is compliance and accreditation with the American Correctional Association's (ACA) International Standards. Established in the U.S., The ACA is a non-profit professional organization founded in 1870 by correctional professionals who developed guiding principles for humane treatment of inmates. Sustaining the goal of improving the U.S. justice system, the ACA has established an accreditation process that applies standards to measure compliance to their core principles. To date, eight federal correctional facilities and the correctional training academy have received ACA Accreditation. The State of Chihuahua has accredited five facilities, has two additional facilities recommended for accreditation, and are working to accredit the remaining two facilities by the end of the year 2014. The State of Baja California has one facility accredited and the State of Mexico has received its first facility recommended for accreditation.

Accreditation requires a facility to encompass the minimum industry acceptable standards in practice and policies. It is the start of a long journey towards the best correctional practices. The ACA has 139 International Core Standards, of which 39 are mandatory. These 139 standards are divided into seven main areas, each with goals and measurable outcomes: **Safety** - Provide a safe environment; **Security** - Protect from harm; **Order** - Maintain an orderly environment; **Care** - Provide for basic needs and personal care; **Program and Activities** - Help inmates to successfully return to the community; **Justice** - Treat inmates fairly and respect their legal rights; and **Administration and Management** - Administer and manage the facilities in a professional and responsible manner.

Success in meeting accreditation standards does not indicate the end of the road for improvement. Accreditation does encourage improvement of all practices and policies through the process of making facilities safer and more humane.

Major Accomplishments under the Merida Initiative:

- The Mexican National Academy for Penitentiary Administration opened in Xalapa, Veracruz in May 2009. The Academy has trained 7,519 newly recruited officials.
- Training and certification for corrections instructors at the New Mexico Corrections Academy. Since 2009, 452 new corrections instructors have been trained and certified.
- 216 federal and state correctional officers of the Transportation Unit have received training at the Colorado Department of Corrections. Additionally, ten prisoner transport vans, two 12-inmates transportation units, one 26-inmates transportation unit, and ballistic and protection equipment were delivered to the Prisoner Transportation Unit.
- 200 mid- and senior-level federal and state corrections staff have received Leadership training from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons and the National Institute of Corrections. One hundred twenty one corrections staff have been trained on First Line Supervisor techniques. Two Advanced Leadership Training Courses have been provided to upper level correctional officials in Denver, Colorado.
- 132 corrections employees have received Security Threat Group/ Intel training at the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.
- 32 female correctional staff received Female Offender Management Training in Colorado.

- 118 correctional officers have been trained in emergency response training (ERT) classes taught at the Mexican National Academy for Penitentiary Administration (ANAP). Twenty-two instructors were certified to teach ERT. Equipment has also been delivered for this unit.
- Two mobile training units were purchased to help support offsite basic correctional classes to be taught at state and federal facilities. The federal correctional trainers have trained 1561 correctional employees by providing one basic correctional class to state level, and human rights, human development, ERT, use of force and fire arm simulator to federal corrections staff.

Future Directions:

- Continue auditing correctional facilities and encouraging the accreditation of state and federal facilities.
- Provide training on operations of juvenile correctional facilities and provide technical assistance in development of procedures.
- Continue providing additional training opportunities supporting the GOM, Federal and State systems with approved training, conducted by INL International Training Academy, U.S. State Correctional Training Academies who have LOA's with USG/INL, Federal Bureau of Prisons and the National Institute of Corrections.

Training priorities will include:

- Accreditation
- 1st Line Leadership
- Correctional Institution Management
- Basic Correctional Management
- Security threat groups
- Emergency Management
- Emergency Management Response
- Prison Industries
- High Risk offender transport
- Prison Intelligence Operations / Security Threat
- Basic Academy Instructor Certification (T4T)