Thank you Victor for making your police department available to us. I have long believed that our border with Mexico is not our backyard, but the front door to our state and nation. It is the gateway to trade, opportunity and prosperity. It is also an important front in the war on drugs and the war on terror. A more secure border is critical to a safer Texas.

We have launched a statewide operation this week, Operation Wrangler, to send a message to drug traffickers, human smugglers and criminal operatives that their efforts to exploit our international border will come at a great cost to them and their illegal operations. Operation Wrangler is a statewide surge operation involving law enforcement at all levels and the Texas National Guard. It is the second phase of a border security operation that began last year: Operation Rio Grande. We are bringing tremendous force to bear, with an enforcement presence of more than 6,800 individuals, 2,200 vehicles, 48 helicopters, 33 fixed wing aircraft and 35 patrol ships. Up to ninety sheriffs offices and 133 police departments are participating. We are covering the coast, the river, and the interstate. And we have 12 armed security platoons composed of the Texas National Guard, the Border Patrol and local police officers to cut off common illegal crossings. The entire operation is being run out of the Border Security Operations Center, the state’s central point of coordination for joint operations based in Austin.

This operation also recognizes that border security requires a statewide approach. The fact is that no matter how tight the law enforcement net along the border is, some will escape and head to both our large urban areas and smaller towns all along smuggling corridors. There can be no safe haven for drug traffickers and human smugglers anywhere in Texas. Sophisticated smuggling operations in cities like Houston require an aggressive law enforcement response across Texas. Some might argue that the state shouldn’t be in the border security business. I disagree. While it is important for the federal government to pick up the cost of border security operations, it is important nonetheless to have joint operations that leverage the knowledge, capabilities and expertise of state, county and city officials. Who knows the common illegal crossing points in remote areas better than a sheriff who has lived all his life in that community? In order to continuously fund surge operations like this one in the future, I am asking the legislature to join me in supporting a $100 million investment in border security this legislative session. The best border security policy involves more boots on the ground, more patrol cars, more helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, more patrol boats and the latest law enforcement technology. All of this costs money. But our security is worth a whole lot more.
Recent events in Mexico are encouraging, as President Calderon cracks down on the drug cartels that have wreaked carnage on both sides of the border. His recent extradition of major criminal operatives to the United States is an important milestone, but there is more work to be done. Success in this struggle requires cooperation from law enforcement on both sides of the border. And it requires a renewed financial commitment by the State of Texas. If legislators pass my $100 million border security package, we can take back our streets, neighborhoods and private ranches from the criminal scourge that currently jeopardizes them. Moreover, it is imperative that we take measures to deny potential terrorists and their allies easy access to our state. The arrest last week of eleven Iraqis in Mexico destined for Texas with falsified identification documents is a reminder that we must make every effort to deny potential terrorists and their supporters easy access to the U.S. Thank you.