

War on Drugs and Media Disinformation - “El Chapo” Arrested—Why Now?

By [Douglas Lucas](#)

Global Research, February 28, 2014

[WhoWhatWhy](#) 24 February 2014

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice, Media Disinformation](#)

This article was first published by WhoWhatWhy.

At least on the surface, the U.S. and Mexico scored a major PR victory Saturday with the arrest of the most powerful drug kingpin in the world, Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera. The long-time boss of Mexico’s notorious Sinaloa cartel, the biggest supplier of illegal drugs to the United States, is now in custody. The question is, why now?

After all, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has had El Chapo in its sights almost nonstop. They knew his whereabouts on any given day since at least mid-2010, as *WhoWhatWhy* previously [reported](#).

More curious is evidence that, for years, the DEA has been in direct contact with Sinaloa leadership through an intermediary, [choosing](#) not to arrest the kingpin in exchange for intelligence on rival cartels.

Both the U.S. and Mexico have [at times](#) been accused of strategically favoring Chapo’s Sinaloa over other cartels, such as the paramilitary “Los Zetas”—a charge both countries deny.

The arrest of a top Sinaloa leader two years ago added fuel to the fire. Jesus Vicente Zambada-Niebla, Chapo’s logistics coordinator, is facing federal drug charges in Chicago and alleges that, as part of a “divide and conquer” strategy against the cartels, the United States helped arm the cartel through Operation Fast and Furious. That operation, run out of Arizona by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), allowed more than two thousand AK-47 style rifles and even a few 50-caliber guns to slip across the border and right into Sinaloa territory.

The official picture of the drug war has always been a clean one, depicting the authorities and the cartels as separate foes. But Zambada-Niebla’s claims paint a picture of a more tangled relationship. Nevertheless, if the U.S., in effect, protected Guzmán just as police treat informants, things have clearly changed.

Did Chapo finally become a liability for the authorities? Was it time for this chess piece to be removed from the board?

The mainstream media have created an image of Chapo as elusive, a “narcoterrorist” the U.S. security apparatus doesn’t much understand. “So hidden was he that there was uncertainty what he looked like, but American officials believe they have the right man,”

the *New York Times* [initially](#) reported, before scrubbing that sentence in follow-up [stories](#).

Even this weekend, The Associated Press, which [broke](#) the story of Chapo's arrest, [tweeted](#) (in Spanish) that El Chapo is "the Osama bin Laden of Mexico." That tweet, too, was deleted, though the AP's bin Laden association stays afloat [elsewhere](#).

But Chapo's image as "elusive" appears inconsistent with the facts, and suggests that "perception management" may be at work, as authorities spin reports with the image of Chapo they want to create.

Regardless of what happens next—and why he was arrested now—the underbelly of U.S. efforts in the so-called "drug war" is growing more exposed.

There are still many questions, but one thing is clear: stopping El Chapo won't significantly slow down the flow of illegal narcotics across the border.

Keep a critical eye on the narco coverage in the coming days.

The original source of this article is [WhoWhatWhy](#)
Copyright © [Douglas Lucas](#), [WhoWhatWhy](#), 2014

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Douglas Lucas](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca