



## DHS Provides Details on U.S./Mexican Border Network

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by [Sandra Wendelken, Editor](#)

Earlier this month, the U.S. departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and State and the Mexican government announced a new cross-border public-safety communications network. The network provides a formal agreement to enhance an earlier communications strategy between the two countries established in 2007 (see “The Border, La Frontera” in the November/December 2007 issue of *MissionCritical Communications*).

*Photo courtesy US Customs and Border Protection*

The agreement establishes a bilateral working group through which DHS and the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) of Mexico will coordinate the network’s installation and operation. The new network will allow participating public-safety organizations to coordinate incident response and cooperate on a broad array of law-enforcement activities by establishing new cross-border voice, data and video channels. The signed protocol states that qualified public-safety organizations from state, local and other public security organizations can be invited to participate in the network through the bilateral working group, according to Chris Essid, director of DHS Office of Emergency Communications.

The timeframe for establishing the network is yet to be worked out by the group. The overall implementation will be subject to considerations such as binational agreements and the availability of funds and spectrum. DHS declined to provide details on how spectrum for the network will be established and regulated. “Each government is responsible for funding and building its own portion of the network,” Essid said.

Similarly, each government will oversee procurement of the network once funding is established. The U.S. government will procure the U.S. portion of the required equipment in accordance with federal procurement regulations. The network will be standards based and use existing and proven technologies, per the guidelines established by the signed protocol.

The network will provide voice, data and video channels for sharing information through cross-border wireless links, Essid said. “It will improve the ability of participating public-safety and law-enforcement organizations to cooperate and conduct a broad array of activities,” he said. DHS officials declined to comment on whether a microwave backbone is part of the network and what specific applications are planned.