

Bush to propose millions in anti-drug aid for Mexico

The Miami Herald
Aug. 08, 2007

WASHINGTON --

President Bush will propose tens of millions of dollars in assistance to Mexico to fight drug trafficking and violence that has ravaged the country and threatens to spill over into the U.S., a Texas congressman said Wednesday.

Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, said Congress will come up with the final sum to assist Mexico.

"We ultimately are going to come in and do the final package," Cuellar said of Congress. "He's going to make the proposal, but the president is going to have to work with us to do this."

The State Department declined to discuss the proposals publicly because they are still being negotiated with Mexican authorities and lawmakers have not yet been fully briefed on the package. But U.S. officials said they began to talk with Mexico's President Felipe Calderón about new and substantial counter-narcotics aid shortly after he took office in December.

One counter-narcotics official who requested anonymity because the package has not been finalized said negotiations are in an advanced stage and it is hoped that at least parts of the program can be announced when presidents Bush and Calderón meet in Canada on Aug. 20 and 21.

U.S. anti-drug officials have been impressed with Calderón's crackdown on drug traffickers since he took office. From December through June, Calderón sent more than 24,000 troops to areas plagued by drug violence.

Calderón has repeatedly pushed the U.S. to take more responsibility in fighting the two countries' common drug problem, including doing more to stop the flow of illegal U.S. arms into Mexico and trying to combat the demand for drugs north of the border.