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IMMIGRATION | CANCUN SUMMIT

## **3-way summit ends without breakthrough**

**President Bush and the leaders of Mexico and Canada failed to make concrete progress on immigration and trade at a two-day summit in Mexico.**

By William Douglas

Knight Ridder News Service

**CANCUN, Mexico** - President Bush and the leaders of Mexico and Canada concluded a two-day summit at this vacation resort on Friday without making visible progress on immigration or the economic issues that have strained relations among the three countries.

At a three-way news conference, Bush and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper politely disagreed over an immigration issue that's gotten little attention: a U.S. law that will go into effect in January 2008 requiring people entering the United States through Mexico and Canada to carry passports or similar secure documents.

Harper said he had pressed Bush on Canadian concerns that the law would hurt trade and tourism. Bush said he was bound by Congress to implement the law, and he disagreed with Canada's criticism. "If properly implemented, it will facilitate trade, not hinder travel and trade," Bush said.

"We're obviously concerned that if we don't move quickly and properly on this, that this could have effects on trade and movement of people, conventions, you name it -- that is not helpful to our economy or relationships," Harper said.

The two leaders agreed to have Canadian Public Security Minister Stockwell Day and U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff meet on the subject.

The three leaders soft-pedaled the bigger immigration question that overshadowed their summit: what U.S. policy will be toward the estimated 12 million immigrants now in the United States illegally and toward the millions more who yearn to come.

Bush signaled that he was resigned to the fact that overhauling the nation's immigration laws now rests with Congress. Lawmakers are debating the matter during a congressional election year, and it's a hot-button issue for many Americans.

"Some guy, some wag one time put it: 'It's like watching people make sausage,' " Bush said of watching Congress legislate. "But we're making progress. And I want a comprehensive bill."

Bush stresses that any new immigration law must contain a guest-worker program, unlike a measure the House of Representatives passed in December, which concentrates on stiffer border enforcement and punishment for undocumented workers.

The Senate is debating a measure that its Judiciary Committee approved this week. It would allow illegal workers who were in the United States as of Jan. 7, 2004, to obtain visas and stay for up to six years while they apply for permanent residency, pay fines and back taxes, and demonstrate proficiency in English and civics.

Under the measure's guest-worker program, up to 400,000 new foreign workers a year could come for up to six years. They also could apply for permanent residency and citizenship. The committee also would allow up to 1.5 million undocumented immigrants over a five-year period to hold agricultural jobs under temporary visas.