

## **International Narco-Terrorism and Non-State Actors: The Drug Cartel Global Threat**

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### **Abstract**

This paper will research the scope of Narco-terrorism in Mexico and its progressive influence and effects in the United States. Since the Columbian drug wars, the crackdown against the drug cartels killed a number of their leaders, and other members were placed in prison. Mexico's drug cartels were then able to take control caused by the vacuum in Columbian leadership and continued to push the drug market into the United States. In this paper, several of the most powerful Cartels in Mexico will be identified, an examination of their training, and their current impact on Mexico and the United States. The paper will illustrate any possible connections between drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas. It will discuss the use of technology and weapons that narco-terrorists use to protect and promote the drug trade and will note the level of violence of these rival cartels and their victim populations. Finally, some possible steps that can be taken by the United States and Mexico to minimize the impact of narco-terrorism are identified.

**Key Words:** Narco-Terrorism, Mexican Cartel, DTOs, Sinaloa, Los Zetas, Narcotics, Drugs, Underground Tunnel, Hezbollah, Hamas, Border Security

### **Introduction to Narco Terrorism in Central America**

Central America's geography is a natural land bridge connecting North and South America and provides movement of drug contraband from South America to the United States. Mexico's outline from the sky resembles the familiar shape, that of a leg; parted by its various geographical regions and states. The lay of the land provides a stretch of coast line on the east and west with water on each side. The Gulf of Mexico's waters move along the east coast, providing easy routes by watercraft or plane to the gulf areas of the United States. The Pacific Ocean also provides a path of travel to this country with access to the west coast of Canada. These coastline areas and the interior roads that lead north to the United States border, provide convenient routes for narcotics activities. Some routes are at times geographically impassible by air or land but numerous trails are available to move drugs into this country and move cash from the sale of those drugs back to the south. Today's war is against a mix of terrorism, illicit drug trade, bribery of public and military officials, threats and coercion, weapons trafficking, human trafficking, assassinations and kidnappings. The land bridge between North and South America will continue to be the favorite route narco-terrorists will use to import drugs into the United States.

The term narco-terrorism is attributed to Peru's president Belaunda Terry in 1983, writes Zalaman (2009) to describe the attacks by drug cartel traffickers in cocaine who were battling

with the police. It was feared the traffickers were in league with the Maoist rebel group, the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) (Zalman, par. 1). The term has taken hold in law enforcement, intelligence communities and military circles. The major issue with narco-terrorism is the violence that parallels terrorism itself. Zalman (2009) writes that narco-terrorism is violence waged by drug cartels to extract political concessions from the government. For example, Zalman (2009) writes, "Escobar, head of the Medellin drug cartel, against the Colombian government by way of assassinations, hijackings and bombings. Escobar wanted Colombia to revise its extradition treaty, which it eventually did." (Zalman, para. 2). There are differing definitions of narco-terrorism, but to some degree all include, drug trafficking and support of an ideology.

Zalman (2009) writes, "Narco-terrorism has been used to refer to groups understood to have political intentions that engage in or support drug trafficking to fund their activities (para. 3). Groups that have political plans or intentions of engaging and supporting drug trafficking reinforce these counter-political activities. However, Zalman (2009) suggests narco-terrorism of this sort means the trafficking of funds for a political agenda. Drug trafficking and armed violence by groups can be an autonomous activity to which politics become a secondary aim or goal (Zalman, para. 3). Groups like the Columbian FARC and the Taliban of Afghanistan are able to use the profits to defeat the west in two ways by obtaining weapons to advance their mission and ideology by killing and fear, and are also destroying the moral fabric of western society by creating a drug epidemic through addiction. Greed for power or for money is the ultimate goal by both ideological terrorist groups and profiteering narco-terrorists. Types of groups use the same tactics of violence and killing to accomplish their goals. Rogan (2011) writes, "The Columbian drug lords, like Pablo Escobar, were wealthy outlaws, but not insurgents (Rogan, p. 2). Power and money trumps above all else. When one group is weakened or extinguished, there is another organization that quickly fills the void. In the Columbian drug wars, the crackdown against the drug cartels killed a number of their leaders, and other members were placed in prison. Mexico's drug cartels were then able to take control caused by the vacuum in Columbian leadership and continued to push the drug market into the United States.

### **The Sinaloa Drug Cartel**

The Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico began as a group of farming families who grouped together in the 1960s and -70s to do business in marijuana and poppy cultivation. According to In Sight (2012), the Sinaloa Cartel is described as the largest and most powerful drug-trafficking organization in the Americas. The cartel is allied with some of Mexico's top capos (The Spanish word capo may refer to boss, big wig or drug baron). The coalition of members operates in unity to protect itself, relying on connections to the federal police and the military, as well as ties to the highest levels of the Mexican government. This coalition was an effort to keep a step ahead of their rivals, namely Los Zetas (In Sight, Introduction).

The influence of this once small farming community in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico has influence reaching into the northern United States as far as New York City and every major city in between, and as far south as Buenos Aires, Argentina. According to In Sight, the Sinaloa Cartel works in a more diplomatic fashion, allowing it to penetrate government and security forces successfully wherever it operates. One could say it prefers to operate in a more diplomatic

fashion. The organization would rather bribe than use a bullet and makes alliances rather than fight. However, it will organize its forces to saturate and overrun an area they want to control (In Sight, para. 1). Payan (2011) writes, "Almost all Mexican law enforcement officials along the border with the United States are bought off by the drug cartels or neutralized by explicit or implicit threats. The strategy has long been the same: 'plata o plomo' [the silver or a lead bullet]. In other words, you either take the bribe (silver) or a bullet to the head (lead)" (Payan, p. 39-40). Law enforcement, government officials or anyone else who might pose a threat of the movement of the illegal drug shipments into the United States sooner or later may be faced with this choice. The deplorable safety and security of Mexico's society today is far from the days when small farming communities that once dotted the country.

As mentioned earlier, the organizations like the Sinaloa Cartel was started by farming families. That tradition continues today; its members are still united by blood or marriage. The Sinaloa Cartel family conducts itself more as a federation than the tightly knit organization as the Sicilian Mafia. In Sight noted, when necessary, the Sinaloa Cartel has created alliances with other organizations like those of the Gulf Cartel and the Familia Michoacana (In Sight, par 1). The drug business is chaotic with alliances shifting frequently with the different cartels involving blood and marriage alliances. According to In Sight, the Sinaloa Cartel, the drug of choice for trade is marijuana. In the latter part of the 1970s, however, the various families began to move cocaine for the Columbian and Central American traffickers. It was the Quintero, Gallardo, and Carrillo who had connections with Columbian Medellin and Guadalajara Cartels through a middleman known as Juan Ballesteros, a Honduran who lived in Columbia part time. The meetings established routes to move cocaine by airplane and boat from Central America and Mexico as well as land routes into the United States (In Sight, par. 3). Underlying differences within the Sinaloa Cartel organization surfaced when the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agent Camarena was assassinated by the organization. A vacuum was created when the leaders fled from the region and loyalties changed, which resulted in bloody wars between the differing factions.

Chalk (2012) writes with the arrest of Hector Salazar in 1995, Joaquin Guzman took over the Sinaloa Cartel and remains as the current leader today and is on the list of the Mexican government as the most wanted drug lords in Mexico. Salazar is one of the wealthiest men in the world with a personal worth of one billion in United States currency (Chalk, p. 5). The cartel controls most of the state and has major hideouts in Baja California, Durango, Jalisco, Sonora, and Chihuahua. Although it has suffered a great deal by the arrest of some top lieutenants, the Sinaloa Cartel remains the most powerful criminal organization. According to Chalk, the organization is able to move large amounts of cocaine into West Africa with planned distribution to Eastern and Western Europe and has control as well as influence in a number of cities in the United States. It manages a number of its affairs through Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) gang in California, and New Mexico. It is currently waging a war with the Fuentes Syndicate, and the Beltran Leyva Organization (Chalk, p. 5-6). Rival groups to Sinaloa's interests will continue to battle back and forth over territory and the drug market. Currently, the Sinaloa Cartel is still considered to be the most powerful cartel in Mexico.

## Los Zetas Cartel

In 1999, the Gulf Cartel's leader, Osiel Cardenas Guillen had his daughter baptized. After the event, Guillen ordered his bodyguard Arturo Guzman Decenas to kill his daughter's godfather. According to Logan (2012), without hesitation, Decenas executed the godfather with a bullet to the head. For ordering the execution, Guillen earned the nickname, "The Friend Killer," and Decenas earned Guillen's trust. Thereafter, Decenas became known as "Z-1" (Chalk, p. 5). The callous murder created what would be known as the (Los) Zetas, with Decenas as its founder. The group became a security detail tasked in protecting the Gulf Cartel's leadership. Logan writes the Zetas would evolve over 12 years to become one of Mexico's most powerful criminal organizations (Chalk, p. 5). During that time, Los Zetas had special status within the Gulf Cartel narco organization. This status also allowed this elite unit to learn the inside workings from top to bottom of in the organization.

Logan (2012) writes that Los Zetas became a bodyguard unit because of Guillen's increased paranoia. The Gulf Cartel was not his to control absolutely; several rivals also existed across Tamaulipas that Guillen needed to "bend the knee or die." The young cartel boss needed an elite unit of bodyguards; Guzman was asked for direction and inquired where he could find men he could trust. Guzman's knowledge of the military, told Guillen the Mexican military would have the best recruits. By careful contract negotiation, Guzman convinced thirty-one men to leave the military service and serve under his command to protect the head of the Gulf Cartel (Logan, p. 5). He adds that some of these men had operated under the command of the Mexican Special Forces unit known as Grupos Aeromoviles de Fuerzas Especiales (GAFE). This unit had superior training and some had even completed a "training the trainers" program. The new recruit members were so well trained in military tactics, that they were senior instructors who trained other military instructors. All of the new recruits were provided the needed resources to build a narco-militia to protect the Gulf Cartel and carry out assigned missions (Logan, p. 5). In order to secure the Gulf Cartel's preeminence, the other competing drug organizations have to be eliminated. Guillen ordered Los Zetas to put a plan into action that would concentrate and centralize the Gulf Cartel's power to be under his full control (Logan, p. 5). An important reason to also concentrate power was to defend interests against the Mexican military. Logan writes, "The Mexican military captured Guillen's primary accountant, Ruben Saucedo Rivera ("El Cacahuatö") on January 14, 2002. Arturo Guzman (Z-1) died in a shootout with soldiers in Matamoros on November 21, 2002. Less than four months after Guzman's death, the Mexican military captured, Guillen himself in Matamoros on March 14, 2003" (p. 6). The forming of Los Zetas Guillen's power, the group was structured and disciplined so well to maintain order in the organization that it allowed Guillen to run the Gulf Cartel from prison. However, Los Zetas would gradually begin to operate more on its own as a narco-terrorist organization.

Over the next seven years (1997 to 2004) Los Zetas experienced a phase of development. Logan (2012) claimed this step was Los Zetas's first phase of development, which established two central roles. First was to protect the principal and second was to hunt enemies. Three of the top lieutenants of Los Zetas, namely, Arturo Guzman (Z-1), Rogelio G. Pizana (Z-2), and Heriberto Lazcano (Z-3) went through the region of Tamaulipas and secretly assassinated rivals

to insure the Gulf Cartel's influence. The actions made them the most powerful criminal drug organization of Mexico's Gulf coast and Tamaulipas (Logan, p. 5).

Guillen's position as the lead capo (boss, chief or leader) rested upon the success of Los Zetas' mission. The number of executions and assassinations established the unit as having a high rate of success. Perhaps it also marks that this advanced tactic by one cartel against another organization was outside the norms of the relationship that existed between the cartel organizations in the past. However, Logan notes the successful training of the Zetas went beyond the kill missions. Physiological warfare also played an important role in their missions. This idea is based upon the same philosophy as the Sinaloa Cartel that is to use fighting as a last resort (Logan, 2012, p. 5)

However, the two differed. Whereas Sinaloa attempted to bribe, Los Zetas (based on its military training) preferred to cast fear in its enemies whereby their rival enemies were too afraid to fight. This creed coupled with the Zetas training swelled the numbers in recruitment and continued to attract members to the security organization. According to Logan (2012), from 2002 to 2004, Los Zetas occupied a position to break away from the Gulf Cartel and become a greater threat to its supremacy, which Los Zetas made possible by creating murder incorporated. The breakaway was created during two years when the capture of Guillen's accountant, Ruben Rivera, the death of Guzman in a gun battle with the Mexican military, and finally with the capture of Guillen in 2003 (p. 5-6). Logan writes, "Osiel Guillen's older brother Antonio Cardenas Guillen (Tony Tormenta), slowly began to fill the vacuum left by Osiel Guillen's absence, although the Gulf Cartel *capo* remained very much the head of the organization from behind bars" (p. 6). In the world of narco-terrorism, leaders have to be shrewd and ruthless to remain a capo of their organization.

When leadership changes through death, murder or arrest, loyalties quickly changed, and opportunities arose. Under such an authoritarian leadership system, the only way to the top requires a show of violence, physical toughness, and intelligence (in personal as well as up-to-date knowledge on one's enemy) and the support of smaller inner organizational alliances to remain alive. Logan (2012) writes that Los Zetas had reached a new plateau in power under the command of Heriberto Lazcano (Z-3) (p.6). Lazcano's savvy business sense and military discipline in leading the organization increased the power of the organization. Lazcano had been using a definitive accounting system that provided significant revenues. He also continued recruitment of new members, skilled trainers and expert advisors. However, the Los Zetas may be at its peak (Logan, 2012, p. 6-7).

Analysts observe that the second-in-command, Eduardo Costilla, was not happy being the number-two man in the Los Zetas Cartel. Indications of his changing loyalties are suspected by the capture of many high ranking Zetas members by the Mexican military (Logan, 2012, p. 6-7). The BBC, reported, "The Gulf cartel has been engaged in a bloody battle with the Zetas drug gang for trafficking routes into the US. A Mexican Navy statement said a man identifying himself as Jorge Costilla Sanchez was arrested on Wednesday in Tampico in Tamaulipas (BBC, 2012, para. 3-4). Evidences in disunity within Los Zetas perhaps be an indication that the second most powerful narco-terrorist organization may become fragmented.

The pressure from Mexican President Calderon's administration did have an effect on weakening Los Zetas. The danger for the organization has also come from disunity from within by its top leaders. According to Logan (2012), Lazcano has suspected Trevino of leaking information. Mexican military patrols were somehow able to apprehend a number of high ranking operatives of Los Zetas. As the number two in command, Trevino had been a police officer in the city of Nuevo Laredo before joining the organization. Trevino is considered to be ambitious and to act on emotion rather than careful planning. Lazcano is the opposite, he leads by his military experience and strategy planning, focusing on training and recruitment (Logan, 2012, p. 7). Perhaps his contacts with government officials while serving as a police officer provided the needed associations to leak inside information. It was anticipated Los Zetas would fragment into rival organizations which occurred after Guillen was killed in a shootout with troops (BBC, 2012, para. 11). The competition and infighting between Lazcano and Trevino, along with pressure from the Mexican Military may be the serration to split of Los Zetas into three smaller organizations to become the Los Zetas Norte, Los Zetas Central, and Los Zetas Guatemala (Logan, 2012, p.7). Whether weakening Los Zetas occurred by government and military pressure or by infighting, Mexican President Calderon's administration would be able to take credit in the war on the drug cartel.

### **Training and Tactics, Capabilities of the Drug Cartel Organization: The Sinaloa Cartel**

Most written material addresses the Zetas Cartel in the use of weapons and tactics because of its recruitment and continual pursuit of military or police trained individuals. There are reports that the Sinaloa Cartel has several training camps in the state of Sinaloa. According to Strategy Page (2012) the Sinaloa have been under heavy surveillance in Mexico for operating several training camps in the region:

The Sinaloa cartel was operating several training camps for its gunmen and wanted military-grade weapons, to include .50 caliber heavy machineguns, medium mortars, and grenade launchers. The M2HB .50 caliber heavy machinegun is capable of destroying light armored vehicles of the type used by Mexican federal police. It is also effective against aircraft; particularly helicopters (Strategy Page, para. 5).

Though the Sinaloa Cartel does operate training camps to train new recruits and possibly seasoned cartel members in the use of weapons to increase its forces and firepower, the organization's focus is building networks with government, business, and smaller local drug gangs. Dudley (2010) writes, "Sinaloa has integrated itself into the local community [Huehuetenango] as well as included it in some of the benefits:

"They give jobs, provide health care and fund local festivals, several people who live in the region said. Sinaloa members have also replaced the state in terms of security by killing or disposing of smaller criminal enterprises" (p. 75).

This approach of diplomacy with local government officials and charity to the local population, establishes the Sinaloa Cartel as an accepted government entity aside from the local elected officials. The cartel has become a surrogate of the legitimate government. The shared

administration opens the door to greater control of the cartel. If government is unwilling or unable to provide a service to its citizens, the cartel will step in and be the care-taker.

Outside Mexico City, power of central government diminishes. The Sinaloa Cartel according to Dudley (2010) has also bankrolled a number of political elections and candidates for office in Huehuetenango. The organization has invested money into local industry such as construction. Their influence has also penetrated into the interior ministry and has been successful in steering investigations and arrests against their rival Los Zetas (p.78). The Sinaloa Cartel's weapons of choice are diplomacy, economic development and bribery. This approach transfers the risk to other organizations or government officials and at the same time establishes networks to ensure drug profits continue uninterrupted.

### **Los Zetas Cartel**

Lazcano as discussed earlier was one of the original members of the Zetas Cartel. Lazcano (Z-3) has overseen the recruitment of elite Special Forces units. He had established a number of contacts over the years to help in the recruitment efforts. Logan (2012) noted that Lazcano came into contact with paramilitary organizations and established sources to obtain recruits. To handle the increase of recruits, he successfully established training bases throughout Tamaulipas. These camps instructed all new recruits in basic training designed for small team tactics and weapons. In any military operation, it is important to establish and maintain reliable communications, so Lazcano implemented a system to establish a secret communications network. Better communications meant real-time response to control strategic points in the drug trafficking routes and storing contraband which Mexican traffickers refer to as plazas. Z-1 increased the business activity beyond extortion to charging a passage tax to the smaller and weaker organizations to guarantee safe continuance of the drugs (Logan, 2012, p. 6).

### **Training Members of a Drug Cartel in Business Ethics?**

The initial idea of any criminal group having any type of organization or structure that has a chain of command or a line of accountability often runs counter that crime is anything but organized or ethical. However the same principles that are applied to any global company, would also work to some extent in a criminal organization. According to Lacey (2009) he reports an arrest of a leader of a Mexican drug cartel known as "The Family." Rafael Cedeno, 47, was arrested by the Mexican Federal Police, the leader informed the authorities that he trained members of his organization in ethics and personal development and urged them to avoid using drugs and alcohol.

Federal Police learned the reason from the cartel leader was to keep better motivational and emotional control over the members (p. A8). Competition in the business world, especially on the global perspective is fierce and requires a company to have well trained and principled employees. In the illicit drug business, poor performance not only means a loss in market share, lives are also at stake, which in any business is an asset, even if their activity is illegal. Unlike legitimate companies who lose business will simply lay off workers. For the cartel member, failing to hold to rules of the criminal organization will result in the member being killed. This piece of information is interesting because the impression it provides in the

sophistication in terrorist and narco-criminal organizations that compete and protect their interests in the criminal business. Even criminal organizations want reliable, honest employees.

Los Zetas pressed upon competing cartels and currently looks to the Sinaloa Cartel as the next enemy to destroy. Sinaloa is set in its traditional ways, keeping members of the organization through family blood or through marriage. The leadership thinks members of the military are too dangerous to be entrusted in the Sinaloa drug-trafficking organization (DTO). Los Zetas once the security arm of the Gulf Cartel moved beyond being security for the organization. The recruitment efforts have continued to hire experienced people. Confidence of the leadership has grown to such a level that they are now making bold statements to the Mexican press as Strategy Page (2012) emphasized in its report:

Mexican security officials are acknowledging that the Zetas drug cartel is still managing to attract recruits among former members of Mexican police forces and the military. A press release attributed to Los Zetas senior commanders (made in late December 2011) said that the drug gang could recruit soldiers, sailors, and security agents (ie, bribe them to defect or recruit them after they leave the service). The press release included this statement: "Not the Army not the Marines nor the security and anti-drug agencies of the United States government can resist us. Mexico lives and will continue under the regime of Los Zetasö (par. 8).

Whereas the Sinaloa Cartel contracts with local gangs, bribes government and law enforcement officials, their loyalties may change to the highest bidder. Unless one is part of the Sinaloa Cartel by blood or by marriage, one cannot be a member and is considered an outsider. Los Zetas however, has the advantage because the cartel opens up its membership on experience in military and law enforcement training. According to Dudley (2010), "The Zetas reportedly have a sophisticated and generous work package for those who join." Among the benefits include free dry cleaning. Ex-military and former intelligence officials have joined the ranks of the Zetas. Many former soldiers and intelligence officers of the Guatemalan special forces (Kaibiles) are out of work following the peace talks of the Guatemalan government and the leftist guerillas (p.75). The Zetas may have the edge because they may be better trained. Former military special forces and intelligence specialists teach and train other members. Former military and law enforcement have also been trained and disciplined to be loyal and keep commitments.

### **Transportation of Drugs across the United States Border and the Problems That Arise**

The war between the Mexican Cartels over the control of the movement and the routing of drugs amounts to keys points across Mexico and most important at the U.S./Mexico border. The narco-cartels use this term, *plazas* (geographical locations or points where drug contraband passes through before entering into the United States). Control of locations near the United States and Mexico control the movement of drugs, the transporters, and any resources that assist in conducting their business. The cartel that controls these key locations possesses the ability to obtain and control the funds, the ultimate symbol of power. Serrano (1997) quoted the Drug Policy Director Barry R. McCaffrey, "Colorado, Utah and Wyoming, the Rocky Mountain heartland of America, are increasingly becoming populated with Mexican cartel trafficking



organizations and violent gangs using this major transportation crossroads as a trans-shipment center" (para. 12). Articles and reports illustrate that the drug problem has saturated the United States had gone far beyond the major cities that serve as major distribution centers. Serrano (1997) wrote the drug cartels have been concentrating on untapped areas of the Mid-west and the Rocky Mountains. States such as Wyoming, Utah, and Iowa have a large number of legal and illegal immigrants who have converged on these areas. Serrano reports that Interstates 25, 70, and 80 serve as pipelines for the movement of drugs and money. He adds that federal drug-enforcement officials note that out the interstate roadways are the major routes for drugs to move north and east, and money to move south and west (para. 12-14). Gun violence will continue to spill over the border into the United States as the rival cartels continue to fight over the key entry points (Plazas) into the United States.

Increasingly, large numbers of drug cases in the Mid-west are appearing in court rooms across the states. Many of these defendants are not American citizens but Mexican nationals who have illegally entered the country. A number of these nationals are males in their twenties are not looking for work, but are pushing drugs such as methamphetamine from Mexico. Chemical products to produce this drug are illegal to purchase or possess, but not impossible to obtain (Serrano, 1997, para. 19-22). The issue is not just the problem of illegal immigration in the United States, but the states having the resources in law enforcement and in the criminal court system to effectively deal with the growing threat of DTOs here in the United States. Serrano cites Senator Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control on the seriousness of the social and economic impact the drug problem poses to the United States:

He said it was "absolutely critical" to pressure Mexico to clean up the regions next to the border. "Yearly we lose tens of billions of dollars in added health care costs, crime, on-the-job accidents, and family violence directly related to the presence of drugs in our society," he said at a recent caucus meeting. "All of this from substances produced illegally and smuggled into this country" (Serrano, 1997, para. 16). The immigration issue remains a sensitive political issue. If Senator Grassley is correct in his assessment on the threat to national security and the loss of economic resources, the illegal immigration problem remains a forefront of political confusion and special interest rather than protecting citizens from a foreign threat by securing the border between the United States and Mexico.

## **Weapons Sources**

It makes sense that the United States at the northern door of Mexico is the best place to conduct business when it comes to small arms. Reports of estimates are as that thousands of firearms cross over the border into Mexico each day. Operations such as Wide Receiver, White Gun, and the latest, Fast and Furious, were planned operation led by the ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms) allowed suspected gun traffickers to buy guns here in the United States to be transported across the border into Mexico. According to Frieden (2012), United States lawmakers were extremely outraged of ATF's poor handling in tracking weapons once they went into Mexico. ATF agent, Larry Alt told CNN, it was "egregious" that agents were watching people transfer guns to people who were handing them over to the cartels, "and we were not

taking an enforcement action" (Frieden, 2012, para. 7). Agencies like the ATF are charged with the responsibility to prevent weapons from leaving the country illegally. The issue is made worse with a lack of transparency, obstruction of the truth, and claimed executive privilege. Questions will continue to be asked about the weapons, who in authority knew, and when they knew about the operations. Political infighting will continue on these botched operations for years to come. Rather than getting to the truth, Mexico will continue to blame the United States for its lax gun laws and the United States will blame Mexico for its lack of enforcement and government corruption.

### **Criminal Activity Literally Underground**

The movie entitled "The Great Escape" with Steve McQueen is an all-time favorite movie of viewers. The sophistication of the tunnel that was dug from inside the German prison-of-war camp Stalag 3 was impressive. Viewers don't know if this gimmick was a Hollywood invention, but the tunnel meant freedom for those who were successful in escaping the prison-of-war-camp. The tunnels that have been dug from Mexico into the United States not for escape to freedom, but for the trafficking of drugs by narco-terrorists. Some are very well designed with lights, tracks, and circulating air (Johnson, 2012, para. 4). A highly sophisticated system in comparison to the dirt tunnels requiring mentioned in the movie where one had to crouch down to the ground to move through a tunnel.

Tunnels discovered in recent years rival any professional underground mining operation. As mentioned above, the rail tracks in some of these tunnels contain electric mining carts that can reach fifteen miles per hour. According to Johnson (2012), Laura Duffy, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of California, told the Senate drug caucus in June. "Understandably, American citizens react to news stories about the discovery of a large tunnel, complete with plumbing, lights, ventilation and a rudimentary railway system, with a mixture of surprise, indignation, alarm and dismay" (para. 4, 12). It is no surprise the DTOs spends over a million dollars on a tunnel as part of an ongoing business. In addition, Johnson (2012) notes the industrial parks on both sides of the border are ideal for building tunnels between the two nations. Even with all the seismic sensors and sonar devices, a majority of the tunnels are exposed by tip-offs from citizens (Johnson, par. 1-12). The success of finding these hard-to-find tunnels will rely on the support of concerned citizens on both sides of the border.

These tunnels are highly prized and well guarded because of the valuable drug product that can easily be moved undetected being transported. In 2009, the Washington Times released a piece on al-Qaeda. The information is alarming regarding al-Qaeda's plans of using a tunnel as an entry point for a biological attack on the United States. Abdullah al-Nafisi made some brash statements on the Al Jazeera network of using the tunnels to move weapons and terrorists into the U.S. He commented as follows:

Four pounds of anthrax in a suitcase this big carried by a fighter through tunnels from Mexico into the U.S. are guaranteed to kill 330,000 Americans within a single hour if it is properly spread in population centers there," the recruiter said. "What a horrifying idea; 9/11 will be small change in comparison. Am I right? There is no need for airplanes, conspiracies, timings and so on. One person, with the courage to carry 4 pounds of

anthrax, will go to the White House lawn, and will spread this confetti all over them, and then we'll do these cries of joy. It will turn into a real celebration" (Washington Times, 2009, para. 5). This is a credible threat; al-Nafisi certainly has a following of young militants willing to step forward and conduct such an operation. This threat is not only possible but also probable.

The Washington Times (2009), confirms the activity of Hezbollah and the state sponsorship of terrorism by Iran.

"It shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that terrorist organizations would utilize the border to enter the U.S.," said a DEA official who also asked not to be named because of his involvement in ongoing intelligence operations. "We can't ignore any threat or detail when it comes to al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations bent on attacking the U.S. (para.8)

The Times first reported in March that Hezbollah – an Iran-backed group based in Lebanon is using routes that Mexican drug lords control to smuggle contraband and people into the United States to finance operations (Washington Times, 2009, para. 11-12). One might think this discovery of Hezbollah crossing into the United States is unlikely under a planned organized effort. According to IPT (Investigative Project on Terrorism) News (2011), Hezbollah's technology of tunnel building in the Middle-East has shown up in the narco-tunnels found at the border between the United States and Mexico. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are being used in car bombings used by DTOs in Mexico found within an internal memo of the Tucson Police Department (para, 13-14). Hezbollah's stronger presence and activity is a strong possibility, which is a threat that is a security factor putting Americans at risk.

## Conclusion

Narcotics and drug trafficking have become a tremendous national and international security threat globally. A number of opinions for legalizing drugs argue it will make many of society's problems disappear. The ideas are lofty and seem to work under the best conditions in the human mind, but fail miserably in reality. Drugs are simply an addicting habit that has ensnared a number of people worldwide. The ramifications are immense in every society. It destroys self-discipline and removes one's moral compass. The evidence is overwhelming. For example, The Dutch Netherlands has reconsidered its relaxing enforcement on the use of cannabis. Tourists traveling to the Netherlands to visit Amsterdam's coffee shops for its hybrid cannabis have caused an economic impact on Amsterdam's more traditional business in its red light district (Associated Press, 2011, para. 11). The Netherlands has been producing hybrid cannabis that has increased in higher concentrations of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) over the past three decades. According to the Associated Press (2011), the Dutch government has announced it will classify the hybrid cannabis as a hard drug within the same category as cocaine, and ecstasy, reporting that the hybrid weed has contributed to an increase in breakdown in public health (para, 1, 5). The Dutch government is concerned about a generation of citizens whose public health could affect the Netherlands' ability to be competitive in the European Union and the global economy. The "leafy green substance" has become such a tourist favorite that the Dutch government is moving to ban sales to the tourists. The Associated Press (2011) mentions the

Trimbos Institute findings that the average amount of THC in Dutch marijuana is currently around 17.8 percent. It has been declining since 2004 after increasing steadily from 4 percent or so in the 1970s (para. 16). The Dutch have move beyond tobacco cigars and have become known for its hybrid cannabis. The Dutch government policies of tolerance of its use have now reconsidered its negative impact on the country.

The United States is the largest market for illegal drug consumption resulting in violence and mayhem. To the Mexican drug cartels, this country by its drug consumption finances their drug empires. Once a less violent activity of Mexico's society, trafficking marijuana has in the last thirty years become a violent war resulting in the loss of thousands of innocent lives. Who can the people trust if not their governments? Activities with the mass slaughter of women, children, and government officials have raised the violence to a level of terrorism. Because narcotics are the central reason for the fighting, and massive corruption, the label of narco-terrorism fits.

Beheadings are a gruesome form of terrorism that used to be a mark of groups in the Middle-East but the technique is now a mark of fear used by narco-terrorists such as the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas. Their philosophy relies on using fear, intimidation, murder, and torture to expand their empire. The Sinaloa Cartel can be just as ruthless, but works in a more subtle way like the Italian or Sicilian Mafia. "Robin Hood" images give the impression of taking from the rich and giving to the poor. Sinaloa works first by bribery. This approach works quite well and has corrupted thousands of government, military, and law-enforcement officials. Other cartels bribe and extort also, but the Sinaloa work hard at its public image. This cartel builds schools, hospitals, and other important infrastructure, so it appears to be a champion of the people. Many of the young people are obsessed with the image of becoming a bandit. Many of the mausoleums in Mexico are occupied by dead narco-terrorists with adorned walls and roofs of their exploits as cartel members. Holden (2012) writes, "By day the graveyard is a boomtown where workers can hardly keep up with the stream of bodies arriving in fancy cars and hearses. Visitors bring elaborate flower arrangements, wreaths, balloons, marching bands and all manner of bric-a-brac" (para. 3). DTOs have a great deal of control over the perception of what young people think of the criminal profession of a cartel member. With very few options most youth view perhaps see the cartel member as successful. Money and luxury items are viewed as symbols of success. The DTOs need to continue to recruit to fill their depleting ranks caused by the continual gun battles for control of territory. Youth have little choice in a society that is offering very little opportunity. Some of the following steps could be taken in the United States and Mexico to minimize the destruction of both societies:

- Educate and empower the citizens of Mexico to have a greater voice in government affairs. The mindset needs to be swayed away from the cultural idea of a drug trafficking life and introduce ethics and moral conduct. Encourage NGOs to be part of the plan to influence this goal.
- Promote programs at the community level to encourage communication and community cooperation.
- Strengthen law enforcement agencies in training and education as well as provide pay and incentives to maintain a code of ethics and stress accountability to the people they

protect and serve. Increase specialized police units to investigate and expose police corruption, government corruption, and increase the penalties committed under the color of authority and the trust of the people.

- Encourage and promote citizen involvement in civic affairs and influence the political process to be more democratic, establishing institutions that promote the political process for future government officials to be held accountable.
- Create a program of asset forfeiture such as any material resources and funds to be seized and used to fight crime and distribute those funds back into communities.
- Tighten accountability on both sides of the border in positions where bribery and blackmail are known to be high. Conduct accountability and vetting procedures on a continual basis and rotate assignments to decrease corruption in the United States.
- The individual states on the American side should be able to take steps to ensure security of its citizens and conduct actions of enforcement that are within the bounds of their laws, federal and state law, as well as the United States Constitution.

A number of other steps, policies, and procedures are available that both countries can put into effect. Immigration reform is a major point of discussion by both governments of the United States and Mexico. In the United States however, there is a large push back to secure the border before reforming immigration laws. The other argument is providing amnesty to those who have already entered the country illegally. An important argument is there must be security at the border before reforming immigration policy, otherwise the problem will resurface. President Regan provided amnesty during his administration to thousands. For the past decade the same problem begs to be solved. Mexican citizens hoping to escape the bloodshed and violence risk the attempt to sneak into the United States. The challenge for Mexico's government institutions is to provide trust and security to its citizens. Wages of federal government and law enforcement officials are significantly higher than local and regional government employees. Power is strong at the central government level, but lacks any presence of power at the local level. This difference had created a rift between the varying levels of government. The local municipalities do not trust the central government and vice-versa. The central government takes a large portion of the tax revenues from the local governments which does not leave enough in their budgets to meet operating costs. This results in low wages for local officials and a weaker local government. The Mexican cartels exploit this problem, offering bribes and payoffs to those who will support the cartel's goals. The biggest problem facing the Mexico and to some extent, the United States is ethical conduct. A multi-billion dollar narco-empire has the capability to influence and payoff a number of individuals to get the drug product onto the streets and neighborhoods across America. There is a large appetite for illegal narcotics in this country. Terrorist groups, criminal organizations, and states that sponsor terrorism are aware of America's cracked armor and weakening resolve to combat the problem. It is impossible to exterminate the use of illegal narcotics in this country. A level of safety and security can be maintained by effective security at the border, and serious enforcement efforts to obstruct and destroy DTOs ability to produce and transport can be accomplished with some success with the aforementioned steps. Unless United States politicians and the policy-makers in the United States and Mexico become serious about narco-terrorism, the next real crisis of war and civil breakdown may take place in many cities of North America.

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