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Bush Plan Rewards Corruption, Shorts Border Protection

The Merida package also proposed a \$50 million aid package for Central America for similar purposes. The administration attached the Merida funding to a larger funding measure for the Iraq War and veterans benefits. On May 15, the Democrat-controlled U.S. House of Representatives voted 256-166 to approve the Bush plan, but reduced the 2008 total from the \$500 million proposed by the White House to \$400 million, and transferred some of the funds from the Mexican military to the Mexican judiciary and other institutions.



The Senate, which has its own version of the Merida plan, is expected to vote on the legislation before the end of May. The House and Senate versions will then have to be reconciled. However, the Merida scheme has proceeded thus far with very little media attention and little public awareness. With immigration and border security again assuming central importance in the election cycle, the plan could run into serious problems if voters become aware. Some key points that may sink Merida:

- President Calderon's refusal to cooperate with U.S. extradition requests to deport or repatriate Mexican nationals who are convicted criminals or criminal suspects.
- President Calderon's refusal to stop his government's policies of encouraging and assisting illegal immigration across Mexico's border into the United States.
- The proposed \$1 billion-plus to Mexico should be spent here to secure our own side of the increasingly violent U.S.-Mexico border.
- Many "Zeta" commandos now leading the drug cartels' assaults on police are U.S.-trained former Army troops. We have no assurance that the proposed aid to the corruption-riddled Mexican police and military will not also end up aiding the cartels.
- President Calderon's arrogant demands show no genuine cooperative spirit. He declared last December 5 his refusal to accept any U.S. conditions on the aid: "I cannot accept any submission or subordination," he insisted. "I need that technology. Give it to me. And give it to me without conditions."



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