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Progress Report - Security and Opportunity at the U.S.-Canada Border

In the aftermath of the horrific events of September 11, President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien directed us to strengthen the security of our citizens while ensuring that terrorists could not hold our economies hostage.

We had a strong foundation to build upon. Our countries have a long and proud history of working together in advancing our common interests, and have built the largest trading relationship between any two countries in the world. And when new threats to our collective security have emerged, our countries have worked together to address them as we did when we jointly created the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).

In addressing the global threat of terrorism we quickly concluded that national and economic security were mutually reinforcing objectives. We recognized that we could and must enhance the security of our border while facilitating the legitimate flow of people and goods upon which both of our economies depend.

In short, we decided to develop a "smart border" - one where we could identify and expedite low-risk people and goods, and focus our resources on higher risk traffic.

On December 12, 2001, we signed the Smart Border Declaration and together launched a 30-point action plan. This blueprint for action has four pillars: the secure flow of people, the secure flow of goods, secure infrastructure and information sharing and coordination in the enforcement of these objectives.

We advised Prime Minister Jean Chr'tien and President George W. Bush that we would report on our progress around the time of the June G-8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada.

With the hard work of dozens of agencies and departments on both sides of the border and with the input of hundreds of stakeholders, we are pleased to report tremendous progress. We believe that we are well on the way to creating a smart border for the 21st century - one that is open for business but closed to terrorists.

The Secure Flow of People

Ensuring the secure flow of people into our countries begins well away from our borders. To this end, we have strengthened our cooperation and our ability to intercept high-risk travelers before they arrive in our countries.

We are deploying additional immigration control officers overseas to ensure that fraudulent documents are identified before individuals board planes. We have also increased our cooperation on policy with respect to the issuance of visas and visa exemptions to help us more effectively control irregular migration to either country.

In keeping with our commitment to improve the operation of our common border, our two countries have initialed a "safe third" text that will require, subject to several important exceptions, that refugee claimants apply in the last of the two countries where they have been present.

We will be holding consultations with members of our respective legislatures, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and non-governmental organizations in the coming weeks in order to finalize the agreement soon thereafter. This initiative will promote the orderly handling of asylum applications and reduce the misuse of our respective asylum systems.

We are implementing a common approach to screen international air passengers before they arrive in either country and identify those who warrant additional security scrutiny. Our agencies are working closely to share information on high-risk passengers, including, for the first time, Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record data. We are establishing Joint Passenger Analysis Units in Vancouver and Miami by September 2002, with U.S. and Canadian officers working side by side to refine our mutual procedures for intercepting high-risk travelers.

As for the border we share, the vast majority of the more than 200 million travelers crossing it each year pose no risk to our security. Canada and the United States are deploying a border-wide "fast lane" program called NEXUS to

speed the flow of pre-screened low-risk travelers so that we can focus our resources on higher risk travelers.

Two days ago, we opened NEXUS lanes at the two main crossings along the Washington-British Columbia border (Blaine-Pacific Highway and Blaine-Douglas), and will open NEXUS at the Point Roberts-Boundary Bay crossing in July.

NEXUS is projected to be in place at all major border crossings in Southern Ontario, New York State and Michigan by the end of this year and to all other high-volume border crossings in 2003. NEXUS enrollment will begin in Buffalo-Fort Erie by September 2002, and in Detroit-Windsor by October 2002. NEXUS will open for operation in both locations by December 2002.

We are also working to provide air travelers the same "fast lane" benefits. We are launching the NEXUS - Air pilot project at Ottawa and Dorval International airports in early 2003. This project will use biometric technology to confirm the identities of pre-screened, low-risk participants. The pilot project is the first step towards a complete binational NEXUS - Air system.

Canada and the United States are working together to develop common standards for using biometric identifiers, such as fingerprints, facial recognition, and iris scanning, to confirm the identity of travelers. Our two countries partnered in Kananaskis to obtain the commitment of the G-8 to develop standards for biometrics in international travel documents.

The Secure Flow of Goods

Today, we are also pleased to report on significant progress on a new joint program that will revolutionize the way commercial shipments move across our shared border. The Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program establishes a public-private partnership to improve security measures throughout the entire supply chain. Companies that make the commitment to improve their supply chain security will enjoy the benefits of a "fast lane" for commercial truck traffic.

In short, FAST will make many cross-border commercial shipments simpler, cheaper, and subject to fewer delays - all while enhancing security. FAST is designed from the framework of our existing unilateral supply chain security programs, Canada's Customs Self Assessment and Partners in Protection (CSA/PIP) and the United States' Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT).

FAST provides a simpler clearance process for lower-risk shipments - those imported by pre-authorized importers and carried by pre-authorized drivers and carriers. Approved participants will use a dedicated "fast lane," which will significantly expedite the processing of shipments. Businesses will benefit from a simpler clearance process and greater efficiency in the shipment of their goods.

FAST also reduces the administrative burden on businesses by minimizing the amount of trade compliance verification that is done at the border. This allows front-line customs officials to focus on higher-risk traffic.

FAST is the first step in an ongoing effort to align how our two countries process all commercial shipments - by truck, plane, train or ship. Our goal is to provide companies compatible procedures to follow when importing to either country. These common procedures will reduce the costs and administrative burden on business, and will significantly enhance security by providing customs agencies with the information they require for proper scrutiny of incoming goods. Later this summer we expect to announce a schedule for implementation at our top shared commercial border crossings.

Using the same principles of risk management, we are cooperating to identify and screen high-risk cargo before it arrives in either country. Canadian customs officers are now stationed in Seattle-Tacoma and Newark to target containers arriving in those ports that are ultimately destined for Canada. U.S. customs officers are currently doing the same in Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver. This program is the first of its kind and revolutionizes the way customs administrators work together to prevent terrorists from threatening global trade.

Today, our two Customs Commissioners - Rob Wright and Rob Bonner - are giving a joint presentation to the World Customs Organization. They are describing how our successful cooperation can serve as a model for enhancing the security of the global trading and transportation systems.

In fact, the U.S.-Canadian efforts have served as a catalyst for the United States' expansion of the Container Security Initiative to Singapore, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. The transportation security agenda approved at the G-8 Summit, which builds upon many of our joint initiatives, is another example of how we are working together

through international fora to address the threat terrorism poses to all nations.

Secure Infrastructure

The efficient movement of people and goods requires the right infrastructure to support it, and the right technology and intelligence to secure it.

We are launching a binational steering group to reduce the risks to our shared critical infrastructure, and are setting priorities for action across key infrastructure sectors. One concrete result of our bilateral cooperation includes security assessments that bridge and tunnel authorities have conducted with federal, state, provincial and private sector representatives - a process which has already resulted in security improvements at many locations.

We have also taken steps to secure air travel. We have agreed to recognize each others' national standards for aviation security and have created new federal transportation agencies to ensure that these standards are met. We have worked together to deploy explosives detection systems, reinforce cockpit doors, deploy cross-border Air Marshals and Aircraft Protection Officers and implement other measures to improve the security of our air system.

Our land border supports the largest trading relationship in the world and we are committed to investing in infrastructure in a way that addresses both current challenges and future growth.

Our first priority is to invest in the infrastructure that will support and amplify the impact of the NEXUS and FAST programs.

Technology can play an important role in expediting traffic in a secure manner. We have invested in computer simulation modeling to optimize our infrastructure investments, advanced information systems to improve traffic mobility and high-energy gamma and X-ray machines to detect dangerous materials.

Coordination and Information Sharing in the Enforcement of these Objectives

September 11 demonstrated that no country is immune from the threat of terrorism. Canada and the United States are committed to working together to prevent, detect, apprehend and prosecute terrorists and other criminals. While our two countries already cooperate closely on many law enforcement initiatives, we are strengthening this cooperation to meet the demands of the new security reality.

We are improving the speed with which we can share information through initiatives such as the implementation of an electronic system for criminal records information exchange, including fingerprints, that will be in place by September 2002. We have also stepped up intelligence cooperation with Canada participating in the U.S. Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force.

To strengthen our coordinated response, we continue to expand and enhance the binational integrated border enforcement efforts that proved effective even before September 11. To better facilitate this existing partnership, we have created six Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs) to act as hubs for coordinated enforcement efforts across our shared border. And though our local officers already coordinate throughout the border on a daily basis, our goal is to field a total of 14 IBETs over the next 18 months.

We are using Project NorthStar - a grass roots organization of law enforcement professionals from the federal, state, provincial, and local levels on both sides of the border - to provide a forum for coordinating communications, intelligence, joint operations, and prosecutions.

Additionally, through our Shared Border Accord process and the Canada-U.S. Cross-Border Crime Forum, we are working to share information and co-ordinate efforts toward fighting terrorism and crime.

We are also conducting joint counter-terrorism training exercises to strengthen the capacities of public safety planners and emergency responders. A major joint counter-terrorism exercise is scheduled for May 2003.

Finally, both of our countries have passed legislation to give us the tools we need to better address the terrorist threat. To date, Canada and the United States have listed over 280 individuals and organizations linked to global terrorism, enabling our countries to freeze their assets.

Next Steps

Although we have taken great strides forward, there is additional work to be done. This process has demonstrated

that when we focus together on common challenges, we can achieve tremendous results. We need to maintain this focus into the future.

As we move forward, we will continue to meet to ensure complete and full implementation of the 30-point Action Plan, particularly those areas that require long-term focus and cooperation. We are also identifying new areas for future cooperation, and will present a forward agenda for action to Prime Minister Jean Chr'tien and President George W. Bush when they next meet.

We are proud of what has been accomplished. This process demonstrates how our two great nations can work together to strengthen our national and economic security.

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