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# **Bush and Fox Repeat Vows on Immigration**

By GINGER THOMPSON and DAVID E. SANGER

CANCÚN, Mexico, March 31 — Five years after they first pledged to work together to find ways to open legal channels for Mexicans to seek work in the United States, President Bush and President Vicente Fox ended a two-day meeting on Friday essentially where they were in 2001: agreeing on an approach, but unable to win the support they needed to turn their vision into law.

At a news conference with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, Mr. Bush and Mr. Fox spoke with conviction about the reasons they supported comprehensive immigration changes that would include expanding guest worker programs and opening new paths to citizenship.

But their comments also made clear that the bold immigration agenda that they supported at the start of their administrations never got far off the ground, in part because of their own missteps and miscalculations, but mostly because of forces out of their control.

"I believe a guest worker program will help us rid the society and the border of these coyotes, who smuggle people in the back of 18-wheelers," Mr. Bush said. "I believe it'll help get rid of the document-forgers. I believe it'll help people on both sides of our border to respect the laws of our border, and enforce our borders."

He added, "I believe it is important to bring people out of the shadows of American society, so they don't have to fear the life they live."

Still, the president dodged a question about the plans by Republican leaders in Congress to press for an immigration plan that does not include guest worker programs and focuses instead on border security.

When pressed on whether he would veto such a plan, Mr. Bush said, "I said want a comprehensive bill. You're presuming there won't be a comprehensive bill. I believe there will be."

Prime Minister Harper announced that the three nations had formed a committee of business leaders to discuss ways to keep North America competitive with Asia. And he announced a summit meeting on development, scheduled for next year in Canada.

The longstanding dispute over United States tariffs on imports of Canadian softwood lumber remained unresolved, with Mr. Bush promising to negotiate and Mr. Harper threatening legal action.

Mr. Bush stood firm against Canada's opposition to a new law that will require all people coming into the United States after 2007 — whether from Canada or Mexico — to present a passport or some other tamper-proof document.

For Mr. Bush the past two days have been as much about trying to defuse a debate over immigration in the United States that pits him against leaders of his own party, as about reviving a relationship that turned sour after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11.

For Mr. Fox, the meeting was an opportunity for a little vindication before he leaves office on Dec. 1. He made sweeping immigration reforms in the United States the center of his foreign policy. In pursuit of those goals, he has stood with the United States to defend free trade and tight border security against leftist leaders across Latin America.

Referring to Mr. Fox and Mr. Bush, Demetrios Papademetriou, co-director of the Migration Policy Institute, said, "Both countries misjudged the political situation in the United States, and so they miscalculated what they could really deliver to each other."

Harley Shaiken, director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, said of the two presidents, "They began dating five years ago. They are dating five years later. There isn't much more activity than that."

Mr. Shaiken added: "In Mr. Fox's case, the causes could be traced to his poor political skills. For Bush, it was the lack of political capital he put behind Mexico. But in the end, it's Fox who will leave office a spinster."