



## Giffords summit addresses Mexico drug violence, spillover

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Authorities north of the Mexico border must take heed of the drug cartel violence unfolding in Mexico and prepare to battle it here, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., said Tuesday.

Giffords spoke at a 4 p.m. press conference following a daylong law enforcement summit on border drug violence she hosted.

"Today is a milestone in the history of border security in Arizona," Giffords said at the Evo A. DeConcini U.S. Courthouse, 405 W. Congress St.

The significance of the summit, Giffords said, was getting 60 federal, state and local law officers together to discuss drug violence in northern Mexico and its spillover into the United States.

Giffords said the summit should focus more attention on getting additional law enforcement equipment and personnel to the border to combat the problem.

Mexico's deadly drug wars, with cartels battling each other and the Mexican Army, have led to an estimated 7,000 deaths in Mexico since the beginning of last year, Giffords said.

Flanked by 15 area law officers at the news conference, Giffords said violence has spilled north of the border and "is flaring up in numerous states hundreds of miles away from the border and as far away as Canada."

Giffords said that in Tucson, cartels distribute drugs and operate stash houses and do whatever it takes to protect their "illicit interests."

A federal study published last year by the National Drug Intelligence Center shows that an unspecified number of Mexican drug trafficking organizations have formed alliances with two drug cartels here, the Federation and the Juarez Cartel.

The cartels, which control drug trafficking from production to wholesale operations and shipping throughout the United States, are in Tucson mostly to ensure their drugs are shipped from Tucson to their ultimate destinations, area law officers have said.

Some of their drugs are sold locally to smaller drug trafficking organizations, which sell here and fuel Tucson's drug violence, authorities said.

While some local authorities have questioned the extent to which cartels operate in Tucson and point out that drug violence here goes back for decades, Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard said he has seen increasing cartel violence in southern Arizona.