

# Mexican drug cartels

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The drug cartels are lucrative, they are violent, and they are operated with stunning planning and precision. " -Attorney General Eric Holder

The Mexican cartels have been able to slide under the radar for quite some time now and are finally beginning to get the attention they deserve. But is this too late? Have they already done too much damage to their country and their people where emerging out of this horrific phase is even possible? This could be the case if no immediate action is taken. In order for this to happen two things must occur.

The first is an immediate solution to the reoccurring violence and corruption within and outside of the Mexican borders. The second is a long-term solution must be made therefore preventing any sort of international dominance like this to happen again. Some solutions that need to be made in the immediate future are an increase in border security and heightened sense of awareness for smugglers not only from Mexico but into it as well, a stricter regulation on the selling of United States firearms, and. In terms of for the long run, there must be a greater relationship between the

United States and Mexico not only toward the security issues but also toward the political ones. The Mexican government must implement reform in places like education, training of officers, and policies to help build a better democracy, and finally there must be a constant and sustained effort to cut off all supply lines of money and weapons to the cartels. The origins of the cartels can be traced back to the Columbian Cali and Medellin mega-cartels who were responsible for the majority of drugs coming into the United States. Fortunately in the 1990's the Columbia drug cartels were able to be suppressed and eventually extinguished (Kindt).

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However the positive efforts in Columbia created negative ones in Mexico. With no one fully controlling the drug supply to the United States anymore the battle for dominance began. After dissolving most of the drug routes through Miami and the Caribbean the only other option left was Mexico (Kindt). While this shift of power was taking place within the cartels, the Mexican government was also facing a shift in democratic power with the emergence of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). It began its rule in 1929 and had total dominance over the political world in Mexico.

The PRI was able to subdue all other voices and elect officers that had the party members best interest in mind. This normally would work however the members of PRI were usually corrupt and therefore it wasn't long before the newly formed Mexican drug cartels and the PRI linked up. The PRI was notorious already for suppressing voices of people who did not agree, granting monopolies, and paying off labor leaders (O'Neil). It wasn't until the 1980's and into the 90's where the violence started to occur. The PRI began to lose its power and there was an every-growing struggle for power.

In 2000 the ties to the PRI was officially broken with the election of Vicente Fox as president. This however created even more corruption with the number of local authorities being paid off which in turn forced disorganization between leaders at the local, state, and national levels. Now that the cartels were beginning to be met with resistance they started to become more violent and militarized. Among the most feared were The Zetas, member of the Gulf cartel, who were alleged to be former members of the elite Mexican army unit (Weinberg).

With this new floodgate opened for Mexican drug trade multiple cartels began to come onto the scene, which caused inter-cartel violence as well. The United States finally had to intervene during a struggle between the Tijuana and Sinaloa cartels ending in the assassination of a catholic archbishop and the favored presidential candidate. The United States began to strengthen border controls and began to revive security collaborations with Mexico (O'Neil). However this was short lived and the cartels were able to once again establish control of border crossings and continue smuggling.

In 2005 the reality of the situation in Mexico was finally brought to the attention of the American people. The kingpin of the Gulf cartel, Osiel Cardenas, was arrested. The Gulf cartel controlled the largest border crossing between Mexico and the United States, El Paso. This in turn caused the other two rival cartels to step in and try and take control. However the Zetas were not going to give up their main smuggling route and at the end of just one day there were one hundred and eighty killed including the newly elected chief of police (Weinberg).

The United States once again took action and implemented operation Stonegarden, which gave local authorities on the U. S. side four hundred million dollars to help improve border regulation and reduce smuggling. Soon after this was implemented, the drug cartels reached an agreement about territories and were able to again continue with business. It is apparent that no matter what the United States or Mexico has done in the past to suppress the cartels has not been successful. With over ninety percent of the U. S. cocaine being able to be traced back to Mexico and about

ninety percent of Mexican firearms being able to be traced back to the United States just feeding more money into different agencies isn't working (Bronsther). Most of the guns that cartels are using are purchased in the United States and then smuggled back down into Mexico. They are able to do this because the cartel hires people called "straw buyers". These are individuals with clean records who are paid to go into the United States and purchase large quantities of guns from local vendors and then bring them back down into Mexico.

In order to prevent this from happening the United States must enforce the current laws where selling guns to foreign countries is illegal. It should also forbid the export of unlicensed firearms. All this is looked after and overseen by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives so therefore additional funding should be going to that agency instead of only focusing on the agencies that deal with security (O'Neil). We know that if we go to war with the drug cartels that it will be a very bloody prolonged and simply unneeded conflict.

The way to hurt them the most and do the most damage is to stop providing them with such a lucrative market. We should create stricter punishments for people who do end up selling to straw buyers or even educate vendors on proper gun selling and encourage the responsible sale of firearms (Miller). When it comes to drugs we can implement the same ideology. The United States is the biggest consumer nation in the world right now and drugs fit right into that. In order to suppress this problem in the most efficient way possible we must look at ourselves first.

There has to be a shift from supporting law enforcement to supporting the suppression of the U. S. demand. Studies have shown that money spent on rehabilitation for addicts is five times more effective than money spent on conventional law enforcement (O'Neil). Expanding and promoting drug treatment will in turn lower the allure or demand for the drugs the cartels are providing. Most of all however the cutting off of the Mexican drug cartels money supply would be detrimental to them and ultimately lead to their destruction.

Removing the money source will no longer give them the ability to pay off officials, at the state and local levels, which will in turn force democracy to become a more fair system. Judges and local police officers will be forced off of the cartels payroll and therefore improve upon Mexico's push to create a clean government. This would also be beneficial for previous problems as well. The purchasing and smuggling of guns will not longer be as big of a problem due to lack of funds the cartels will have. Drugs will also see a decrease due to expensive manufacturing costs and distribution expenses.

This is where the majority of United States efforts should be focused because between fifteen and twenty five billion dollars goes from the U. S. into either Mexico or an account. The money is usually simply carried, wired, or transported to the border and merely driven across. Although guns and drugs are a huge problem in coming across the border if that amount of money is about to be simply driven across the border should we be focusing a lot more attention towards our efforts in recovering and seizing that

money? Especially when confiscating that money will therefore lower amount of guns and drugs in circulation.

The United States is not the sole source of the problem. The Achilles heel of Mexico is the corruption. About one fifth of Mexico's Federal Investigative Agency is under investigation for involvement with the drug cartels (Bronsther). In order to prevent this problem from continuing and hopefully reverse this common theme, Mexico must create institutional reform and growth by promoting better ways of training and education for law enforcement. They must be sure to implement ways to ensure that their officers, agents and even diplomats are not susceptible to corruption or manipulation.

The United States is as much to blame for the situation in Mexico and Mexico is. If it weren't for our massive consumption habits and distribution of firearms the cartels would be useless to have. We have dug ourselves into a very deep hole and now must begin the slow climb out. This begins with efforts to subdue our addictive habits through rehabilitation and education, stricter laws regarding firearms sales especially around the border, a cooperative effort with Mexico against the cartels, and most importantly an increased effort in finding and destroying money that is funding these cartels.

Mexico in turn is facing this problem head on and suffering greatly for it. To avoid any further damage from being done, as a country, Mexico must start from the inside and work out with major reforms in their branches of government most importantly judicial and more specifically law enforcement.

They must design a system in which corruption is the main characteristic to be aware of and avoid and need to educate, train, and generate true leaders who will hopefully strive to make a new positive name for Mexico.

Both the United States and Mexico are realizing just how much corruption, violence, and instability these drug cartels are creating. Procedures are beginning to be put in place in order to suppress the cartels. The United States recently passed the Miranda Initiative with grants Mexico one point four billion dollars to help them rebuild their nation. Mexico too has increased salaries and benefits for officers as an effort to allure people to fill positions once held by corrupt officials (O'Neil).