



Published: 09.10.2005

## Border plan will combat child abductions

*THE ASSOCIATED PRESS*

CHANDLER - Attorneys general from both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border pledged Friday to work more closely on crime issues plaguing the region.

Tops on their agenda is implementing a coordinated "Amber Alert" child-abduction-notification system, a need highlighted in July when a man escaped into Mexico as officials sought him in the kidnapping of his two children and the shooting deaths of his ex-girlfriend's parents and brother in the Phoenix suburb of Queen Creek.

The suspect in that case was eventually arrested by Mexican authorities near Puerto Vallarta and the children were returned to their mother.

"We've got an informal agreement now with the Nogales police, but that's not good enough," Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard said. "We can't have another situation like the Queen Creek abduction."

Law enforcement agencies in the two countries are not connected electronically, but top officials from nine cross-border states finishing a three-day meeting here said they have agreed on a plan to put top deputies in direct communication so they can quickly spread the word about kidnappings.

They hope to expand the plan later this month into a complete electronic interconnection of their various agencies.

An electronic system linking the police and prosecutors in both nations is extremely important, not just by improving response time to abductions but in stopping vehicle theft, drug smuggling and other crimes, Baja California chief prosecutor Antonio Martinez-Luna said.

"It will help in two ways," Martinez-Luna said. "It will help identify the person and the vehicle, but more importantly, for the police, it will warn them" of safety issues by identifying stolen cars.

Right now, police agencies on opposite sides of the border can't tell if a car registered in another country is stolen when they stop it, he said.

The agreements came out of the annual conference of border attorneys general, and brought together seven border state AGs and deputy AGs from two others.

In addition to improved cooperation on Amber Alerts and car theft, they agreed on a series of steps to battle methamphetamine, violence against women, fraud and identity theft and juvenile delinquency.

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