

US POLICY APPROACHES FOR COMBATING VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN MEXICO

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

US POLICY APPROACHES FOR COMBATING VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

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US POLICY APPROACHES FOR COMBATING VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN MEXICO

Significant violence by drug cartels permeates the current security environment in Mexico. The level of violence is a serious threat to Mexican internal security. Its close proximity to the United States southwest border causes concern within the United States that this violence could spill over into United States territory.

There are seven drug cartels in Mexico that compete with each other to control smuggling routes, territory, and market share. These cartels often use violence to control competition between cartels. This violence is particularly brutal and widespread. It targets other cartels, government troops, and government authorities. It is used to send clear messages not to try to encroach into established cartel territory and not to try to drive out existing cartels. It is used to try to expand cartel influence and territorial control and to intimidate police, judicial, and civil authorities. This violence is often marked by gruesome displays, including beheadings, torture, execution-style murder, and public display of severed heads and bodies. One of the most bizarre discoveries was of a murder victim with a soccer ball sewn into what was his skinned face.¹ This type of violence clearly demands strong government actions to combat its spread. The level of violence has become more prevalent in recent years. When President Calderon came into power in 2006 there were 62 victims of drug related violence, by 2010 where there were 15,273 victims.²

This violence is predominantly cartel on cartel, but it also spills over into cartel on civil authority. The cartels use violence against government authorities

in an attempt to control law enforcement, the judiciary, and the civil authorities that control them. By bribing, intimidating, or driving out government officials the cartels can establish dominance within their operational control and shape the environment in which they operate. They essentially gain freedom of maneuver to move drugs and weapons; set up and operate drug labs and training facilities; and reduce the risk of apprehension and prosecution. The cartels are in effect establishing ungoverned areas of the country that are critical to their lucrative drug trade. By targeting rival cartels; government officials who impede cartel activities or refuse to be bought off; and law enforcement officers, they are attempting to establish control militarily, economically, and socially. An example of the serious violence is that in 2010 there were 12 mayors killed by cartels, nine journalists, as well as numerous government soldiers.³

The violence in Mexico stems from several factors. The application of Plan Colombia significantly disrupted and minimized the Colombian cartels. This made the cartels in Mexico much more significant and profitable. Mexico became a major player in the international drug industry as Colombia's influence diminished, becoming much more engaged in all aspects of the drug trade rather than just on the transportation and smuggling into the United States.⁴ Manufacture of drugs and production of them from precursor chemicals imported from abroad became big business in Mexico. The cartels have historically operated on well established smuggling routes and the Mexican authorities have for the most part turned a blind eye, or at least lent tacit support to the cartels. The culture of corruption in the Mexican government at all levels, combined with

remote areas and challenging terrain, have lent themselves nicely to a business that likes to operate on the edge of society with little or no interference from law enforcement, the judiciary, or civil authority.

As the drug trade increased and became more lucrative, the cartels were faced with problems of volume. No longer were they moving hundreds of pounds of drugs into the United States; they were now faced with how to move tons of drugs into the United States. This required them to develop their distribution system within the United States and address the related problem of how to launder billions of dollars out of the United States and back into their hands. They needed to have multiple routes to efficiently supply their distribution networks, return the money made in the sales of drugs, and provide some flexibility to adapt to increasingly sophisticated and adaptive law enforcement efforts carried out in the United States.

The cartels based the development of their distribution networks in the United States on the large number of Mexican immigrants in the United States. There are more than 11 million Mexican immigrants equivalent to roughly 10% of population of Mexico in the United States. Roughly 30% of them are in the United States illegally.⁵ The cartels simply capitalized on the Mexican population in the United States to build their distribution networks. The Mexican immigrant population is distributed over nearly all fifty states and is clustered in urban areas where the cartels seek distribution centers. It was relatively easy for cartels to make contacts with individuals and families from the geographic areas of Mexico where the cartels are located and coerce them into working for the cartels. The

economic downturn in the United States and the historically low wage jobs the immigrants typically hold make the lucrative drug trade appealing. These populations also have routinely traveled back and forth to their homes in Mexico to visit family and pay remittances. Their experience in circumventing law enforcement measures aimed at stopping illegal aliens at the international border became an invaluable skill prized in the drug trade.

The fact that many of these immigrants have no legal basis for being in the United States makes them easier to coerce. If that was not enough the cartels have other means to gain cooperation. They can offer to bring in family members of the people they are targeting as part of the cartels' business in human trafficking. If this failed they could pressure or threaten the families back in Mexico. Lastly kidnapping Mexican family members to coerce Mexicans living in the United States is a very effective inducement to cooperate with the cartels. The cartels could operate with impunity in Mexico with virtually no threat of interdiction or prosecution from the Mexican officials; this leaves the family of the victims little choice but to cooperate.

The cartels have historically smuggled goods across the border along traditional routes that have been in the organization for years. The combination of increased traffic and increased interdiction efforts on the US side of the border causes cartels to move routes if one traditional route is interdicted. Ramped up law enforcement actions in smuggling routes, increased presences of authorities in the area, or use of technology to temporary interdict the routes causes tension between cartels in Mexico.

This tension between cartels, in turn, causes violence in Mexico. This violence has historically been relatively minor until the collapse of the Colombian cartels increased the significance and profits within the Mexican cartels. Suddenly, even a short term disruption of routes became big business. As a result, violence escalated and the spill over to Mexican civilians increased. The resultant concern for personal safety in Mexico became a major issue in the presidential elections in 2000.

The election of Mexican President Vicente Fox in 2000 marked a change in the Mexican government strategy of how to deal with the drug cartels. President Fox's National Development Plan stressed "protection of citizens" and moved his administration to target the cartels.⁶ As his administration disrupted leadership in the cartels, increased tensions arose among the cartels as they struggled among themselves for leadership, control of routes, and market share.

President Calderon continued the government's pressure on the cartels, but he changed some elements of policy. His security issues were exacerbated by the perception among 80% of the population that the police were corrupt.⁷ The police had long been in the pockets of the cartels. As long as the cartels were relatively stable, with few changes or little competition for terrain or smuggling routes the status quo was sufficient. Corruption was more or less at an acceptable level. Once the cartels began competition for more lucrative market share, terrain, and smuggling routes, the status quo ruptured. The cartels began aggressively vying for increasingly profitable market share of the drug business. As one cartel encroached on another's area, the police and civil authorities that

were no threat to the first cartel became a threat to the second. The police and judiciary, who were previously in business with the cartels, were no longer an asset of the cartels but were now a hindrance. The existing alliances or business agreements between law enforcement and the cartels came apart.

The situation with government officials, mayors, councilmen, and governors was the same. As the cartels began to push any influence of the previous cartels out of newly acquired or contested territory, the civil authorities became targets in the power struggle. As the civil authorities caved in to cartel influences, or were intimidated, forcibly removed, or murdered, the effect became one of essentially ungoverned spaces in Mexico.

The Mexican government had to take action. Corruption, violence, and lack of civil authority had far surpassed the cultural norm and required action. With the law enforcement agencies holding no credibility, the judiciary corrupt and civil authorities unable or unwilling to act the government had few options.

The military is one of the most trusted organizations in Mexico and it had the capacity to take on the problem. President Calderon turned to the military to enforce the law and break up the cartels. The strong application of military force and a decrease in the cartels ability to co-opt law enforcement, increased the violence problem. In multiple cases the military came into an area under cartel control and had to reestablish government rule. In several cases this included completely replacing the existing police forces with federal troops. In some cases it included removal of judges, mayors, and even governors who were seen to be corrupt and ineffective.

Interdiction of routes has caused internal strife among the cartels as they struggle to maintain relevance in the industry, protect their turf, or seize turf of competing cartels. The military is targeting and removing the cartel leadership.⁸ This creates security problems within the cartels causing them to outsource their security to gangs and former members of the Mexican special operations community.⁹

This sets conditions ripe for spreading violence and creating security concerns in Northern Mexico. This violence has pitted cartel against cartel while ensnaring the police, government officials, judiciary, and the military. The cartels have simply run out of allies. Their greed, aggression, and heavy-handed business practices have upset the balance that effectively shielded them from interdiction, and prosecution in the past. Police and public officials are intimidated; forced out of office or murdered on a regular basis; and gunfights in Mexico between the military and cartels have become common.

The significant increase in violence and the increase in ungoverned space in northern Mexico pose a strategic problem for the United States. Will this violence threaten the United States? Will under governed areas in northern Mexico create enough of a governance vacuum that the cartels can establish a Hezbollah-like *de facto* government in areas of Mexico? Should the United States intervene in Mexico? If so, how, and with what? What tools should the United States use to achieve its desired ends?

The United States is currently conducting actions that ultimately will positively shape the current environment, assist Mexico in restoration of law and

order within its borders, and strengthen the relationship between the two countries. Mexico has been reluctant to partner in areas that could be perceived as directly related to sovereignty-- for example, the law enforcement, judiciary, and the military, which could be seen as direct reflections of the Mexican government's ability to govern its sovereign territory. Through a combination of circumstances, a change in ruling party in Mexico and effective diplomatic actions, the United States is now more able to engage with Mexico and help shape the environment for the benefit of both nations.

The United States is shaping the environment by applying multiple governmental functions like Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement (DIMEFIL) to influence the problem. Furthermore, by emphasizing the "soft power" elements of DIMFIL, the United States can help shape the environment to strengthen the social, economic, and political conditions that have brought Mexico into direct conflict with the drug cartels.

DIPLOMACY

When President Fox, and later President Calderon, engaged with the United States and initiated better diplomatic relations, opportunities began to open enabling the United States and Mexico to cooperate and improve the situation. The United States is using multiple diplomatic programs and tools to enhance Mexico's abilities to cope with the cartels and shape the environment.

The Merida Initiative is the primary means by which the United States is providing substantial aid to Mexico and several Central American countries in a

variety of areas.¹⁰ The Merida Initiative provides for the exchange of technology and expertise; the building of capacity and training; and development of interoperability between internal Mexican institutions as well as between United States and Mexican officials. It will significantly enhance Mexico's ability to deal with the situation within its borders.

Diplomacy is the key to developing opportunities and trust-- both necessary to enable sovereign nations to build complementary capacities and work together to solve problems. The Merida Initiative is enabling Mexico to build capacity and limited interoperability both internally and externally in the areas of law enforcement, judiciary, governance, and the military. These capabilities and capacities are critical for Mexico's ability to reestablish control over under-governed areas. Diplomacy enables several other areas of the governments of both countries to engage and affect conditions in Mexico. The ability of the US Justice Department to aid Mexico in developing credible law enforcement and judicial processes is one example. The greater development of military to military relations enables Mexico to develop interoperability internally and build capacity. This maximizes the effects that the Mexican military can achieve in the struggle against the cartels.

There are still more areas in which the application of diplomacy could impact on the ability of Mexico to address the cartels. The further development of international law and cooperation concerning money laundering would be a significant blow to the cartels, international organized crime, and terrorism organizations around the world. The ability to launder money and move it

internationally is the center of gravity of these cartels. The cartels' business would fail without a ready supply of large amounts of money to cover business costs, bribe officials, and reap as profits.

If the international community is to be successful in controlling the ability of large international criminal organizations to adversely impact society, the rule of law, and even the sovereignty of nations, it must recognize and address these issues in a logical and coordinated strategy. The international community must be continually developing national laws, international cooperation, and coordination to interdict and seize illegal assets.

INFORMATION

The United States is using several Informational tools to shape the environment. Some examples taken from press releases by the United States Embassy in Mexico are:

- Principal lieutenants of the Gulf Cartel and the Los Zetas were designated as "Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act)."
- Twelve criminals have been successfully extradited to the United States to face drug trafficking, racketeering, money laundering, assault, manslaughter, illegal possession and use of firearms, and attempted murder. They were extradited under the provisions of United States-Mexico Extradition Treaty.
- The announcement of the delivery of new helicopters to the Government of Mexico's Federal Police force, as an intermediate

step in the transfer of equipment, the development of capacity, and training from the United States to the government of Mexico, building capacity within Mexico to address the violence.

- United States authorities arrested 45 defendants in Georgia who were engaged in the distribution of drugs, as part of a Mexican Drug Cartel.
- United States authorities arrested and convicted of two United States citizens in firearms trafficking charges causing the disruption of firearms moving from the United States into Mexico.
- The sharing of intelligence with Mexican law enforcement agencies enabled the capture of one of the most violent drug traffickers in history, helping to bring down “one of the most powerful and violent criminal organizations operating in Mexico”.¹¹

These messages are released not only to inform and educate the public, but also to send several clear messages:

- The drug cartels in Mexico and their partners in the United States are all subject to investigation, arrest, and prosecution under the law.
- The governments of the United States and Mexico are working in partnership to address the issues of drug trafficking on both sides of the border.

- The police and militaries of both countries are working in concert, sharing training, equipment, and intelligence to target even the most powerful, and violent of the cartels.
- Cartel members are subject to extradition and prosecution in the United States.

Large public media in the United States have taken up the subject and report nearly daily on the violence in Mexico. This action shapes public opinion, builds support in the United States for the actions of the Mexican government against the cartels, and garners public support for the actions of the United States supporting Mexico. Continued public awareness and support is necessary if Mexico is going to be able to continue to pursue aggressive action against the cartels in an environment of increasing violence. It is also necessary if the United States is going to continue to be able to support the Mexican government with large aid packages like the Merida Initiative in times of economic distress and growing budget deficits and debt.

The continued flow of information on the local, national, and international scenes will be necessary to build public understanding of the issues, build the credibility of Mexican institutions, and sustain public support of the governments' actions. It is critical that public support for the Mexican government's actions continue through the next Mexican election cycle in 2012. The election in 2012 of a president and government in Mexico that is committed to act against the cartels could mean the end for the large organized and violent cartels as they now exist in Mexico.

MILITARY

The United States is using several military tools to shape the environment. United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) has responsibility for developing and executing military strategy in support of our national goals and objectives in relation to Mexico. USNORTHCOM Commander General Renuart states “its top theater security cooperation priority is to build the capacity of allies and partners to help create an environment in North America that is inhospitable to terrorism.”¹² The narco-terrorism the cartels are currently engaged in falls into this objective.

USNORTHCOM is accomplishing its goals by conducting military to military engagements that focus on Law Enforcement, Army, Navy, and Air Force capacity building. USNORTHCOM uses various types of engagements to achieve its goals. The use of Foreign Military Financing through the Merida Initiative is used to purchase aircraft and ion scanners to build capacity in Mexico’s civilian law enforcement. It also purchases night vision goggles, boats, personal protective equipment, digital media forensics, tactical communications equipment, and conducts specialized training to build capacity and capabilities in the Mexican military.

The Merida Initiative enables United States military personnel to conduct specialized training with Mexican counterparts. This specialized training includes maintenance training, aviation training, and explosive ordnance disposal/hazardous material team training. Additional training engagements focus on civil military relations, military justice and operational law, and

administrative law.¹³ All these actions conducted by USNORTHCOM build Mexican capacity and directly contribute to the Mexican government's ability to successfully combat the cartels.

USNORTHCOM can utilize existing military personnel, equipment, and expertise to augment and enhance the abilities of our domestic agencies to interdict cartel activities and prosecute cartel members. One example is the National Guard, which has deployed service members to the southwest border to work in support of law enforcement officials as they target the cartels trafficking in people, drugs, illegal weapons, and money. National Guard personnel increase the capacity of the law enforcement agencies enabling them to put more of their officers out on the ground to execute their mission.

The continued use of military as trainers and subject matter experts in institution building will only strengthen the Mexican government's abilities to shape the environment and control the cartels. Developing increased interoperability and trust between agencies and nations along with improved international relations can only improve Mexico's ability to act against the cartels.

ECONOMIC

The United States is enhancing Mexico's abilities to establish security and rule of law by executing several economic programs within the Merida Initiative. While most of the expenditures in the initiative are related to military, training, and technology they all represent a substantial investment in resources that Mexico could not afford without assistance.

In 2008 the United States funded \$500 million, and in 2009 the United States invested an additional \$450 million used in four program areas in Mexico¹⁴:

- Counternarcotics, Counterterrorism, and Border Security,
- Public Security and Law Enforcement,
- Institution Building and rule of Law, and
- Program Support.

Close economic ties between the two countries can only help both prosper and grow in a secure environment. Violence and corruption inhibits free and unrestricted trade between the two countries and, ultimately, it will inhibit Mexico's ability to compete on the world market. It is clearly in Mexico's interest to establish domestic security and the rule of law in order to foster increased economic growth with foreign countries and attract investors.

The implementation of the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) significantly increased the importance of the economic relationship between Mexico and the United States. Since the implementation of NAFTA in 1994, Mexico's exports to the United States have risen 345%. The economic importance of the United States to Mexico is reflected in several statistics. The United States consumes approximately 80% of all Mexico's exports.¹⁵ In 2008 bilateral trade with Mexico reached \$367 billion. Mexican workers in the United States send back to Mexico \$25 billion in remittances annually.¹⁶

A continued infusion of money directly into the budget lines of supporting agencies or the providing for sharing of equipment, technology, and capabilities

is vital to the future success of the effort against the cartels. Any short-term budget benefits that could be gained by reducing or cutting off funding to Mexico would rapidly be lost to increased criminal activity, drug problems, and violence. The United States will be much better off to continue to partner with Mexico and to make the short term investments necessary to reap the long term benefits of reduced violence and cartel influence in Mexico and improved bilateral relations.

INTELLIGENCE

The United States is using several intelligence tools to shape the environment. Some of the US intelligence shared with Mexican authorities enhances their ability to interdict cartel activities and prosecute cartels members. Other intelligence capabilities are used domestically to enhance the ability of United States law enforcement agencies to interdict cartel activities and prosecute cartel members.

USNORTHCOM and Mexico have partnered to improve capabilities in the region by developing and fielding automated identification architecture, which will increase information exchange and Maritime Domain Awareness. This will improve the ability of the United States and Mexico to counter illicit drug trafficking.¹⁷

A domestic example of this technology is the eGuardian system. It is expected to be the Department of Defense (DOD) Suspicious activity reporting system. This system will share potential terrorist threats with state, local, tribal, federal law enforcement agencies, state Fusion Centers, and the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force.¹⁸

The National Guard can bring unique experience and valuable expertise to the problem. While deployed in a Title 32 status, the National Guard can support local law enforcement in ways that are restricted or prohibited to US active duty soldiers under Title 10. When deployed, the Guardsmen are able to “monitor the border from strategic observation points with state-of-the-art surveillance and detection tactics, and technology in support of local law enforcement.”¹⁹ This added capacity enables the United States Customs and Border Protection to put more officers out in the field at the point of the spear in interdiction and prosecution efforts.

Another example occurred when tunnels crossing the border into California were discovered. A guardsman provided a critical skill set while serving on the border support mission in California, “serving as a criminal analyst through joint Task Force-Sierra... that conducted case support and link analysis for the investigations, which resulted in arrests, and additional support after the discoveries.”²⁰ This is one example of the possible use of skills possessed by our National Guard soldiers that can be effective combat multipliers in the struggle against the cartels.

Another example of intelligence gathering would be the flight of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) over border areas to increase our ability to interdict drug trafficking and illegal activities. The Customs and Border Protection is currently using Predator B drones to patrol the border. Their ability to gather real time intelligence contributes to the seizing of drugs and interdiction of illegal immigrants crossing the border.²¹

The development and utilization of domestic intelligence capabilities and the ability to analyze and disseminate that intelligence to appropriate domestic, and/or Mexican authorities greatly enhances the ability of law enforcement, the judiciary, and government officials to execute their duties in apprehending and prosecuting cartel members on both sides of the border.

Ongoing intelligence sharing, institution building, and generation of increased interoperability will continue to pay huge dividends for both countries. Both countries should continue making a concerted effort to enable intelligence sharing both in law enforcement and their military. It will improve their abilities to combat the drug cartels and strengthen security between our countries.

FINANCE

The United States has multiple approaches available to shape the financial environment that confronts the cartels in Mexico. Some of the actions being taken are providing non- intrusive inspection equipment at the border check points, training of prosecutors in financial crime investigations, and exchange of personnel for financial intelligence work.²²

The inspection equipment aims to counter the cartels' ability to ship bulk quantities of cash. This equipment can only partially increase the ability to interdict cash shipments. It normally requires vehicular inspection at the border and is only as effective as the capacity of the inspection program and the skill of the operator. If the inspectors are inspecting only one out of ten vehicles, then there is a 90% chance any vehicle carrying cash will make it through without even undergoing an inspection. If the vehicles selected for inspection are in

some way profiled, then the chances of now being inspected are tied to the skill of the profiler. The cartels regularly keep crossing points under observation, gathering intelligence on processes and actions by the inspectors and use this information to counter law enforcement efforts by delaying cross border shipments, diverting them, or if needed repackage into a vehicle not likely to be inspected.

This technology could be further leveraged by linking it to additional data bases -- for example, biometrics. This would enable law enforcement to identify know cartel members transiting the border and target their vehicles for search.

Training prosecutors in financial crime investigations supports institution building and the validity of the judicial system and the government of Mexico itself. The exchange of personnel for financial intelligence work significantly increases the ability of the United States and Mexican governments to intercept bulk cash shipments. These personnel do this by assessing shipping patterns, known shipment movements, and cartel personnel.

An example of this exchange would be the standing up of the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the Department of Homeland Security. This task force has stood up in multiple locations in the United States and Mexico and is “a series of multiagency teams developed to identify, disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations posing significant threats to border security”.²³ This task force works with law enforcement agencies locally and internationally to address organized criminal activities and to prosecute those criminals.

The synergistic effect of using personnel in a task force that can coordinate actions and share information both nationally and internationally has increased the effectiveness of law enforcement. The integration of multiple agencies, multiple data bases, and interoperability enables law enforcement to address cash shipments and money laundering, both of which are vital to the cartels ability to operate.

Possible future bilateral actions to disrupt money laundering and cash shipment could include increased legal restrictions on movement of money, increased banking regulation, increased sharing of intelligence, and closer cooperation between governments and agencies.

The international community is lagging behind the technology in the area of money laundering. Corrupt business practices, banking practices, poor banking regulation, and governments that provide little or no oversight on money transfers contribute to the problem.

The United States should take the lead in developing both internal and international controls, as well as increased international cooperation to target money laundering. Money laundering is a critical task that supports the drug cartels as well as international organized crime and terrorism. If money cannot be rapidly and efficiently laundered with minimal risk, these organizations will be seriously hindered in their operations.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The United States is using several law enforcement tools to shape the environment. Engagements between law enforcement personnel and

organizations from both the United States and Mexico are building capabilities and capacity in technology development, interagency cooperation and intelligence sharing.

Specialized training can develop capabilities, capacity, and credibility where little previously existed. One example is the US Government's Law Enforcement Professionalization and Training Project providing 275 training courses to over 6000 Mexican law enforcement agency personnel.²⁴ This training not only increases the capacity and capabilities of the Mexican law enforcement agencies, it ultimately contributes to their credibility by enabling them to professionally investigate suspects, gather evidence, and pursue prosecutions. All of this enhances the Mexican citizens' perception of their own government.

The US Coast Guard brings a unique capability to the problem. Similar to the National Guard which can be deployed domestically under Title 32 to assist law enforcement in United States, the Coast Guard can also be deployed externally in a law enforcement role under Title 14 or in a military role under Title 10. They have been deployed to Mexico to provide training to the Mexican Navy in maritime law enforcement. This training is bringing valuable skills and capabilities to what was already one of the most trusted institutions in Mexico, the Mexican Navy.

The United States has extensively used the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime to extradite persons involved in organized crime, arms smuggling and street gangs. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) is engaged in operations to stem the southbound

flow of weapons into Mexico. Both United States and Mexican law enforcement agencies are engaged in joint efforts to disrupt arms smuggling by sharing data and monitoring illicit sales. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is engaged with the Mexican police in antikidnapping efforts.²⁵ The US Department of Homeland Security and US Customs and Border Protection have loaned nonintrusive inspection equipment to Mexican customs for use in protecting Mexico's northern border from smuggling of arms and bulk cash into the country.²⁶

Developing legitimate, effective, and respected law enforcement agencies in Mexico and linking them with counterpart agencies in the United States will pay big dividends for Mexico in its effort to combat cartel violence and reestablish the rule of law in Mexico. It will take considerable effort and likely international assistance in the form of economic aid, technology transfer, training, and intelligence sharing to rapidly develop the Mexican agencies. The United States should continue to support these efforts in all four areas.

CONCLUSION

The United States is engaged in a comprehensive and ongoing effort to influence the conditions that are causing violence in Mexico. Through the effective use of all of the elements of national power, Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement the United States is setting conditions that will reduce violence and the strength of the cartels.

The calculated use of the elements of power as "soft power" is improving the relationship between the two nations, while increasing the effectiveness of

the military, law enforcement, judiciary, and governance of Mexico. Close coordination and information sharing, coupled with improved technological and interagency interoperability, is building the basis for effective law enforcement, judicial, and governance institutions in Mexico. Coordination with United States agencies has had a synergistic effect by improving the effectiveness of agencies on both sides of the border. It reduces the cartels' ability to use the border to gain sanctuary. Sharing evidence helps build cases against cartel members and enables prosecution on either side of the border.

The application of soft power can be an effective solution to international issues by shaping the environment, building improved relations and regional alliances. The use of soft power is not without some risk. It takes a longer, focused application to produce results. It takes considerable interagency coordination and commitment. It takes sustained budgetary support across many agencies and multiple budgets cycles. Regime changes can significantly alter the receptiveness of nations in the process.

Ultimately to be successful in shaping the environment in Mexico, the United States should continue to apply a broad range of national powers. The United States must continue adapting to changing conditions, must stay focused on the objective, must and sustain the effort over multiple years, budget cycles and regimes. The smart application of soft power is effectively changing the conditions that have led to the strength of the cartels in Mexico and the violence in Mexico. Continued use of soft power will further change those conditions, thus enabling the reduction of both the level of violence, and the influence of the cartels.

Endnotes

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