

# Partners in Crime: The U.S. Secret State and Mexico's "War on Drugs"

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For decades, investigative journalists, researchers and analysts have noted the symbiotic relationships forged amongst international drug syndicates, neofascists and U.S. intelligence agencies, documenting the long and bloody history of U.S. complicity in the global drugs trade.

While the United States has pumped billions of dollars into failed drug eradication schemes in target countries through ill-conceived programs such as Plan Colombia and the Mérida Initiative, in the bizarre world of the "War on Drugs," corporate interests and geopolitics *always* trump law enforcement efforts to fight organized crime, particularly when the criminals are partners in crimes perpetrated by the secret state.

Since 2006, when Mexican President Felipe Calderón turned the Army loose, allegedly to "dismantle" the drug cartels slowly transforming Mexico into a killing field some 28,000 people, primarily along Mexico's northern border with the U.S., have lost their lives. Countless others have been wounded, forced to flee or simply "disappeared."

Writing in [The Guardian](#), journalist Simon Jenkins tells us that "cocaine supplies routed through Mexico have made that country the drugs equivalent of a Gulf oil state."

"Rather than try to stem its own voracious appetite for drugs," Jenkins writes, "rich America shifts guilt on to poor supplier countries. Never was the law of economics—demand always evokes supply—so traduced as in Washington's drugs policy. America spends \$40bn a year on narcotics policy, imprisoning a staggering 1.5m of its citizens under it."

Judging the results, one might even think the drug war solely exists as the principle means through which wealthy elites *organize* crime.

## Scenes from the Atrocity Exhibition

- December 13, 2009: [The Observer](#) reported that "drugs money worth billions of dollars kept the financial system afloat at the height of the global crisis." Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, said he saw evidence that "the proceeds of organised crime were 'the only liquid investment capital' available to some banks on the brink of collapse last year. He said that a majority of the \$352bn (£216bn) of drugs profits was absorbed into the economic system as a result." *The Observer* informed us that this "will raise questions about crime's influence on the economic system at times of crisis." Costa told the British newspaper that "in many instances, the money from drugs was the only

liquid investment capital. In the second half of 2008, liquidity was the banking system's main problem and hence liquid capital became an important factor." Although the UN's drug czar declined to identify the countries or banks that benefited from narcotics investments, he said that "inter-bank loans were funded by money that originated from the drugs trade and other illegal activities... There were signs that some banks were rescued that way."

- February 26, 2010: Responding to charges by left-wing critics and academics, Mexican president Felipe Calderón was forced to counter evidence that his government's "offensive" against narcotraffickers has left the "largest and most powerful of the cartels relatively unscathed," the [Los Angeles Times](#) disclosed. Critics accused the government of favoritism towards the Sinaloa cartel, claiming it "has been allowed to escape most of the government's firepower and carry on with its illegal business as usual." During a news conference, Calderón said such charges were "absolutely false." The president said the suggestion was "painful," and went on to say: "I can assure you that this government has attacked without discrimination all criminal groups in Mexico ... without taking into consideration whether it's the cartel of so-and-so or what's-his-name. We've fought them all." Edgardo Buscaglia, an academic expert on organized crime challenged the president and said that arrest figures "skew heavily" toward the other cartels. "By his calculation," the *Times* reported, "of more than 53,000 people arrested in drug-trafficking cases in the three years since Calderón took office, fewer than 1,000 worked for the Sinaloa organization." Commanded by Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, the Sinaloa cartel crime boss placed 937 on [Forbes](#) 2010 survey of the world's billionaires with an estimated net worth of \$1 billion. A similar modus operandi is standard practice where foreign policy and corporate concerns of America's wealthiest clients overseas override efforts by law enforcement to choke-off the flow of narcotics. In Colombia, secret state agencies such as the CIA have long-favored drug organizations that have served as intelligence assets or death squads. Examples abound. Consider the "untouchable" status enjoyed by the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers' Cali cartel. During the 1980s, at the height of America's Central American interventions, cocaine shipped into the United States as part of the U.S. government's "guns-for-drugs" arrangement with Nicaraguan Contra rebels, was principally supplied by Cali traffickers. When Medellín drug lord Pablo Escobar's group was brought down, the CIA, DEA and the Pentagon's Delta Force relied on operatives funded by the rival Cali faction and Los Pepes, a vigilante group founded by drug lord Carlos Castaño and his brothers Fidel and Vicente. Los Pepes had operational links to the Colombian National Police, especially the Search Bloc (Bloque de Búsqueda) hunting Escobar, and acted on intelligence provided by the CIA/DEA/Delta Force to execute their missions. After Escobar's death, the Castaño brothers launched the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), a notorious right-wing death squad. The AUC in coordination with the Colombian Army, carried out multiple attacks and massacred thousands of leftists, trade union organizers and peasant activists. In 2001 under pressure from human rights groups, the U.S. State Department designated the AUC a "Foreign Terrorist Organization." This didn't however, prevent U.S. corporations such as Chiquita Brands International, Occidental Petroleum, Coca-Cola or the Drummond Company from allegedly hiring out AUC paramilitaries to murder trade union and peasant activists. In 2007, Chiquita pled guilty in federal district court and paid a \$25 million fine under provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1991 for funding the AUC. Dole Food Company now faces similar charges. In 2002, the Justice Department unsealed an indictment against Carlos Castaño and accused him of trafficking some 17 tons of cocaine into the United States.

- March 9, 2010: The National Security Archive published a series of [documents](#) linking the

U.S. secret state to Mexico's dirty warriors and drug cartel operatives under official protection by a CIA-allied intelligence agency. Following [reporting](#) by Peter Dale Scott that "both the FBI and CIA intervened in 1981 to block the indictment (on stolen car charges) of the drug-trafficking Mexican intelligence czar Miguel Nazar Haro, claiming that Nazar was 'an essential repeat essential contact for CIA station in Mexico City,' on matters of 'terrorism, intelligence, and counterintelligence,'" the National Security Archive disclosed that Nazar Haro's corrupt Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) was responsible for the disappearance, torture and murder of left-wing activists during the 1970s and '80s. The Archive revealed that "there is a deep connection between the former Mexican intelligence service and the country's drug mafias. As DFS agents took command of counterinsurgency raids in the 1970s, they often stumbled upon narcotics safe houses and quickly took on the job of protecting Mexico's drug cartels." Researchers Kate Doyle and Jesse Franzblau told us although "the DFS was disbanded in 1985 following revelations that it was behind the murder of DEA agent Enrique 'Kiki' Camarena, and Mexican journalist Manuel Buendia," of the 1,500 agents who suddenly found themselves unemployed, many "found their training in covert activities and brutal counterinsurgency operations easily adaptable to the needs of the criminal underworld." In 2006, the National Security Archive and investigative journalist Jefferson Morley disclosed that declassified U.S. [documents](#) "reveal CIA recruitment of agents within the upper echelons of the Mexican government between 1956 and 1969. The informants used in this secret program included President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz and future President Luis Echeverría." As we now know, when he served as Interior Secretary in the Díaz government, Echeverría oversaw the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre of student activists just days before the Summer Olympics were staged in Mexico City. "The documents," Morley wrote, "detail the relationships cultivated between senior CIA officers, such as chief of station Winston Scott, and Mexican government officials through a secret spy network code-named 'LITEMPO.' Operating out of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Scott used the LITEMPO project to provide 'an unofficial channel for the exchange of selected sensitive political information which each government wanted the other to receive but not through public protocol exchanges.'" These, and other disclosures reveal that "one of the most crime-ridden CIA assets we know of is the Mexican DFS, which the US helped to create," Peter Dale Scott [wrote](#) back in 2000. "From its foundation in the 1940s, the DFS, like other similar kryptocracies in Latin America, was deeply involved with international drug-traffickers. By the 1980s possession of a DFS card was recognized by DEA agents as a 'license to traffic;' DFS agents rode security for drug truck convoys, and used their police radios to check of signs of American police surveillance." Evidence suggests that similar protection and management of the global drug trade persists today.

- March 16, 2010: Wachovia Bank, a subsidiary of banking giant Wells Fargo & Co., signed a [Deferred Prosecution Agreement](#) with the federal government. Wells admitted in court that its unit failed to monitor and report some \$378.4 billion in suspected money laundering transactions by narcotics traffickers between 2004-2008, "a sum equal to one-third of Mexico's current gross domestic product," [Bloomberg Markets](#) magazine revealed. Cash laundered by drug mafias were used to purchase a fleet of planes that subsequently shipped some 22 tons of cocaine into the United States. Wells paid the government \$160 million to resolve the case. American Express Bank and Western Union also agreed recently to huge settlements with the government for similar offenses.

- May 19, 2010: Retired Mexican Army General Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro was shot and wounded in Mexico City during an alleged robbery attempt. [El Universal](#) reports that police claimed that a thief wanted to "steal the general's watch" and shot him several times in the

chest. In 2007, after a six-year imprisonment on charges of providing protection to late drug trafficking kingpin Amado Carrillo Fuentes, chief of the Juárez cartel and self-described “Lord of the Heavens,” Acosta Chaparro was released from custody after his conviction was overturned on appeal. According to documents published by global whistleblowers [WikiLeaks](#) in 2009, the Swiss Bank Julius Baer’s Cayman Islands unit, allegedly hid “several million dollars” of funds controlled by Acosta Chaparro and his wife, Silvia through a firm known as Symac Investments. *WikiLeaks* wondered whether Mexican authorities would “want to know whether the several millions of USD had anything to do with the allegations that Mr Chaparro, a former police chief from the Mexican state of Guerrero, stopped chasing his local drug dealers and joined them in business.” According to reports cited by *WikiLeaks*, Acosta Chaparro was “already the subject of multiple allegations not only that he was a narcotrafficker but also that he had played a leading role in the dirty war of police and army against rural guerillas on his patch between 1975 and 1981. He was accused of organising the seizure, torture and murder of peasants who were suspected of helping the rebels and, with particular persistence of overseeing ‘flights of death’ in which well-tortured detainees were taken up in helicopters and pushed out over the ocean while still alive.” Despite these serious charges, *WikiLeaks* informs us that “no action was taken at all [and] Chaparro’s funds might still be managed by the former representative of Julius Baer, Mexico Curtis Lowell Jun in Zurich.”

- June 7, 2010: Guerrero State Attorney General Albertico Guinto announced that 55 bodies were found deep in an abandoned silver mine outside Taxco, [The Christian Science Monitor](#) reported. In various states of decomposition, the victims showed signs of torture before being killed. “It was like a quicksand, but filled with bodies,” Luis Rivera, the chief criminologist investigating the scene told [The Washington Post](#). The recovery of the remains took nearly a week, “a task made more difficult” by the fact that some cadavers were mummified, others were dismembered by the fall and at least four of the victims had been decapitated. “There are headless bodies, but some of the heads don’t match the bodies,” Rivera said. Based on wound analysis of the corpses, investigators theorized that “many of the victims were alive when they were thrown down the mine shaft.”

- June 12, 2010: [The Narco News Bulletin](#) reports “a special operations task force under the command of the Pentagon is currently in place south of the border providing advice and training to the Mexican Army in gathering intelligence, infiltrating and, as needed, taking direct action against narco-trafficking organizations.” A “former U.S. government official who has experience dealing with covert operations,” told journalist Bill Conroy that “black operations have been going on forever. The recent [mainstream] media reports about those operations under the Obama administration make it sound like it’s a big scoop, but it’s nothing new for those who understand how things really work.” Perhaps we should recall how “things” have worked in the recent past. Back in 2003, the [Brownsville Herald](#) reported that Los Zetas, formerly the enforcement arm of the Gulf cartel, “feature 31 ex-soldiers once part of an elite division of the Mexican army, the Special Air Mobile Force Group. At least one-third of this battalion’s deserters was trained at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Ga., according to documents from the Mexican secretary of defense.” According to the U.S. Defense Department, some 513 Mexican Special Forces soldiers received training at the School of the Americas, and about 120 “graduates” joined the Special Air Mobile Force. Luis Astorga, a drug trafficking expert at the National Autonomous University in Mexico City told the *Herald*: “There is a higher level of danger with the type of knowledge that these people have, their arms capacity, their knowledge of techniques and specialization in (drug) traffic operations. Traffickers traditionally don’t have

that; they pay other people for those services.” Is history repeating itself under the Mérida Initiative? A former DEA official told [Narco News](#) in 2005 that “A lot of the Zetas came from former Mexican police offices or the military ... So they come from a diverse background. Some of them have prior training from the DEA, FBI and the U.S. military, as well as other agencies.”

- June 28, 2010: Rodolfo Torre Cantu, the leading candidate for governor in the state of Tamaulipas was gunned down in one of the highest profile assassinations since a presidential candidate was murdered under suspicious circumstances in 1994. Four others, including local lawmaker Enrique Blackmore, were also killed when their campaign van was sprayed with machine gun fire by unknown assailants. Cantu had vowed to crack down on drug gangs if elected.

- July 15, 2010: A powerful car bomb explodes on a crowded street near a federal police headquarters in Ciudad Juárez, across the border from El Paso, Texas. Four are killed, including a police officer and doctor lured to the scene.

- July 15, 2010: Investigative journalist Daniel Hopsicker [revealed](#) that the pilot “of the American-registered DC-9 (N900SA) from St. Petersburg, FL caught carrying 5.5 tons of cocaine in Mexico’s Yucatan several years ago,” Carmelo Vasquez Guerra, “had been released from prison less than two years after being arrested.” Readers will recall that the DC-9 and another American-registered plane, a Gulfstream II business jet (N987SA) that spilled “4 tons of cocaine across a muddy field,” Hopsicker [reported](#), were used in CIA “rendition” (torture) flights and had been purchased by Mexican drug gangs with funds laundered through Wachovia Bank. “The shocking news was delivered via an international headline stating that a pilot named Carmelo Vasquez Guerra had been arrested in the West African nation of Guinea Bissau on a twin-engine Gulfstream II carrying... *what else?* 550 kilos—a half-ton—of cocaine.” According to Hopsicker, the drug pilot was arrested—and released—from three countries “under mysterious and unexplained circumstances.” Seeking answers to the pilot’s series of seemingly miraculous escapes, Hopsicker drolly observed: “Maybe there *is* an innocent explanation for everything. Maybe drugs just show up, unbidden, like unwanted guests. And maybe Carmelo Vasquez Guerra *didn’t* escape each time he got busted. Maybe he just *‘released himself on his own recognizance’*.”

- July 18, 2010: In the wake of the massacre of 17 people attending a birthday party in the northern city of Torreon, [The Christian Science Monitor](#) revealed that inmates from a prison in the nearby city of Gomez Palacio were the authors of the crime. “According to witnesses, the inmates were allowed to leave with authorization of the prison director ... to carry out instructions for revenge attacks using official vehicles and using guards’ weapons for executions,” said Ricardo Najera, a spokesman from the attorney general’s office. After the atrocity, inmates drove back to their cells.

- July 20, 2010: Following the Juárez car bomb blast that killed four, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Arturo Sarukhan, downplayed it’s significance and claimed, though disturbing, violence “has not yet reached the level of terrorism,” [The Washington Post](#) reported. “Terrorism,” the U.S. ambassador said, “refers to the acts by groups with political objectives that seek to control the government.” But what if those with “political objectives” and limitless funds from the illicit trade *already* control the state’s security apparatus?

- July 25, 2010: Of the more than 28,000 people killed since December 2006 when President

Felipe Calderón “hurled the Mexican Army into the anti-cartel battle,” nearly 6,300 (a quarter of the total) were murdered in Ciudad Juárez, [The Nation](#) reports. Under a three year deal, the United States has bankrolled the Army offensive with some \$1.4 billion in funds under the Mérida Initiative. Journalists Charles Bowden and Molly Molloy wrote in response to Ambassador Sarukhan’s statement: “We are supposed to believe in their evidence that 90 percent of the dead are criminals, but that they have no evidence at all of narco-terrorism?” Bowden and Molloy aver, “This, despite numerous incidents of grenades and other explosives being used in recent attacks in the states of Michoacan, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, Guerrero, Sonora and many other places in Mexico. And that ‘armed commandos’ dressed like soldiers and wielding high-powered machine guns are witnessed at the scenes of hundreds of massacres documented since 2008.” According to expert Diego Valle, the steep rise in homicide rates correlate directly to increased military operations against *some* cartels. In his recent study, [Statistical Analysis and Visualisation of the Drug War in Mexico](#), Valle writes that “military operations in Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Veracruz and Durango have coincided with increases in homicides and attempts by the Sinaloa cartel to take over drug trafficking routes from rival cartels. After the army took control of Ciudad Juárez it became the most violent city in the world.”

- July 27, 2010: Building on alliances forged during the Cold War amongst right-wing political gangs and drug traffickers, cartel operations in Central America have soared, [The Washington Post](#) informs us. Since 2006, drug networks in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras “are burrowing deeper into a region with the highest murder rates in the world.” According to United Nations data, cocaine seizures in Central America “nearly quadrupled” between 2004 and 2007. “Over the past two years,” the *Post* reports, “two national police chiefs and the former president have been arrested on charges related to drug trafficking or corruption. Two former interior ministers are fugitives.” In Honduras, where a U.S.-sponsored coup toppled a democratically elected president in 2009, Mexican cartels have established “command-and-control” centers to coordinate cocaine shipments by sea and air to North America and Europe. In El Salvador, that country’s leftist president has said that the violent street gang, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), have forged a working relationship with drug cartels that could eventually help the group mature into “an international syndicate.”

- August 22, 2010: Journalist Bill Conroy reports in [The Narco News Bulletin](#) that despite surging violence in Ciudad Juárez, the murder-plagued city “where some 10,000 small businesses have closed their doors since 2008 due, in large part, to a wave of burglaries, kidnappings, extortion and murders that has washed over the city during the past two and a half years,” why is the violence not affecting the entire city? Conroy writes “there is often an exception to most rules, and in the case of Juárez, the rule of violence does not extend to its industrial zones, which are home to some 360 maquiladora factories that employ more than 190,000 people.” According to a report obtained by *Narco News* from the El Paso Regional Economic Development Corporation, or [REDCO](#), “there was only one homicide carried out in the maquila industrial zones” since 2008. “That’s right,” Conroy avers, “just one murder in this huge swath of Juárez that is dotted with maquila plants operated by huge corporations such as General Motors, Delphi, Motorola, Visteon, TECMA and Honeywell. Maquiladoras, also known as twin plants, are Mexico-based factories owned and/or operated by foreign companies that benefit from the cheap labor and favorable tax treatment.” REDCO officials refused to comment to *Narco News*. However, Conroy writes, TECMA executive vice president Toby Spoon told ABC’s El Paso affiliate KVIA that “If they [the narco-trafficking organizations] got the maquila industry, or American companies or foreign companies, if they became targets of this, it would just take it to a whole different level, and nobody

wants that.” Isn’t *that* an interesting statement! “So it would appear, based on that comment,” Conroy writes, “that the narco-trafficking organizations, the Mexican government and the maquila factory owners have some sort of unspoken alliance of convenience that assures protection for the maquila factories and their professional employees.” Indeed, *Narco News* discovered that “at last three security zones have been set up in Juárez that are guarded by Mexican soldiers who assure safe passage for Maquila executives commuting from El Paso to the Juárez factory sites. In addition, the maquila industrial zones themselves, according to media reports, are under the close watch of Mexican state police as well as private security guards employed by the maquilas.” This is the same Army and federal police force that is seemingly “powerless” to halt the slaughter of Juárez citizens by ubiquitous, yet invisible, drug gangs which have transformed that city, and northern Mexico, into a free-fire zone. Curious indeed!

- August 25, 2010: A wounded Ecuadorean migrant stumbled to a Mexican Marine checkpoint in the northern state of Tamaulipas and leads officials to a blood-splashed room. Inside, authorities discover the bodies of 58 men and 14 women, allegedly murdered by Los Zetas, or another cartel seeking to discredit their rivals. “Years ago,” [IPS](#) reported, “Los Zetas found a gold mine: kidnapping undocumented migrants.” The UN estimates that some half million undocumented migrants from Central and South America “cross Mexico from south to north every year in their attempt to reach the United States.” And more than 10,000 were kidnapped between September 2009 and February 2010 according to Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission. According to multiple press reports, the migrants were killed after they refused to serve as forced labor for Los Zetas.

- August 26, 2010: A veteran officer with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection service (CBP), a satrapy within the sprawling Department of Homeland Security, Martha Alicia Garnica, 43, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for drug trafficking, human smuggling and bribery. “Three other defendants,” the [Center for Investigative Reporting](#) disclosed, received prison sentences, ranging from two years to a little more than five years. A fourth defendant was murdered in February in Juárez.”

- August 27, 2010: “Federal prosecutors,” [The Nation](#) revealed, “have used top leaders of Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), known as the most violent gang in the US and Central America, as secret informants over a decade of murders, drug-trafficking and car-jackings across a dozen US states and several Central American countries.” Former California state senator Tom Hayden told us that “the informants are identified as Nelson Comandari, described by law enforcement as ‘the CEO of Mara Salvatrucha,’ and his self described ‘right hand man,’ Jorge Pineda, nicknamed ‘Dopey’ because of his drug-dealing background.” According to *The Nation*, Comandari’s grandfather “was Col. Agustin Martinez Varela, a powerful right-wing Salvadoran who served as an interior minister during El Salvador’s civil wars. Comandari’s uncle, Franklin Varela, was a central informant in the Reagan administration’s scandalous investigation into the activist Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador [CISPES].” In his 1998 written [testimony](#) to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, retired DEA Special Agent Celerino Castillo III told Congress that “while our government shouted ‘Just Say No !’, entire Central and South American nations fell into what are now known as, ‘Cocaine democracies’.” Castillo testified: “On Jan. 18, 1985, [retired CIA officer Felix] Rodriguez allegedly met with money-launderer Ramon Milan-Rodriguez, who had moved \$1.5 billion for the Medellin cartel. Milan testified before a Senate Investigation on the Contras’ drug smuggling, that before this 1985 meeting, he had granted Felix Rodriguez’s request and given \$10 million from the cocaine for the Contras.”

Contra drug operations were coordinated by the CIA out of El Salvador's Ilopango airport and protected from prying eyes, and U.S. law enforcement investigators, by troops drawn from by Col. Varela's interior ministry. According to the National Security Archive's [Oliver North File](#), "Mr. North's diary entries, from the reporter's notebooks he kept in those years, noted multiple reports of drug smuggling among the contras. A Washington Post investigation published on 22 October 1994 found no evidence he had relayed these reports to the DEA or other law enforcement authorities."

- August 28, 2010: The bullet-ridden body of Roberto Suarez Vasquez, the lead investigator probing the murder of 72 Central- and South American migrants was found on a highway not far from where the massacre took place.
- August 31, 2010: The entire 2,000 mile U.S.-Mexico border will be monitored by Predator drones. Part of a \$600 million package passed by Congress earlier this year, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said the border was now "safer than ever."
- August 31, 2010: Some 3,200 Mexican federal police, "nearly a tenth of the force," have been fired this year "under new rules designed to weed out crooked cops and modernize law enforcement," the [Los Angeles Times](#) reports. Amongst the 465 cops arrested in early August, federal authorities took four commanders into custody after 250 subordinates in violence-plagued Ciudad Juárez publicly accused them of corruption.
- September 6, 2010: The [Los Angeles Times](#) reports that "drug traffickers who siphon off natural gas, gasoline and even crude, rob the Mexican treasury of hundreds of millions of dollars annually." The newspaper disclosed that "the cartels have taken sabotage to a new level: They've hobbled key operations in parts of the Burgos Basin, home to Mexico's biggest natural gas fields." *Times'* journalist Tracy Wilkinson writes that "the world's seventh-largest oil producer has become another casualty of the drug war." A series of kidnappings and murders in the gas-rich region has curtailed production. Pemex officials refused to comment and have sought to "repress information on the kidnappings." Despite a massive outcry by Mexico's citizens against moves by the Calderón administration to privatize Pemex, which generates some \$77 billion in annual revenue, Chevron's Latin American operations chief Ali Moshiri told the [Houston Chronicle](#) that the company wants to make Mexico "a big part of our portfolio." In this light, violence against Pemex workers and crippled production is nothing more than an odd coincidence, right?
- September 8, 2010: Speaking at the elite Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton claimed that Mexico's drug cartels "increasingly resemble an insurgency with the power to challenge the government's control of wide swaths of its own soil," the [Los Angeles Times](#) reported. Comparing Mexico to Colombia, Clinton's comments reflect past U.S. claims that Colombia's well-entrenched drug mafias were part of a leftist "narcoguerrilla" strategy to topple the government. This is a mendacious comparison given rich evidence that for decades Colombia's leading mafia groups are allied with extreme right-wing forces in that country's political establishment. Declassified U.S. documents revealed that former President Álvaro Uribe, enjoyed close ties to drug-linked paramilitary organizations. A darling of the Pentagon and the American secret state, according to multiple press reports and [documents](#) obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the National Security Archive, when Uribe was mayor of Medellín, the epicenter of Pablo Escobar's narcoempire, the now-dead mafia boss's former lover Virginia Vallejo, told the Spanish paper *El País*: "Pablo used to say, that if it weren't for that blessed little boy [Uribe], we would have to swim to Miami to get drugs to the gringos." According to

Vallejo, when Uribe was the director of Colombia's Civil Aviation authority, he granted dozens of licenses for runways and hundreds of permits for planes and helicopters, on which the drug trade's infrastructure was built. The 1991 [document](#) by the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency noted that Uribe was a "close personal friend of Pablo Escobar" who was "dedicated to collaboration with the Medellín [drug] cartel at high government levels."

- September 9, 2010: 25 people, including women and teenagers ranging in age from 15 to 60, were murdered in Ciudad Juárez by Juárez cartel gunmen, the [El Paso Times](#) reports. The operation was allegedly mounted against their rivals in the Sinaloa drugs organization, apparently in retaliation for a kidnapping. The well-coordinated attacks took place in different parts of the city. Despite thousands of Mexican Army troops and federal police stationed in the city, the attacks took place with impunity. Since 2008, more than 6,400 Juárez citizens have been killed. While President Calderón claims that 90 percent of victims are connected to drug organizations, evidence suggests that like the 72 migrant workers slaughtered in Tamaulipas in August, most of the victims had no ties to the murderous trade.

- September 10, 2010: Seeking to calm a "diplomatic furor" over recent comments by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that Mexico "resembled Colombia" during the heyday of cartel power, President Obama disputed Clinton's assertion, the [Los Angeles Times](#) reported. In what could generously be described as a replay of President Ronald Reagan's repeated denials that right-wing Nicaraguan Contra "rebels" were deeply mired in cocaine trafficking, Obama said that "Mexico is a great democracy, vibrant, with a growing economy," the president told the Spanish-language *La Opinión* newspaper. "And as a result, what is happening there can't be compared with what happened in Colombia 20 years ago." Human rights abuses are widespread. According to [Amnesty International](#), political dissidents, environmentalists, trade union activists and indigenous human rights defenders are routinely disappeared, tortured or murdered with impunity.

- September 12, 2010: An in-depth [Washington Post](#) profile of convicted U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officer Martha Garnica, sentenced in August for drug smuggling and human trafficking along the border, revealed that "the number of CBP corruption investigations opened by the inspector general climbed from 245 in 2006 to more than 770 this year." The *Post* reports that "corruption cases at its sister agency, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, rose from 66 to more than 220 over the same period." The vast majority of cases involve "illegal trafficking of drugs, guns, weapons and cash across the Southwest border." Although Garnica received a 20-year sentence for her crimes, not a *single* criminal indictment has been issued by the U.S. Justice Department for crimes committed by top corporate officers of Wells Fargo-owned Wachovia Bank, who admitted earlier this year to laundering hundreds of billions of dollars for Mexico's ultra-violent drug mafias. Aside from [Bloomberg Markets](#) magazine's comprehensive investigation, neither the *Post*, nor other U.S. "newspaper of record" reported on the bank's "deferred prosecution agreement" with the federal government.

- September 15, 2010: Writing in [The Nation](#), investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill revealed that the private security firm Blackwater "have provided intelligence, training and security services to US and foreign governments as well as several multinational corporations." According to Scahill, "former CIA paramilitary officer Enrique 'Ric' Prado, set up a global network of foreign operatives, offering their 'deniability' as a 'big plus' for potential Blackwater customers." While Blackwater's mercenary network was originally created to service CIA black ops, Prado wrote an email to a Total Intelligence executive (a

Blackwater cut-out) with the subject line, "Possible Opportunity in DEA-Read and Delete," a pitch to the Drug Enforcement Administration. *The Nation* reports "that executive was an eighteen-year DEA veteran with extensive government connections." Prado explained that Blackwater "has developed 'a rapidly growing, worldwide network of folks that can do everything from surveillance to ground truth to disruption operations.' He added, 'These are all foreign nationals (except for a few cases where US persons are the conduit but no longer 'play' on the street), so deniability is built in and should be a big plus'." According to Scahill, the executive wrote back and suggested that "one of the best places to start may be the Special Operations Division, (SOD)." Scahill writes that "the SOD is a secretive joint command within the U.S. Justice Department, run by the DEA" and serves "as the command-and-control center for some of the most sensitive counternarcotics and law enforcement operations conducted by federal forces." As we have seen with other clandestine operations run amok in the drug war, "deniable" assets, especially when they are "foreign nationals" with no direct ties to the U.S. government, have a funny habit of lending their well-compensated "expertise" to drug traffickers. One is reminded of the case of Israeli mercenary Yair Klein, a former IDF lieutenant colonel. Klein's private security firm, Spearhead Ltd., produced training videos and tutored drug lord Carlos Castaño's AUC in the fine art of murder. In 2001, Klein was convicted by a Colombian court for his firm's work with right-wing death squads and the enforcement arms of several drug trafficking organizations. According to [Democracy Now!](#), Klein was "accused of training Mafia assassins" and "suspected of involvement in the explosion of a Colombian airliner in November 1989." Given Blackwater's sensitivity to human rights (just ask Baghdad residents!) one can be certain that the mercenary firm's interest in the drug war will assure Mexico's citizens that help is on the way!

### **The Grim Road Ahead**

It should be clear: the "War on Drugs" like the "War on Terror" is a colossal, multibillion dollar fraud perpetrated on the American people.

North Americans consume drugs and line the pockets of state-connected killers; Latin Americans do the dying. Low-level dealers and the poor who buy their illicit products are rewarded with wrecked lives, devastated communities and one-way tickets to prison.

U.S. banking and financial elites reap whirlwind profits and are handed virtual get-out-of-jail-free cards by federal prosecutors and courts that levy fines regarded as little more than chump change by the banks. The CIA and their far-flung network of private contractors siphon-off illegal proceeds from the grim trade laundered through U.S. and European financial institutions.

The U.S. secret state, seeking geopolitical advantage over their imperialist rivals deploy drug mafias and right-wing terrorists as plausibly deniable intelligence assets, *just as they have for decades*.

Congressional banking and intelligence probes are killed. Black operations in areas of strategic interest to U.S. policy planners spread death and destruction, particularly where rich petrochemical and mineral reserves owned by other people are lusted after by American multinationals.

Corporate media collaborate in this charade; pointing the finger at black and brown citizens, *white* elites on both sides of the border escape scrutiny. It is far easier to demonize black

and brown youth as “predators” than to take a hard look in the mirror at a ruling class that are the real *American drug lords*.

And still we wonder *why* Mexico is slowly transformed into a killing field.

*Tom Burghardt is a researcher and activist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition to publishing in Covert Action Quarterly and [Global Research](#), his articles can be read on [Dissident Voice](#), [The Intelligence Daily](#), [Pacific Free Press](#), [Uncommon Thought Journal](#), and the whistleblowing website [WikiLeaks](#). He is the editor of Police State America: U.S. Military “Civil Disturbance” Planning, distributed by [AK Press](#) and has contributed to the new book from [Global Research](#), *The Global Economic Crisis: The Great Depression of the XXI Century*.*

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