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Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2010 6:24 AM
To: Pascual, Carlos (Mexico City)
Cc: Williams, James H (Mexico City); Dickson, John S; Castillo, Raymond A; Mills, Cheryl D; Sullivan, Jacob J; DiMartino, Kitty; Douglas, Walter T; Macmanus, Joseph E
Subject: Strategic Communications

Carlos:

First, let me say how shocked we all were by the news over the weekend. I know this is a very difficult time for everyone at the Mission and our thoughts are with all of you.

I had a good conversation with Jim Williams about the strategic communications initiative and I wanted to bring you up to speed on our thinking and where things stand with Keith.

Based on our discussions and the excellent paper that Jim prepared I think there are several critical areas that we need to address:

- Work with our counterparts in the Mexican government to help them develop their capacity to handle the communications aspects of the drug initiative more effectively
- Develop a process for ensuring the GOM and USG have clear, coordinated and consistent messaging on all aspects of the initiative
- Increase public awareness in Mexico about "Merida"; based on a report I got from INR last week there is very little awareness or understanding of the program in Mexico and the contributions of USG
- Work with GOM to develop an on-going and effective communications strategy at all levels to provide people across the country with information that is directly relevant to them and which they need to navigate their way through this crisis. For example, what is going on in *their* community; what are *local* authorities doing; what programs are available in *their* schools; what can *they* do, etc. I have increasingly come to believe that the lack of this sort of "personally relevant" information at a time of crisis increases public anxiety and contributes to the overall sense of things being out of control. We have begun to focus on this issue and have worked both in Haiti and last year in Pakistan to provide people with a steady stream of information they can use. We are using a wide array of communications tools to deliver these messages that allows the information to be delivered in a very granular, local, personal way. The other benefit of this approach is that it helps balance the steady stream of gruesome news being put out by traditional media.
- Work with private sector in both Mexico and US to develop broad based PSA campaign to increase awareness of the initiative and maintain public support for the effort
- Increase awareness in Mexico of USG efforts to combat drug use in US

Keith has reached out to a number of his associates at BDA and unfortunately he has met with some resistance to BDA taking this project on. The personal safety issue seems to be the biggest concern. I do believe we will be able to overcome this to some degree and I have some ideas which we can discuss when we next speak. In the meantime I have reached out to Pat Mitchell of the Paley Center and she believes she will be able to help engage the US private sector once we have a plan of action in place.

Finally, with regard to next week's trip by S, Jim feels it might be better for me to come to Mexico sometime in late April rather than have it as part of next week's agenda. I am happy to do whatever works best for you. Keith is also prepared to come next week or in April. Just let us know.

Judth