

Ranking Member Peters Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing:
Remain in Mexico
Date: January 16, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Paul.

As a member of this Committee, I've long made securing our borders a top priority. I've been pleased to work with members on both sides of the aisle to advance bipartisan, commonsense legislation that strengthens border security and provides tools and resources to support our border security professionals as they carry out their challenging missions. I look forward to working together to continuing those efforts this Congress.

I recognize that we face significant challenges at our Southern Border, and I'm committed to working in a bipartisan way to address those challenges.

Today we're discussing the policy known as "Remain in Mexico" which was created during the first Trump Administration and first implemented in 2019. Under this policy, certain migrants seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border were processed and returned to Mexico to wait for their next immigration court hearing in the United States.

Although billed as means of deterring migrants, the policy's real success was dumping fuel onto the fire of cartel activity in Mexico.

This particular policy accelerated dangerous, illegal activity lead by cartels in Mexico even more. It's estimated that these cartels have raked in billions of dollars from this criminal activity through drug trafficking, extortion, human trafficking and smuggling, and ransom kidnappings of asylum seekers.

After the implementation of the Remain in Mexico policy, a report documented more than 1,500 allegations of violent harm caused by cartels including homicide, sexual assault, and kidnapping – in just a couple years.

There are also numerous reports of cartels extorting asylum seekers for thousands of dollars, so they won't be murdered by the cartels while they waited in Mexico for their scheduled immigration hearings often over the course of several months.

Although today we are discussing a policy and its impact in Mexico, we know that cartels bring their criminal activity across our borders and into our communities in the United States.

We should not implement policies that will further enrich cartels and enable their violent criminal enterprises on either side of the border. We should be focused on policies that help frontline DHS personnel get ahead of these dangerous cartels.

I'm committed to working in a bipartisan way to find commonsense solutions that strengthen border security – streamline our immigration and asylum processes and ensure DHS personnel have the tools and resources they need to complete their national security missions.

I appreciate our witnesses for sharing their testimony today and for contributing to our discussion on securing our borders.