

Mexican leader chastises Bush; U.S. immigration policy and the country's appetite for illegal drugs drew fire from Felipe Calderon.

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Body

Mexican President **Felipe Calderon chastised** President **Bush** yesterday, accusing him of doing too little to stem the causes of **illegal immigration** and failing to curb the **U.S. appetite** for **illegal drugs**.

Opening a two-day meeting aimed at easing strained relations, **Calderon** reminded **Bush** that he once had said that "there is no relationship all over the world that is more relevant to the United States than the one with Mexico."

"Unfortunately, [because of] the terrible happenings against the United States, priorities changed," **Calderon** said, referring to the Sept. 11 attacks. "Nevertheless, I believe that it is now time to retake the spirit of those words and to direct our relationship toward a path of mutual prosperity."

Calderon reminded **Bush** of the pain caused in Mexico by the departure of so many migrants, dividing families. The costs are more than personal, he said.

"Mexicans lose in each migrant the best of our people, young people, working people, and audacious people, strong people," **Calderon** said. "This is why we want to generate jobs for Mexicans here in Mexico, because that is the only way in order to truly solve the **immigration** issue."

Calderon's comments, delivered at a lush hacienda 30 miles outside this former Mayan city, were unusually pointed for opening remarks, when presidents tend to exchange pleasantries and leave differences to be aired behind closed doors.

But **Calderon**, who was inaugurated in December, would like to be seen here as standing up to the United States and seeking more respect for Mexico than did his predecessor, Vicente Fox.

Calderon accused **Bush** of seeking the wrong solution to **illegal immigration** in signing a law that would build or improve 700 miles of fencing along the **U.S.**-Mexico border, a move widely seen by Mexicans as hostile and ineffective.

"My pledge to you and your government," **Bush** said, "- but, more importantly, the people of Mexico - is I will work as hard as I possibly can to pass comprehensive **immigration** reform."

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The two economies are complementary but not equal, **Calderon** said, with Mexico awash in labor and the United States rich in capital. **Immigration** can be stopped, he said, "not by decree" but by investment and jobs in Mexico.

Echoing a line from his presidential campaign last year, **Calderon** said that money for just one kilometer of road in Mexico would do more to stem **illegal immigration** than 10 kilometers of walls at the border.

Calderon, who has dispatched Mexico's army to eight **Mexican** states to combat **drug** violence, pledged to do his part to curb the supply of **drugs** crossing into the United States from Mexico. Warring smugglers are believed responsible for 2,000 killings last year in Mexico.

But **Calderon** said he could not succeed in the **drug** war unless the United States reduced the billions of dollars a year its citizens spent on **drugs**.

In response, **Bush** repeated pledges made Monday in Guatemala that he would work forcefully to pass an **immigration** overhaul this year and reduce the demand for **illegal drugs**.

"Together, we're working to ensure that we have a secure and modern border that speeds the legitimate flow of people and commerce, and stops those who threaten our common safety and prosperity," **Bush** said.

Bush is due back in Washington today after a weeklong tour.

Read remarks by President **Bush** and **Mexican** President **Felipe Calderon** via <http://go.philly.com/mexico>

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