

POLI 437: International Relations of Latin America

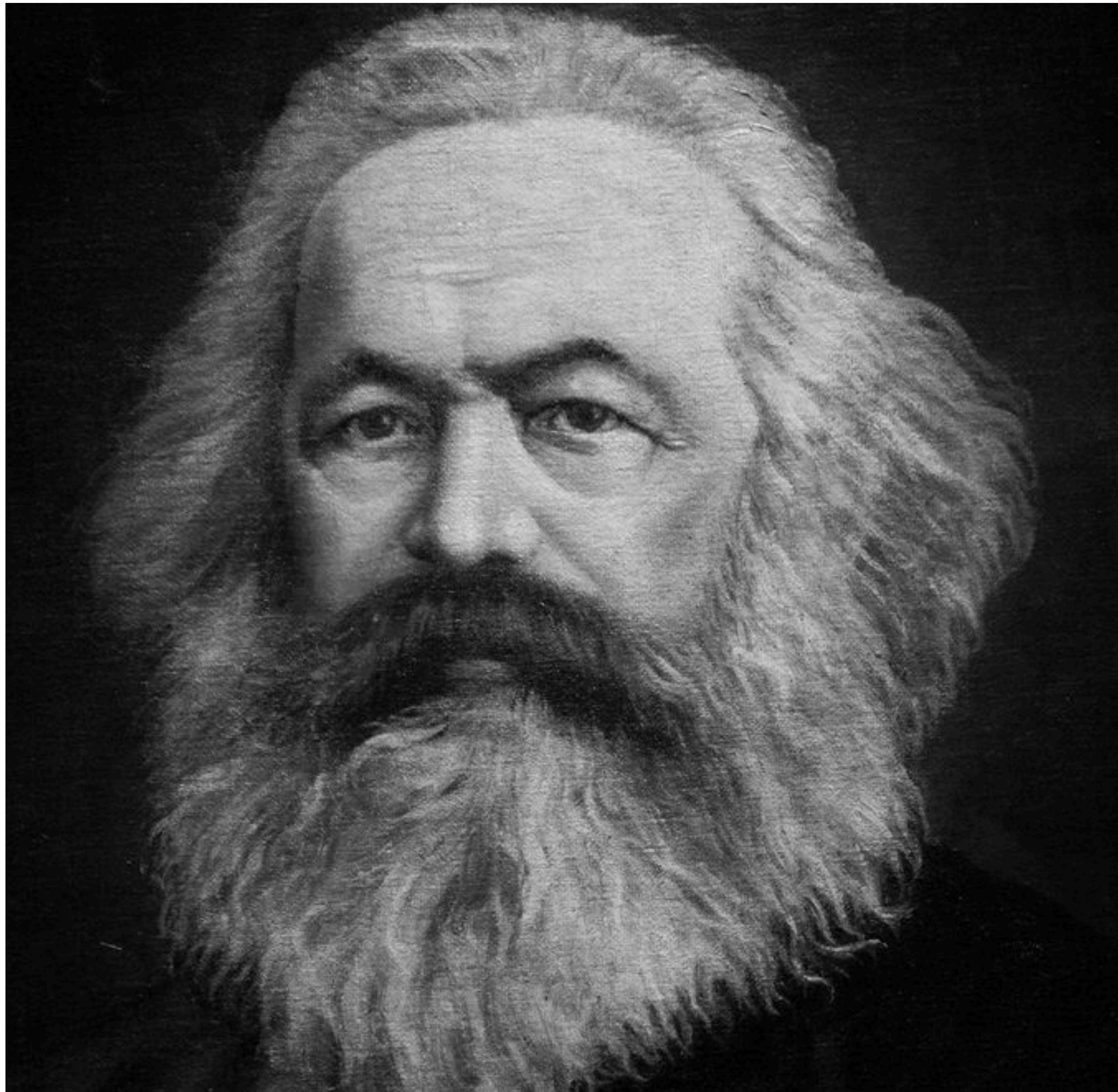


THIS WEEK

Drug flows

Gangs and competition

State & civilian
responses to crime



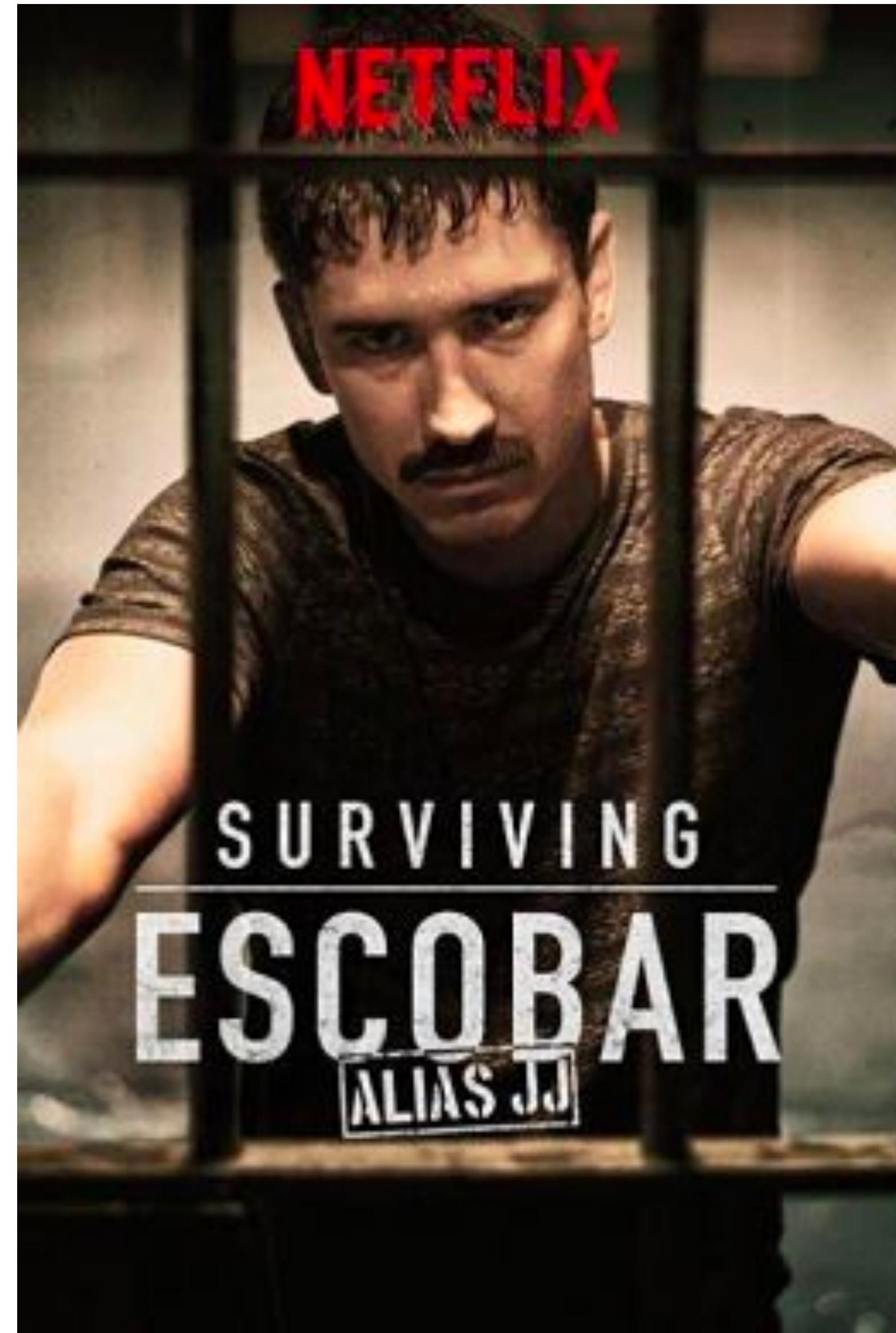
CORRIDOS IN MEXICO



NARCO-CORRIDOS



NARCO-NOVELAS



NARCO-RELIGION?



NARCO-RELIGION?



NARCO-CULTURE

Cultural obsession with depicting “narco” lifestyle in soaps, films, music

Controversial: simply depicting, or glorifying? Is it exploitative of real suffering?



2017 Homicide Rates in Latin America and the Caribbean

HOMICIDE RATE (PER 100,000)



VENEZUELA	89
EL SALVADOR	60
JAMAICA	55,7
HONDURAS	42,8
BRAZIL*	29,7
GUATEMALA	26,1
COLOMBIA	24
PUERTO RICO	19,7
MEXICO	19,5
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	14,9
COSTA RICA	12,1
PANAMA	10,2
PARAGUAY	9,8
BOLIVIA	8,5
URUGUAY	7,8
PERU	7,7
NICARAGUA	7
ARGENTINA*	6
ECUADOR	5,8
CHILE	3,3

Image Credit: InSight

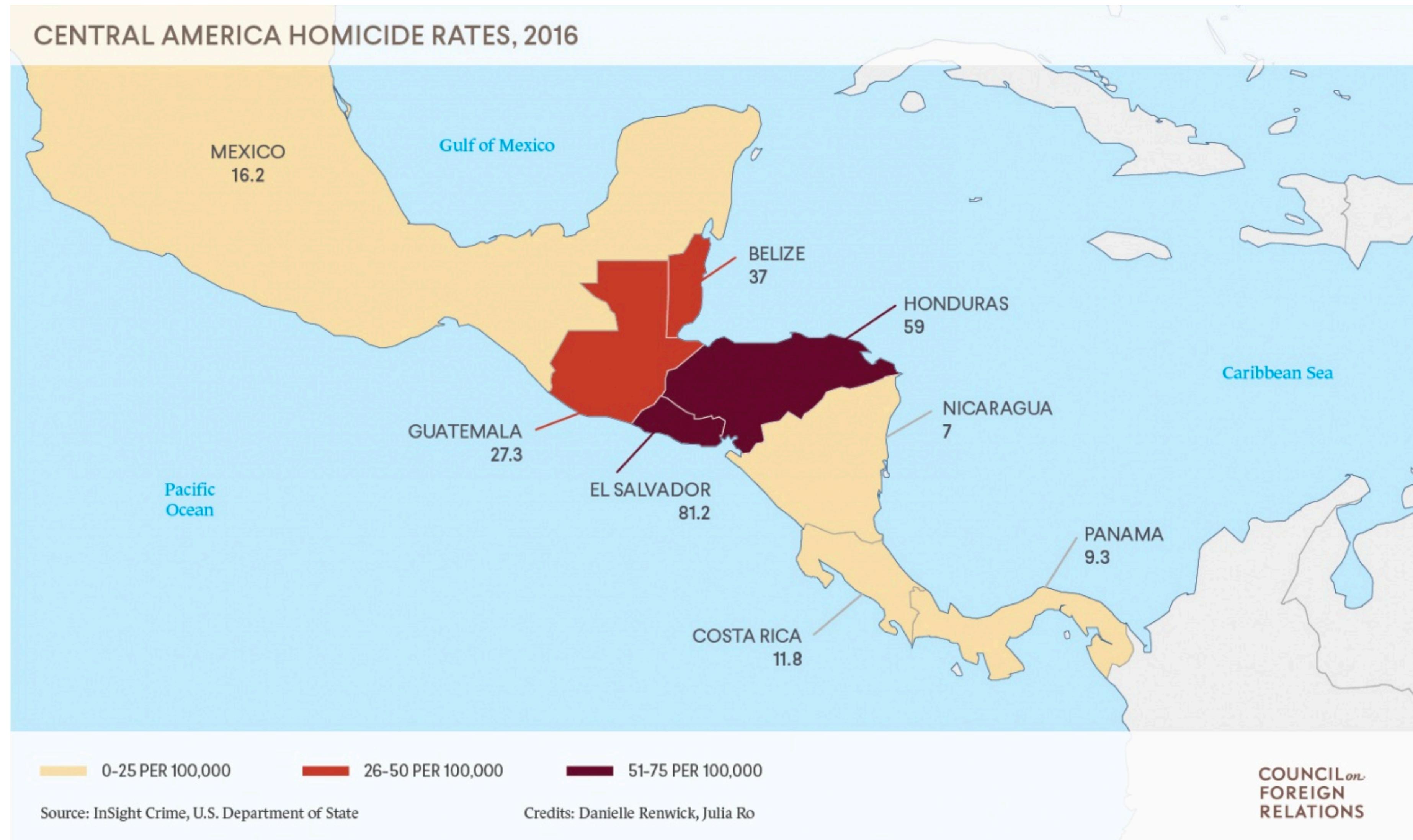
* Homicide rate for the year 2016 due to the absence of 2017 statistics

Latin America has largely traded civil war violence for criminal violence



Crime is a central topic today, especially with respect to violence

NORTHERN TRIANGLE



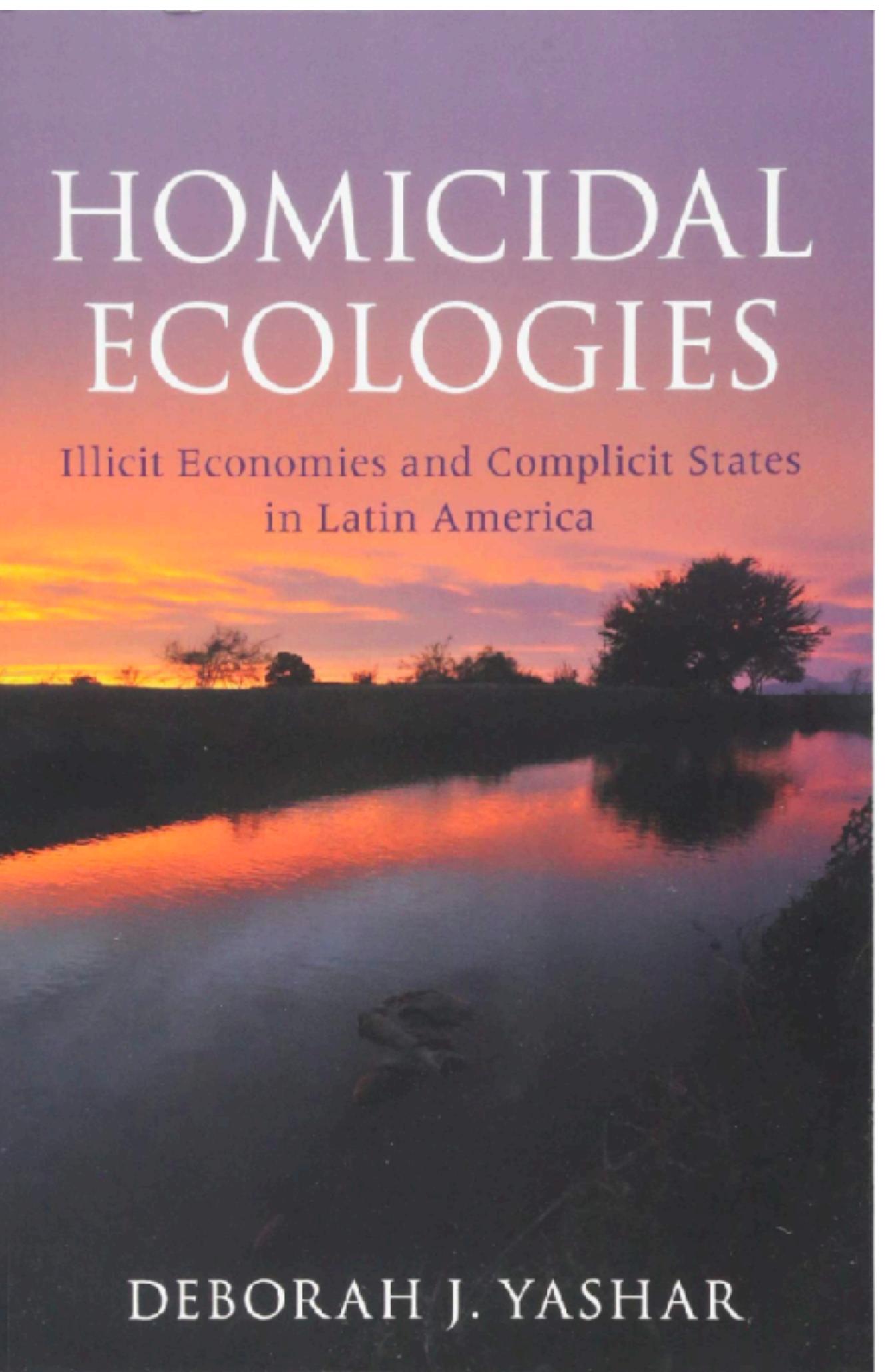
WHY SO VIOLENT?

Three factors:

Changing drug routes

Weak/complicit states

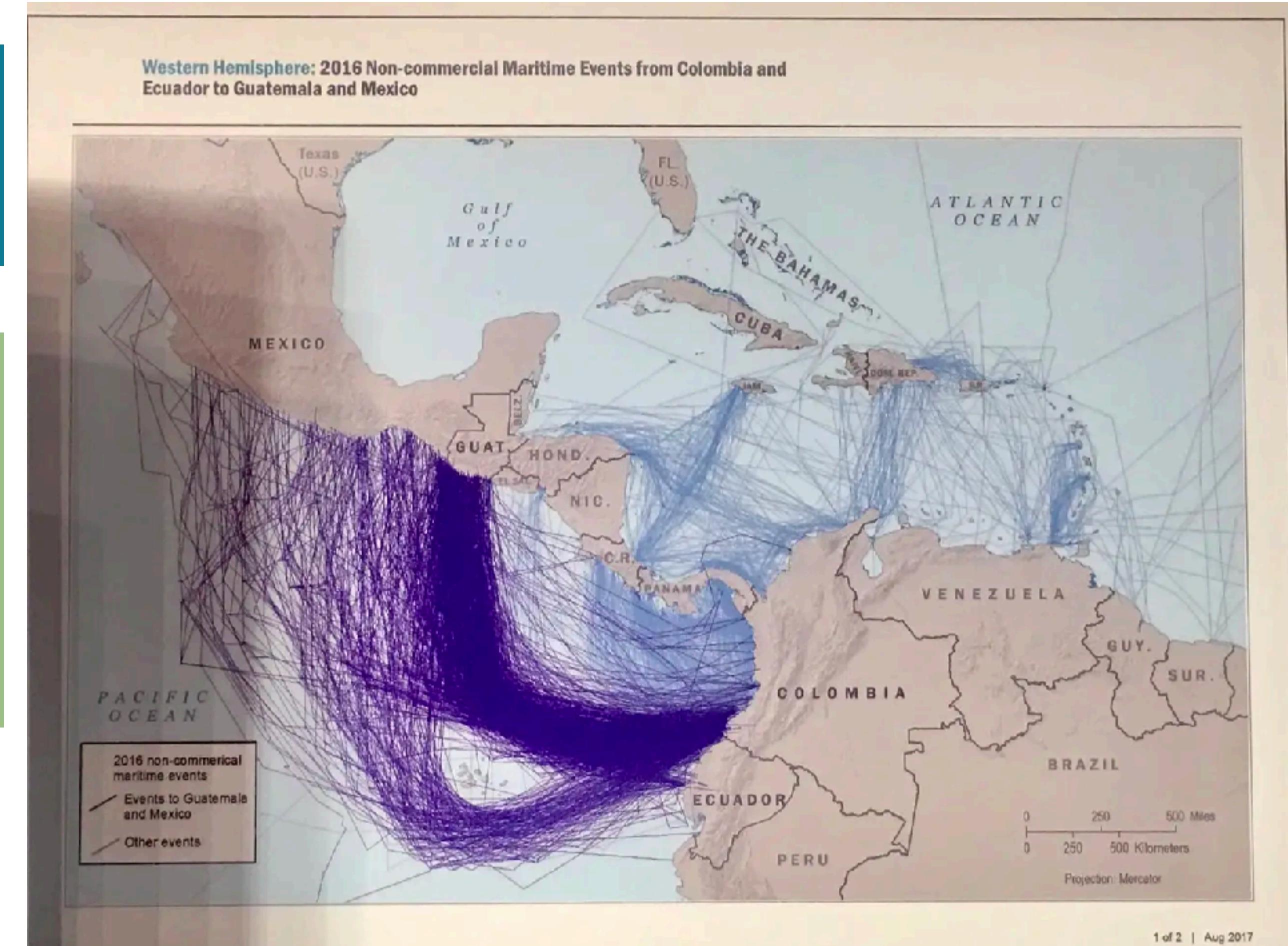
Org. competition



Producers: Colombia, Bolivia, Peru

Bulk of cocaine goes:
Colombia/Ecuador →
Guatemala/Mexico →
US border

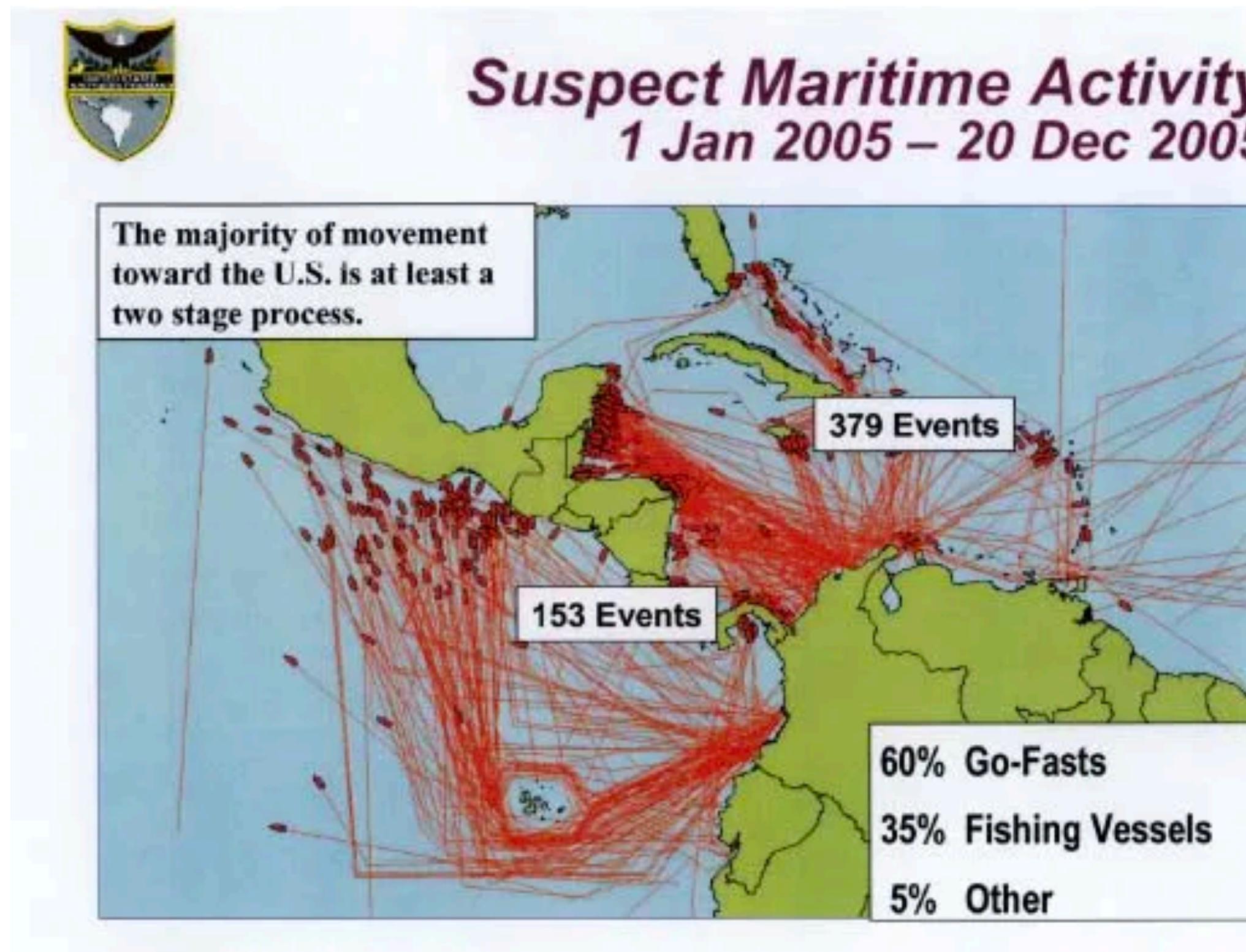
Mostly boats, some air



GROW IN COLOMBIA



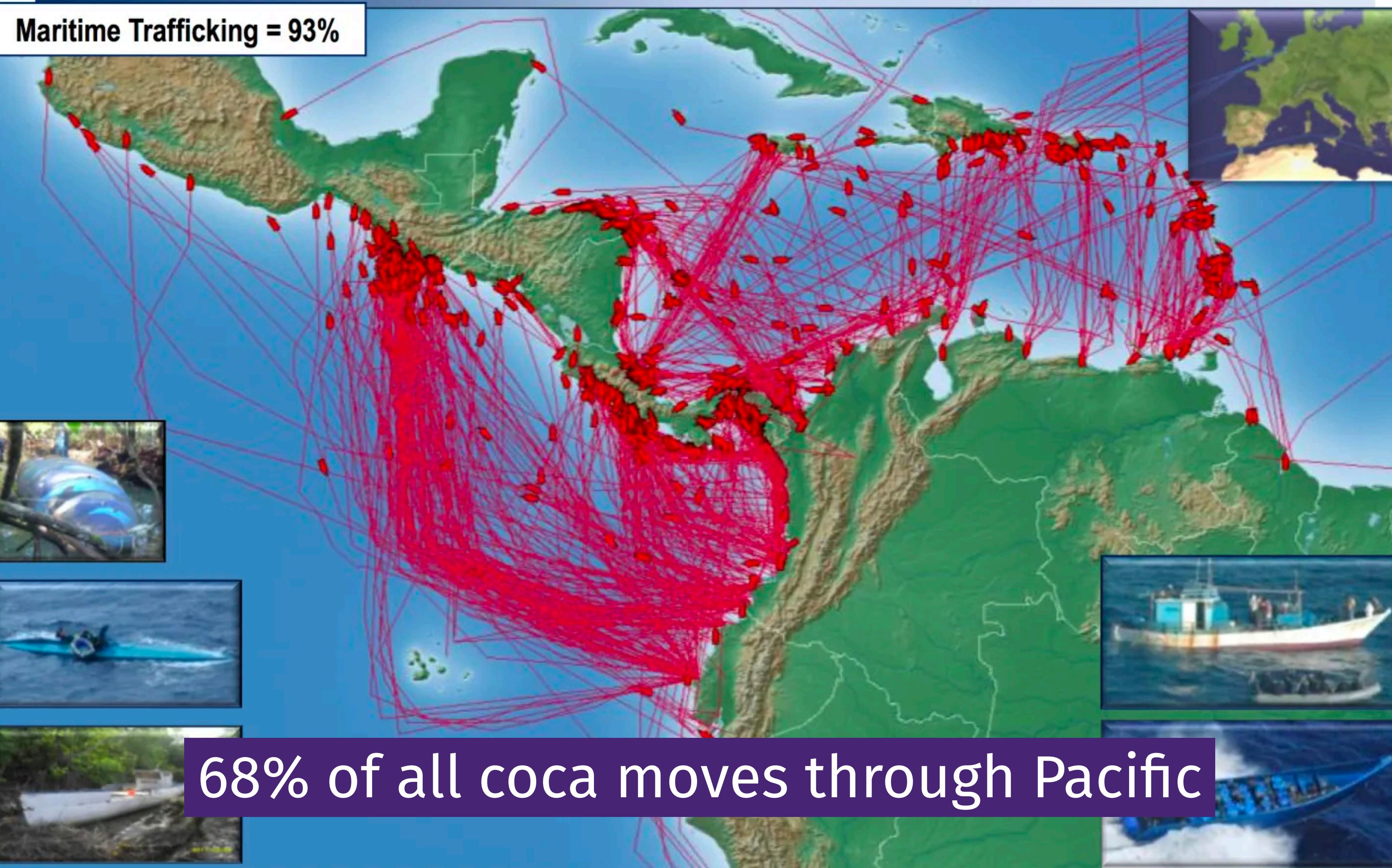
US SOUTHERN COMMAND





Suspect Maritime Activity

2014



CHANGING DRUG ROUTES

Height of Pablo Escobar era (1980s), 75% of coca moved through Caribbean

Massive US effort to shut down Caribbean transit moved routes west

Snorkel Pablo Escobar's Sunken Drug Plane In The Bahamas

Just off Norman's Cay lies a corroding reminder of paradise's brief but sinister past.

JOHN McMAHON · UPDATED: JAN 24, 2019 · ORIGINAL: JAN 31, 2018

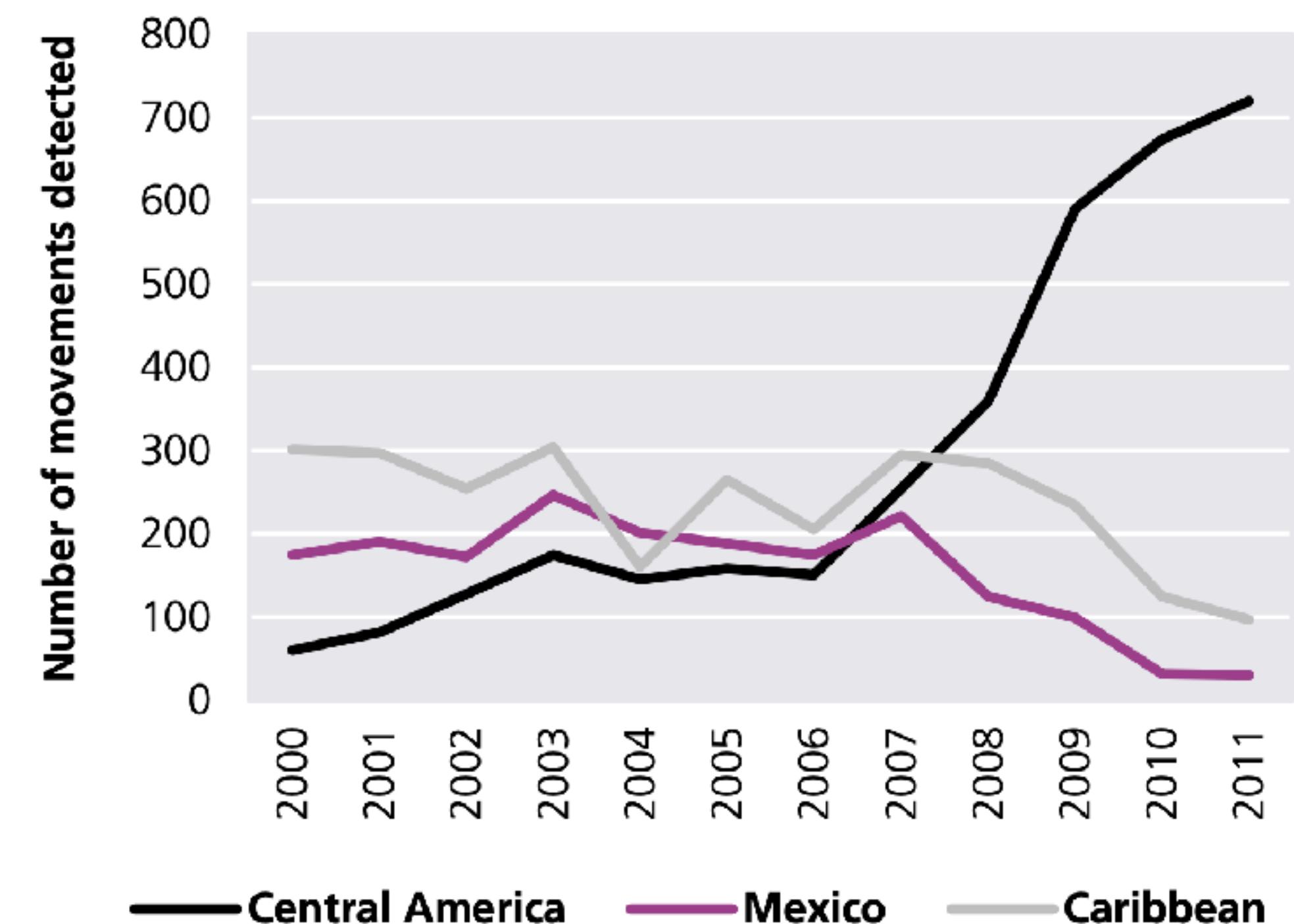


By 2010, over 80% was going through Central America

Boat to CA →
cross border into Mexico →
cross into US

Note: all our data is *seizures*;
might be lots we don't know!

Figure 22: Number of primary cocaine movements destined for, or interdicted in, Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico, 2000-2011



GUATEMALA

HONDURAS

EL SALVADOR

San Salvador



El Salvador Travel Advice

- Exercise a high degree of caution
- International boundary
- Administrative boundary
- National capital
- Administrative centre



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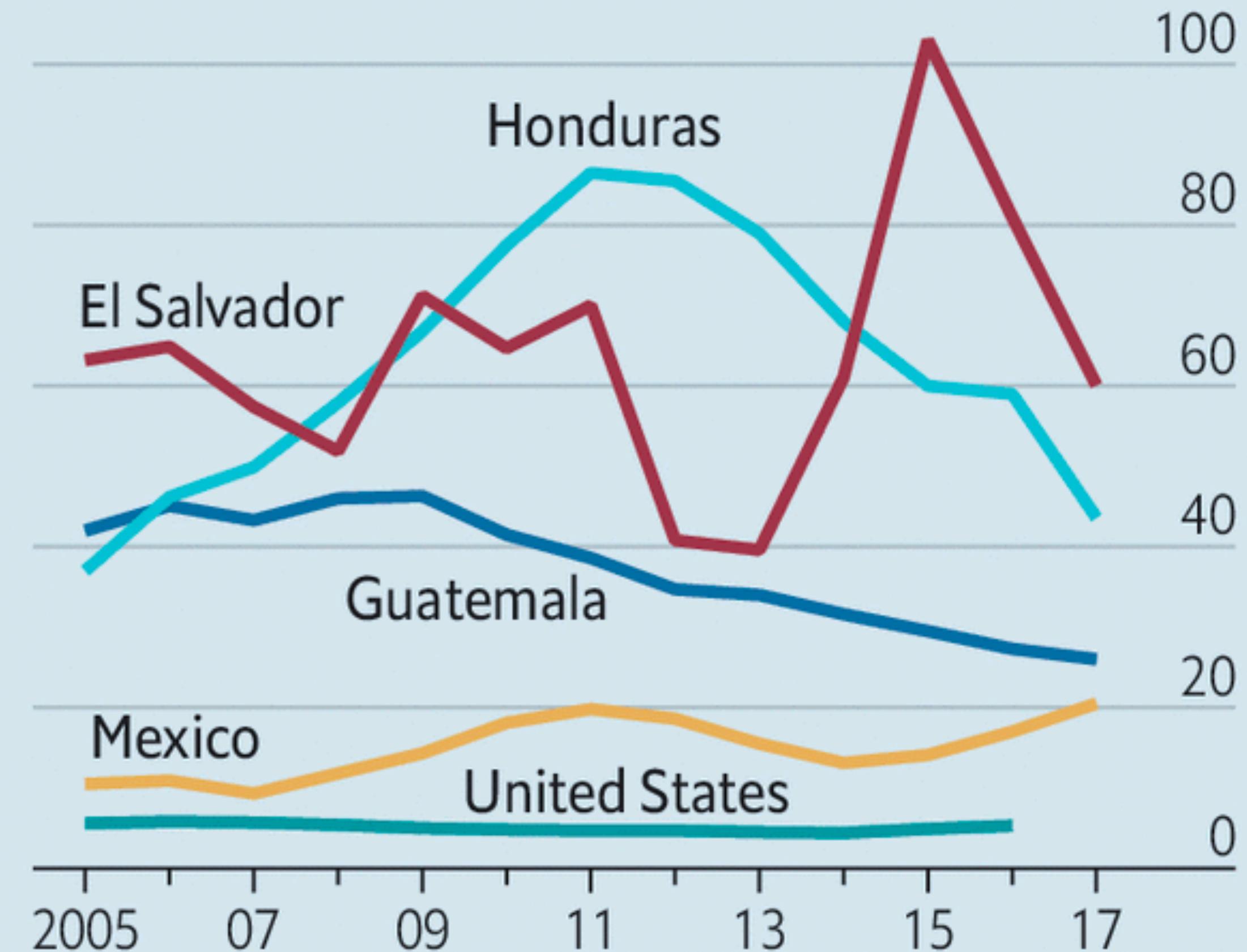
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BE INFORMED > BE PREPARED

Arguably one of the most violent countries in the world in 2000s

Killing on the wane

Homicide rate per 100,000 population



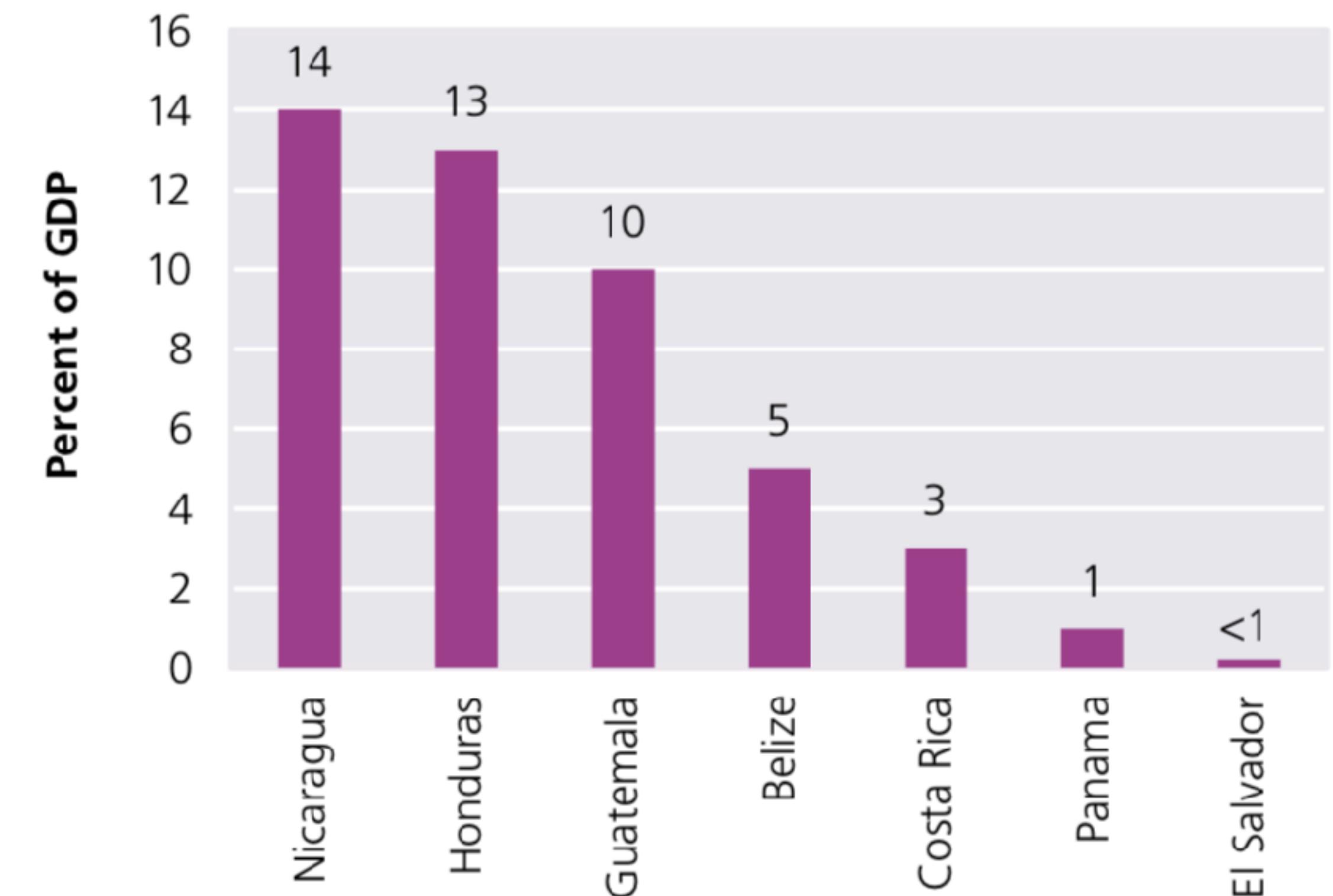
Source: Igarapé Institute

Not as choice of a transit location for drug routes

But scale of problem for region is huge

\$4 billion in cocaine passes through Guatemala, entire region spends \$3 billion on fighting drug war

Figure 36: Share of GDP represented by value of cocaine transiting each country, 2010



But position along PA HWY + small coastline for parcelling drugs

Border with Guatemala completely porous

Map 6: Cocaine trafficking routes in El Salvador



Source: UNODC, elaborated from interviews in the region



VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGG7IRJJkJk>

The biggest moving piece for crime and violence in El Salvador are **street gangs**

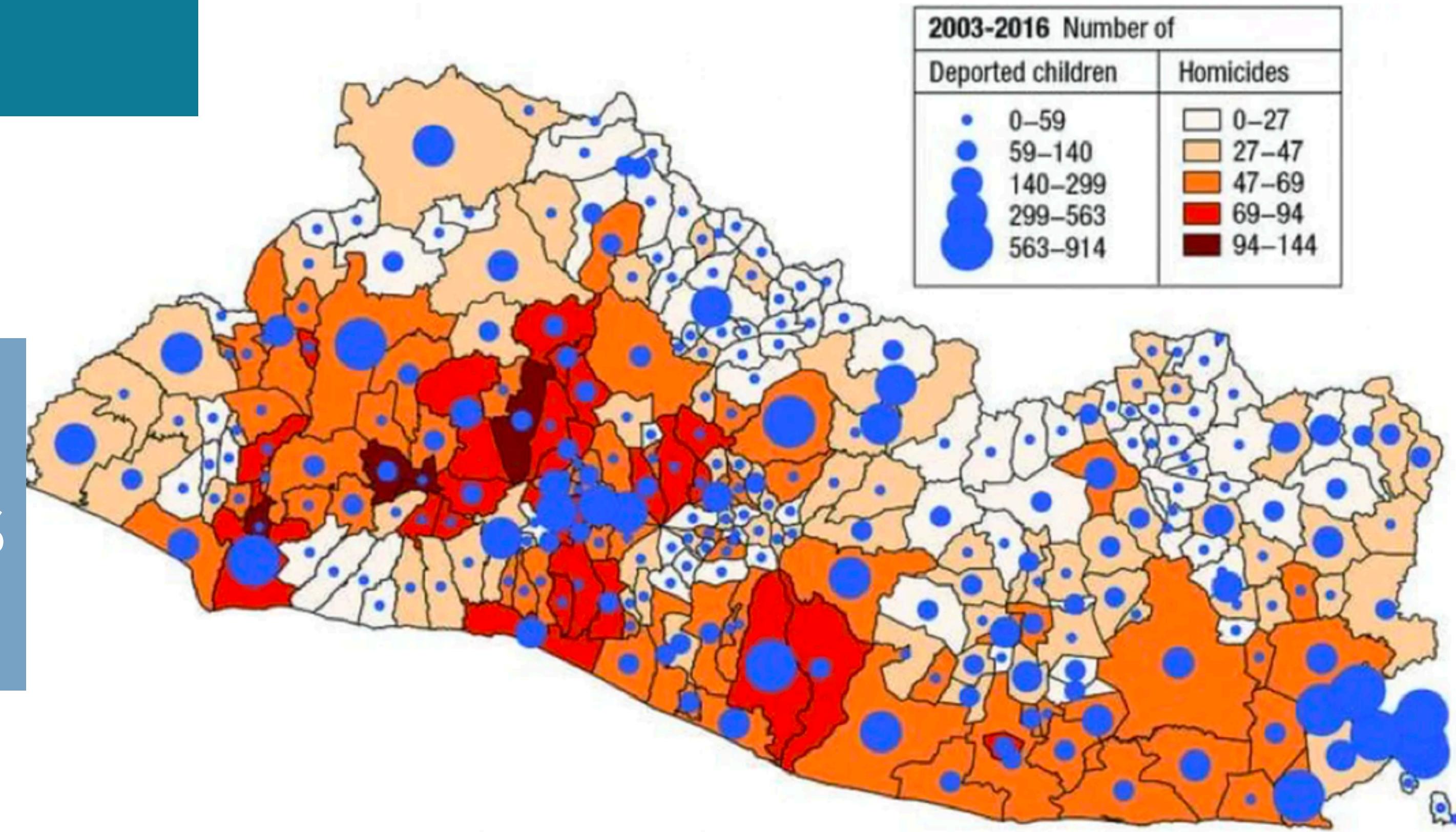
Why do gangs exist? Why do people form gangs?

State absence

MS-13, biggest gang in El
Salvador, formed in...

Los Angeles

Formed to protect
Salvadorians immigrants
from other gangs



But why doesn't the state offer this protection?

And why is protection even necessary?

Due to political/moral/economic reasons, there are certain markets states won't regulate

Drugs

Prostitution

Gambling

Illegal migration

Prohibition means private agents have to conduct business without **recourse to the state, police, or legal system**

Economic agents face a lot of
vulnerability + uncertainty

Coca producer in Peru can't sue a
buyer who won't pay

Buyers can eliminate competition,
not compete over price

Product not subject to common
standards or regulation

Large % of drug transactions are rip-offs

Drug	average purity	percentage of all trades that are rip-offs (i.e., $\leq 2\%$ purity)	average price of rip-offs (std. dev. of price)	average price of non rip-offs (std. dev. of price)
Heroin	31%	10.3%	\$53 (22.8)	\$57 (20.6)
Crack Cocaine	68%	7.8%	\$32 (21.3)	\$38 (24.6)
Powder Cocaine	54%	5.1%	\$35 (21.8)	\$53 (25.8)

Table 1: Purity of trades with value $\leq \$100$ in 1983 dollars.⁵

Cannot discriminate using price!

How do you do this without a state
to enforce property rights,
contracts?

Wield violence individually

Repeat interactions, networks

Might work at small-level, but scale
to entirely of supply route

Private actors might be better if someone
can establish **monopoly of violence**



Gangs are less like **firms** and more
like **proto-states**

Fill power-vacuum left by states in
areas it can't / won't regulate

Offer **protection/enforcement** to private
actors in exchange for rents ("tax")

Protect exchange

Retaliation/
mediation

Prevent ripoffs

Of course, with monopoly, gangs extort everyone

Extorting bus routes is a huge business for gangs in El Salvador

Bus lines from gang-controlled neighborhoods systematically extorted at tune of \$26 million/year



From then on we were told that we would be charged twice a year to pay a fee to the gang. In total, it's \$100 per driver per year. The deduction from our salary to be paid to the gang is written directly on our payslips. There it clearly states "Extortion Mara 18."

Luckily we have a saving scheme in place for this. We are discounted \$3 or \$4 a day, which we save and are given back at the end of the year. Those savings are how we make the two payments for the extortion.

Our route has 46 drivers and 13 other staff members. We all get charged the two fees per year. If you do the math, how much is \$100 for 43 drivers plus the other 13? Thousands! And that's only on this route. Can you imagine how much they make across all the routes in the country?

Bus companies have incorporated extortion into their business model

Gangs enforce payment through violence

2014-2015, 800 bus workers murdered

“Most dangerous job in the world”

I don't understand it entirely, but the gang that receives the most money from us is Mara Salvatrucha because we go through quite a few areas controlled by them. But, as we also go through areas controlled by Barrio 18, we also have to pay them. I mean, we're really fucked up.

The good thing is that at least they don't kill us. It's always hard to have your money taken when it has cost you so much. But, I can say to my wife in the morning “I'll be back in the evening.” I tell her that if we don't pay them every day, “I don't know if I'm going to return home later.”

Why violence?

Competition over territory

MS-13

vs.

Calle-18

Drug dealing

Extortion

Mostly urban areas,
the capital

~ 30k members

Why territory?

Rents

Extortion

New members

And why just one gang?

Pricing power = extract
monopoly prices

What factors increase territorial competition?

Changes in **relative power**

Changes in **rents**

Changes in **organizational structure**

Existing “agreement” no longer viable

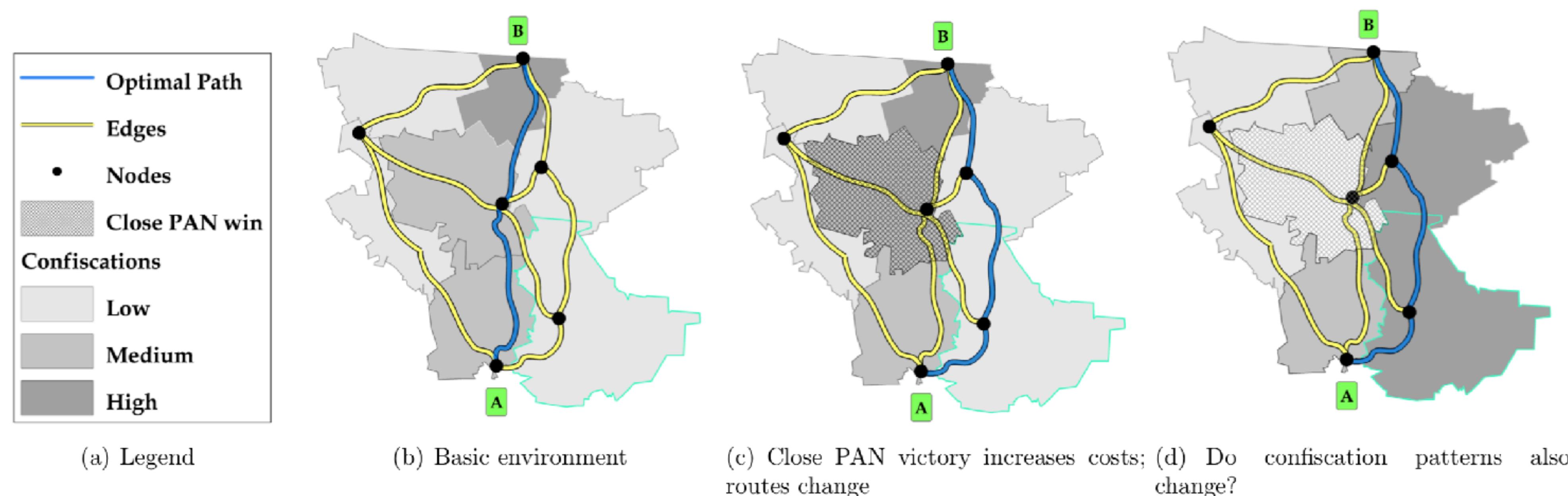
Changing drug routes

Death of leaders,
consolidation of org.

Trafficking Networks and the Mexican Drug War[†]

By MELISSA DELL*

Figure 1: Illustration of Spillovers Methodology

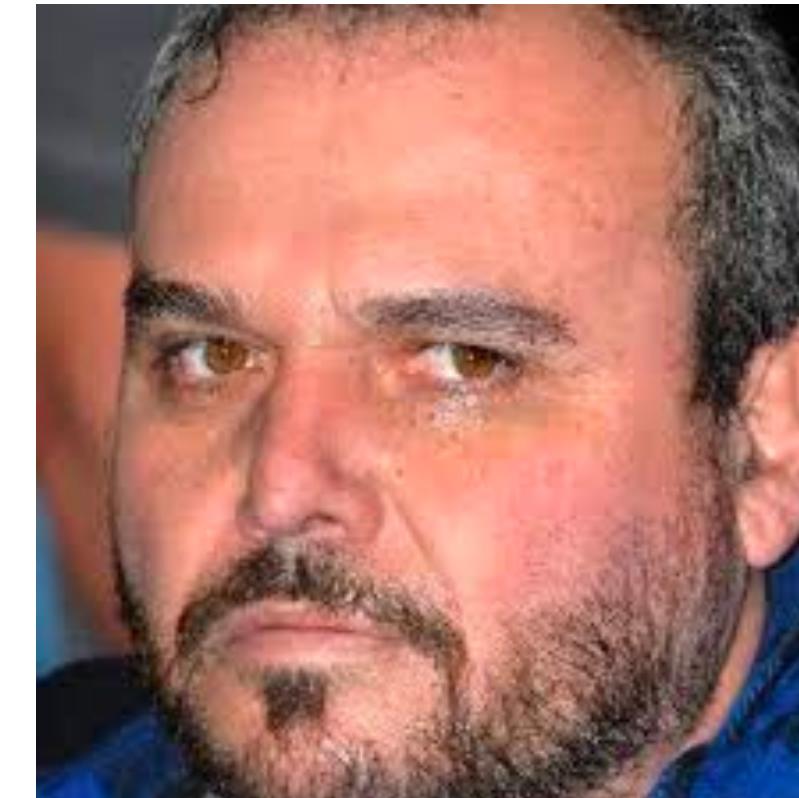


Mexican anti-narcotic efforts
shift drug routes

2007 - 2010: Sinaloa Cartel suffers multiple decapitations



Sandra Ávila Beltrán



Jesus Reylando
Zambada



Ignacio Coronel
Villareal

Explosion in levels of violence around this time

TAKEAWAYS

Central America is **transit point** in drug flows from South to North America

Illicit nature of drugs means gangs push to fill power vacuum

Territorial competition is a key source of violence in CA today, esp. El Salvador

Heavily-armed police and soldiers enter El Salvador parliament

⌚ 10 February 2020



Security forces in full battle gear marched into the legislative assembly

Heavily-armed police and soldiers in El Salvador have forced their way into parliament, demanding the approval of a \$109m (£85m) loan to better equip them.

Weak/complicit states key part of crime in
Latin America

How does Yashar describe the legal system in
El Salvador?

Mix of **ineffective** and **predatory**

INEFFECTIVE POLICING

Sources of inefficiency in El Salvador's police

Weak infrastructure

Bad performance
incentives

Corruption

INFRASTRUCTURE

Police lack equipment/training for processing homicides

pay rent or utilities, among others issues.¹⁸ “Underfunded,” “poorly resourced,” and “incapable of meeting organizational demands” were common refrains in these types of newspaper reports. The interior minister vividly summarized the depth of the problem: “The police lack gloves, lack tape to isolate the scene of the crime . . . even [lack] bags to get rid of the cadaver.”¹⁹

Homicide clearance rates = low single-digits

400 murders a day: 10 reasons why Latin America is the world's most violent place

Christopher Woody Sep 10, 2019, 9:47 AM



People near bullet casings at a crime scene after a shootout in the municipality of Tuzamapan, in the Mexican state Veracruz, May 16, 2019. REUTERS/Yahir Ceballos

Just 20 of every 100 murders in Latin America lead to a conviction. The global average is about 43 per 100, Muggah said. The clearance rate is much lower in some places.

"In Brazil for example, just 8 of every 100 homicides results in a conviction. In certain cities, it can go down to 5 [or] 4. By contrast, in Japan, like 98%, 98 of every 100 homicides, result in a conviction."

A 2016 report from the University of the Americas in Mexico found just 4.46% of reported crimes in that country result in convictions. Considering how few crimes get reported — just seven of every 100, according to the report — "less than 1% of crimes in Mexico are punished."

Low “disincentive” to commit crime

One response has been to
“militarize” police; SWAT-like units

Trade-off: more firepower,
more human rights abuses

A 2017 investigative report in the Salvadoran online newspaper Revista Factum documented evidence of a “death squad” within an elite unit of the Salvadoran police that engaged in killings, sexual assault of teenage girls, robbery, and extortion. At the funeral of a female police officer in September, the National Civil Police (Policia Nacional Civil) director stated that another, now-defunct elite unit participated in her December 2017 disappearance and “femicide,” which Salvadoran law defines as a killing motivated by hatred or contempt for women.

Not just “inaccuracy”; abuse of power → power asymmetry, frustration, dehumanizing “enemy”

BRAZILIAN BOPE VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5VOuJK7Aag&t=98s>

PERFORMANCE INCENTIVES

In major Latin American cities, police earn on average 16% less than the rest of the public sector.

Source: 2014 CAF Survey.



Best paid police - worst paid police = 10%
Rest of public sector ~ 80%

What are some consequences of this?

Even while ineffective, police are also
predatory and corrupt

In CA, some of this is legacy of the civil wars

Police forces inherited bad institutions +
ideology from civil war period

Corrupt military officers, soldiers, involved
in drug/weapons trade in police force

Honduras' national police chief helped cartel move 1,700 lbs. of cocaine, report says

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN and MARTHA MENDOZA AND GARANCE BURKE
ASSOCIATED PRESS | JAN 26, 2018 | 7:42 AM | MEXICO CITY



NOT JUST POOR COUNTRIES

Ferguson's law enforcement practices are shaped by the City's focus on revenue rather than by public safety needs. This emphasis on revenue has compromised the institutional character of Ferguson's police department, contributing to a pattern of unconstitutional policing, and has also shaped its municipal court, leading to procedures that raise due process concerns and inflict unnecessary harm on members of the Ferguson community. Further, Ferguson's police and municipal court practices both reflect and exacerbate existing racial bias, including racial stereotypes. Ferguson's own data establish clear racial disparities that adversely impact African Americans. The evidence shows that discriminatory intent is part of the reason for these disparities. Over time, Ferguson's police and municipal court practices have sown deep mistrust between parts of the community and the police department legitimacy among African Americans in particular.



Even relatively routine misconduct by Ferguson police officers can have significant consequences for the people whose rights are violated. For example, in the summer of 2012, a 32-year-old African-American man sat in his car cooling off after playing basketball in a Ferguson public park. An officer pulled up behind the man's car, blocking him in, and demanded the man's Social Security number and identification. Without any cause, the officer accused the man of being a pedophile, referring to the presence of children in the park, and ordered the man out of his car for a pat-down, although the officer had no reason to believe the man was armed. The officer also asked to search the man's car. The man objected, citing his constitutional rights. In response, the officer arrested the man, reportedly at gunpoint, charging him with eight violations of Ferguson's municipal code. One charge, Making a False Declaration, was for initially providing the short form of his first name (e.g., "Mike" instead of "Michael"), and an address which, although legitimate, was different from the one on his driver's license. Another charge was for not wearing a seat belt, even though he was seated in a parked car. The officer also charged the man both with having an expired operator's license, and with having no operator's license in his possession. The man told us that, because of these charges, he lost his job as a contractor with the federal government that he had held for years.

'Policing For Profit' Is Alive and Well in South Carolina



Emma Andersson, Senior Staff Attorney, Criminal Law Reform Project
& Susan Dunn, Legal Director, ACLU of South Carolina

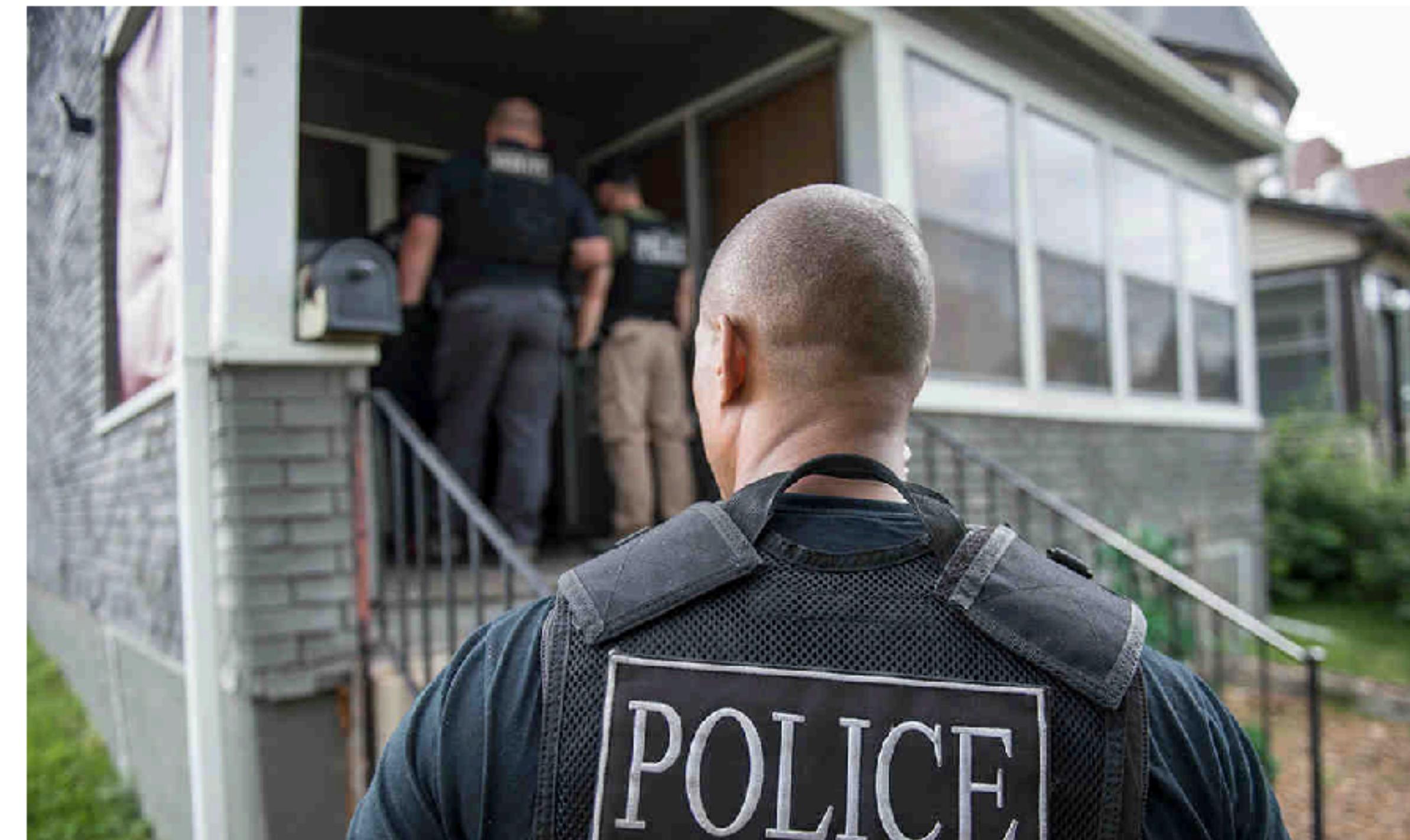
FEBRUARY 12, 2019 | 3:45 PM

TAGS: [Asset Forfeiture Abuse](#), [Reforming Police Practices](#), [Criminal Law Reform](#)



In Conway, South Carolina, a 72-year-old widow hides inside, her curtains drawn, fearing that local law enforcement will attempt to take away her home for a third time. Ella Bromell has never been convicted of a crime. So how has her house been at risk of seizure for over a decade?

The answer is simple, but the process is obscure, discriminatory, and all-too commonplace: civil asset forfeiture.



Lots of crime, violence; police are ineffective or corrupt

How do citizens navigate this?

How does living in these contexts shape people and their perspectives?

LYNCHINGS

Spontaneous mobs, organized groups taking the law “into their own hands”

Most likely in places where people had to **defend themselves in civil war**



Wealthy living in large urban areas have retreated into heavily fortified “gated communities”



Figure 8.6 Restricted control entrances and security devices. Present day **gated communities** in **Mexico City** address the increasing concern for security.



Figure 8.7 *Bosque Real Country Club.* *Bosque Real Country Club* is the most important real estate development in 21st century **Mexico**. Located in the west side of the metropolitan area, this **gated community** has two golf courses.

Private security, internal malls, shops, spas, etc.