

Mexico Leader Hopes His Talks With Bush Will Unblock Aid

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Body

Days before a scheduled summit meeting with President **Bush**, President Vicente Fox of **Mexico** said today that he **hoped** to end a months-long stalemate and make concrete advances in negotiations on immigration and American economic support for the poorest regions of his country.

"We are ready and we **hope** to solidify some advances," Mr. Fox said in a late afternoon interview.

"Our final objective remains the same as we had defined at the beginning of the **talks**," he said, "but we understand that the matters of security and terrorism affected the speed of our progress."

The summit meeting is set for Friday in Monterrey, where both presidents **will** attend the United Nations Conference on Development.

Since he was elected more than 18 months ago, President Fox has pressed the United States to adopt agreements that among other things would: increase the number of guest workers hired in the agricultural and service industries; increase American economic support for development in **Mexico**'s poorest regions -- particularly those that expel the largest number of illegal immigrants to the United States in search of work; and give legal status to some three million undocumented Mexicans living in the United States.

The negotiations were delayed by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. And many political observers predicted that American concerns about terrorism would plunder Mr. Fox's campaign by dousing support in Washington for opening the border to a freer flow of Mexican workers.

Responding to the crisis, **Mexico** added binational security measures to the negotiations. And, following a visit to **Mexico** by the United States homeland security director, Tom Ridge, **Mexico** and the United States are expected to reach agreements on measures aimed at making the border more secure without interrupting trade.

Six months after the attacks, there are signs that support for Mr. Fox's initiatives is regaining ground in the United States. Congressional **leaders** including Representative Richard A. Gephardt and Senator Tom Daschle recently wrote President **Bush** to urge that he move forward on an immigrant legalization plan.

And the House of Representatives passed a measure to extend a program that allows undocumented immigrants to stay in the United States while they apply for permanent residency.

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