

**U.S.-Mexico talks see scant progress;**

**LITTLE ACTION TAKEN ON IMMIGRATION, OTHER ISSUES**

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**Body**

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While stressing the close relationship between the United States and Mexico, government officials from both nations failed Tuesday to make significant **progress** during an annual summit to discuss sensitive trade, **immigration** and border **issues**.

The 19th annual meeting of the **U.S.-Mexico** Binational Commission, headed by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castaneda. ended Tuesday afternoon with many promises but **little action** on matters that have caused tension between the neighboring countries.

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington changed the priorities of the Bush administration, and **progress** on reaching a new **immigration** accord with Mexico will take time, Powell and Castaneda told reporters at the end of the summit.

"The Bush administration sees Mexico as more than a neighbor. . . . Mexico is also a partner who helps the United States combat terrorism and helps ensure Iraq complies with the U.N. resolution to disarm weapons of mass destruction," Powell said.

Powell said there was no "specific deal" on **immigration** or on Mexico's growing water debt to drought-stricken U.S. farmers. But Powell said ties with Mexico were at an all-time high despite policy changes caused by Sept. 11.

Castaneda, who has repeatedly stated that the United States would eventually have to accept a more lenient migration accord given the reality of millions of Mexicans already in the United States, took a less positive tone than Powell. "There is no plan, no time frame to legalize Mexicans, nor is it foreseen. It is being negotiated, as it has been all along," said Castaneda, one of President Vicente Fox's closest advisers.

"We reiterated the commitment of both governments to find solutions for legal, early, humane and secure movement of people between Mexico and the United States," said Castaneda, who said there was no timeline for these goals.

Behind closed doors, members of the delegations from the two countries met in separate groups, depending on the topic: foreign policy, **immigration**, legal affairs, energy, border **issues**, bilateral cooperation and economic affairs.

Besides Powell, the Americans attending were Attorney General John Ashcroft, Education Secretary Rod Paige, Interior Secretary Gail Norton, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman.

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Fox greeted the group before they got to work and gave a lengthy speech on pressing issues. Afterward, President Bush gave a videotaped message from Washington. "The United States has no more important relationship in the world than we have with Mexico," Bush said. "I have visited Mexico more than any other country and consult with my friend President Fox frequently."

As proof of the importance Bush placed on Mexico, the president said he choose fellow Texan Tony Garza, "one of my most trusted amigos," as the new U.S. ambassador to Mexico. Garza was the former Texas Railroad Commissioner and is the first Mexican-American to hold the post.

In his talk with the U.S. delegation, Fox said, "It is time to put migration matters at the highest levels."

The Fox administration's top priority with the United States has been to reach a new immigration accord to give legal status to undocumented Mexican workers. "We have a new window of opportunity . . . to regularize Mexicans, achieve border security, have temporary workers, visas and programs for better association and prosperity," Fox said.

The main achievements Tuesday included a \$25 million letter of agreement to speed up the movement of goods and people across the 2,000-mile border between the two countries.

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