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NARCOTRAFFICKING IN MEXICO

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Mexico, like other nations in Latin America, can't escape the problems surrounding drug-trafficking and its consequences. Despite years of concentrated effort by all levels of Mexican government and its various organizations, the cycle of drugs continues. The President of Mexico, Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon, has publically stated to the American media that drug trafficking is a threat to Mexican national security, not only because of the crime that accompanys such activity, but also because of the growing wealth that enables traffickers to corrupt police and government institutions. This paper provides an overview of the drug-trafficking problem in Mexico, and underlines the necessity to closely coordinate counterdrug operations between the United States and Mexico.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....1
THE THREAT.....3
MONEY LAUNDERING.....6
CHEMICAL CONTROL.....8
BORDER CONTROL.....9
TRAFFICKING GROUPS IN MEXICO AND
MEXICAN ARMY OPERATIONS.....10
U.S. EFFORTS AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKING.....16
CONCLUSION.....23
END NOTES.....27
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....29

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

To analyze the relationship between Mexico and the United States is to examine the encounter of two cultures transplanted from the European Continent to North America, with their differences and rivalries. The historical sequence of encounters, interaction and consequences has determined the dynamic of their relationship. As a result of the changing global situation, and despite the asymmetry of power between the two nations, their national interests tend to converge along the 2000 mile land border that they share.

In the contemporary period many negative economic, social and political trends are affecting both countries. These threats are growing and may continue to deteriorate the bilateral relationship with additional negative consequences in other important areas. Essentially, these are the existence of a huge demand for illegal drugs in the United States, and the low income of many peasants in several areas of Mexico. These two factors combine to promote narco-trafficking.

Mexico like other nations in Latin America cannot escape the problems surrounding drug-trafficking and its consequences. Despite years of concentrated effort by all levels of Mexican

Government and by its antidrug organizations, the cycle of illegal drugs continues. The nation must address a key response to the drug trafficking problem through a national drug control strategy.

Mexico is a key gateway for illicit drugs entering the United States. President Zedillo's administration has stated its intention to resume Mexico's vigorous campaign against the illicit drug industry and anticorruption efforts will be an integral part of this campaign. Mexico could integrate with U.S. Southern Command on counterdrug exercises supporting the national counterdrug strategy and through a regional counterdrug air campaign and combined counterdrug operations.

Mexico must address a key response to the drug trafficking problem through a national drug control strategy that:

- Reduces crime, violence, drug availability, and drug trafficking.
- Prevents drug abuse and demand.
- Promotes chemical control.
- Expands efforts to investigate and address money laundering.
- Expands border control efforts in coordination with U.S. Government.
- Investigates drug trafficking organizations through federal investigations in order to cripple, disrupt or dismantle

such organizations.

-Integrates with the United States Southern Command on combined counterdrug exercises.

The Threat

Narcotrafficking, with all its associated ills, is a serious threat in several different ways. Through bribery, murder, intimidation and complex alliances, multinational narcotic businesses are undermining political institutions and seriously challenging governmental authority. As stated by James W. Shaver, former Assistant Commissioner for International Affairs, U.S. Customs Service, "Narcotrafficking is a problem which destabilizes the politics, economic and social fabric of a country and it threatens nearly every nation in the world".¹

Andres Urbina, a research professor at the University of Chile, explained that drug traffickers and insurgents groups have a fairly simple working relationship. "The traffickers pay large amounts of money to insurgent organizations for the freedom to operate in zones where those groups are strong, in repayment, the insurgent groups give warning of government attack and in some cases, the insurgents have confronted government forces to defend drug traffickers plantations, laboratories and airports".² This relationship could have some bearing on the insurgency movement in Southern Mexico.

Mexico does not have an external threat, the enemy is internal, in the drug cartels. The threat is diverse and encountered on several fronts: cultivation (drug growers), processing (refiners), traffickers (local and foreign) and consumers.

An additional by-product of international drug dealers that ties in with the profit motive, is support of terrorism and political violence. Money from drugs is used to finance arms purchases and used for subversion and insurgency motives. Dealing in drugs or protection to drug dealers provides the finances for terrorist and insurgency operations and also causes great problems with destabilizing effects in the country.

In addressing the problem of narcoterrorism, we must be specific and not blur distinctions, inflate threats, or propose unrealistic solutions. As the terrorist consultant, Grant Wardlaw, states: "By treating this disparate group...as a coherent entity, we have failed adequately to define the nature of the threat posed by the drug/political violence linkages and have often descended merely into motive name calling."³

We must not confuse narcoterrorism with guerrilla warfare. The trafficking organizations are not natural revolutionaries. They do believe in the use of terror to obtain objectives. The relationship they have had with insurgent groups in the country

has been for the most part characterized by both hostility and limited cooperation.⁴

The traffickers have consistently used terror as a means to an end. The objective may be to support for local farmers or to intimidate the police, the military, or the government to leave them alone.

Under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Mexico declared drug trafficking a grave threat to the health of citizens and its national security. Mexico's antidrug strategy focused on demand reduction, interdiction, eradication, and international cooperation.

The newly-inaugurated President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon stated publicly that narco-trafficking presented the single greatest threat to the national security of Mexico. Within a few weeks of taking office, he promulgated a sweeping judicial reform package, which was overwhelmingly approved by the Mexican Congress. The administration of President Zedillo has also pledged to pursue institutional reform of Mexican law enforcement agencies to counter official corruption and to strengthen legal controls over money laundering and precursor chemicals.

Drug trafficking is also a threat to national security of the United States. The declaration of drug trafficking as a

threat was formalized in 1986 by National Security Decision Directive 221: "Drug abuse and trafficking threaten national security by degrading the nations's moral fiber and health, adversely affecting its economy, and undermining its foreign security interests."⁵

Money Laundering

Money laundering is pervasive throughout the hemisphere, and U.S. enforcement officers rank Mexico behind only the United States, Panama and possibly Venezuela as money laundering centers. Although Mexico has increased sanctions against money laundering through revisions to its tax code, the Mexican Financial System remains vulnerable to drug money laundering. Foreign and domestic currency movements are unmonitored; any amount of deposit currency can be transferred by wire, between domestic banks or between foreign and domestic institutions. There are no mandatory reporting requirements relating to cash deposited in banks or wire transfers.

Much of the money laundering occurs in "casas de cambio" or exchange houses which proliferate along Mexico's lengthy, penetrable border with the United States. These "casas" can only exchange one form of currency for another; another role in money laundering is to create a layer of anonymity between the owner of the currency and the financial institution where the "casa" has

an account; that account can be used to wire transfer funds. A great deal of currency is also returned from the United States through Mexico, enroute to South America. Traffickers are reverting to bulk shipments of drug currency; having been "stung" by enforcement officials through Operation Green Ice, they are more fearful of being detected through improved U.S. bank reporting requirements. Large quantities of cash are secreted in tractor trailers or cars, often carrying legitimate merchandise, which are driven across the southwest border (some shipments are by air). Inside Mexico, the cash is placed into the Financial System, or wire transferred, or moved further in bulk to South America. Illegal proceeds are also invested in legitimate enterprises and the money laundering which occurs can involve loans, letters of credit, offshore banking transactions and other schemes.

In June 1993, President Salinas created the National Institute for the Fight against Drugs, which has overall responsibility for counternarcotics activities and targets drug trafficking, money laundering and arms smuggling. Hacienda (Treasury Department) officials travelled to Washington for a day of policy discussions with Treasury, State, and Justice.

Mexico has published new regulations which require persons entering the country to declare currency and checks in their possession in excess of US \$10,000. Mexico has also proposed

changes in its tax code to permit prosecution of money laundering as an independent offense related to drug trafficking. Although the revisions are drawn from the model legislation approved by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), money laundering would remain a tax rather than a criminal offense. The General Attorney of the Republic (PGR) has agreed to inform Hacienda of property seizures so that a determination can be made whether or not any tax laws were violated.

Money laundering enforcement actions have been stepped up, resulting in increased seizures of drug assets. Sensitive to these vulnerabilities, Mexico has taken a number of regulatory and sensitive enforcement actions, but further action is needed to comply fully with the goals and objectives of the 1988 U.N. Convention.

Chemical Control

Mexico has a significant chemical industry. Diversion from domestic commerce of locally manufactured chemicals is the probable source of chemicals used in the refining of Mexican opium into heroin. Mexico is also an importer and transit point for precursor chemicals.

Mexico does not have adequate laws and regulations to prevent chemical diversion. However, draft legislation based on

the Organization of American States model chemical regulation has been submitted to the Mexican Congress for consideration during its current session. This legislation imposes record-keeping and reporting requirements for listed chemicals, establishes a system of authorizations for imports and exports of listed chemicals and reporting of listed chemicals and authorizes government officials to refuse the authorization. In an effort to improve controls over the flow of chemicals into and through Mexico, the Government has formed a task force consisting of defense representatives from the Secretariats of Agriculture, Treasury, Commerce, Defense, Environment, Customs and Health.

Border Control

Controlling the border is essentially a task of controlling the movement of people, vehicles, aircraft, and goods. This is difficult at any border, but characteristics of the U.S.-Mexican border complicate the job. The U.S. has maintained an essentially open border (2,000-mile) for several reasons: the high cost to implement a system 85% effective in intercepting illegal entrants crossing between ports of entry; U.S.-Mexican relations have been good and are based upon friendliness and cooperation; and the U.S. desire to facilitate the flow of legitimate traffic.

The magnitude of travel and commerce increased with NAFTA,

and the necessity to facilitate their flow, places constraints on the practical countermeasures available for interdiction at ports of entry. Resource deployment and border law enforcement effectiveness (significant arrest and seizures) depend upon the quality and quantity of information (intelligence) available to enforcement decisionmakers. The quantity of legitimate traffic in the vicinity of the border and passing through the border make it extremely difficult to identify smugglers. Quality intelligence concerning the activities of smugglers, in combination with mobile air, water, or ground interception systems, is considered to be the best tool to improve interdiction results, short of total surveillance and interception coverage. Information on how drugs enter the U.S. is not adequate in Mexico for decisions on how to respond.

Trafficking Groups in Mexico and Mexican Army Operations

There are numerous trafficking groups in Mexico that have gained a firm foothold in the trafficking of drugs, but here I'll describe the four major drug trafficking organizations that work closely with the Cali mafia:

Tijuana Cartel

The organization sometimes referred to as the "Tijuana Cartel" is headed by Benjamin Arellano Felix and his brother

Francisco. They control most of the drugs crossing the border on the West Coast between Tijuana and Mexicali.

Feuding between this group and other organizations has become increasingly violent. In fact, it was the feuding between the Arellano Felix organization and rival drug dealers that led to the killing of Catholic Cardinal Juan Jesus Posadas Ocampo at the Guadalajara airport in 1993.

The Arellano Felix brothers are currently the subjects of a national manhunt by law enforcement authorities for their involvement in the Cardinal killing. The Mexican authorities arrested Hector Luis Palma Salazar, the leader of a rival drug organization that is believed to be behind the attempted assassinations of the Arellano Felix brothers, as well as the murder of Cardinal Posadas Ocampo. Benjamin and Francisco Arellano have both been indicted in San Diego, California, and are DEA fugitives.

The Caro Quintero Organization

The Caro Quintero organization is involved in the cultivation, processing, smuggling and distribution of heroin and marijuana and the transportation of Colombian cocaine into the United States. This organization was previously led by Rafael Caro Quintero, known as the "Mexican Rhinestone Cowboy", who

began his criminal carrier at the young age of 12 or 13 as an apprentice to Pedro Aviles, a notorious Mexican drug trafficker.

Caro Quintero is currently in a Mexican maximum security prison for his involvement in the kidnaping, torture and murder of DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena, as well as for marijuana and cocaine trafficking. His brother, Miguel Caro Quintero, now runs the organization. Here in the U.S., he is under indictment in Tucson and Denver.

Juarez Cartel

One of the most notorious and powerful of these trafficking organizations is the Amado Carrillo Fuentes organization, sometimes referred to as the "Juarez Cartel." Carrillo Fuentes has been the chief transporter for the recently arrested Cali mafia leader Miguel Rodriguez Orejuela.

Carrillo Fuentes owns several airline companies, which enables him to fly Boing 727 aircraft from Colombia into Juarez, where he runs his organization from his ranch headquarters. Increasingly, murders in Juarez have been associated with Carrillo Fuentes. The leader of the juvenile gangs he recruits to smuggle drugs across the border was found shot 23 times in the head. Here in the United States, Carrillo Fuentes has been

indicted in Miami on heroin and marijuana charges, and in Dallas on cocaine charges.

Juan Garcia Abrego

Another influential Mexican trafficker acting in concert with the Cali mafia is Juan Garcia Abrego, who is involved in smuggling drugs from the Yucatan area in Mexico to South Texas and up to New York. Juan Garcia Abrego was recently added to the FBI's top ten most wanted fugitives, with a \$2 million reward for his capture. This is the first time an international drug trafficker has been included on the FBI list.

This organization transports large quantities of cocaine for the Cali mafia, as well of marijuana and heroin for other traffickers. Garcia Abrego pioneered deals in which Mexican traffickers take payment in cocaine, which substantially raised their profits, and at the same time diversified their involvement from beyond smuggling to the role of suppliers to their own drug distribution networks. He and his organization are notorious for the violence they employ to further and protect their illicit trade.

His organization also ships bulk amounts of cash for the Cali mafia. During a four-year period, from 1989 to 1993, \$53 million was seized in connection with the Garcia Abrego

organization. Two American Express bankers in Brownsville, Texas, were indicted for laundering \$30 million for Garcia Abrego, and to date, 70 members of his organization have been prosecuted and convicted in the U.S. Juan Garcia Abrego was arrested last year by members of the Mexican National Counternarcotics Institute (INCD) in Villa Juarez, Nuevo Leon State. President Ernesto Zedillo ordered the expulsion of drug trafficker Juan Garcia Abrego, head of the Mexican Gulf Cartel, to the United States for national security reasons, because the kingpin could organize, in a matter of hours, an operation to destabilize the country.⁶⁷

Mexico has maintained 25% of its armed forces in a tenacious and permanent campaign against this evil since 1972. The decision to use the armed forces in the war against drug trafficking was made in response to an escalation of the problem. Mexico has developed a permanent campaign against drugs involving the Secretaries of National Defense, Navy, and the Attorney General. These operations began in 1972 with a plan called "DN-PR-1." It consisted of the deployment of fixed and mobile detachments and bases of operations in characteristic drug places such as the states of Chihuahua, Sinaloa, and Durango.

In 1976, Mexico created Task Force "CONDOR 1" for action in specific areas where the problem was greatest. In locations where the problem remains operation "CONDOR" continues. The name

of the operation was changed to "MARTE" in 1978. The units that form this Task Force were relieved every six months (and now every four months) for two reasons. First, this preserves the health of the men and avoids excessive fatigue. Second, this procedure reduces the possibility of personnel becoming corrupted by the drug dealers.

Another operation developed in Mexico is "Operation CANADOR" which is intensively and permanently applied in all areas of responsibility of the Military Zone Commands. As a complement to both "MARTE and CANADOR" operations, the President of Mexico orders "SPECIAL" operations by defined time and in specific areas of several States. Mexico conducts these operations while at the same time attacking, within fiscal constraints, the real causes of the problem. Mexico has clearly defined these causes in national and international forums as social, economic, and cultural in nature. Even in the United States, the possibility of using the armed forces has been considered, but this effort is geared to attacking trafficking while little or nothing has been done with regard to consumption.

Official documents from the Mexican Armed Forces stated that during 1993 they have eradicated: 36,070 marijuana plants in a surface of 3,672 hectares, and 26,554 poppy plants in 2,578 hectares. They have seized: 45,339 kilos of cocaine, 393,192 kilos of marijuana and 369 kilos of opium gum and heroine. 12

laboratories were destroyed and 64,168 millions of pesos (\$20.7 million US dollars) were seized plus \$15.2 million in cash.

In the same year the National Institute for the Fight Against Drug Traffic was created as a new effort in the continuous campaign against drugs. This institute has the objective of centralizing planning and supervising, and evaluating the activities aimed to fight drugs in a nationwide scale. It is also responsible for the health preservation of the Mexican population in coordination with the component institutions and the guidelines established by the PGR.⁸ In the decree the President stated "In the past six months Mexico has had more seizures than Canada and US combined in the same period."⁹

U.S. Efforts Against Drug Trafficking

The primary element of US policy against drugs is to reduce the supply of drugs entering the United States. These efforts are directed to:

1. Law enforcement efforts, consisting of strengthening national judicial and police capabilities to curb drug trafficking and production.
2. Interdiction and other enforcement support before drugs arrive in United States territory.

3. International cooperation through diplomacy and other means.
4. Foreign aid sanctions.
5. Crop eradication, where politically feasible.
6. Trade initiatives.

All these efforts when applied at the border interact with the consent and initiatives of Mexican agencies charged to fight the drug trafficking.

The US effort against the demand side has been less attended to because of political reasons, as asserted by Jose Luis Reyna: "Formally speaking, any drug campaign (or action) oriented to suppress or to control the consumption of narcotics goes against the nature of US democracy, of freedom of choice."¹⁰

One of the untenable diplomatic efforts is the inclination towards unilateral decision-making within a bilateral, and collaborative framework. US officials worried by their world agenda are not directly involved in the day-by-day antidrug programs. So, when drug related problems arise in the United States, they shift to a unilateral mode. This may achieve gains in the short run, but it fatally affects Washington's anti-drug efforts in the context of US-Mexico relations.

The United States associates its anti-drug efforts with its foreign policy purposes. Section 481 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, (22 U.S.C. 2291) relates specific US foreign economic, military, and other assistance to collaborate with anti-drug efforts. (Also called The Certification Act)¹¹ As a rule, Washington has relied on a cooperative approach with Mexico during the peaks of its anti-drug campaigns. At such times meetings and mutual decision-making are the rule.

One of the recent antidrug joint efforts began with Operation Intercept I, in 1969 during the Nixon administration; it was created as a necessary interagency interdiction effort along the Mexican border. Its outcome was a number of drug seizures, far less than envisioned, but it generated serious tensions in the US-Mexico relationship. Later, it was changed to "Operation Cooperation", which included Mexican Government participation in the interdiction efforts.¹² This operation was designed to install a plan for permanent collaboration in drug control.

In 1975 Operation Condor was implemented. Under this operation Mexico increased its interdiction efforts, particularly against the expanding cultivation triangle of opium poppies in the "critical triangle" of Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua. The poppy eradication campaign began in 1976, with collaboration and support of the US government. Conflict from that first operation

nonetheless meant that the bases for bilateral discussion of the drug trafficking issue remained undefined.¹³

Over time, the joint effort of both countries has varied in accordance to the intensity of the relationship. In 1991, the US DoD transferred to Mexico: 21 UH-1H Huey helicopters. Additionally, in 1992, a transfer donation of more helicopters and some spare parts worth \$26 million was authorized by the DoD. The FBI and DEA offered courses in investigations techniques to the PGR. Also the Customs Service and Coast Guard offered courses to Mexican Treasury officials and Navy Officers.

At this point we can see that the Mexican Government does not integrate the Armed Forces in all of its anti-drugs programs. The lead agency role is held by the PGR. The Armed Forces conducts principally its anti-drugs programs with little and sometimes totally without cooperation of the PGR. I personally believe the Mexican Armed Forces conducts more successful anti-drugs operations than those of the PGR. The Mexican Government needs to integrate both agencies in conducting joint operations.

Mexico and the U.S. have similar goals in this matter. Both countries are conducting joint operations against drug trafficking, drug production and trafficking continues to be the major regional problem which affects Mexico, the U.S. as well as other nations in the Americas. USSOUTHCOM is looking forward to

the process of hemispheric integration in confronting this issue and other non conventional threats. The question for the Mexican people could be "Why shouldn't Mexico integrate with the Southern Command counterdrug effort?."

The United States Government Narcotics Control Policy toward Mexico has three objectives: 1) Strengthening the political commitment and institutional capability of the Government of Mexico to enable it to take effective measures against drug production and trafficking; 2) Crippling the trafficking organizations that operate in Mexico by apprehending and prosecuting the trafficker leadership and disrupting or dismantling their operations; 3) Developing cooperative initiatives along our common border to increase the effectiveness of counternarcotics activities. Mexico must increase efforts against this problem through: developing effective plans, giving priority to international drug control initiatives, intensifying federal enforcement agencies efforts to dismantle drug trafficking organizations, combating money laundering and combining task force operations (PGR-Army) to attack illicit drug organizations.

The United States Government and the Government of Mexico maintained close counternarcotics cooperation in 1994, the final year of the President Salinas Administration, in keeping with the commitments of the bilateral agreement on cooperation in

combating narcotics trafficking and drug dependency (Chiles Amendment Agreement). Mexico continued its multi-faceted national campaign against production, trafficking and abuse of illegal drugs, meeting many of the goals and objectives of the 1988 UN Convention. However, the results of this campaign were mixed, with cocaine seizures falling to the lowest level of Salinas' tenure and few major traffickers were arrested and prosecuted. Narco-corruption remains a serious impediment to effective drug law enforcement. Eradication of opium poppy and cannabis also declined substantially. One factor causing the decline may have been the diversion of military personnel and resources to handle the political uprising in the State of Chiapas. On the positive side, heroin seizures increased, more than the previous five years combined. Seizures of precursor and essential chemicals and destruction of clandestine laboratories likewise increased. Money laundering, particularly the large-scale conversion of cash from the United States, remains a major problem in Mexico, which the government of Mexico has not yet effectively curbed.

The decline in cocaine seizures was due to a number of factors. Much of the Mexican Attorney General's Office was devoted to investigating the assassinations of the leading Presidential candidate and the Secretary General of the ruling PRI party. Also, to avoid detection by U.S. and Mexican air interdiction systems, traffickers increased the use of fast

moving cargo jets, each transporting huge quantities of cocaine into Mexico. Only one of these aircraft was seized; the U.S. and Mexico are sharing intelligence and upgrading equipment to address this situation.

Despite commendable efforts by President Salinas in his administration to tackle endemic corruption within the Mexican police and judicial systems, including hundreds of dismissals and numerous prosecutions, the measures taken did not resolve the problem. Anti-corruption actions, as well as efforts to build strong anti-drugs institutions, were undermined by narco-influence (and money) and frequent personnel turnovers, especially in 1994.

Mexican society and the Government are alarmed over increasing violence evidenced by incidents such as the drug-related bombing attempt at a hotel in Guadalajara, a series of kidnappings of wealthy individuals, and a number of execution-style killings in Tijuana and other northern cities. Many Mexicans believe that organized crime is behind the still-unsolved assassination in September 1994 of PRI Secretary General Jose Francisco Ruiz Massieu.

Conclusion

No community in Latin America can escape the problems surrounding drug-trafficking and its consequences. Despite years of concentrated effort by all levels of the Mexican Government and by its antidrug organizations, the cycle of drugs continues. The nation must mount a focused response to the drug trafficking problem through a national drug control strategy that:

- Reduces crime, violence, drug availability, and drug trafficking.
- Prevents drug abuse and demand.
- Promotes chemical control.
- Expands efforts to investigate and address money laundering.
- Expands border control efforts in coordination with U.S. Government.
- Investigates drug trafficking organizations through federal investigations in order to cripple, disrupt or dismantle such organizations.
- Integrates with the United States Southern Command counterdrug initiatives and conducts combined counterdrug exercises.

Under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Mexico declared drug trafficking a grave threat to the health of its citizens and national security. Mexico's antidrug strategy focused on demand

reduction, interdiction, eradication, and international cooperation. The performance of the Government of Mexico in these areas in 1994 was consistent with the obligations of Mexico under the 1988 UN Convention, to which it is a party, but more progress was needed in areas such as money laundering, chemical controls, and crop eradication.

The newly-inaugurated President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon stated publicly that narco-trafficking presented the single greatest threat to the national security of Mexico. Within a few weeks of taking office, he promulgated a sweeping judicial reform package, which was overwhelmingly approved by the Mexican Congress. The present administration has also pledged to pursue institutional reform of Mexican Law Enforcement Agencies to counter official corruption and to strengthen legal controls over money laundering and precursor chemicals. The Secretariat of National Defense plays an increasingly major role in combating drug trafficking by conducting counterdrug operations in diverse States of the Mexican Republic, nevertheless such operations are less than those the PGR (General Republic Attorney) conducts.

In an attempt to prevent corruption, The Secretariat of National Defense frequently rotates officers and troops involved in the campaign against drug dealers. It also uses imagery from monthly aerial survey flights conducted by the Mexican Air Force to plan manual eradication efforts by the Mexican Army.

Since Mexico is a key gateway for illicit drugs entering the United States, the President Zedillo Administration has stated its intention to resume Mexico's vigorous campaign against the illicit drug industry, and anticorruption efforts will be an integral part of this campaign. Mexico could integrate with USSOUTHCOM combined counterdrug exercises supporting the national counterdrug strategy through a regional counterdrug air campaign and conducting combined counterdrug operations.

Mexico must formulate an effective plan for reducing crime, violence, and drug trafficking. This plan must emphasize the importance of strong linkages among all elements of the criminal justice system and prevention, education, and media support.

Mexico must also effect a plan to control the border with the United States; it is estimated that 70%-80% of the cocaine entering U.S. is trans-shipped through Mexico and then across the Southwest U.S.-Mexican border. Because of its fundamental importance in the fight against drug trafficking, Mexico needs to improve federal and military efforts in this area to better address the flow of drugs through this port of entry.

Mexico needs to investigate drug trafficking organizations through federal investigations focusing on those organizations that account for the largest quantities of drugs, whose activities are accompanied by the most violence. By working

together, all levels of law enforcement can make maximum use of federal and military investigate tools such as electronic surveillance, analysis of compulsory financial reporting, investigation grand juries, and federal evidentiary rules and criminal statutes. Due to the enormous size and complexity of the financial system that complicates the prevention and detection of money laundering, Mexico needs to make an investigation of money laundering and financial institutions.

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