

<b>Forum:</b>	Special Conference
<b>Issue:</b>	Measures to reduce violence from drug cartels in Mexico
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<b>Position:</b>	Chair of Special Conference

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## Introduction

The ongoing war on drugs has continued to escalate throughout North American countries. The violence is so common and widespread that Mexican citizens recognize that there is a gun shooting if there is a traffic jam; movies theatres lock the doors when they hear a nearby gunshot; parents brace themselves, wondering if their child will be on the next headline, reported missing. The rate of murder and extreme violence has doubled in the past twenty years and has continued to increase exponentially since the war on drugs was first announced. It is impossible to accurately estimate the rate of violence and destruction caused by each individual cartel.

Drug-related criminality in Mexico has become a norm, police enforcement is extremely futile, and most crimes are unreported and criminals uncaught. Roughly 60,000 deaths have occurred due to drug related violence, including 67 reporters, 1000 children and 3500 police officers. Aside from directly murdering people, drug cartels have other methods of exerting their violence and power. For example, roughly 1.7 million people in Mexico has been displaced, most of them having to leave all their possessions behind. Drug cartels and organized crime thrive under social and political unrest and recruitment becomes easier as resentment of the Western world, which stem from propaganda and anger at the depiction of Mexicans, spread throughout the nation. Maria Elizabeth Macias Castro was decapitated for the use of social media to report cartel activities. Her head was displayed in a busy public square warning many others of a similar fate if they tried to report criminal activities. It is impossible to actually take action in a town fueled with distrust and anger at government officials. Most often, drug cartels are more powerful than the law enforcement around them.

It has been 12 years since the War on Drugs was first declared. It is extremely important that nations stop fueling the growth of drug cartels whilst also helping the communities that need urgent support.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Drug Cartels

Drug cartels are criminal organizations with the intent to supply and distribute drugs around the world. Drug cartels have similar structural organization to terrorist groups, including a hierarchy, recruitment, and organized crime. However, the biggest difference between drug cartels and violent extremism is that drug lord's

main desire is to maximize profit rather than spread their ideology.

## General Overview

### The Drug War

Drug cartels in Mexico go beyond common street gangs, as they operate as structured military groups with control of whole cities. In July 2018 alone, 2000 people were murdered due to the drug war. The Drug War began in 2006, when the United States government officially declared war on drugs and named Mexico as its main exporter of drugs. The constant shift in power between drug cartels and shifts in control generates bloodshed as rival drug cartels fight for dominance.

#### *The Sinaloa cartel, Los Zetas and Juarez Cartel*

The major powers in the drug war are the Sinaloa Cartel, Los Zetas Cartel and the Juarez Cartel. The Sinaloa Cartel is known to be the biggest supplier of drugs in America. With thousands of members, it supplies 80% of the meth and 50% of the heroin in the United States. The Sinaloa Cartel is famous for absorbing smaller gangs and new cartels, making it impossible to track down the extent of its influence.

The Los Zetas cartel owns more territory and is known for the extreme violence and brutality committed by its members. With sophisticated resources and technology, most of the heinous acts of crime has been committed by the Los Zetas cartel.

Lastly, the Juarez Cartel is the oldest operating cartel. It has been known for the complete rule over the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez, which has one of the highest murder rates in the world with 130 murders per 100,000 residents. It is important to understand the strong rivalry between each cartel since such rivalry becomes one of the strongest factors of the violence committed by drug cartels.



*Mexican drug cartels' main areas of influence in 2017*

### Corruption in Mexico

Systematic and governmental corruption is a widespread problem within Mexico. Mexican Police officers (Federal

Preventiva) have shown a long history of human rights violations and allegations of taking bribes and freeing drug convicts. For example, in September of 2014, Mexican police officers were accused of kidnapping and committing acts against the local population, including rape, kidnapping, physical abuse and theft. 43 students in the town of Iguala were kidnapped and handed over to a local drug gang. Other than corruption from local police officials, on a federal level, government military officials are known to have received bribes and committed acts of violence against their own population. Under President Calderon's rule, the deployed military personals took part in corruption rather than resolving it. Citizens claimed that armed soldiers initiated abuses against the population completely going against their own line of duty. Even military officials who did not commit direct human rights abuses still acted without warrants, conducted illegal searches, and arrested people without any justification.

### *Recruitment*

Drug cartels require a large number of "employees" and members to operate. Many Mexican cultures are exploited by drug cartels, who force media outlets and entertainment industry with bribes and threats to depict the life of a drug lord as a luxurious and exciting and portray drug cartels as a business rather than a violent group of organized criminals. Young teens and poor families who are struggling to make ends meet often join these cartels with promises of a large profit and secure life. Many members are exposed to violence since a young age either directly or indirectly, with a family member who is a gang member, or a town that is devastated by cartels and gangs. The appeal of a gang and a cartel is that they provide a sense of community and family, giving a false sense of security and trust between members. Smaller cartels only start off drug trafficking because of the high demand and stable income and later opt into violence due to threat from other cartels and gangs. It has been proven that lower socioeconomic areas throughout the world are more susceptible to the lure and false promises of a gang.

### *Drug trafficking around the world*

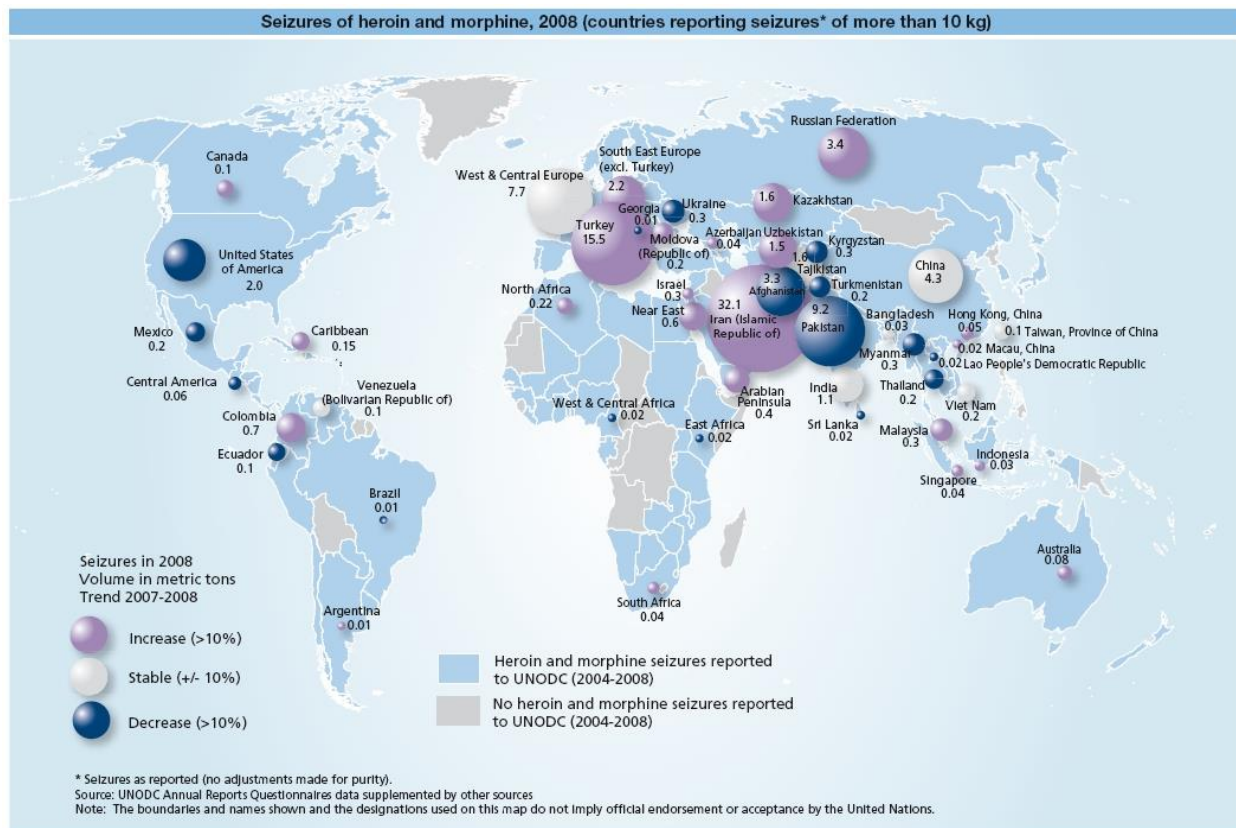
The main purpose of a drug cartel is to create a mass influx of profit from the sale of drugs. Demand for drugs has always been a constant and stable one, with many people willing to pay large amounts. Addiction also strongly helps the sale of drugs, as one customer is likely to be a customer for a very long time. The annual profit of drug cartels is estimated to be roughly 19 to 23 billion US dollars. The United States has acknowledged that they are one of the biggest contributing factors to the rise in violence over the past years in Mexico as the demand for drugs has increased in the US. Unlike more progressive efforts such as the treatment of habitual addicts or prison reforms for prisoners and decreasing recidivism rates, the Trump administration pursues a harsh stance to drug crimes, increasing penalties, mass incarcerations, and repealing Obamacare provisions which enabled addicts to receive medical and psychological treatment. The administration has also slashed the budget of the Office on National Drug Policy Control, which had previously played a key role in establishing a relationship with Mexican drug control agencies. Currently, 29.5 million people globally suffer from drug use disorders and are engaged in problematic uses of drugs.



*Drug trafficking routes throughout Mexico*

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The Office for Drug Control and Crime prevention (UNODC) was created in 1997. The mandate of the UNODC is to ‘assist Member States in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism’. Like most offices operating under the UN, it holds three pillars to solve drug related crimes. Firstly, a field-based technical cooperation aims to enhance the capacity of Member States to counteract illicit drugs, crime and terrorism. Secondly, the UNODC assists with gathering information and furthering research and analytical work to increase knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues and understand the nature of drugs. Lastly, the organization helps in assisting states in the ratification and implementation of the relevant international treaties which works to limit drug trafficking. The Santo Domingo Pact is also an interregional programme which aims to enhance and facilitate the coordination of regional national policies and analyse specific regions of drug related crime. It also assists countries in implementing past United Nations conventions and provide technical assistance for programs.



### United Nations seizures of heroin and morphine

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2006	Operation Michoacan is launched against the La Familia Michoacana cartel. President Felipe Calderon launches the first major military crackdown against drug cartels. More than 60 Mexican soldiers, 100 police officers and 500 cartel gunmen are killed in the operation.
January 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2007	3296 officers from major departments in the Mexican and United States government are deployed. Operation Baja California was launched.
December 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2007	In suspicion of taking bribes and cooperating with drug cartels, the entire police force is disarmed. This is an important incident as corruption of military officials were suspected before, however no actions were carried out to respond to it. The drug related death toll reached 2,477 in 2007 alone.
December 29 <sup>th</sup> 2008	The drug related death roll reaches 6,290.
December 29 <sup>th</sup> 2009	The drug related death toll reaches 7,724.
September 10 <sup>th</sup> 2010	Gunmen from drug cartels kill 25 people in a series of attacks in Ciudad Juarez. A message is graffitied with a threat to the Sinaloa Cartel drug lord Guzman reading "You are killing our sons. You already did, and now we are going to kill your families" In 2010, the drug related death reaches



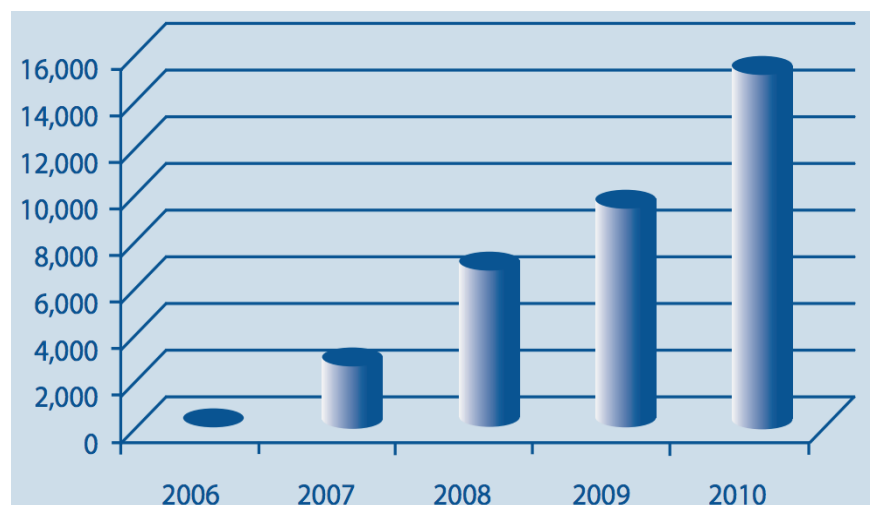
15,273.

January 8 <sup>th</sup> 2011	28 bodies were discovered in Acapulco, a major drug crime related to city. Signs of decapitation and torture shocked the world. This was later found to be by the leader of the Sinaloa cartel, El Chapo Guzman.
July 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2012	President Felipe Hinojosa calls for a nationally aired discussion with peace and human rights activists regarding the strategy against drug cartels.
July 25 <sup>th</sup> 2012	In the prison of Ciudad Juarez, 17 inmates are shot and killed during a brawl between rival drug cartels. It is now impossible to properly estimate the death toll due to the war on drugs as it became so widespread.

## Possible Solutions

Corruption has become a notable element to the rise of drug cartels. Enhancing and reforming law enforcement with close and strong regulation by the United Nations will help decrease the rise of violence. Training on how to deal with situations and local reports on drug related crimes will substantially increase the level of trust between local law enforcement and the population. Any development and maintenance of a fair and effective criminal justice system that abides by applicable international laws and bases itself on regulations by the United Nations and its Charter when prosecuting acts of violence from drug cartels will help substantially reduce violence from drug cartels in Mexico. Cooperation between civilians and law enforcement to properly identify the movement of drugs and their suppliers would be more effective than immediate military crackdowns which do not last or actually change the root of the problem. In addition, rehabilitation programs have proven to decrease recidivism rates and recurrence of the use of drugs. Education platforms and recovery programs to help young children and teenagers who have experienced conflict and violence will prevent the recruitment and vulnerability of their minds by drug cartels. In fact, criminalization and incarceration of drug users are often racially directed and proven to be ineffective. The graph below shows that strong prohibitions and major crackdowns do not really work and often prove to be counterproductive. Tough law enforcement in the Caribbean has forced drug traffickers to find alternative routes to mitigate the loss of profit. This leads to violence and more conflicts between cartels to control territory and routes.

*Drug war killing in Mexico since the launch of President Calderon's offensive on drug cartels*



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