

United States Senate Committee on  
**FOREIGN RELATIONS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:**

[Sean Bartlett](#), 202.224.4651

**Cardin, Colleagues Write to Secretaries Tillerson, Kelly As Officials Arrive in Mexico City**

*“On the eve of your trip to Mexico City, we encourage you to take advantage of your visit to reaffirm the strategic importance of the U.S.-Mexico partnership... President Trump’s commentary – both during the campaign and since his inauguration – is damaging this critical bilateral relationship and endangering U.S. national security.”*

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator **Ben Cardin** (D-Md.), Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, led five of his colleagues in a letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Department of Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly last night as the two Administration officials landed in Mexico City.

Also signing the letter were U.S. Senators **Jeff Merkley** (D-Ore.), **Edward J. Markey** (D-Mass.), **Robert Menendez** (D-N.J.), **Jack Reed** (D-R.I.), and **Patrick Leahy** (D-Vt.).

The text of the letter follows:

Dear Secretary Tillerson and Secretary Kelly,

On the eve of your trip to Mexico City, we encourage you to take advantage of your visit to reaffirm the strategic importance of the U.S.-Mexico partnership. With more than 35 million Mexican-Americans and Mexicans residing in the United States and more than a million U.S. citizens living in Mexico, our nations are fortunate to enjoy deep social and cultural connections. The American and Mexican people share common values and a commitment to democratic principles. President Trump’s commentary – both during the campaign and since his inauguration – is damaging this critical bilateral relationship and endangering U.S. national security.

The United States engages in extensive collaboration with Mexico on a broad range of issues that advances U.S. national security and economic competitiveness. The U.S. and Mexican governments conduct law enforcement and intelligence cooperation on counterterrorism and counternarcotics. Our governments work together every day to combat the illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons, money and people. The armed forces of both countries routinely conduct joint training exercises sponsored by the U.S. Northern Command.

Mexico is our second largest export market and, according to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the United States exported over \$266 billion in goods and services to Mexico in 2015. Recent reports by the non-partisan Woodrow Wilson Center have documented that roughly 5 million U.S. jobs depend on our trade with Mexico. We believe that trade agreements should be updated; strengthening labor and environmental protections would benefit both Americans and Mexicans. Talk of punitive tariffs and threats against investors in Mexico, however, put American jobs tied to exports to Mexico in jeopardy. Ill-informed and arbitrary measures could make it more difficult to create the high-quality domestic jobs, including domestic manufacturing jobs, that are critical to ensuring continued economic recovery that reaches all American communities.

Additionally, we want to voice our opposition to President Trump's proposal to build a 2,000-mile wall – estimated to cost \$21 billion – on the U.S.-Mexico border. A 2016 Drug Enforcement Administration report finds that the preferred method of drug trafficking organizations is to smuggle illegal narcotics among licit cargo and drive into the United States at a legal port of entry. Since 1990, over 220 tunnels have been found at the U.S.-Mexico border. We therefore agree with your statement at your confirmation hearing, Secretary Kelly, that a wall “will not work.”

As the U.S. struggles with a nationwide epidemic caused by illicit heroin and fentanyl – both of which are trafficked illegally into the United States from Mexico – America's citizens deserve serious proposals, not gimmicks. A border wall, no matter how huge, will do nothing to stop tunnels or trafficking at our ports of entry. Instead, we should make new investments in technology at the border and ports of entry and strengthen intelligence and law enforcement cooperation with our Mexican partners.

In closing, we note for you that six former U.S. Ambassadors, whose combined tenure across Democratic and Republican administrations extends to the late 1980s, recently wrote that “U.S.-Mexico relations touch the daily lives of more Americans than ties with any other country. U.S. prosperity and the security of our homeland are deeply affected by the type of relationship we have with our southern neighbor.” We agree, and we urge you to use your visit to forge a strong partnership based on mutual respect with the Government of Mexico.

Sincerely,

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