The Historical Perspectives of Narco-Trafficking and Political Corruption in Mexico

Submitted by Sean Kennedy

Advisor: Isaac Campos-Costero, PhD

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Prohibition laws that were passed in Mexico and the United States in the early twentieth century gave rise to an unintended effect when the business of selling the outlawed substances arose. Despite efforts undertaken by both countries, including "wars on drugs", the supply and demand for those substances continued throughout the century and down to the present day. The business side of narcotics trafficking has been transformed into a lucrative, highly organized industry that wreaks violence as a byproduct of functioning. In the last six years, nearly 60,000 people have died in Mexico as a result of narcotics related violence. Narcotics trafficking has emerged as a challenge to authority and a threat to the stability of the Mexican Government. Nearly every writer who has examined the evolution of narcotics trafficking in Mexico has considered the contributions made by corrupt political officials in its operations. Some scholars propose that Mexican government officials were intricately involved in narcotics trafficking in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, conspiring to organize and control the enterprises, enabling them to flourish. The champion of that theory is academic Luis Astorga, a researcher at the Institute for Social Research at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. His work has been cited by numerous academics and scholars who have adopted his thesis as authoritative.[1] It is important to set forth his hypothesis in some detail in order to review it with other documents that address the issue.

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[1] See Peter Dale Scott, *American War Machine* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010; Also, Scott's prior book, written with Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics, Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998); Paul Kenney and Monica Serrano, *Mexico's Security Failure* (New York: Routledge 2012); George W. Grayson, *Mexico* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 2010); Letizia Paoli, Victoria Greenfield and Peter Reuter, *The World Heroin Market: Can Supply Be Cut?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009); Wil Pansters, ed., Violence, Coercion, and State-Making in Twentieth Century Mexico (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2012); David Shirk, *The Drug War in Mexico: Confronting a Shared Threat* (Council on Foreign Relations Special Report No. 60, March 2011); Daniel Sabat, *Police Reform in Mexico: Informal Politics and the Challenge of Institutional Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2012).

Astorga has written a number of articles on the sociological and cultural aspects of narcotics trafficking in Mexico.[2] His thesis is that drug trafficking is not a recent enterprise in Mexico but rather one that has existed for nearly one hundred years, beginning as a legal business on the Mexican side of the border, then subsequently transitioning into an illegal activity. Astorga examines archival records and newspaper reports to conclude that the political framework of the local, state and federal government helped to advance the drug trafficking businesses to such an extent that eventually the very governmental agencies charged with the responsibility of eliminating the illegal operations were instead organizing and profiting from them. Astorga suggests that there have been distinct periods that delineate the changing political atmosphere that have influenced the drug trafficking operations.

The first period of Astorga's analysis began in the early twentieth century when the international community and, importantly, the United States began to enact legislation in order to control certain drugs.[3] This generated an attractive economic proposition for entrepreneurs on the Mexican side of the border, such as Colonel Esteban Cantú, the governor of Baja California from 1916 to 1920. Astorga notes that Governor Cantú carried on an opium trafficking business that allowed him to finance his government's expenses as well as profit personally. But he was

[2] Although not an exhaustive list, see Luis Astorga, *El siglo de las drogas* (Mexico: Espasa-Calpe Mexicana, 1996); Luis Astorga, "Cocaine in Mexico A prelude to 'los Narcos,'" in Paul Gootenberg, ed., *Cocaine Global Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999); Luis Astorga, "Organized Crime and the Organization of Crime," in John Bailey and Roy Godson, eds., *Organized Crime & Democratic Governability: Mexico and the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 2000);Luis Astorga, "Drug Trafficking in Mexico: A First General Assessment," Discussion Paper No. 36; UNESCO; Luis Astorga, "Mexico: drugs and politics," in Menno Vellinga, ed., *The Political Economy of the Drug Industry*. *Latin America and the International System* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Luis Astorga and David Shirk, "Drug Trafficking Organizations and Counter-Drug Strategies in the U.S.-Mexican Context" in Eric L. Olson, David A. Shirk and Andrew Selee, eds., *Shared Responsibility: U.S.-Mexico Policy Options for Confronting Organized Crime* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Mexico Institute 2010); Luis Astorga, *Mexico: Organized Crime Politics and Insecurity* in D. Siegel and H. van de Bunt, eds., *Traditional Organized Crime in the Modern World*, Studies of Organized Crime 2012.

[3] For an analysis of the development of drug legislation in the United States, see David Musto, *The American Disease Origins of Narcotic Control* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973).

not the only political official to engage in such activity. Astorga points to the close association of opium trafficker Antonio Wong Yin and Governor Nazario Ortiz Garza in 1931 and the governors of Baja California and Chihuahua with drug traffickers in the 1930s.[4] By then, Mexico had its own prohibition laws; the cultivation and sale of marijuana was prohibited in 1920 and of opium poppies in 1926. Astorga states that Mexicans with political positions or connections viewed their illegal activities as business opportunities, ethical considerations aside.

The second period that Astorga identifies in the development of the connection between political power and drug trafficking began in 1947 when two factors occurred. First, the agency in charge of administering Mexico's antidrug policies changed from the Department of Health to the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic (PGR). Second, the Federal Security Directorate (DFS) was established as a political police organization, similar to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and was directly under the supervision of President Miguel Alemán. Astorga characterizes the duties of the DFS as performing surveillance of opposition groups, particularly those affiliated with the communist party, and of assisting in the country's antidrug policies. The PGR was immediately called into action when a political scandal involving General Pablo Macías Valenzuela, ex-Secretary of War and of the Navy and Governor of the state of Sinaloa (1945 to 1950), was implicated in leading a drug trafficking ring. The allegation received widespread publicity in national newspapers. In the end, the PGR agent for Sinaloa concluded that the allegations were false and the product of a smear campaign by the governor's political enemies. Macías finished his term in office and later was appointed as commander of the First Military Zone (1951 to 1956), but Astorga suggests that doubts about his

[4] Astorga, *Mexico: drugs and politics*, 87.

honesty remained.[5] Whatever the truth, Astorga claims that this was the first example of one political faction using a charge of drug trafficking against a political foe in Mexico.

Astorga alleges that the DFS was founded by Mexicans who were not only politically connected to the presidency but who were also well known in drug trafficking circles. He names Colonel Carlos Serrano as the most important of the highly connected yet corrupt politicians involved. The supporting evidence for this allegation is the July 16, 1947 report of U.S. Assistant Military Attaché, Lt. Col. Maurice C. Holden to the Secretary of State.[6] Astorga claims that the work of the DFS was the structural connection between those at the top of the political pyramid and the drug traffickers. He further claims that the DFS had two important tasks:

> first, it ensured that part of the profits of the trade were siphoned off in exchange for protection; second, it served as a mechanism for containing drug-generated violence and controlled any temptations traffickers may have had to translate economic power into political power.[7]

He expands on his theory that high ranking politicians have controlled the illegal drug trade by examining the development of the political system in place in Mexico since the Mexico revolution in the early twentieth century. Specifically, Astorga notes that the one state party system created a monopoly that controlled appointments to offices and rewarded the revolutionary generals for their loyalty by putting them in high level political positions. Once there, the generals could engage in whatever business they deemed desirable.

> Controlled, tolerated, or regulated by mighty politicians in northern states, drug trafficking seems to have been a business that was developed from within the official political power structure. Drug traffickers appear to have emerged as a new class of outlaws that depended closely on political and police protection, had limited autonomy as a specialized social group, and was (sic) banned from political activity.[8]

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[5] Astorga, *Mexico: drugs and politics*, 88.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid 89.

Astorga identifies the third period in the relationship between political authority and drug trafficking as beginning in 1985. Leading up to that time, Astorga notes that there had been some important changes to the international drug market. First, in the late 1960s, the demand from U.S. customers for marijuana grew immensely. U.S. President Nixon declared a war on drugs and singled out Mexico as a country that needed to intensify its elimination of the drugs at the source. The U.S. population's demand in the 1970s and 1980s for cocaine also involved Mexico since it was beginning to be shipped through Mexico using the transport routes in place from marijuana and heroin trafficking. One of the drug trafficking organizations to emerge in Mexico to facilitate the movement of cocaine was led by Mexican Miguel Angel Félix Gallardo, the bodyguard of the former governor of Sinaloa, Leopoldo Sánchez Celia.[9] Despite the efforts of the U.S. and Mexican authorities to eliminate drugs in Mexico, Astorga notes that the people to be rounded up were largely the peasant growers, not the traffickers that the authorities supposedly hoped to capture. The traffickers merely moved their operations to other areas, usually to industrial, commercial and financial centers, which gave them easier access to transportation routes. Astorga cites a 1978 secret report from the DFS that intimated the head of the PGR, Oscar Flores Sánchez, was associated with drug traffickers, although there was not enough evidence to take action against him.[10] Astorga states that the U.S. authorities believed the DFS to be involved in assisting with the reorganization of the drug trafficking operations.[11] With the movement of the trafficking businesses into the cities came increased incidences of violence, directed at competitors and occasionally the police. According to Astorga, the older

[9] Ibid 90.
[10] Ibid 91.
[11] Astorga, *Mexico: drugs and politics*, 91

drug traffickers blamed the violence on a new influx of younger traffickers who did not respect the arrangements that had guided the business for so long.

> A new generation was emerging and trying to impose its own law. Decades of drug trafficking and generations of traffickers had produced a new breed of tougher players, richer and more powerful at a younger age than their ancestors. They were more sure of themselves, they did not hide, they moved to other new and respected middle-class neighbourhoods, drove cars with American license plates and had many parties where *tambora*, regional music, played for days; they were proud of being drug traffickers. As for the rest of society, their attitude was a mix of astonishment, fear, admiration and respect. If violence did not touch them directly, they were not particularly worried and had no explicit and public moral judgment against the trafficker's way of life or business.[12]

The kidnapping, torture and murder of Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent, Enrique Camarena in 1985 was the event that changed the four decade containment policy that existed between politicians and drug traffickers, according to Astorga. Moreover, Astorga states that this event "put an end to the complicit silence of several decades by the U.S. government".[13] His contention is that the traffickers were permitted to prosper so long as they shared the profits of the drug trade with the long chain of institutional corruption that went to the top military, police, and political officials. For their part, the corrupt government representatives would look the other way in order to pursue more important matters, such as the desire to contain opposition political forces and criminal groups outside of the bargain.[14] Intense pressure from the U.S. was placed on Mexican government officials to take action, and Astorga notes that the DEA chief pointed the finger at DFS and the Federal Judiciary Police (PJF) officials for permitting or participating in drug trafficking matters. Publicity through the press required that the Mexican government take action and President Miguel de la Madrid dismantled the DFS in response.

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[12] Astorga, *Drug Trafficking in Mexico*.
[13] Astorga, *Mexico: drugs and politics*, 91.
[14] Ibid.

According to Astorga, the violence involving drug traffickers intensified, so that even police commanders were now being assassinated.[15]

Astorga argues that the official protection of drug traffickers by top political leaders was further eroded beginning in 1989 when the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate for governor of Baja California was defeated by a candidate of the opposition National Action Party (PAN). This created a situation where the drug traffickers operating in the area were no longer controlled by a political apparatus that extended from the local level all the way up to the presidency. Throughout the 1990s Astorga notes that the states where the opposition party candidates were successfully elected over the PRI candidate were the ones that experienced higher levels of drug trafficking related violence.[16] He also points out that the drug trafficking organizations themselves began to fight amongst themselves over the control of operations in particular regions. These factors, along with intense pressure from the U.S. government to eliminate the drugs coming into the U.S. at their source, led the Mexican government to commit large numbers of the military in the effort to eradicate drugs grown in Mexico and eliminate drug trafficking.[17]

Astorga's final period in the relationship between the political sector and the drug trafficking industry begins in 2000 with the election of President Vicente Fox of the PAN.[18] Astorga notes some of the changes that the new administration put into place, such as the characterization of the drug trafficking issue as a matter of public order as opposed to one of national security and the shuffling of the agencies involved in the drug control policy. The result has been the creation of a new military-dominated police structure that now has the lead

[15] Ibid, 92.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid, 93.
[18] This is the first time in seventy-one years that the elected president did not come from the PRI.

responsibility over the PGR in combating the drug trafficking industry.[19] With the election of President Felipe Calderón in 2006, also of the PAN, the battle with drug trafficking organizations has been intensified through measures that have been largely punitive in nature. Consequently, there has been tremendous instability in the existence and competition between the drug trafficking organizations themselves, resulting in overwhelming levels of violence. Astorga reports that between December 2006 and December 2010, 34,612 deaths occurred due to criminal activity, often the result of rivalries between drug trafficking organizations.[20] Astorga opines that the drug violence will not be contained without the government using what he terms the "legitimate use of force".[21]

Astorga did not invent the theory of the close relationship of politicians and corrupt practices including drug trafficking in Mexico, a perception that's origin is obscure, but one that has existed throughout the past century.[22] Nor did Astorga first articulate the division of certain periods in Mexican history that characterized the cooperation of politicians and drug traffickers. That was introduced by Peter Lupsha, University of New Mexico, Department of Political Science, in his 1991 essay, "Drug lords and narco-corruption: The players change but the game continues".[23] However, Astorga has become the visible proponent of the theory of the Mexican political control of the local, state and national officials over the drug trafficking operations and

[19] This is in contrast to the original province of the PGR as being the lead organization in the matters related to drug control and with the military subordinated to the PGR.
[20] Astorga, *Mexico: Organized Crime*, 160.
[21] Ibid, 163.
[22] See Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism* , (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968) 37-40; Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 91, 136, 165; Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1999), 253-303; and Gabriela Recio, "Drugs and Alcohol: US Prohibition and the Origins of the Drug Trade in Mexico, 1910-1930" in *Journal of Latin American Studies*; Feb 2002; 34 ProQuest.
[23] This essay was published in *Crime, Law and Social Change* 16, 1991 by Kluwer Academic Publishers. Astorga makes reference to Lupsha in his essay "Mexico: Drugs and Politics", although he does not cite this particular essay. In fact, he refers to Lupsha as a "U.S. investigator", who made a report to the U.S. Department of State.

for the past fifteen years has been widely cited for this concept. Lupsha's analysis is similar to Astorga's, with some slight variations in form.

Lupsha argues that there have been two forms of corruption involving Mexican politicians and drug traffickers over time. The first is characterized as low level, involving bribes to low level officials; the second is a larger scale of corruption that involves kickbacks from contracts and financial arrangements that rely on inside connections. Particular periods of time that Lupsha categorizes as "phases" demonstrate one form of corruption or the other. Lupsha opines that Phase I took place from sometime before 1960 to 1965.[24] During this period which he calls "La Plaza", the drug trafficker bought permission to engage in the operation from the local "jefes", whoever was the power base in the local community.[25] The local elites were likely representatives of the PRI. According to Lupsha, the system of corruption thrived by virtue of that political connection. Payments made by drug traffickers were collected at the local level, but distributed up the chain of PRI representatives, as each level sought to protect its position by rewarding those who were responsible for keeping them in the position. Lupsha states that in the event a particular drug trafficker became successful enough to draw notoriety, he or she would be required to make payments directly to higher levels of "Judicales" or "Federales" (state or federal police agents) in addition to the local patron. The payments were necessary for permission to operate in drug trafficking, but according to Lupsha, they did not guarantee continued protection over time. Lupsha states that the trafficking business itself is dynamic, and with a change in regimes or personnel in offices, a trafficker could be arrested, put out of

[24] Lupsha states that the Chinese immigrants living in Mexico dominated drug trafficking from the turn of the century until the mid 1930s, when they were replaced by Mexicans. Specific reference of drug traffickers from the 1930s to the 1960s is made to the Igancia Jasso Gonzales organization, Jorge Moreno Chaubet, Pedro Aviles Perez, Manuel Carrasco, and the Herrera family.

[25] Lupsha states that this could be the police commandant, the mayor, the military, land owner or major businessman.

business or even killed at a moment's notice, notwithstanding making the timely, required payments.

Lupsha describes Phase II as arising in the 1960s and 1970s due to the rapid expansion of the drug trafficking market and the emergence of larger, more efficient trafficking organizations. The less capitalized, less ruthless and less connected trafficking organizations were pushed aside. Hundreds of Mexicans were employed in various positions in order to cultivate and harvest the products as well as the ancillary work associated with running a business. In most cases, these new trafficking organizations found protection from authorities, most notably through the DFS, but also from the Mexico City police force.[26] Lupsha states that both the DFS and Mexican police were known to interact with drug traffickers.[27] Each side benefitted from the relationship and they increasingly became more entangled.

Phase III took place between 1982 and 1985 in Lupsha's structural framework. Known drug traffickers became patrons for those seeking political offices, staying especially connected to PRI insiders. Lupsha claims that as the U.S. increased its political pressure on Mexico to stem the flow of narcotics, the traffickers connected to the officials gave more than a portion of the profits.

> The trafficker was expected to assist the police and the political system by providing grist for the judicial mill, as well as public relations materials to give the U.S. drug enforcers. Thus, while a trafficker could gain protection and warning information, the police could gain credit, praise, and promotions; the political system gained campaign monies and control; and the U.S., statistics, to justify a job well done.[28]

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[26] Lupsha notes that the Herrera family had such wide ranging influence, that it controlled entire regions and states, and operated its drug trafficking business without being subject to the extortionate police practices that other organizations were required to operate under.

[27] Lupsha states the DFS interacted with drug traffickers from its inception, naming Capt. Rafael Chavarri, one of the founders, as an aide to trafficker Jorge Moreno Chaubet; Miguel Nazar Haro, a DFS chief, allegedly received a gift of a speedboat from trafficker David Walker; and DFS chief Antonio Zorrilla signed the DFS Identification cards that Guadalajara cartel members were carrying when arrested for the murder of DEA agent Camarena. Mexico City Police Chief Arturo Durazo Moreno was indicted in the U.S. for drug trafficking charges.

[28] Lupsha, *Drug Lords*, 47.

This agreeable arrangement existed to such an extent that drug trafficking leaders were invited to high-level conferences with Mexican officials to discuss ways of ameliorating increasing U.S. DEA pressure.[29] But everything was upset when DEA agent Enrique Camarena was murdered in 1985.

Lupsha argues that Phase IV began in 1985 with the dissolution of the DFS. While that agency was replaced with the General Directorate of Investigations and National Security (DGSN), the old arrangements between the drug traffickers and political elites was suspended. The military was taking a more aggressive role in the antidrug campaign and the drug traffickers and corrupt law enforcement officials fled or were arrested. As a result, Lupsha claims that the narco-corruption connections between the traffickers and politicians shifted back to the local MFJP and regional military zone commanders and operated much as it did in Phase I.[30] However, he suggests that the military officers were increasingly participating in the corruption profits now that the old system was dismantled.

Lupsha's Phase V began in 1990, shortly before he wrote his essay. He suggests that it appears to reflect a return to the rhythms of Phases II and III based on his assessment of the appointments to high level positions made by the Salinas administration, including a number of people with connections to prior corrupt administrations, agencies and organizations.[31] But

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[29] Lupsha claims one such meeting held in October 1984 took place at the home of Javier Barba Hernández, an attorney that represented members of the Guadalajara cartel, and in attendance were Manuel Ibarra Herrera, head of the Federal Judicial Police, Interpol Chief, Miguel Adlana Ibarra, Federal District Chief of Police and past president of the PRI, Javier García Paniagua along with drug traffickers Ramón Matta Ballesteros, Rafael Caro Quintero, Ernesto Fonseca, Manuel Salcido Uzeta, and businessman Rubén Zuno Arce.

[30] Lupsha suggests that this occurred because of a number of reasons: the intense pressure placed on Mexico by the U.S. after Camarena's death, the election of a new president in Mexico with its resultant influx of new personnel, the changing relationship of Colombian cartels with less visible Mexican organizations, the battle for control of the fractured Guadalajara cartel and the infusion of new foreign trafficking groups trying to establish their own businesses.

[31] Specifically, Lupsha points to the appointments of Enrique Alvarez Castillo, the Governor of Jalisco when the Guadalajara cartel operated there freely, to the position of Attorney General of Salinas; Pablo Aleman Diaz, former Chief of Jalisco State police was appointed Chief of the MFJP; Javier Garcia Paniagua, ex-DFS Director and President of PRI was appointed Chief of Police for the Federal District, Mexico City; and ex-DFS Director,

Lupsha argues that the patterns of relationships and behavior continue in one of the forms described in his essay.[32]

Other academics have considered various aspects of Mexico's drug policies and have touched on the contribution that corrupt officials have made. Richard Craig has written extensively on Mexico's antidrug campaign and the bilateral relationship of the U.S. and Mexico in light of the U.S. narcotics policy toward Mexico.[33] One of the central issues in the question of the connection between Mexican drug traffickers and government officials is the level of efforts undertaken by the Mexican government to stop the cultivation, manufacture and shipment of narcotic drugs. Craig states that Mexico's nationwide antidrug campaign officially began in 1948 when three problems were identified, that exist to the present day:

> First, the remote and often inaccessible areas where marijuana and opium poppies are grown made the utilization of aircraft a requisite to any degree of success. Second, without the extensive use of herbicides or defoliants, a truly successful campaign against the cultivation of opium and marijuana would prove impossible. Third, any effort to eliminate drug cultivation and traffic would be forcefully resisted.[34]

Mexico has been mindful of its own domestic drug abuse problem, but has approached it differently than the U.S. government views its own problem. Mexican officials consider drug

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Fernando Gutierrez Barrios was appointed Secretary of Gobernacion. Also, Coello Trejo, who was conducting anti-narcotics raids with success, was demoted (in Lupsha's estimation) to the position of Attorney General for Consumer Affairs, presumably in order to prevent him from continuing his crackdown.

[32] A careful review of his essay reveals a lack of supporting evidence for many of his assertions. One possibility is from the book, *Drug Lord: The Life and Death of a Mexican Kingpin*, written by Terrence Poppa, published in 1990. Lupsha mentions the book in his essay and wrote the forward to the second edition of the book, published in 1998 wherein he praises Poppa for uncovering the "truth…that drug trafficking in Mexico is controlled from the top by key agencies of government, political institutions and key officials among the elite". See Terrence Poppa, *Drug Lord: The Life and Death of a Mexican Kingpin*, (New York: Pharos Books, 1998, 2nd ed., rev. and updated).

[33] Richard Craig, "U.S. Narcotics Policy toward Mexico: Consequences for the Bilateral Relationship", Guadalupe Gonzalez and Marta Tienda, eds. *The Drug Connection in U.S.-Mexican Relations* (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies , Vol. 4 1989); Mexico's Antidrug Campaign in the 1970s, William O. Walker III, ed., *Drugs in the Western Hemisphere* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc. 1996); Mexican Narcotics Traffic: Binational Security Implications, Donald Mabry, *The Latin American Narcotics Trade and US National Security*, (Westport: Greenwood Press 1989).

[34] *Mexico's Antidrug Campaign*, 176.

abuse to be a "medical, educational, social, and law-enforcement question".[35] Treatment and rehabilitation are preferred over criminalization. Craig argues that Mexico has cooperated with the U.S. in trying to stem the flow of drugs northward. Mexico has signed every major international drug treaty and has committed a sizeable portion of its domestic expenditures and law enforcement officials toward that goal.[36] Craig lists a number of factors that thwart Mexico's efforts, including an inadequate source of funding, inadequate number of forces to perform the necessary acts, and corruption of federal, state and local officials.[37] Craig does not argue that the Mexican government is or has controlled drug trafficking organizations and instead suggests that the government has achieved accomplishments that should be recognized.[38]

William O. Walker III has published and edited a number of books on the issues related to drug control in the Americas.[39] He has conducted primary research and demonstrated how an examination of the records of the U.S. Departments of State and Treasury helps to reveal the historical perspectives regarding drugs, largely from the standpoint of the U.S. imposing its will to eliminate illicit narcotics at their source and otherwise control narcotics coming into the U.S. While Walker mentions the allegations of corruption made against Mexican officials generally, he has not undertaken a comprehensive examination of the issue and makes no argument that this was a fundamental element that enabled the narcotic traffickers to thrive.[40]

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[35] Ibid, 179.
[36] Ibid., 180.
[37] Ibid., 188.
[38] For a discussion of the impact of corruption on politics and society of Mexico in the 1940s, see Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1999).
[39]William Walker, III, *Drug Control in the Americas*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981); Also, *Drugs in the Western Hemisphere: An Odyssey of Cultures in Conflict* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996); *Drug Control Policy: Essays in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).
[40] For a similar analysis, see Maria Celia Toro*, Mexico's 'War' on Drugs: Causes and Consequences* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers 1995).

Astorga relied on records of the U.S. State Department to make his claim that the Mexican Government established a system to control illicit narcotics businesses in exchange for payoffs. The U.S. Government had a presence in Mexico throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, through its Embassy in Mexico City, Consular Offices and agents of the Bureaus of Customs, Narcotics and Investigation, who reported on every detail that was deemed to have significance to the U.S. This is an important period to examine since that is when Astorga claims that the Mexican Government began its systematic corrupt way of functioning. The late 1960s presented a different dynamic for the U.S. and Mexico in that the demand for marijuana substantially increased as a result of consumers in the U.S. and the U.S. Government officially declared a war on drugs in an effort to limit the supply. Therefore, this examination will end there. In order to evaluate the Mexican Government's level of genuine commitment in conducting its war on drugs, its actions must be evaluated in the context of its political, economic and social agendas considering domestic and international matters of importance. If it is shown to be legitimate in its efforts, it would be inconsistent with a conclusion that it fostered the drug industry. The question is what is sufficient evidence to advance a theory of government sponsored criminal behavior as it relates to drug trafficking in Mexico? The records of the State Department and Treasury Department are voluminous and detailed in the extent of information pertaining to narcotics. The starting point is the Memorandum that Astorga relies upon to make the case against the Mexican Government.

The Assistant Military Attaché's Memorandum, written by Lt. Col Maurice Holden on July 16, 1947, is a seven page assessment of the DFS, which he refers to as the National Security Police.[41] His Memo is titled, "Misuse of Power by National Security Police," giving a concise

[41] Lt. Col. Maurice C. Holden Memorandum directed to the American Embassy, Mexico City, Treasury Dept., and the FBI; NARA, Washington D.C.; RG 59,812.105/9-447. The Memo itself was sent by the Counselor of the

announcement of the gist of its content. He provides an assessment of the commanding officers and the scope of its operation, claiming to base his opinions on information "from a confidential source which can be rated reliable, especially inasmuch as a large portion of the information listed below has been verified by other sources."[42] While Holden initially notes that the principal function of the DFS is to advise the President on subversive acts against the Government and to protect the life of the President, he later states that its biggest job will be to control investigations of narcotics cases. Holden alleges that Colonel Serrano, characterized by him as the unofficial head of the organization and a known corrupt politician, convinced President Alemán to vest narcotics jurisdiction in the DFS so that it could use the office to obtain information from the U.S. Government about the organizations involved in narcotics traffic in Mexico in order to eliminate its competition and control the traffic itself. Holden goes on to disparage the individuals in leadership roles in the DFS, providing examples of their bad behavior. Holden concludes with an assessment of the DFS "from a military intelligence viewpoint," the presumed purpose of his Memo. His conclusion is that the DFS is "fast becoming the law of Mexico", that it "could become a monster which might eventually control" the President, "is nothing but a Gestapo organization", exists to increase the "personal fortunes" of the leadership through narcotics trafficking, and could represent a serious threat to the U.S. should a foreign power attempt to penetrate the organization.[43]

The Memo would be an indictment against the DFS, its leadership, the Mexican President, Colonel Serrano and the Office of the Attorney General if there was no further input.

Embassy, on behalf of the Ambassador, to the Secretary of State along with a memorandum from the Legal Attaché at the Embassy requesting that the latter's memo be "given due weight when the contents of the Military Attaché's report are being reviewed and appraised."

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

However, on September 4, 1947, the Counselor for the Embassy, writing for the U.S. Ambassador assigned to the Embassy in Mexico City, wrote to the Secretary of State that the "Embassy is unable to verify or to corroborate the extremely derogatory statements made in the report against officials of the Mexican National Security Police."[44] Importantly, Astorga fails to mention this writing and likely missed it when accessing the records of the Department of State. The Legal Attaché to the Embassy prepared a Memo, giving an assessment of the DFS and its officials based on his and his office staff's interactions with them, wherein those observations "are not in accord with the general tenor of the report issued by the Assistant Military Attaché."[45] The Legal Attaché acknowledged the reputations that Colonel Serrano and two administrators have as being "identified" with narcotics, but he pointed out that the agency was newly formed and just added nine young honor graduate cadets from the Mexican Military Academy. The young agents were being trained by FBI instructors, who were sent to Mexico City at the request of the Mexican Government. The FBI instructors complimented the young agents, stating that their interest and application to their work was outstanding. The Legal Attaché suggested that there were good and bad elements in the makeup of the DFS, which would need to play out over time to see which would predominate. He further noted that the President told him personally that his hope was that the young officers would become the nucleus around which to build a high caliber police organization.[46]

Colonel Serrano was so closely watched throughout the later 1940s that a special folder exists that contains memoranda of conversations, impressions, allegations, and newspaper

[44] Raymond Geist, Counselor of Embassy to the Secretary of State, September 4, 1947, NARA, Washington D.C., RG 59, 812.105/9-447.
[45] Ibid.
[46] John Speakes, Legal Attaché, Memorandum for the Ambassador, Re: Dirección Federal de Seguridad, dated September 3, 1947, NARA, RG 59, 812.105/9-447.

accounts of his activities.[47] Early on, Serrano was considered by Foreign Service analysts to be a leading contender for the nomination for President in the 1952 election, which may also account for the intense interest in him.[48] Despite the allegations that Serrano participated in unlawful practices, there is no concrete evidence to substantiate that claim in the documents of the State Department or Treasury Department.[49] When confronted by a staff member of the U.S. Embassy about the allegations of ties to narcotics traffickers, Serrano made a statement on May 20, 1948 that was transcribed, as follows:

> I have never had anything to do with the narcotics traffic. Never in my life have I been in jail. I have never had a law suit against me and I have never had anything to do with a person engaged in dishonest business.[50]

As for the direction of the DFS, that organization did not venture into the realm of narcotics enforcement in Mexico in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. That remained the province of the Office of the Attorney General, its Federal Judicial Police, and the local authorities. The Embassy noted that the DFS was not a legal police group as such and for operating funds it siphoned off a great deal of the budget granted to the Gobernacion Police. Because it lacked the legal powers of arrest, it utilized the Judicial Police for the making of arrests where it felt that such color of legality was necessary. At that time, the Embassy stated that the DFS was making the most

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[47] Mexico Special Folder 0660, RG 170.

[48] Charles Burrows to the Secretary of State dated June 28, 1949, Memoranda re Possible Presidential Candidates, NARA, RG 59, 812.00/6-2849; also, Lt. Col. Holden's Memo dated July 16, 1947 wherein he states that Serrano "is now starting his campaign, quiet and unpublished, to become the next President of Mexico", RG 59, 812.105/9-447.

[49] Lt. Col Holden's July 16, 1947 Memo reported that "observers" believed that Serrano was operating a house of prostitution where high government officials were "possibly" given dope, photographed and then blackmailed, RG 59, 812.105/9-447; A. L. M. Wiggins, Under Secretary of the Treasury Memorandum dated May 4, 1948 regarding the confiscation of opium found in a Cadillac automobile allegedly owned by Serrano, by U.S. Customs agents on June 25, 1946. It was later determined that the automobile in question was not owned by Serrano; Extract from a report dated December 26, 1947 from D. J. DeLagrave, Treasury Representative at Mexico City, Mexico where he states that in addition to the two allegations above, "rumors are current throughout Mexico about Col. Serrano's connection with the narcotics traffic." NARA, Mexico Special Folder 0660 RG 170.

[50] S. Walter Washington, First Secretary of Embassy, Mexico City, Mexico to the Secretary of State, dated May 21, 1948, NARA, RG 59, 812.20/5-21-48. Washington notes that "after about seven hours of conversation with Colonel Serrano altogether, I received the impression that he might be telling the truth as regards his non-participation in the narcotics traffic."

important and most confidential political investigations upon the personal requests of President Alemán. It was also conducting some criminal and security investigations where the investigations appeared to have an international background.[51] The DFS officers used the training provided by FBI instructors to carry out its mission to collect information of subversive plots against the Government and protect the President, who was increasingly concerned for his safety throughout 1948.[52]

Foreign Service Officers in the Political and Economic Section of the State Department assigned to Mexico City submitted monthly reports that summarized the growing discontent with Alemán, his inability to improve the economic conditions for the population, his unpopular foot-and-mouth disease eradication program, and allegations of corruption in Government and amongst his friends and advisers. It was reported that former Presidents and Generals were meeting to determine the viability of keeping Alemán in office and he was acutely aware of the pressure being placed on him.[53] He requested that all Cabinet members submit letters of

[51] Raymond Geist to the Secretary of State, August 15, 1947, NARA, RG 59, 812.105/8-1547 lists and analyzes the police organizations which the office of the Legal Attaché was in contact with in Mexico City. With respect to the "Federal Security Police", the memo states: This unit was formed when the Alemán Administration took office. This group is charged with the protection of the life of the President, in much the same way that the United States Secret Service handles this responsibility in the United States. The Federal Security Police have excellent new office space and will probably receive excellent laboratory equipment, but up to the present time the group is small and is largely made up of inexperienced young agents. There are also several men with criminal backgrounds and records within the group. To a certain extent these men were brought in because of Senator Carlos Serrano's influence, as they were utilized by him as strong-arm men during the recent Presidential campaign and he has accordingly endeavored to reward them with these positions.

[52] S. Walter Washington to the Secretary of State reporting March 3, 1948 on the Political Conditions in Mexico, specifically "Gangsterism in Government and the Deteriorating Political Situation", wherein he states: "The Embassy has reported to the Department that President Alemán has shown a personal interest in the precautions taken for his safety. It has been noted that he has appeared in public in recent months less often than formerly. On the occasions when he has been photographed in public he seldom is caught smiling, as was always the case during the campaign and during the early months of his administration. Persons who have observed him in public say that he seems to be constantly on the alert as if looking for danger in the crowds. It is not improbable in the present situation, customs being what they are in Mexico, that some of those who oppose the President would think that the best way of improving the situation would be to murder him, and he appears to be aware of this. He thus must feel that he has need for the services of Col. Serrano and the Presidential police which the latter has trained and controls." RG 59, 812.00/3-348.

[53] Ibid. See also, S. Walter Washington to the Secretary of State reporting April 21, 1948, RG 59, 812.00/4-2148.

resignation and vowed to "clean house" of anyone proven to be participating in wrongdoing.[54] It was not until September 1948 that Alemán had reason to believe that he would remain in office, when a dinner was held in his honor attended by many Generals who confirmed their support for him.[55] Alemán's Presidency became more stable toward the end of 1948.

It was in this atmosphere that Alemán had to maneuver his political course and at the same time contend with the enormous pressure being placed on Mexico from the U.S. over the continued trafficking of narcotics into the U.S., threatening the health of its people, according to Bureau of Narcotics Commissioner, Harry J. Anslinger.[56] In April 1947, the U.S. Treasury Representative in Charge at Mexico City estimated that Mexico had a minimum of 10,000 opium poppy plantations, which would yield roughly 32 tons of raw opium, all destined for the U.S.[57] The Secretary of Treasury suggested that the Secretary of State direct the American Ambassador in Mexico City to bring this to the attention of the Mexican President with the view that he intensify the poppy destruction campaigns and allot additional funds to meet the task.[58] Very revealing photographs of opium poppy fields were shown to President Alemán and he expressed the interest to combat the narcotics traffic and the growth of opium poppies in Mexico.[59] By April 1947, President Alemán had approved the designation of fifteen agents in the Federal Attorney General's office to conduct the opium destruction campaign in Northwest Mexico. He

[54] Harry Turkel, First Secretary of U.S. Embassy to the Ambassador, Mexico City, Memorandum dated August 20, 1948, communicated by S. Walter Washington to the Secretary of State, and Memorandum of Conversation between Turkel and Sr. Manuel Germán Parra dated August 12, 1948, RG 59, 812.00/8-2048.
[55] George Scherer, First Secretary of Embassy to the Secretary of State, Political Conditions in Mexico for the Period Beginning August 16, 1948 and Ending September 15, 1948, RG 59, 812.00/9-1748.
[56] Statement of Anslinger in his capacity as the United States Representative on the Commission of Narcotic Drugs of the United Nations, made July 30, 1947 "Regarding the Narcotics Situation in Mexico", RG 59, 812.114/8-947.
[57] The report is discussed in the letter written by Secretary of the Treasury, John Snyder to the Secretary of State, dated April 30, 1947, RG 59, 812.114/4-3047.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Raymond Geist to the Secretary of State dated June 20, 1947, RG 59, 812.114/6-2047.

signed a decree adding substantial amounts to the income of agents assigned to the border on narcotics work.[60]

The Embassy staff assessed the Mexican Government's ability to effectively accomplish a successful campaign, noting the inadequate funds, agents and equipment to do a competent job.[61] The Treasury Department representative suggested that a joint commission be established whereby each Government would contribute staff and funds in order to orchestrate more effective campaigns.[62] Up to that time, the U.S. exercised a hands-off policy with regard to local narcotics traffic within Mexico, and was only concerned with traffic to the U.S.[63] The Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Customs verbalized that policy when writing to the Treasury Agent-in-Charge in Mexico City that the U.S. did not want to give the impression that it shared the responsibility for the narcotic problem.[64] Specific recommendations were drafted and sent to the Secretary of State on June 20, 1947, but such cooperative efforts fell through after the U.S. made a former resolution to censure Mexico before the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs in July 1947.[65] The statement of Commissioner Anslinger, the U.S. representative to the U.N. Commission, criticized Mexico for its lax efforts in its 1947 opium poppy destruction

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[60] Secretary of State to Ambassador Thurston dated April 22, 1947. See also, Secretary of Treasury to the Secretary of State dated March 17, 1947, wherein it was reported by the Treasury Representative in Charge at Mexico City that the Mexico Government's efforts would be the largest expedition ever sent out and that the Mexican agents appeared sincere in their desire to suppress the narcotics traffic. RG 59, 812.114/3-1747.

[61] RG 59, 812.114/6-2047. See also, Raymond Geist to the Secretary of State dated May 12, 1947 wherein he concluded that the cooperation of the Mexico Government and the cooperation promised had fallen far short of what was desired and what was necessary. Geist reported that only six agents accompanied by fifteen soldiers were sent out on the campaign, destroying two hundred poppy fields. He estimated that there were 10,000 poppy fields in existence, enabling traffic to be at an all time high. Geist concluded that the 1947 campaign, as previous ones, was handicapped by inadequate knowledge of the situation and inadequate measures, improvised at too late a date.

[62] RG 59, 812.114/6-2047. A Mexican official close to President Alemán told the Treasury Representative in Charge that the Mexican Government would welcome American participation and equipment in its narcotics campaigns. RG 59, 812.114/6-1647.

[63] Special Employee Salvador Peña, Treasury Department, U.S. Customs Service to American Consulate, Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico dated January 17, 1945, RG 170, 811.4.

[64] RG 170, 812.114/11-2647.

[65] RG 59, 812.114/8-947. Since 1944, the U.S. Government had taken the position that the U.N. commission on Narcotic Drugs was a forum where any country may be called upon publicly to account for its failure to take effective measures to control the narcotics traffic. RG 59, 812.114/3-1048.

campaign. Noting a misconception of the extent of the task by a new administration and the lack of manpower and finances, Anslinger requested that the Mexican Government increase its activity without delay in accordance with its international obligations. He further stated that while the Mexican law prohibited the cultivation of opium poppies, such practice was tolerated by state and local authorities in the producing areas, with the exception of the State of Sonora.

The records of the Department of State and the Department of Treasury throughout 1946 and 1947 contain very few reports of specific Mexican officials alleged to be involved in narcotics transactions. One example is the September 21, 1946 report of the American Consulate at Tijuana to the Secretary of State that an informant claimed that the real head of a narcotics ring in Tijuana was Capt. Manuel Fontes Buetna, the Inspector General of Police for the Territory in conjunction with certain police officials in San Diego, California.[66] Another example was the appointment of a Mexican military official to the position of Inspector General of the Territorial Police on January 21, 1947. At that time, all Mexicali police officers were discharged for participating in corrupt practices, such as narcotics trafficking, prostitution and auto theft. Similar action was anticipated in Tijuana.[67]

Anslinger reported on a shooting incident that occurred at the border in June between Mexican smugglers and U.S. narcotics agents, as a further indication of the threat of narcotics

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[66] RG 59, 812.114/9-2146.

[67] RG 59, 812.105/1-2147. Other mention of corrupt Mexican officials was more general. On May 12, 1947, the office of the Secretary of State reported the statements of the Treasury Representative in Mexico City to Embassy Counselor Raymond Geist that "we have positive evidence that one of the key men in the new administration is the paid agent of one of the largest underworld gangs in the United States, now actively engaged in the narcotics traffic on a large scale". RG 59, 812.114/5-1247. On June 16, 1947, the Treasury Representative wrote to Counselor Geist that "the large profits being realized by the traffic make available large sums for graft. There is no cooperation obtainable from the local authorities, undoubtedly because they have been paid off or otherwise are financially interested in the traffic. There are also numerous indications that higher Federal officials may be protecting the traffic." RG 59, 812.114/ 6-2047.

trafficking to U.S. citizens, noting that more than 200 shots were fired in the incident.[68] The Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs thereafter requested the basis for Anslinger's statement about corrupt state and local officials. He said that if the U.S. had specific information regarding corrupt officials, in the spirit of cooperation, it should share it.[69]

By September 1947, the Secretary of State was again directing the Ambassador to have a frank discussion with the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the illicit traffic of narcotic drugs.[70] The Ambassador was instructed to prevail upon the duty of the Mexican Government to take necessary action to get results in stopping the opium poppy cultivation. He was further told to state that the U.S. expected to urge the U.N. Economic and Social Council at its next meeting to recommend that the Government of Mexico take measures to suppress the illicit cultivation of opium poppies in Mexico.[71] Before the Ambassador had the opportunity to have a meeting with the Mexican Minister, the Mexico Attorney General announced a large scale 1948 opium poppy eradication campaign, slated to begin not on January 1, 1948, as all prior campaigns began on January 1st, but rather on November 17, 1947.[72] Bristling from the criticism of Mexico by the U.S. before the U.N., the Mexican Attorney General decided that the Americans would be excluded from participating in the campaign. In every prior year, Americans were invited to go with the officials in order to document their work.[73] But now it

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[68] Anslinger mentioned the assassination of the Mexicali Police Chief as part of that incident, presumably for his cooperation with U.S. narcotics agents. RG 59, 812.114/8-947.

[69] RG 59, 812.114/3-1048. The Office of the Secretary of State authorized the Embassy to respond to the Mexican Foreign Minister that information about corrupt state and local officials was provided to Mexico's representative two days before the U.N. conference by Commissioner Anslinger through a copy of his formal statement before the Commission. However, that statement made no specific reference to individuals alleged to be corrupt.

[70] The Office of the Secretary of State to Ambassador Thurston dated September 26, 1947 wherein it stated that "the information transmitted by the Embassy during the past year clearly indicates that narcotic conditions have worsened and that the Mexican Government has relaxed its vigilance." RG 59, 812.114/9-2647.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ambassador Thurston to the Secretary of State dated October 21, 1947. RG 59, 812.114/10-2147

[73] In fact, it was the Treasury Representative who had accompanied the Mexican agents on their 1947 campaign that provided the statement used by Anslinger in his U.N. Resolution against Mexico to the effect that the campaign was inadequate and unsuccessful. RG 59, 812.114/5-1247. See also RG 59, 812.114/12-1847.

seemed to Mexican officials that the U.S. was making them look bad internationally.[74] In addition, in November 1947, the Mexican Penal Code was amended to create harsher penalties for narcotics violations, eliminating bail pending trial and doing away with suspended sentences.[75] For its part, the Embassy suggested that the impetus for Mexican action be international pressure via the U.N. as opposed to discussions between U.S. officials and Mexican officials.[76] The Secretary of State was more cynical than the Ambassador in suggesting that the Mexican campaign was merely orchestrated to appease the U.N. criticism and directed the Ambassador to meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs as originally advised.[77] The Ambassador did meet with the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, who presented Mexico's viewpoint that "Mexico is virtually the victim of this traffic, which is financed in Mexico and in the United States by American capital" and that the U.S. should put its own house in order.[78]

The Sixth Session of the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs was conducted in February 1948. In advance of the meeting, the Mexican Representative, Luis Padilla Nervo, contacted the Deputy U.S. Representative for the U.N. Commission, inquiring as to the U.S. intention of going forward on the Resolution against Mexico. Padilla Nervo expressed the Mexican Government's belief that the U.S. Government had an equal responsibility in the problem in that American

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[74] The Mexican Attorney General almost immediately reversed that decision and invited an American agent to accompany the campaign. RG 59, 812.114/11-2447. Interestingly, there was a debate between the offices of the Secretary of State and the Treasury Department's Bureau of Customs about whether a U.S. agent should participate in Mexico's narcotics campaigns, which might give the impression that the U.S. shares the responsibility for Mexico's narcotics problems. RG 59, 812.114/12-247.

[75] RG 59, 812.114/11-1847.

[76] RG 59, 812.114/10-2147. The Embassy characterized the efforts of the Mexican Government through its 1948 campaign as extraordinary and extensive. RG 59, 812.114/11-2447.

[77] RG 59, 812.114/10-2147. The Ambassador was told to convey the U.S. Government's support of Anslinger's comments before the U.N. Commission in July 1947; also, that the U.S. Government is tired of waiting for the Mexican Government to do its duty and enforce its laws.

[78] Ambassador Thurston to the Secretary of State dated December 18, 1947, RG 59, 812.114/12-1847. This argument resonated with the Ambassador who stated in his letter to the Secretary of State when reporting about the meeting that the U.S. seems "no more able to control [conditions in the U.S. and the connivance of American gangsters] than do the Mexicans seem able to control the production and shipment of narcotics".

gangsters were controlling the production and traffic of narcotics for their own financial benefit.[79] An agreement was initiated that no mention of American gangsters would be made by Padilla Nervo and that he would speak to the efforts undertaken by the Mexican Government to control the narcotics problem in exchange for Anslinger's recommendation that the Resolution be tabled until further report could be made on Mexico's progress.[80] Padilla Nervo's report to the U.N. Commission recited the activities of the Federal Judicial Police in the northwestern states, where 70% of the corps was involved in the campaign, including the assistance of the Federal Army, Air Force and Calvary, with soldiers, planes and signal units equipped with radios, and the placement of Ministry of Public Health agents at borders, especially Mexicali and Tijuana.[81] The Ministry of Health initiated a campaign to inform people living in the rural areas that growing opium poppies was immoral and illegal, with stiff penalties imposed in accordance with the changes in the penal code. Padilla Nervo spoke of the location and destruction of laboratories and the destruction of opium poppy plantations. He also talked about the difficulties involved in the task itself, stating that the opium poppies were grown in remote, wild, mountainous regions of the country that were scarcely populated; there were limited transportation routes to access the areas; often it was necessary to do so by burro; and there were dangerous insects that hampered the agents' ability to function. Padilla Nervo said that in a country as vast and mountainous as Mexico, the complete resolution to the problem was hard and strenuous, requiring a strong and persistent will, enduring vigilance and great resources. But he said that it also required patience

[79] Ibid. Treasury Representative in Mexico City reported to the Secretary of Treasury on December 25, 1947 that the illicit narcotic traffic in Mexico was controlled for the most part by prominent Mexicans. The Acting Secretary of Treasury stated "we believe that will dissipate any feeling that American gangsters are controlling production and traffic of narcotics, making the U.S. Government equally at fault with the Mexican Government." RG 59, 812.114/1-1948.

[80] Acting Chief, Division of Mexican Affairs to Ambassador Thurston dated January 21, 1948. RG 59, 812.114/12-1847 writing that "we hope that the Mexican delegate won't state that the Mexican narcotic traffic exists only because of the U.S. market. This would serve no useful purpose".

[81] RG 59, 812.114/2-648.

and time, especially given Mexico's economic means. Padilla Nervo pointed to these measures as the positive steps of the Mexican Government.[82] In response, the Resolution introduced by U.S. Representative Anslinger was indeed tabled by the U.N. Commission.[83]

It was just one month later, on March 23, 1948, that the Counselor for the American Embassy in Mexico City wrote to the Secretary of State and expressed the collective opinion of the Embassy staff and the Department of Treasury Attaché that the U.S. strategy in dealing with Mexico over the issue of narcotics control was flawed.[84] Acknowledging the vigorous 1948 campaign of the Mexican Government and the many difficulties encountered in order to be successful, the Embassy suggested that it would be better to have Mexico act in the spirit of cooperation, rather than out of fear or embarrassment. Reviving the U.S.-Mexico Joint Commission idea that was proposed nearly a year earlier, the Embassy suggested that the U.S. contribute financial assistance, technical assistance, equipment, and cooperation in exchange for information. Mexican officials would perform the actual operations within Mexico. Noting that up to this time, American cooperation in Mexican eradication efforts had been practically nothing, the Embassy pointed out that Mexico made unappreciated expenditures solely in the interest of the U.S., since the production of narcotics in Mexico was no particular danger to it, but was a threat almost exclusively to the U.S. The Embassy concluded that no working relationship with Mexico would succeed until the U.S. cooperated and stopped trying to force Mexico to take action, a unilateral obligation that created undue burden on Mexico. The Embassy mentioned that the Mexican Foreign Office desired to have a meeting between technical representatives of both Governments and was desirous of getting advice from the U.S.

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] RG 59, 812.114/4-2748.

on the narcotics problem.[85] In April 1948, Dr. Saturnino Guzmán, Mexico's new Representative to the U.N. Commission, met with Anslinger on his way to the May 1948 meeting and inquired how cooperation between Mexico and the U.S. for the suppression of illicit traffic in narcotics could be promoted. He was told that Mexico should establish a single narcotics administration, in the mold of the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics. Shortly thereafter, the office of the Mexican Attorney General was designated the agency to coordinate violations of Mexico's narcotics laws with the assistance of the Federal Judicial Police.[86]

In June 1948, Mexican Attorney General Lic. Francisco Gonzalez de la Vega requested a meeting with high officials of the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics to discuss organizational problems connected with control and suppression of narcotics production in Mexico and traffic to the U.S.[87] With no other Bureau of Narcotics official available to meet, the local agent assigned to El Paso, Texas met with Gonzalez de la Vega and claimed to have such an extraordinarily good working relationship with the local police in Ciudad Juarez that he found it unnecessary to coordinate narcotics cases with the District Attorney's Office in Ciudad Juarez.[88] Gonzalez de la Vega added fifty narcotics agents within the Federal Judicial Police that were posted at border cities to help reduce narcotics trafficking to the U.S.[89] The U.S. began formulating a new policy of cooperating with the Mexican Government on the narcotics problem with certain principles in mind, as communicated by the U.S. Treasury Department to the State Department:

(1) Actual operations should be carried out by Mexican officials only and not by American citizens;
(2) United States participation should include exchange of information, technical assistance, financial and material aid; and

[85] Ibid.
[86] RG 59, 812.114/6-2548.
[87] RG 170, 812.114/6-3048.
[88] RG 59, 812.114/7-1348.
[89] RG 59, 812.114/7-1248.

(3) The overall scheme of action should be adopted on the basis of conferences between responsible officials of the two governments.[90]

However, while noting the positive steps taken by the Mexican Government, including a substantial increase in the amount of money devoted to the 1948 poppy destruction campaign, the Assistant Secretary of Treasury suggested that the U.S. Government may not need to extend financial aid, believing that the next poppy destruction campaign would cost less than the previous one.[91] By October, Gonzalez de la Vega was requesting help from the U.S. Government in purchasing two airplanes for use in the next campaign against poppy production.[92] Anslinger negotiated a 25% discount on the price of the aircraft with a U.S. company on behalf of the Mexican Government.[93] The planes were delivered to the Mexican Government in December 1948 and the Office of the Attorney General of Mexico, reporting on the success of the 1949 campaign, commented that "these planes were used constantly in flying during a period of three months having operated in an extremely mountainous zone without any imperfection or misfortune whatsoever".[94] In November 1949, Attorney General Gonzalez de la Vega invited Anslinger to a personal meeting in Mexico City to discuss the narcotics problem in the interest of promoting closer cooperation between enforcement agencies in Mexico and the U.S. Government.[95] After that meeting, Anslinger and other U.S. officials with the Treasury Department characterized the relations between narcotics enforcement officials of Mexico and the U.S. as being "on the highest level", expressing particular gratitude to President Alemán for

[90] RG 59, 812.114/6-2548.
[91] RG 59, 812.114/8-2548. The underestimation of the problem existed within both governments.
[92] RG 59, 812.114/10-1948.
[93] RG 59, 812.114/12-148.
[94] RG 59, 812.114/8-2249. By June 1951, the Mexican Government was requesting Anslinger's help negotiating a discount in purchasing two more airplanes for use in its opium poppy destruction campaigns; one of the original planes crashed and they sought to replace it and add one more. Counselor of Embassy for Economic Affairs, Mexico City to Department of State, June 1951, RG 84.
[95] RG 59, 812.114/11-1049.

his legislative efforts with respect to narcotics laws.[96] Thus began the precedent for informal meetings between high officials of the Mexican and U.S. Governments on the issue of narcotics production and trafficking. This opened up the means for an exchange of information regarding violators of both countries' narcotics laws.

The hands-on collaboration was performed by the narcotics agents on both sides of the border.[97] American agents were routinely invited to assist Mexican agents on narcotics investigations and arrests.[98] Narcotics agents reported information about specific cases up the chain of command where it was communicated to counterparts from the other country.[99] The

[96] RG 170, Special Folder 0660, "Mr. Anslinger's Mexico City Trip – December 1949".

[97] Rae Vader, Customs Agent in Charge, San Diego, California to Supervising Customs Agent dated May 26, 1950 regarding the sharing of information of specific individuals suspected of narcotics violations; he stated that Bureau of Customs and F.B.I. agents exchanged information on a daily basis and investigations took place immediately. Vader stated "There is already a joint investigative effort as between the Mexican government officials and the Customs Agency Service and when, because of this investigative effort, information is learned which pertains to the trafficking of narcotics within the United States, such information is immediately disseminated to the Federal Bureaus of Narcotics in the district where the information can be of value. RG 170. Also, Robert O'Brien, Bureau of Narcotics Agent to Supervisor Williams letter dated October 8, 1953 reporting on the request of the Mayor of Ciudad Juarez to meet with Bureau of Narcotics agents periodically to exchange information. RG 170.

[98] C. A. Emerick, Deputy Commissioner of Customs to Benjamin White, Treasury Representative, Mexico City dated June 10, 1952 authorizing White to assist Mexican narcotics agent in Tijuana. RG 170. See also, Memorandum from Charles Siragusa, Field Supervisor for Enforcement to Anslinger dated December 9, 1959 providing a summary of the narcotic enforcement situation in Mexico for a ten year period ending 1958, wherein he states that "The United States Bureau of Customs maintains an office in the American Embassy at Mexico City and works closely with the Mexican authorities in relation to the suppression of the international illicit narcotic traffic and particularly to combat the smuggling of illicit narcotics into the United States. In addition, representatives of the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics have been invited on numerous occasions to assist the Mexican police regarding specific investigations of major significance." RG 170; and Memorandum from Agent W. J. Durkin to Commissioner Giordano dated December 17, 1962 wherein Col. Hector Hernandez-Tello, Acting Chief, Mexican Federal Judicial Police invited an American agent to assist in the investigation of the owner of the Mirador Hotel, Acapulco, Mexico, believed to be the husband of film star Hedy Lamar, dated December 17, 1962. RG 170.

[99] Letter from Arnulfo Martinez Lavalle, Attorney General of Mexico, to Anslinger dated February 21, 1950 providing a list of the principal narcotics traffickers (18 listed) operating at that time in Mexico City and in the northern part of the country. Lavalle stated that "the laws of Mexico do not make it possible to record as narcotic traffickers those persons that have not recorded as such by the Mexican courts, therefore the list that I am enclosing herewith deals only with those that have been sentenced as traffickers in narcotics. You will understand that in our confidential lists, there are a number of persons suspected of being engaged in the narcotic traffick (sic), but that information can not be furnished to outsiders, for, in case that such names be known it could determine the defamation (sic) against them, because there is not a court record establishing them as such narcotic traffickers." The list does not contain the names of any Mexican officials at any level of office. RG 170; Lavalle to Anslinger letter dated February 15, 1952 providing information about an arrest of an individual selling marijuana in Nuevo Laredo who had in his possession the names and addresses of U.S. citizens. RG 170. Also, Reynaldo Maduro, Bureau of Narcotics Agent to District Supervisor Gaffney Memorandum dated January 25, 1961 reporting on a meeting with

U.S. Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Narcotics and the FBI exchanged information on a daily basis, including information about the Mexican officials in charge of narcotics enforcement.[100] Through this exchange of information, personal observation and participation of U.S. agents with Mexican agents, and intelligence gathered from informants, the U.S. agencies had the ability to gauge the commitment of the Mexican Government to enforce its narcotics laws. That enforcement was largely carried out through the annual campaigns and investigations based on information provided by U.S. agencies.

Many of the allegations of violations of Mexican narcotics laws were provided by informants who had nonspecific information. For example, the informant would claim to have personal knowledge of the location of opium poppy plantations and would offer to become a "confidential agent" in helping the U.S. agents locate them.[101] U.S. narcotics agents investigated to the extent that they were able but it is unknown whether the information proved to be valuable or not. In December 1950, it was reported that narcotics were being smuggled in freight train cars, hidden by tomatoes being shipped to the U.S. On more than one occasion, agents searched freight cars and never found narcotics.[102] In October 1951, an informant alleged that one of the co-pilots of President Alemán's official plane smuggled gold and narcotics to the U.S., knowing

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Mexican Federal Police who uncovered a cocaine distribution laboratory in Mexico, seized in November 1960 and naming heroin and cocaine traffickers. RG 170.

[100] For example, see FBI report dated February 10, 1956 on Mexican Attorney General Lic. Carlos Franco Sodi, and Chief of the Federal Judicial Police, Roberto Solis. RG 170. Also, Bureau of Narcotics agent, Ralph Frias to District Supervisor, George White dated July 26, 1954 regarding Mexican Federal Agent in Charge at Mexicali, Marco Alcazar Vega. RG 170.

[101] For example, Arturo Gil letter to Bureau of Narcotics dated January 24, 1951 with information of a large harvest to be made in March or April, 1951 in Culiacan, Sinaloa; the Bureau of Narcotics assigned an agent to meet with Gil. RG 170. Also, Ruben Duran Moreno to the U.S. Department of Justice dated April 20, 1955, with information about "certain regions of Mexico" where poppies are cultivated; that large sums of money are paid by smugglers to government officials to overlook the unlawful activity; and that in 1952 in Sinaloa, under the Presidency of Alemán, the state government of Sinaloa received "the greatest loot". This information was offered by the informant for a "lucrative and high salary". RG 170.

[102] Fredrick Gardner, Customs Agent to Commissioner of Customs letter dated December 15, 1950. RG 170. A similar outcome occurred with the allegation in 1950 that automobiles were stolen in the U.S. and smuggled into Mexico where they were traded for narcotics. Vader to Customs letter dated May 26, 1950. RG 170.

that the plane was exempt from inspection.[103] Prominent businessmen reported that the Judge of the Minor Penal Court in Ciudad Juarez must be engaged in illicit narcotics traffic, since he seemed to spend lavishly, while making "an insignificant salary".[104]

Other informants provided more specific allegations against individuals without explaining how they obtained the information in the first place. One such example was a letter written by a resident of Mexico City on August 4, 1951, alleging that Mrs. Pesi Ksiger and her sister, residents of Ciudad Juarez were part of a narcotics ring, with connections to the U.S., who escaped arrest by paying for police protection.[105] Another example was an allegation made by the owner of two newspapers in Guadalajara that came from some of his reporters that "certain unknown persons, believed to be connected with Luis Limberopulos", owner of Tiger Lines, an air transportation company, were smuggling narcotics into the U.S. with paid protection from local and federal authorities.[106] In another example, three informants who were unnamed but characterized by FBI agents as having "known reliability" provided somewhat contradictory information that they obtained from sources they considered to be reliable about the nefarious activities of the Governor of Chihuahua, Oscar Soto Maynez.[107] All of these informants claimed that the governor was collecting payoffs for protecting "dope smugglers", although the amounts

[103] G. W. Cunningham, Acting Commissioner of Narcotics to C. A. Emerick, Deputy Commissioner of Customs, letter dated October 12, 1951, suggesting that the informant be told to speak with the Treasury Representative in Charge, Mexico City for further action. RG 170.
[104] Robert O'Brien, Narcotic Agent to P. A. Williams, District Supervisor, Department of Customs dated October 3, 1951. RG 170.
[105] Translation of a letter written by Manuel Gutierrez to Bureau of Customs dated August 4, 1951. RG 170.
[106] Benjamin White to Bureau of Customs dated July 3, 1952. RG 170. Another example was the report by an official of the Mexican Office of Civil Aeronautics to the Commercial Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City that five named pilots were smuggling narcotics into the U.S. around El Paso, Texas, using four planes. The Attaché commented that "the Embassy does not know how to evaluate the above information but believes it may be worthwhile to call to the attention of appropriate American authorities. Robert Glover, Commercial Attaché to Department of State dated June 8, 1953. RG 170.
[107] FBI Memorandum Re: Mexican Police Organizations, Political Judicial Del Estado de Chihuahua (Judicial Police of the State of Chihuahua) dated February 16, 1955, forwarded to the Commissioner, Bureau of Narcotics by John Edgar Hoover on May 15, 1955. RG 170.

they claimed he received were inconsistent with one another. One of the informants claimed that the Chief of Police in Juarez, General Pablo Cano Martinez, also collected bribes and sent some of the bribe money to the former Chief of State Judicial Police.[108] There is no follow up with respect to this information. Another case involved an American living in Mexico who made allegations against specific Mexican Government officials, including then President Adolfo López Mateos, based on information he claimed came from his close friend.[109] The friend, Juan Erraido, was a business associate of President López Mateos, having been the President of the Railroad Union when López Mateos was Secretary of Labor under President Ruiz Cortines. He was allegedly given two timber plants as a reward for supporting López Mateos for President. Erraido was asked to run for Governor of Sinaloa by the President in order to prevent the endorsement of the PRI candidate next in line for office, Senator Leopoldo Sanchez Celia. At stake, the informant claimed, was the continuation of the corrupt practices of the outgoing governor in supporting the poppy growers in the state. According to the informant, President López Mateos was fed up with the poppy scandal and wanted a governor to take office in Sinaloa who would wipe it out. López Mateos was said to have sent an Army detachment to destroy the poppy fields in 1960, only to have the fields destroyed after the harvest, at the behest of corrupt Army officers and the Governor. Erraido refused to run for Governor and the candidates put up by López Mateos were ultimately rejected by the PRI in favor of Sanchez Celia, a move guaranteed to officially protect the poppy agriculture, in the opinion of the informant. He claimed to know that

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[108] Ibid.

[109] John Reese to Cap. James Hamilton, L.A. Police Division dated August 1962. The letter was sent in a sealed envelope to Reese's friend to forward to Hamilton, as explained by Reese in a postscript that he got queasy about it upon reflection. He asked that if there be a response, it be in an unmarked envelope, since "people get killed". RG 170.

> the State "narcotics police" have officially been called off poppies to work marijuana until October. All they do…is discipline and organize the business, and keep out the lone-wolf growers who are trying to develop their own little outlaw markets in the United States. Either you belong to the "official" poppy group or you get your fields sprayed and/or burned, and that is all the "state narcotics officers" do. They shot up one H lab here last spring and killed three men, but not for violating the law---just for not paying their dues.[110]

This informant sent the same information to the Los Angeles Times hoping that it be published. The police captain forwarded the letter to Commissioner Giordano, who characterized it as "most interesting".[111] He stated that such information would help the agency in planning its future operations in the area concerned.[112]

Some information was provided by persons who were being investigated themselves for criminal violations of one sort or another. A New York businessman being questioned about income tax violation volunteered information about his wife's uncle, a General alleged to be the head of the Mexican Federal Police, who he claimed orchestrated a scheme whereby Mexican field hands illegally crossed the border at Brownsville-Matamoras and were paid to carry small packets of narcotics which were collected from them in the fields.[113] A doctor incarcerated in Texas for narcotics violations reported the location of a heroin lab near Victoria, Mexico, accessible by burro.[114] A trafficker arrested by Customs agents in Laredo, Texas alleged that he obtained the drugs from seizures made in Mexico by Government agents who were trying to dispose of it at $15,000 U.S. currency per kilo.[115]

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Henry Giordano, Commissioner of Narcotics to Captain James Hamilton, Commander, Intelligence Division, Los Angeles Police Department letter dated October 22, 1962.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Statement of R. A. Donner, taken by Special Agent, Richard Joyce, dated August 21, 1955. RG 170.
[114] Statement of Richard Futrell, given to Special Employee Cotton, taken by Narcotics Agent Theodore Hagstrom dated April 18, 1951.
[115] Operations Memorandum from American Consulate, Nuevo Laredo, Mexico to Department of State dated January 13, 1969. RG 84.

Many times information was provided seemingly for no reason other than to report facts that may prove useful to the authorities. On April 19, 1963, a man reported that an entire rural community in western Chihuahua was involved in growing opium poppies.[116] The informant claimed to have a girlfriend in the community, which enabled him to freely observe the activities since he was welcomed because of her. He related how opium poppies were cultivated in all of the valley areas of the mountains where the land could be irrigated. While he was there, the crops were harvested and he observed the actual gathering of the opium from the poppy pods. He stated that the peasants were paid 80 pesos per kilo for the raw opium, which was weighed using tin cans tied to the ends of a cross beam, one filled with silver coins and the other with opium. He further stated that

> he observed several groups of Mexican soldiers in the area and that each farmer was required to pay the sergeant or lieutenant in charge of each group “”mordida” (graft) to insure protection against the disturbance of the growing fields until such time as the crops were harvested. After the opium was harvested and the plants were dead, the soldiers would then burn a few of the fields in order that they could report the fact to their superiors. The informant stated that no green field of poppies had been destroyed in the area he visited. The informant stated that it would be impossible for an outsider to get into the area without the consent of the local people. Also, that almost every farmer in the area carries a revolver at all times, if he can afford to own one, and is never without his knife which they all have a habit of carrying under their belts on their left hip.[117]

The information was forwarded to the Bureau of Narcotics, who had an agent meet with the informant with the goal of pinpointing the area in question.[118] The records of the Treasury Department do not reveal the outcome of the information.

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[116] Statement made by unnamed informant to M. R. Rogers, Customs Agent in Charge, Nogales, Arizona to Commissioner of Customs dated April 25, 1963. RG 170.
[117] Ibid.
[118] George Gaffney, Assistant to the Commissioner to District Supervisor George White, San Francisco letter dated May 8, 1963. RG 170.

Of significant credibility, however, was information that came from trusted members of Mexican police agencies. On April 22, 1952, Tijuana, Mexico narcotics agent, Napoleon Camaraza Valaguer, met with a Bureau of Customs agent and reported that

> one Victor Torres was operating a large laboratory in Culiacan where he produces several kilograms of heroin each month, under the protection of local and Federal officials; that the agents assigned by the Attorney General's office in the destruction of poppy fields in Sinaloa, Sonora and other north-western states were in league with the opium poppy planters and that the man in charge of the poppy campaign is Federico Lavalle Basó, uncle of Arnulfo Martinez Lavalle, Chief investigator of the Attorney General's office.[119]

He also reported that Manuel de la Paz Carrillo, an agent with the Federal Judicial Police, was tipping off suspected traffickers of investigations in exchange for money. In particular, de la Paz Carrillo was alleged to inform suspected trafficker, Alfonso Treviño Ramon of an impending investigation that was being coordinated through the joint efforts of the Federal Judicial Police and U.S. Narcotics agents.[120]

In many cases, Anslinger provided information received from various sources about narcotics violations to the Mexican officials, including names and places. In December 1953, that information concerned an organization headed by Onesimo Rivera in Sinaloa and named his associates, including a former chief of police in Sinaloa.[121] In 1955, he reported information about an opium plantation and narcotics ring located in the town of Ayutla, in the mountains of west central Jalisco.[122] In 1956, Anslinger wrote to Oscar Rabasa in his capacity as Secretariat of

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[119] Benjamin White to Commissioner of Customs dated May 22, 1952. RG 170.

[120] Ibid. Camaraza Valaguer requested that Agent White meet with Sr. Piña Soris, Chief of the Presidential Staff, and advise him of the "deplorable conditions existing between the narcotic traffickers and the agents of the Attorney General's office." White declined by explaining to Camaraza Valaguer that "no actual proof existed of his accusations and that even though such proof did exist the matter should be reported through his own departments' official channels to the President". Alfonso Treviño Ramon was arrested in early 1953 and his brother, Enrique was arrested later that year. Memorandum of Charles Siragusa, Field Supervisor for Enforcement to Anslinger dated December 9, 1959. RG 170.

[121] Anslinger to Arnulfo Martinez Lavalle letter dated December 18, 1953. RG 170.

[122] Anslinger to Rabasa letter dated November 8, 1955. RG 170. The information was fairly specific, naming Alfonso Jimenez, farmer and lumberman as the head of the operation. Anslinger stated that the people in town had an idea of what was going on, but were too frightened to do anything about it. The gang's associates were named

External Relations about a Mexican arrested in California who had in his possession two Mexican credentials which he claimed to purchase for $50 in Mexicali.[123] The credentials consisted of an identification card bearing his photograph and name, indicating that he was an agent of the Federal Security Department and a metal badge, gold colored with blue lettering, as follows:

D F S
S de G
Direccion Federal de Seguridad
Agente

No significance was attached to the DFS credentials by officials in either country. However, it was reported by a Bureau of Narcotics agent that officials in Mexico, including judicial police and others, made a practice of giving their personal calling cards to their friends. They would pull the cards out if stopped for minor traffic infractions to show officials that they have friends in respectable positions, with the hope that they would not be charged. [124]

For the most part, the information gathered by U.S. agencies was communicated by Anslinger to Rabasa, who served as Mexico's representative to the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs beginning in the early 1950s. Rabasa then forwarded the information to the Attorney General's office for investigation.[125] The Attorney General would order the Federal Judicial Police or local police to follow up on the information, including surveillance of persons named as suppliers of narcotics, the location of laboratories or of fields.[126] The Attorney General sent periodic status reports to Anslinger noting the outcomes of the particular investigations.[127]

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and it was alleged that the opium was smuggled out of Ayutla to the U.S. by private plane and by buses or trucks. RG 170.

[123] Anslinger to Rabasa letter dated October 4, 1956. RG 170.

[124] Robert Nicholoff, District Supervisor to Giordano Memorandum dated May 31, 1963. RG 170.

[125] Carlos Franco Sodi, Attorney General of the Republic to Anslinger letter dated November 10, 1955. RG 170. Also, Rabasa to Anslinger letter dated November 29, 1955 acknowledging receipt of the letter regarding the alleged poppy cultivation in Ayutla, Jalisco and forwarded to the Justice Department for attention. RG 170.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid.

However, there were many instances of persons arrested in the U.S. for narcotics violations who refused to provide information of their sources of the narcotics.[128] U.S. officials reported the names of the individuals arrested to Mexican officials, with the expectation that further investigation would take place in Mexico. Mexican officials were not always convinced that the narcotics originated in Mexico, an assumption that U.S. officials were almost always willing to make.[129] Nevertheless, there was little doubt about the origin of narcotics that were seized by U.S. Customs officials at border crossings.[130] The specific locations of suspected opium and marijuana fields were also reported to Mexican authorities with the expectation that appropriate action would take place.[131]

Formal reports of Mexico's narcotics enforcement statistics, including the acreage amounts of opium poppies and marijuana plants destroyed, laboratories discovered, narcotics seized and persons arrested were submitted annually by the Mexican Government to the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs.[132] Those reports were analyzed by U.S. officials, who assessed the cooperation of the Mexican Government and Mexican officials as "excellent".[133] Assessment of individual Mexican officials was varied. U.S. narcotics agent, Ralph Frias,

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[128] Benjamin White to the Acting Commissioner of Narcotics Cunningham letter dated November 18, 1955. RG 170. White reported that he told Attorney General Sodi that "it is very seldom that a person arrested in the United States, who has been apprehended with narcotics smuggled into the United States from Mexico, will name the person from whom he had purchased the narcotics".

[129] Ibid. Also, Cunningham to Sodi letter dated December 6, 1955. RG 170. However, The Bureau of Narcotics was aware that Mexican marijuana was being traded for white heroin in New York and smuggled into Mexico where it was sold in 1951. A. L. Raithel, Narcotics agent to Supervisor Williams letter dated June 11, 1951. RG 170.

[130] Martin Scott, Customs Agent to Commissioner of Customs letter dated October 20, 1955. RG 170.

[131] Bureau of Narcotics agent Durkin to General Ramón Jiménez Delgado letter dated May 16, 1967. RG 170.

[132] Mexico and the United States had always been among the 15 of the 57 members of the United Nations to hold seats in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs. Siragusa to Anslinger Memorandum dated December 9, 1959. RG 170.

[133] Siragusa to Anslinger Memorandum dated December 9, 1959. RG 170; Ernest Gentry, District Supervisor Bureau of Narcotics, El Paso, Texas to Anslinger Memorandum dated June 7, 1962, reporting on the degree of cooperation with Mexican authorities since December 1959. Gentry stated that there was excellent cooperation that resulted in significant arrests and seizures. He described joint operations, which were sometimes hampered by Mexican authorities' aversion to "buy" cases, which were considered to be forms of entrapment by Mexican courts. Gentry also stated that the U.S. agents had excellent cooperation from the Coahuila State Police. RG 170.

attributed successful seizures and arrests to the integrity of Mexican Federal Agent in Charge at Mexicali, Marco Alcazar Vega, and his supervisor, Commissioner Humberto Mariel of Mexico City.[134] The FBI reported in 1954 that Mexican Attorney General Carlos Franco Sodi was a well known, well respected attorney and former law professor.[135] The report also discussed Roberto Solis, Chief of the Federal Judicial Police, noting that he had held important political posts in his eighteen year career in law enforcement.[136] Gilmore Flues, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Department, wrote to Anslinger in 1961, expressing high praise for Mexican Prosecutor Toca "for the grand job he is doing".[137] Richard Dunagan, Bureau of Narcotics Supervisor wrote to Commissioner of Narcotics Giordano in 1967 that conditions between Bureau of Narcotics agents and their Mexican counterparts were increasingly better due to "the personal daily contact between personnel of this office and General Jimenez Delgado, Chief of the Mexican Federal Police".[138] Anslinger praised his counterpart on the U.N. Commission, Oscar Rabasa on numerous occasions.[139] He similarly praised Mexican Attorney General de la Vega.[140] However the records contain numerous reports of corruption on the part of Mexican officials. Two Federal Judicial Police agents accepted bribes to release a chemist who was apprehended at a narcotics laboratory, but were immediately arrested and jailed.[141] The U.S. Consulate at Nuevo Laredo reported to the Department of State in 1960 that "no cooperation can be expected from

[134] Frias to George White, Bureau of Narcotics Supervisor letter dated July 26, 1954. RG 170.
[135] FBI Memorandum dated February 10, 1956. RG 170.
[136] Ibid. However, there was other information regarding Solis provided by Benjamin White that Solis fired the Federal Judicial Police agent who apprehended narcotics trafficker, Alfonso Treviño Ramos and fired another agent for not splitting a bribe. White to Commissioner of Customs Emerick letter dated January 18, 1955. RG 170.
[137] Flues to Anslinger letter dated April 20, 1961. RG 170.
[138] Dunagan to Giordano letter dated July 25, 1967. RG 170.
[139] Anslinger to Rabasa letter dated September 7, 1960. RG 170. Anslinger's testimony before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Narcotics of the Committee on the Judiciary, June 3, 1955. RG 170.
[140] Anslinger to Cessna Aircraft Co. letter dated September 17, 1951. RG 170.
[141] Emerick to Ralph Kelly, Commissioner of Customs letter dated July 3, 1960. RG 170.

the local authorities" there.[142] Similarly, the Vice-Consul at Mexicali reported that "until such time no incorruptible Mexican federal officers are assigned to this border post, no serious effort will be made to attempt to control the flow of narcotics".[143] The turnover of police officials and administrators in Mexico created an uncertain environment for cooperation with U.S. agents.

Senior Bureau of Customs Representative, Benjamin White, Jr. reported to U.S. Ambassador Hill in Mexico City in 1959 that since he began his assignment in Mexico City in 1952, he and his staff had maintained close contact with Mexican law enforcement agencies engaged in enforcing Mexico's narcotics laws.[144] He stated that information of mutual interest was freely exchanged between the Mexican officials and his office and that they had excellent cooperation. White farther stated that Customs agents or Bureau of Narcotics agents had accompanied Mexican agents on numerous investigations and that a great deal of the expenses associated with those investigations was provided by the U.S. Treasury Department due to the lack of funds available to the Mexican agents. White discussed the problems facing the two Mexican Federal agencies involved in the suppression of narcotic traffic in Mexico, the Federal Judicial Police charged with the campaigns to destroy opium poppies with the Mexican Army, and the Federal Narcotic Police, charged with investigating narcotics violations throughout the country. The biggest problem for both agencies was limited salaries, inadequate travel expenses and lack of appropriate transportation. [145]

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[142] Embassy telegram to Department of State dated January 13, 1960. The Consulate reported that "Federal authorities from Mexico City are now in Nuevo Laredo to investigate narcotic traffic, and that the person in charge of the investigation is known to the United States authorities as a narcotic trafficker". RG 84.
[143] E. T. Vangas, American Vice Consul to the Department of State Dispatch dated January 13, 1960. RG 84. In 1967, the Chief of the Mexican Federal Judicial Police transferred Mexican agents suspected of colluding with narcotics traffickers out of Tijuana and Mexicali. Lawrence Katz, agent Memorandum dated February 2, 1967. RG 84.
[144] Benjamin White to Ambassador Hill letter dated August 6, 1959. RG 170.
[145] Ibid.

At an informal meeting between high ranking officials of the U.S. Government and the Mexican Government in 1960, it was noted that "the general public is frequently unaware of the operations of competent authorities in the narcotics field because of the necessarily confidential nature of enforcement methods."[146] That level of cooperation was significantly advanced in 1961 when the two governments entered into a "Cooperative Program for International Control of Narcotics" whereby the U.S. Government contributed $500,000 and the Mexican Government contributed $50,000 for the provision of "special equipment and training for the Government of Mexico in their campaign against illicit narcotic traffickers and to assist them in the location and destruction of illicitly cultivated fields of papaver sonniferum (opium poppy) and marijuana".[147] The use of the equipment substantially increased the amount of opium plants destroyed, from 8,636 square meters in 1960-61 without the equipment to 3,890,316 square meters in 1961-62 using the equipment.[148] The use of the equipment resulted in similar success with the campaign against marijuana, whereby 273,899 square meters of plants were located and destroyed in 1962 as opposed to the 45,000 square meters in 1961.[149]

With the aid came greater oversight by the U.S. government over the use of the equipment and verification of the results.[150] When one of the planes crashed in 1962 and one of

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[146] United States-Mexico Joint Communiqué on Control of Illicit Narcotics held in Washington, D.C. on January 4 and 5, 1960. RG 170. The U.S. delegation included the Deputy Commissioners of Customs and Narcotics and the Officer in Charge of Mexican Affairs for the Department of State. The Mexican delegation included Oscar Rabasa, Director in Chief of American Affairs, Minister of Foreign Relations and permanent Representative of Mexico to the U.N. Commission on Narcotics, the Assistant to the Mexican Attorney General and the Chief Inspector of Immigration.

[147] Narcotics Control Project NO. 523-W-71-AE End Use Report dated July 12, 1963. RG 170. The equipment included two helicopters, two twin engine planes, spare parts, radio equipment, ten jeeps, rifles, ammunition and flame throwers.

[148] Ibid. The low figure for the 1960-61 opium destruction campaign was questioned by Bureau of Narcotics agent Durkin, noting that figures prior to that campaign were much higher. Lt Col Hector Hernandez Tello, Chief of the Federal Judicial Police stated that "other matters of great importance occupied the time of his agents and consequently, the entire destruction campaign was handled by the army". Durkin to Giordano letter dated July 17, 1963. RG 170.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

the helicopters crashed in 1963, the Mexican Government sought to obtain additional aid from the U.S. in replacements, as well as five additional jeeps.[151] They specifically requested a larger helicopter that would be capable of transporting at least ten men, as the old helicopter could only carry two or three men, and they were frequently met by gunfire when arriving at opium poppy growing sites and were usually outnumbered.[152] The aid was ultimately granted, but one condition that was part of the bargain was the installation of photographic equipment on the planes "demonstrating how the airplanes were used to locate the fields and the subsequent destruction of the fields."[153] Other conditions included that a representative of the U.S. Government would accompany Mexican authorities on some of their field trips to observe the tasks performed under the project.[154] Another was the completion of periodic end reports providing information as to details of the use of the equipment.[155] U.S. officials assessed the

[151] Durkin to Giordano letter dated June 12, 1964 wherein Durkin related a conversation he had with Chief of the Federal Judicial Police, Col Hernandez Tello and Acting Attorney General, Oscar Treviño Rios that they wanted sufficient jeeps to be able to act independent of outside assistance from Area Military Commanders, who often had excuses why they were unable to help. Also,

[152] Robert Rousa, Acting Secretary of Treasury to Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary, Department of State letter dated June 10, 1964. RG 170. Rousa stated that the Treasury Department was "most anxious to render every possible assistance to the Mexican Government in its efforts to control the traffic in narcotic drugs" in writing a letter in support of the proposal.

[153] Durkin to Giordano Memorandum dated January 31, 1963 relating a conversation between Siragusa and the Mexican Attorney General where the Mexicans were told they could show these documentary films at the different international conferences on narcotics demonstrating their effective fight against the illicit narcotic traffic. RG 170. The Mexicans were told that the aerial camera was obtained from a "personal friend" and that they may be asked on rare occasions to take certain shots other than opium and marihuana. In fact the "personal friend" was the CIA. Memorandum to Giordano dated January 22, 1963. RG 170.

[154] Siragusa to Durkin letter dated February 7, 1963. RG 170.

[155] John Johnson, Treasury Staff Aide to Oscar Treviño Rios letter dated July 23, 1963 asking the following questions:

1) To what extent has your Government increased the budget support and personnel engaged in the narcotics control program?
2) To what extent has you Government furnished or plans to furnish equipment to supplement the equipment provided under this Agreement?
3) What are the total hours logged by [aircraft] including areas covered, reconnaissance flights for locating production areas and investigation flights to apprehend and/or confiscate narcotics?
4) Have flamethrowers been employed? Has this equipment been of value?
5) How is equipment provided under the Agreement deployed in the Republic?
6) How is the equipment deployed, and used, in the control of narcotics during the period of May and November, when it is not needed for destruction of poppy fields?

degree of cooperation with the Mexican Government as excellent, especially because of the assignment of additional personnel to the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City and at the Consulate General in Monterrey.[156]

Despite the actions taken by the U.S. Government toward Mexico, narcotics traffic continued to thrive. Between 1963 and 1966, the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics Commissioner reported to Mexican authorities that there had been a dramatic increase in marijuana trafficking in the U.S.[157] The question at the beginning of this essay was whether the Mexican Government through the political elite created the framework to control drug trafficking in Mexico. The records of the U.S. Departments of State and Treasury reveal some answers to allegations made.

First, the DFS was never involved in narcotics policy-making or enforcement from its beginning in 1947 and throughout the 1950s and 1960s. There were occasional inquiries made to the FBI from DFS personnel about specific individuals that are contained in the records (presumably because they had some involvement in narcotics), but no direct association with narcotics enforcement. The DFS was patterned after the FBI and its agents were trained by FBI agents, often using equipment supplied by the FBI. Some of the administrators for the DFS were alleged to have connections with criminal enterprises, including narcotics, but the allegations against Colonel Carlos Serrano, who helped organize the agency, were unproven. Other agents

7) Our agency, as well as that of the Bureau of Narcotics is very much interested in photographs of operations that show the equipment provided under the Agreement in use. Photographs of the areas that have been destroyed would also be appreciated.
8) From the annual reposts of your office we have information on the destruction of opium plants through the campaign of 1961-62. For the covered report it would be appreciated if the recent campaign (1962-63) statistics on the areas and square meters of destruction could be made available; also the statistics on the confiscation of opium products.
9) Though a training program was not considered as part of this Agreement it would be useful to our agency in other projects to learn of training programs carried out by your office to implement and supplement the narcotics control program.

[156] Memorandum of conversation between Ambassador Antonio Carrillo Flores, Assistant Secretary of State Mann, Director of Mexican Affairs Sayre and Staff Aide, Johnston dated April 17, 1964. RG 170.
[157] Giordano to Rabasa letter dated November 13, 1967. RG 170.

within the agency were young, recent honor guard cadets from the Mexican Military Academy, who were just beginning their careers, with unknown character.

The agency that was assigned the responsibility for enforcing the Republic's narcotics laws was the Office of the Attorney General. That designation was made in 1948, at the insistence of the U.S. government, as communicated by Bureau of Narcotics Commissioner Anslinger, who contended that one agency alone should be authoritative over narcotics enforcement in order to effectively coordinate the functions. The Attorney Generals who were in office throughout the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s were considered to be cooperative and professional by U.S. officials. There were no allegations of corruption made against any of those Attorney Generals.

There was tremendous oversight of the Mexican Government's narcotics enforcement efforts by U.S. officials on local and federal levels. While there were reports of corruption of officials at different ranks and at different times, they appear to be individual examples rather than institutional models. It is difficult to believe that if corruption was systematic throughout the Mexican Government that the U.S. would have allowed its agents to collaborate on cases with Mexican narcotics agents or provide aid to the extent that it did. Moreover, as the U.S. increased its level of cooperation with Mexico, more U.S. presence in Mexico was carried out. On an international level, Mexico was required to submit annual reports of its efforts to eradicate illicit narcotic production and traffic. Beginning in 1948, Mexico was routinely recognized and congratulated for its results and legislative initiatives aimed at strengthening the penalties against violators.

The argument made that the Mexican government controlled illicit narcotics production and traffic attempts to explain the uptick in violence when the dominance of the PRI came to an

end in the 1990s. The records of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s reveal that narcotics related violence was almost always part of the scene. Gun battles were reported throughout the period resulting in a number of deaths of Mexican narcotics agents. There were also examples of assassinations of authorities who were enforcing narcotics laws. Part of the justification for U.S. sponsored aid to Mexico was the need for adequate transportation of narcotics officers to combat the violence they encountered when conducting narcotic destruction campaigns. The records do not provide an answer to the question of the increased violence in Mexico, but they do demonstrate that it was not a recent phenomenon.