

## OIA Response for 2009FOIA2231

**1. Shifting of resources: How, exactly, are you going to shift resources without affecting other regions and programs?**

OIA is temporarily supporting the Southwest Border Enforcement “surge” for the next 6 months by reassigning agents from its other OIA attaché offices in Central and South America and OIA headquarters, Washington DC to TDY assignments to the attaché and assistant attaché offices in Mexico.

**2. How much, exactly, is this effort expected to cost and where exactly are your pulling funds from to pay for this?**

The OIA TDY requirements for 12 agents from March to September 2009 are estimated to cost \$650,000. Some costs are being supplemented by utilizing existing space, vehicles, etc. in current assistant attaché offices in Mexico. OIA is seeking reprogramming of funds within the overall ICE budget to cover the unanticipated FY09 expenditures totaling \$650,000.

**3. Will you be asking for more funding in the 2010 and 2011 budgets to sustain the increased effort?**

OIA requested funding for 12 permanent positions to be deployed to key locations along the Northern border of Mexico to address increased operations and cross border crime along the US-Mexico border. The positions would directly support the efforts of the SAC offices along the southern borders of the U.S. OIA would fund the permanent positions from the current FY10 enhancement pending with OMB for the SW Border Enforcement Initiative. Depending on whether the passback received would be for \$5.1 million as in the Secretary’s initial changes or the full \$6.8 million, OIA would permanently deploy 9 agents or 12 agents to Mexico, respectively.

In FY11, depending on guidance on funding ceilings, OIA may request additional funding in support of a comprehensive Mexico and Central American Initiative designed to target criminal networks and organizations at the source and not only along the U.S. border.

**4. Please provide recent stats on violence numbers (stats on Armas Cruzadas, drop houses, etc).**

Since July 2005, the BESTs have been responsible for 2,034 criminal arrests, 2,796 administrative arrests, 885 indictments, and 734 convictions, as well as seized approximately 159,832 pounds of marijuana, 7,704 pounds of cocaine, 597 pounds of methamphetamine, 1,023 pounds of ecstasy, 213 pounds of heroin, 515 weapons, 6 properties and \$22.7 million in U.S. currency and monetary instruments.

## **5. What is the plan for potential mass migration?**

The mission of OIA will be to work with Government of Mexico (GoM) authorities to gather intelligence of a mass migration influx caused by the escalation of violence that will better enable ICE domestic offices and DHS components to provide a more defined tactical response along the U.S./Mexico border.

The purpose of this plan is to address the eventuality that mass migration will occur as the border violence in Mexico escalates to the point that people will seek to enter the U.S. when the GoM cannot guarantee the safety and well-being of its citizens. ICE Attaché Mexico City personnel will ensure proper coordination with ICE domestic offices and GoM officials.

OIA will support ICE personnel by working with the GoM to establish a flow of information directly from the agencies involved to provide the most accurate information as it becomes available.

OIA will establish a command post at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Mexico that will be integrated with U.S. intelligence and U.S. law enforcement assets assigned at the U.S. embassy.

OIA will augment the Attaché Mexico City with previously identified personnel for deployment to the Assistant Attaché offices near the border. TDY personnel will immediately travel to Mexico after coordination with the Attaché Mexico City.

The ICE Attaché Mexico City, in conjunction with the U.S. Embassy, will notify the GoM that the increase in Mexican citizens attempting to illicitly enter the U.S. is posing a threat to national security along the Southwest border.

ICE Attaché will coordinate with all DHS components in country to minimize duplicative and erroneous reporting. Attaché will also serve as a central point of information for domestic command centers/IROC. An issuance/guidance directive for all components will be needed to prevent field offices from attempting to obtain information directly from foreign counterparts without first contacting the designated DHS point of contact.

## **6. How much money has gone into addressing SW border violence so far? Why hasn't this been enough?**

Since its creation in FY04 under DHS, OIA had approximately 24 agents permanently deployed throughout Mexico. Current FY09 attaché offices include Mexico City, Ciudad Juarez, Tijuana, Hermosillo, and Monterrey. OIA spends approximately \$12 million annually to operate these offices. These agents conduct operations for the full range of ICE and DHS mission requirements and are not solely dedicated to the operations arising from increased enforcement along the US Southwest border by OI and CBP. Without

additional FY10 funding, OIA would have to cease the TDY surge and could not offset the permanent positions from other overseas locations without impairing their mission.

OIA does not have sufficient funding for permanent positions in our base appropriation to support the increased international enforcement operations necessary to reinforce the heightened domestic enforcement from the SWB initiative. However, this linkage and the resources for the overseas offices are needed to disable criminal networks and dismantle criminal organizations. Without this added support in the international arena that is linked to the domestic efforts, the risk of new threats arising from overseas networks increases.

**Stevens, Richard P**

**From:** Mack, Lauren K  
**Sent:** Friday, March 20, 2009 1:26 PM  
**To:** Wolford, Renee K  
**Subject:** FW: Homeland Security official affirms Mexican drug cartel violence has spilled over into Texas

-----Original Message-----

**From:** fiveofnine [mailto: [REDACTED] b6]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 24, 2009 6:15 PM  
**To:** Mack, Lauren K  
**Subject:** Homeland Security official affirms Mexican drug cartel violence has spilled over into Texas

Homeland Security official affirms Mexican drug cartel violence has spilled over into Texas  
By Brandi Grissom / Austin Bureau  
Posted: 02/24/2009 12:00:00 AM MST

AUSTIN -- Violence from Mexican drug cartels has spilled over into Texas, state Homeland Security Director Steve McCraw said Monday.

"Yes, absolutely it has occurred; there's no question about it," McCraw said after a hearing before the House Committee on Border and International Affairs.

McCraw answered lawmakers' questions about Gov. Rick Perry's request for another \$135 million for border security operations on the same day Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott asked lawmakers for a new tool to help bring down transnational gangs that threaten border communities.

During the border committee meeting, state Rep. Joe Moody, D-El Paso, asked McCraw whether some incidents that have been reported in the El Paso area would be considered elements of spillover violence from Mexican drug cartels.

Moody asked, among other things, if threats against American citizens, individuals seeking treatment at U.S. hospital for injuries sustained in Juárez and Mexican nationals seeking asylum would be evidence of spillover.

McCraw said yes.

"Anything that involves cartel activity that impacts Texans on this side of the border is, by definition, spillover violence," he said after the meeting.

McCraw told lawmakers, though, that Texas has a contingency plan to deal with large-scale violence and that local, state and federal agencies are working to prevent that from happening.

Earlier Monday, state Sen. Tommy Williams, R-The Woodlands, and state Rep. Aaron Peña, D-Edinburg, filed a bill they said they hoped would make doing business in Texas harder for drug cartels.

Along with Abbott, the legislators urged their colleagues to approve a bill that would give the attorney general expanded authority to seize guns, drugs and cash that are the lifeblood of human and drug smugglers.

"This bill is going to give us the ability to put these kinds of criminals out of business by taking the very thing they are trying to make," Abbott said.

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Though such seizures can currently be made in criminal cases, the legislation would allow the attorney general to pursue seizures in civil court, where the burden of proof is less stringent, Abbott said.

Williams said the measure would help ensure that violence from the cartels stays south of the Rio Grande.

"The body count is stacking up along the border," he said, "and we don't want this to spill over into our state anymore."

Brandi Grissom may be reached at [bgrissom@elpasotimes.com](mailto:bgrissom@elpasotimes.com); 512-479-6606

[http://www.elpasotimes.com/newupdated/ci\\_11770847](http://www.elpasotimes.com/newupdated/ci_11770847)

**Stevens, Richard P**

**From:** Mack, Lauren K  
**Sent:** Friday, March 20, 2009 1:27 PM  
**To:** Wolford, Renee K  
**Subject:** FW: U.S. military report warns 'sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible

-----Original Message-----

**From:** [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]] **On Behalf Of** Spagat, Elliot  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2009 10:12 AM  
**To:** Mack, Lauren K  
**Subject:** RE: U.S. military report warns 'sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible

Map..

<http://www.iamericas.org/about/latest/map-and-directions.html>

**From:** Mack, Lauren K [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2009 9:14 AM  
**To:** Spagat, Elliot  
**Subject:** Fw: U.S. military report warns 'sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible

----- Original Message -----

**From:** fiveofnine <[REDACTED]>  
**To:** Undisclosed-recipients <Undisclosed-recipients::>  
**Sent:** Wed Jan 14 07:57:04 2009  
**Subject:** U.S. military report warns 'sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible

U.S. military report warns 'sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible  
By Diana Washington Valdez / El Paso Times  
Posted: 01/13/2009 03:49:34 PM MST

President-elect Barack Obama listens as Mexico's President Felipe Calderon makes a statement to reporters in Washington, Monday, Jan. 12, 2009. Mexico is one of two countries that "bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse," according to a report by the U.S. Joint Forces Command on worldwide security threats. (AP photo)EL PASO - Mexico is one of two countries that "bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse," according to a report by the U.S. Joint Forces Command on worldwide security threats. The command's "Joint Operating Environment (JOE 2008)" report, which contains projections of global threats and potential next wars, puts Pakistan on the same level as Mexico. "In terms of worse-case scenarios for the Joint Force and indeed the world, two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico.

"The Mexican possibility may seem less likely, but the government, its politicians, police and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and press by criminal gangs and drug cartels. How

This image provided by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration shows a poster of 10 people identified as rival drug traffickers locked in a violent battle for control of Tijuana, Mexico. They include Fernando Sanchez Arellano, described by the DEA as leader of the Arellano Felix cartel, and his archrival, Eduardo Teodoro Garcia Simental. Mexico is one of two countries that "bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse," according to a report by the U.S. Joint Forces Command on worldwide security threats. The report is one in a serious focusing on Mexico's internal security problems, mostly stemming from drug violence and drug corruption. (AP Photo/DEA)that internal conflict turns out over the next several years will have a major impact on the stability of the Mexican state. Any descent by Mexico into chaos would demand an American response based on the serious implications for homeland security alone." The U.S. Joint Forces Command, based in Norfolk, Va., is one of the Defense Departments combat commands that includes members of the

5/6/2009

different military service branches, active and reserves, as well as civilian and contract employees. One of its key roles is to help transform the U.S. military's capabilities.

In the foreword, Marine Gen. J.N. Mattis, the USJFC commander, said "Predictions about the future are always risky ... Regardless, if we do not try to forecast the future, there is no doubt that we will be caught off guard as we strive to protect this experiment in democracy that we call America."

The report is one in a series focusing on Mexico's internal security problems, mostly stemming from drug violence and drug corruption. In recent weeks, the Department of Homeland Security and former U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey issued similar alerts about Mexico.

Despite such reports, El Pasoan Veronica Callaghan, a border business leader, said she keeps running into people in the region who "are in denial about what is happening in Mexico."

Last week, Mexican President Felipe Calderon instructed his embassy and consular officials to promote a positive image of Mexico.

The U.S. military report, which also analyzed economic situations in other countries, also noted that China has increased its influence in places where oil fields are present.

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## U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Recommended Enhancements

	Total Cost Estimate (FY 2009 - FY 2010)	FY 2009			FY 2010	
		FY 2009 Costs for April Deployment (do not use these numbers -- enter in your own)	FY 2009 Funding Available	FY 2009 Shortfall (formula -- do not enter numbers here)	Full FY 2010 Costs (do not use these numbers -- enter in your own)	Pending in the FY 2010 Request to OMB <3>
<b><u>Office of Investigations</u></b>						
Double existing BESTs on SW Border	\$53,620	\$17,873	\$39,100 <1>	\$21,227	\$35,747	\$59,400
<b><u>Office of International Affairs</u></b>						
Increase Staffing in Border Offices	\$1,300	\$433	\$500	\$67	\$867	\$5,100
<b><u>Office of Intelligence</u></b>						
Expand Intelligence Support	\$3,268	\$1,089	\$750	(\$339)	\$2,179	\$10,900
<b><u>Office of Detention and Removal Operations</u></b>						
Increase of Criminal Alien Prosecution Team personnel at border offices	\$10,000	\$3,333	\$0	(\$3,333)	\$6,667	\$36,200
<b><u>Secure Communities</u></b>						
Front Load Deployment Plans along SW Border	\$250,000	\$83,333	\$95,000 <2>	\$11,667	\$166,667	\$39,100
<b><u>Office of the Principal Legal Advisor</u></b>						
Increase Attorneys Serving SW Border offices	\$7,000	\$2,333	\$3,500	\$1,167	\$4,667	\$0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$325,188</b>	<b>\$108,396</b>	<b>\$138,850</b>	<b>\$30,454</b>	<b>\$216,792</b>	<b>\$150,700</b>

<1> \$34.3m of the Office of Investigations amount is Worksite funding that would require a reprogramming

<2> The SC available amount would require reprioritization of locales, which would require OMB concurrence

<3> FY10 request reflects costs that are required for long-term sustainment and NOT inclusive of the current trend of violence at the border

## Southwest Border Hearing Prep

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### 1. Shifting of resources: How, exactly, are you going to shift resources without affecting other regions and programs?

ICE's Investigations, Detention and Removal, and Office of Principal Legal Advisor will utilize personnel from its nationwide network of field offices to minimize disruption to ongoing criminal investigations, removal operations, and legal proceedings in any one location.

ICE's Office of International Affairs (OIA) is reassigning agents from its attaché offices in Central and South America and Washington DC to assignments to its offices in Mexico for the next 6 months. OIA has selected personnel from offices in the Americas area of responsibility and OIA Headquarters that will not require back filling the positions while the agents with the required investigative and language skills are assigned to the surge operation in Mexico. The offices selected will reassign workloads causing minimal disruption to agents currently assigned to those offices.

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ICE's Secure Communities Program (SC) will prioritize current deployment plans to activate high threat jurisdictions in Southwest Border States first, given the rapidly increasing risk of violent crime being committed by foreign born individuals. This deployment includes activation of Interoperability to identify criminal aliens through biometric information upon arrest, as well as supporting infrastructure, including beds and personnel. SC currently plans to spend a minimum of \$54 million to complete deployments in 26 of the highest risk Southwest Border State jurisdictions in FY 2009. These efforts will not require resources to be shifted.

### 2. How much, exactly, is this effort expected to cost and where exactly are your pulling funds from to pay for this?

OI. OI's estimated temporary duty costs were determined as follows: 10K per month per person (Includes all travel, per diem, rental car, MIE and miscellaneous expenses) x 6 months x 80 agents = \$4.8M

- Lodging, food and Per Diem is roughly \$38,000 per person for six months
- Rental Car \$4,000 for six months
- Air Fare \$12,000 for six months
- Miscellaneous travel and operational expenses \$6,000 for six months

OI will defer the purchase of the following to redirect \$4.8M to SW Border TDYs:

- 40 Replacement Vehicles @ \$25K/vehicle : \$1.0M

• 20 PCS moves @ \$100K/move:	\$2.0M
• 200 Retrofit Car Radios @ \$5K/radio:	\$1.0M
• Facility:	<u>\$0.8M</u>
Total	<u>\$4.8M</u>

**OIA.** The OIA temporary duty requirements for 12 agents from March to September 2009 are estimated to cost \$650,000. Some costs are being supplemented by utilizing existing assets in current assistant attaché offices in Mexico. OIA is seeking reprogramming of funds within the overall OIA budget to cover the unanticipated FY09 expenditures totaling \$650,000.

**DRO.** The full year fiscal year 2010 cost to permanently fund additional 50 CAP/VCAS personnel in ICE's southwest border offices would be \$10,374,268. The funding will come from the reclassification of Secure Communities charges against the Criminal Alien Program vice Secure Communities funding.

**SC.** SC currently plans to spend a minimum of \$54 million on Southwest border state enforcement in FY 2009. The funds will come from existing Secure Communities appropriations.

**OPLA.** The Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) anticipates a \$0.637M requirement in fiscal year 2009 in order to provide 14 additional attorneys to southwest border offices to assist in the increased activity likely to be generated by the southwest border enforcement. \$318,000 can be pulled from currently allotted general expenses to cover the temporary duty costs for 14 attorneys. The balance of 319,000 through the end fiscal year 2009, is unfunded.

**3. Will you be asking for more funding in the 2010 and 2011 budgets to sustain the increased effort?**

**OI.** OI currently has a recommended budget enhancement of approx. \$53.6M for the fiscal year 2011 budget. The amount is currently pending OMB approval.

**OIA.** OIA requested funding for 12 permanent positions to be deployed to key locations along the Northern border of Mexico. OIA would fund the permanent positions from the current fiscal year 2010 enhancement pending with OMB for the SW Border Enforcement Initiative. In fiscal year 2011, depending on guidance on funding ceilings, OIA may request additional funding in support of a comprehensive Mexico and Central American Initiative designed to target criminal networks and organizations at the source and not only along the U.S. border.

**DRO.** Unless ICE is able to submit a request for supplemental funding, DRO will not be able to request additional funds to cover these costs in fiscal year 10. DRO will request additional funds to increase staffing in its southwest border offices in fiscal year 2011.

**Comment [d1]:** Where is the money coming from?

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**Comment [d2]:** This is not responsive to this question. Where is the money coming from in this fiscal year? This is the answer for the next question.

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**OPLA.** ICE will ask for supplemental funds in fiscal year 2010 and will include increased staffing for its southwest border offices in its 2011 budget request as a program initiative.

**4. Please provide recent stats on violence numbers (stats on Armas Cruzadas, drop houses, etc).**

**OI.** See attachment for Armas Cruzadas and BEST FY statistics from fiscal year 2008 through fiscal year 2009 and OI case hours.

**DRO.** In fiscal year 2009, in the SWB Field Offices of San Diego, Phoenix, El Paso, San Antonio, and Houston, the DRO Violent Criminal Alien Section teams (VCAS) have obtained 1,223 indictments and convicted 1,192 offenders.

**SC.** Interoperability is currently deployed in 4 counties in Arizona. Since deployment in late December 2008/early January 2009, until the end of February, Interoperability submissions resulted in 3,771 IDENT matches, of which, 382 of the IDENT matches were charged or convicted of a Level 1 offense (defined as individuals who have been convicted of major drug offenses and violent offenses such as murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery, and kidnapping). 33 of those 382 aliens have previously been removed from the United States.

**5. What is the plan for potential mass migration?**

**OIA.** The mission of OIA will be to work with Government of Mexico (GoM) authorities to gather intelligence of a mass migration influx caused by the escalation of violence that will better enable ICE domestic offices and DHS components to provide a more defined tactical response along the U.S./Mexico border.

The purpose of this plan is to address the eventuality that mass migration will occur as the border violence in Mexico escalates to the point that people will seek to enter the U.S. when the GoM cannot guarantee the safety and well-being of its citizens. ICE Attaché Mexico City personnel will ensure proper coordination with ICE domestic offices and GoM officials.

OIA will support ICE personnel by working with the GoM to establish a flow of information directly from the agencies involved to provide the most accurate information as it becomes available.

OIA will establish a command post at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Mexico that will be integrated with U.S. intelligence and U.S. law enforcement assets assigned at the U.S. embassy.

OIA will augment the Attaché Mexico City with previously identified personnel for deployment to the Assistant Attaché offices near the border. Additional ICE

personnel will immediately travel to Mexico after coordination with the Attaché Mexico City.

ICE Attaché will coordinate with all DHS components in country to minimize duplicative and erroneous reporting. Attaché will also serve as a central point of information for domestic operations. An issuance/guidance directive for all components will be needed to prevent field offices from attempting to obtain information directly from foreign counterparts without first contacting the designated DHS point of contact.

**DRO.** It is DRO's mission to assist in apprehension and removal individuals who illegally enter the U.S. during a mass migration event. DRO has developed a robust response plan to support any mass migration event to include the Caribbean or the Southwest Border. The plan describes the specific roles, responsibilities, and strategies of the DRO mission during a mass migration event. DRO's support will include the process by which arriving migrants will be transported from initial processing, relocated to other States, and placed in appropriate detention facilities. The DRO Plan also outlines the responsibilities of the organizations that execute each step in the process, the roles of key managers charged with coordinating operational activities, staffing, equipment and infrastructure requirements, and operational procedures employed at each of the facilities/locations outlined in the Concept of Operations.

More specifically, the DRO Plan contains detailed operational information that delineates DRO's activities to accomplish the mission goals as follows:

1. Deter unlawful migration;
  2. Support law enforcement operations to identify persons of interest, foreign government agents, smuggling, or other criminal enterprise operations;
  3. Develop and deploy air and ground transportation systems and assets needed to transport up to 55,000 apprehended migrants.
  4. When directed, establish Temporary Staging Facilities (TSFs) and Temporary Detention Centers (TDCs)
- 6. How much money has gone into addressing SW border violence so far? Why hasn't this been enough?**

**OI.** For fiscal year 2008, OI expended \$25.3M on BEST activities along the SW Border. BEST needs additional domestic and international resources along with the infrastructure to support its critical mission, which has been identified as a top priority under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

**OIA.** Since 2004, ICE has approximately 24 agents permanently in Mexico City, Ciudad Juarez, Tijuana, Hermosillo, and Monterrey. OIA spends approximately \$12 million annually to operate these offices. Without additional funding in 2010, OIA would have to terminate adding an additional 12 agents to Mexico offices.

**DRO.** CAP has funding for jail operations and VCAS for fiscal year 2009. No additional funding has been reallocated to SW border violence thus far. DRO would use existing funds and personnel to increase its southwest border field office staff for fiscal year 2009.

**SC.** Secure Communities plans to obligate at least the following amounts by ICE region to deploy in high threat Southwest Border State jurisdictions during FY 2009

AOR	Planned FY09 \$
DAL	\$7M
ELP	\$0M
HOU	\$13M
LOS	\$11M
PHO	\$10M
SFR	\$0M
SNA	\$8M
SND	\$5M
Grand Total	\$54M

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**From:** (b) (6)

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 10, 2009 5:39 PM

**To:** (b) (6)

**Subject:** Fw: Texas

FYI

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Department Planning  
Operations Coordination and Planning

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Sent from my BlackBerry Wireless Handheld

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**Sent:** Tue Feb 10 16:17:29 2009

**Subject:** Texas

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**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2009 1:39 PM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Cc:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** JFCOM report: "Sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible"

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## **U.S. military report warns 'sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible**

By Diana Washington Valdez / El Paso Times

Posted: 01/13/2009 03:49:34 PM MST

EL PASO - Mexico is one of two countries that "bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse," according to a report by the U.S. Joint Forces Command on worldwide security threats. The command's "Joint Operating Environment (JOE 2008)" report, which contains projections of global threats and potential next wars, puts Pakistan on the same level as Mexico. "In terms of worse-case scenarios for the Joint Force and indeed the world, two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico.

"The Mexican possibility may seem less likely, but the government, its politicians, police and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and press by criminal gangs and drug cartels. How that internal conflict turns out over the next several years will have a major impact on the stability of the Mexican state. Any descent by Mexico into chaos would demand an American response based on the serious implications for homeland security alone."

The U.S. Joint Forces Command, based in Norfolk, Va., is one of the Defense Department's combat commands that includes members of the different military service branches, active and reserves, as well as civilian and contract employees. One of its key roles is to help transform the U.S. military's capabilities.

In the foreword, Marine Gen. J.N. Mattis, the USJFC commander, said "Predictions about the future are always risky ... Regardless, if we do not try to forecast the future, there is no doubt that we will be caught off guard as we strive to protect this experiment in democracy that we call America."

The report is one in a series focusing on Mexico's internal security problems, mostly stemming from drug violence and drug corruption. In recent weeks, the Department of Homeland Security and former U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey issued similar alerts about Mexico.

Despite such reports, El Pasoan Veronica Callaghan, a border business leader, said she keeps running into people in the region who "are in denial about what is happening in Mexico."

Last week, Mexican President Felipe Calderon instructed his embassy and consular officials to promote a positive image of Mexico. The U.S. military report, which also analyzed economic situations in other countries, also noted that China has increased its influence in places where oil fields are present.

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**Planner, Department Plans**

**Deliberate Plans**

**Plans Division**

**DHS Office of Operations Coordination and Planning**

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**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2009 4:13 PM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Cc:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** RE: JFCOM report: "Sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible"

Thanks for reply.

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**Planner, Department Plans  
Deliberate Plans  
Plans Division  
DHS Office of Operations Coordination and Planning**

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**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2009 3:22 PM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Cc:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** RE: JFCOM report: "Sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible"

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Cheers,  
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**To:** (b) (6)  
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**To:** (b) (6)  
**Cc:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** RE: JFCOM report: "Sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible"

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**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2009 3:15 PM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Cc:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** RE: JFCOM report: "Sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible"

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Cheers,  
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P.S. Sorry for the duplicate emails. Hit the send button too soon.

**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2009 1:39 PM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Cc:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** JFCOM report: "Sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible"

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### U.S. military report warns 'sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible

By Diana Washington Valdez / El Paso Times  
Posted: 01/13/2009 03:49:34 PM MST

EL PASO - Mexico is one of two countries that "bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse," according to a report by the U.S. Joint Forces Command on worldwide security threats. The command's "Joint Operating Environment (JOE 2008)" report, which contains projections of global threats and potential next

wars, puts Pakistan on the same level as Mexico. "In terms of worse-case scenarios for the Joint Force and indeed the world, two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico.

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"The Mexican possibility may seem less likely, but the government, its politicians, police and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and press by criminal gangs and drug cartels. How that internal conflict turns out over the next several years will have a major impact on the stability of the Mexican state. Any descent by Mexico into chaos would demand an American response based on the serious implications for homeland security alone."

The U.S. Joint Forces Command, based in Norfolk, Va., is one of the Defense Departments combat commands that includes members of the different military service branches, active and reserves, as well as civilian and contract employees. One of its key roles is to help transform the U.S. military's capabilities.

In the foreword, Marine Gen. J.N. Mattis, the USJFC commander, said "Predictions about the future are always risky ... Regardless, if we do not try to forecast the future, there is no doubt that we will be caught off guard as we strive to protect this experiment in democracy that we call America."

The report is one in a series focusing on Mexico's internal security problems, mostly stemming from drug violence and drug corruption. In recent weeks, the Department of Homeland Security and former U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey issued similar alerts about Mexico.

Despite such reports, El Pasoan Veronica Callaghan, a border business leader, said she keeps running into people in the region who "are in denial about what is happening in Mexico."

Last week, Mexican President Felipe Calderon instructed his embassy and consular officials to promote a positive image of Mexico. The U.S. military report, which also analyzed economic situations in other countries, also noted that China has increased its influence in places where oil fields are present.

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**Planner, Department Plans**

**Deliberate Plans**

**Plans Division**

**DHS Office of Operations Coordination and Planning**

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**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2009 3:12 PM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Cc:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** RE: JFCOM report: "Sudden collapse' of Mexico is possible"

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Collection Requirements Management Division  
Office of Intelligence & Analysis  
Department of Homeland Security  
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**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 10, 2009 8:52 AM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** RE: SWB Violence

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Department Plans Section  
Deliberate Plans  
Plans Division  
Office of Operations Coordination and Planning

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**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 10, 2009 8:01 AM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** SWB Violence

## **Border lawmakers fear drug-terrorism link**

**By Jordy Yager**  
**Posted: 03/07/09 05:36 PM [ET]**

Members of Congress are raising the alarm that war-like conditions on the Mexican border could lead to Mexican drug cartels helping terrorists attack the U.S.

“When you have...gangs and they have loose ties with al Qaeda and then you have Iran not too far away from building a nuclear capability, nuclear terrorism may not be far off,” said Rep. Trent Franks (R- Ariz.), a member of the House Armed Services committee.

The Mexican drug cartels’ violence accounted for more than 6,000 deaths last year, and in recent months it has begun spilling over into the districts of lawmakers from the southwest region, even as far north as Phoenix, Ariz. - which has become, Franks noted, the “kidnap capital of the U.S.”

Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas), whose district borders Mexico, said that while the situation is bad, it could easily get worse.

"The goal of the cartels is to make money," said Cuellar, who sits on the House Homeland Security committee. "If they can smuggle in drugs and human cargo, then certainly they can smuggle other things in, other devices to cause us harm."

"We have not heard of any associations, but is there the possibility? I'll be the first to say, yeah. They have the routes, they can very easily smuggle in other things. If I was a bad guy in another country, I would go into Central America because the U.S. is not paying the proper attention."

Violence reached new levels last week when the mayor of Juarez, a Mexican city with 1.6 million people that serves as a major transit point for drug smugglers, moved his family to El Paso, Texas, after receiving threats against his and their lives.

The move corresponded with the resignation of the city's police chief after a drug cartel promised to kill a police officer every 48 hours if he did not step down. The city's police director of operations, a police officer and a prison guard were killed by the cartels in days prior.

"That was a mistake in my judgment," Franks said of the chief's resignation. "The federal government should have come in and said listen, we're going to put a Marine division there to help you out if that's what's necessary, but narco-terrorists are not going to tell America who to elect and who resigns."

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said earlier this week that there are no plans to militarize the border, but Texas Gov. Rick Perry last week asked for 1,000 additional forces, such as National Guardsmen, to help protect the country's border.

The Homeland Security and House Oversight and Government Reform committees, which Cuellar sits on, and the House Appropriations subcommittees on Homeland Security and State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs all have hearings scheduled next week to address the increase in violence.

"The U.S. moves on crisis," Cuellar said. "My colleagues aren't going to pay attention to it until it boils up to a particular point. And we're boiling."

A report on global security threats issued by the U.S. Joint Forces Command earlier this year stated that Mexico is on the same level as Pakistan for the potential of "a rapid and sudden collapse."

Cuellar, who does not think Mexico has reached a "failed state" status, traveled to Mexico City two weeks ago to meet with the Mexican secretary of defense and Mexico's attorney general, asking them what more assistance the U.S. can provide.

"If you ask the Mexicans what's the biggest thing we can do, it's to stop the flow of guns," he said, adding that during his visit he viewed a large cache of seized weapons. "A lot of (the guns) were from the U.S. but some were from China, Bulgaria, and other places."

According to ATF, 95 percent of the weapons used by drug cartels came from the U.S.

Under the Merida Initiative, initiated by President George W. Bush, the U.S. has committed to provide Mexico with \$1.4 billion over three years to fight the drug cartels. The omnibus spending bill that is currently caught up in the Senate carries \$405 million designated for the program.

Rep. Ciro Rodriguez (D-Texas), who sits on the House Appropriations subcommittee on Homeland Security, said he hasn't seen much violence spilling over into his district, which spans nearly all of Texas' border with Mexico. But, he added, he is still very concerned about the situation.

"One thing we're working on from Homeland Security is to beef up from a border patrol perspective, from the passage back and forth perspective, and also not to shoot ourselves in the foot as far as trade; our economies are directly tied in to each other," he said.

Rodriguez, who was born in Mexico and has spent nearly 10 years in Congress, said there may be a silver lining to the influx of violence.

“I hate to say this but the fact that that’s occurring right now is a good sign that they’re (the drug cartels) not in control,” he said. “In other words, if you don’t hear any noise anywhere, it doesn’t mean that it’s okay, it just means that one group is in control.”

But the unrest does not ease the concern of Franks, whose district borders Phoenix, where police reported an average of one kidnapping a day last year linked to Mexican drug cartels.

“I take it personal in that I have two little 7-month-old babies,” Franks said. “If lawlessness like that is not contained, it almost always has a tendency to grow more and more bold and broad and a lot of times these kidnap victims are held for ransom, so they may say, ‘Why not kidnap a rich American kid?’”

“They make a mistake if they do that because I think that would finally get the attention of the American government to the point where we responded.”

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**Sent:** Tuesday, March 10, 2009 8:01 AM  
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**From:** (b) (6)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 10, 2009 2:29 PM  
**To:** (b) (6)  
**Subject:** CQ: Mexico  
**Attachments:** Mexico's Drug War.htm

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CQ WEEKLY – COVER STORY  
 March 9, 2009 – Page 534

Mexico's Drug War: Violence Too Close to Home  
 By Jonathan Broder, CQ Staff

Mexico's illegal drug trade used to be relatively civilized, made up of small-time traffickers who smuggled marijuana and heroin into the United States and the corrupt officials who accepted their bribes to look the other way. Both sides followed certain unwritten rules: The officials forbade the traffickers from selling their wares inside Mexico and from arming themselves too extravagantly. Kidnapping was out of bounds. If a drug trafficker felt compelled to eliminate a rival, Mexican officials encouraged him to do so discreetly — preferably north of the border, where the investigation would be a problem for law enforcement in the United States, not Mexico.

Such conditions seem almost quaint compared with the violence that wracks the country today. Mexico's drug gangs have added South American cocaine and methamphetamine to their exports, and they earn as much as \$39 billion a year from sales in the United States. They also peddle plenty of the drugs to Mexicans. To protect their profits, the cartels have taken advantage of openings in U.S. gun-control laws to stock up on military-grade assault rifles, grenade launchers, bazookas and even heavy machine guns, smuggling them back into Mexico for fire-fights with government forces and rival gangs. The cartels also operate helicopters, jet planes and small submarines for use in smuggling.

Since the beginning of 2007, the drug war has claimed the lives of about 7,500 people — almost double the number of U.S. troops killed in Iraq since 2003. The dead include more than 200 American citizens, some of whom were probably involved in the drug business but also others who were innocent bystanders caught in the cross-fire.

Using a combination of bribes and extreme cruelty that includes gruesome tortures and beheadings, the drug cartels have corrupted or intimidated police and magistrates, taking effective control over a growing number of towns and rural areas south of the border. The gangs also have moved north into Arizona and other states, where kidnappings, gun battles and executions among rival cartel members



**FIGHTING BACK:** Mexican Federal Police carry out an anti-drug operation in Ciudad Juarez last week. President Felipe Calderon says the drug war

are becoming increasingly common.

With an approving nod from the United States, Mexican President Felipe Calderon has thrown his army into the fight against the cartels, but the well-armed gangs are fighting back. And according to some U.S. officials and experts, the drug barons are winning.

is tougher than he thought when he launched it in 2006. (GETTY IMAGES/AFP / RONALDO SCHEMIDT)

In Washington, where policy debates involving Mexico have been confined mostly to trade and immigration for the past two decades, sudden awareness of the drug war has produced some alarming assessments. Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who was the drug czar in the Clinton White House, warned recently that unless the Mexican government gains control of the drug gangs, the United States could, within a decade, be confronting on its southern border a “narco-state” — meaning an area controlled by drug cartels. The Pentagon envisions an even worse scenario: Mexico and Pakistan, it says, are the countries most at risk of swiftly collapsing into “failed states” — those whose central governments are so weak they have little practical control over most of their territory.

Beset as he is at home by the credit crisis and plunging economy, President Obama’s response to the chaos in Mexico has so far been to continue some George W. Bush administration policies while beginning a search for others. He is expected to focus on possible regional approaches when he attends a Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago next month.

Experts on the region, though, say the magnitude of the drug war in Mexico and its danger to the United States far exceed the reach of existing federal policies, perhaps even the policies the new administration is considering, such as stepped-up military aid and regional cooperation.

Uncontrolled drug violence in Mexico, these experts say, might result in tens of thousands of refugees surging across the border, adding to the estimated 12 million immigrants already in the country illegally. U.S. drug officials say that a narco-state in Mexico could turn the ungoverned territory along the border into a permanent springboard for Mexican drug traffickers smuggling their goods north into California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. And economic analysts say that should the Mexican government completely collapse, it would jeopardize oil exports from Mexico, from which the United States receives a third of its supply.

“Any descent by Mexico into chaos,” the Pentagon’s Joint Forces Command wrote in November, “would demand an American response based on the serious implications for homeland security alone.”

### Scramble for Solutions

A more likely result than such a complete descent into chaos, some authorities on the region say, is that Mexico becomes an “informal” narco-state, where the current democratic government continues but the drug cartels wield great influence behind the scenes. Such a development would not increase the flow of illegal immigrants into the United States, they say.

Whatever the assessment, the climate of violence in Mexico has spooked many former U.S. officials, as well as current members of the administration and Congress. Some have proposed their own dramatic solutions, topped off by the suggestion of Duncan Hunter, a staunchly conservative Republican who gave up his Southern California House seat last year after a brief run for president, to build a wall along the entire 2,000-mile border with Mexico.

The administration has not spelled out any major new policies on Mexico; the

White House Web site, chock full of policy prescriptions for dozens of issues, says not a word about illegal drugs and little about Mexico.



A Tapestry of  
Drug Violence:  
[Click Here to  
View Chart](#)

In the short term at least, the new president has decided to keep alive his predecessor's program that provides Mexico with training, equipment and intelligence aid to fight the drug gangs. The economic stimulus package Obama pushed to enactment this winter includes funds to help bolster border security and curb the flow of guns from the United States into Mexico. And he has ordered his top homeland security advisers to work side-by-side with the National Security Council to address not only terrorism, but also other security threats such as organized crime and narco-trafficking.

Meanwhile, in advance of the annual pilgrimage of thousands of American college students to spend their spring vacations at the beaches and bars of Cancun, Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta, the State Department has issued a travel alert warning of the increased Mexican drug violence and kidnapping. The alert, guaranteed to terrify parents if not students, said U.S. travelers have been trapped in firefights between government forces and drug gangs that have resembled "small unit combat."

Administration officials, including Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr., sound confident that the gangs can be defeated and the violence quelled, even if they have no bold new plans to make that happen. After a major federal drug bust late last month involving suspected Mexican traffickers, Holder declared, "We can provide our communities the safety and the security that they deserve only by confronting these dangerous cartels head-on, without reservation. We can do that, and we will do that."

"These cartels," he said, "will be destroyed."

The situation in Mexico will be high on the agenda at next month's meeting in Trinidad, where Obama is expected to seek a multilateral approach aimed at cutting drug supplies in South and Central America while trying to reduce demand for drugs in the United States — just the sort of progress that has eluded the government since the "war on drugs" got under way in the Nixon administration nearly four decades ago.

Some Latin American leaders, including former presidents of several countries, have called for a different approach — decriminalizing marijuana, the most popular recreational drug of their citizens and also the region's biggest illicit export to the United States. In the past, Obama has said that American law enforcement agencies should stop prosecuting marijuana users because it would save precious resources to combat more-serious crimes; he does not favor legalizing the drug, however.

Experts on Latin America say that unless Obama commits more money and aid to the fight in Mexico, the drug cartels could turn the Southwest frontier into a lawless borderland. "U.S. complacency about the troubles in Mexico is very dangerous," warned Moises Naim, a former Venezuelan minister of trade and industry and now the editor of Foreign Policy magazine. "You don't want a narco-state to become your neighbor. It's an illusion that you can have a border that can protect you."

### A Weak Neighbor

When Calderon first deployed 6,500 Mexican troops to take on the drug cartels in December 2006, the traffickers were operating primarily in the seven northern Mexican states. Today, the cartels' reach has spread to 18 of Mexico's 32 states, and Calderon is deploying 45,000 troops — a quarter of his entire army — to confront them.

It is a war marked by spectacular violence. Drug gangs sometimes behead government officials and members of rival gangs, then post videos of the executions on the Internet. Hundreds of people have simply disappeared. The fate of some of the missing became clear in January, when Mexican authorities arrested a man who admitted disposing of 300 kidnap victims for the drug gangs by liquefying their bodies in large vats of industrial solvents. The arrested man, Santiago Meza Lopez, was known as *El Pozolero* — the Stew Maker.

Mexican drug violence has touched at least one U.S. lawmaker personally. Last June, a relative by marriage of Texas Democrat Silvestre Reyes, the chairman of the House Select Intelligence Committee, was seized by gunmen in Ciudad Juarez, the violent and corrupt Mexican city across the border from El Paso. After being notified by Reyes' staff, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents helped arrange the relative's return after her family paid a \$32,000 ransom. (There was no suggestion the kidnapping was related to Reyes' position in Congress.)



Mexico's Projected Growth: [Click Here to View Chart](#)

Such reports have been increasingly common in Mexico for more than a year now. But in Washington, where Bush administration officials were focused primarily on the Middle East, few mentioned Mexico's troubles until after Obama won the presidency in November. Only then did military and intelligence officials for the first time describe the events as a national security threat.

In its report that month on likely challenges facing U.S. forces in the future, the Pentagon's Joint Forces Command explained why it had included Mexico as a country that faced the risk of sudden collapse.

"The Mexican possibility may seem less likely, but the government, its politicians, police and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by criminal gangs and drug cartels," the report said. "How that internal conflict turns out over the next several years will have a major impact on the stability of the Mexican state."

Just before he departed in January as director of the CIA, Michael V. Hayden listed the threat the drug gangs pose to Mexico's stability as one of top challenges facing Obama. He urged the president to strengthen ties with Mexican intelligence to deal with the situation there. "As bad as it is — and it is bad," Hayden said, "there's an opportunity here."

Even Obama's director of national intelligence, Dennis C. Blair, has chimed in, telling Congress last month that the Mexican government already has lost control over some parts of its country. "The corruptive influence and increasing violence of Mexican drug cartels," Blair told the Senate Select Intelligence Committee on Feb. 12, "impedes Mexico City's ability to govern parts of its country."

Latin America specialists who have been following events in Mexico say it's about time U.S. officials paid more attention to their southern neighbor.

"The United States has ignored Mexico and its needs and realities," said Naim. "More people have been beheaded in Mexico this year than in Iraq. The battles being fought in Mexico may be more important for the average U.S. citizen than those being fought in Baqubah," the scene of heavy Iraqi insurgent activity.

Mexican officials bristle at the dire forecasts for their country. "The suggestion that Mexico is remotely close to a failed state or is heading in that direction is analytically flawed and therefore simply wrong," Arturo Sarukhan, Mexico's ambassador to the United States, said in a statement. "Mexico is today a country with solid institutions, a consolidating and pluralistic democracy, a vibrant civil society, and,

despite the global recession, strong economic fundamentals.”

In a separate interview, Sarukhan argued that the heavy toll from the armed confrontations in Mexico is, if anything, a sign of his government’s strength and determination to confront the cartels, which, he adds, have grown increasingly desperate under the army’s assault. “The violence,” Sarukhan said, “is an indication that they’re feeling the pressure and against the ropes.”

Many U.S. experts on Mexico also reject what George W. Grayson, a Mexico scholar at the College of William & Mary, called the “overstated” tone of the recent warnings about Mexico.

“The army is still loyal to the regime,” said Grayson. “Most workers get up and go to their jobs every day, and the major production facilities around the country continue to turn out goods and services.”

Allyson Benton, a Mexico City-based analyst for the Eurasia Group, an international risk analysis firm, said flatly, “Mexico is not a failed state and will not become one.”

But, these regional analysts add, Mexico suffers from serious institutional weaknesses, including a police force and judiciary that have been thoroughly corrupted by the bribes the drug cartels are offering. The scope of the corruption was driven home last November, when Noe Ramirez Mandujano, Mexico’s top anti-drug official, was arrested for allegedly pocketing \$450,000 a month from drug traffickers.

“By any measure, the cartels are winning,” despite the Mexican army’s offensive, Grayson said. “They’re active in more states now. They’re involved in a broader array of criminal activities. They’re certainly getting incredible publicity for their brutal executions, and they’re making lots of money.”

Despite such violence and corruption, though, Grayson and other Latin America experts do not believe Mexico’s government will completely collapse.

“What we’re seeing are not the symptoms of a failed state,” Naim said. But, he added, “I do believe that Mexico is a country at risk. The government may lose control of certain enclaves.”

Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute, says the growing influence of the cartels, which now provide the money to fund the campaigns of some Mexican politicians, makes it more likely the country will become “an informal narco-state model in which the cartels become the power behind the throne.”

More U.S. Assistance Needed

For McCaffrey, the former drug czar, that kind of scenario is bad enough. He has called on Obama to waste no time in developing a plan, with the money to pay for it — a “resourced strategy” — that is “appropriate for the dangers we face.”

Right now, Obama’s strategy consists of continuing the Bush administration program dubbed the Merida Initiative — a three-year, \$1.4 billion effort to fund training and equipment for Mexican law enforcement to fight drug trafficking and organized crime. The program, named for the Yucatan capital where Bush and Calderon met in March 2007, also includes greater cooperation between U.S. and Mexican intelligence services. In December, just before leaving office, Bush implemented the plan, making the first \$197 million available to Mexico.

The \$787 billion stimulus bill that Obama signed included roughly \$600 million for border security, including \$40 million to help local law enforcement officials “combat criminal narcotic activity” along the border.



**PARTNERS:** Bush and Calderon announce their anti-drug initiative in March 2007 in the Mexican city of Merida. Bush implemented the plan in December. (GETTY IMAGES/AFP / MANDEL NGAN)

“The recent escalation of violence along the southern border demands our immediate attention,” said Senate Homeland Security Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, a political independent from Connecticut. “To deal with the spillover of violence into U.S. territory, we must assess border security programs and plans in place, and we must review the readiness of federal, state and local law enforcement.”

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has vowed to work closely with the Mexican government against the drug gangs through intelligence sharing. She also has said she is reviewing a plan by the Bush administration to rush U.S. troops to the border if there is a surge of refugees trying to escape the drug violence.

“We don’t want to militarize the border,” Napolitano said last month in her first appearance before the House Homeland Security Committee. But she acknowledged the need for what she called a “contingency plan to deal with worst-case scenarios.”

McCaffrey says he wants to see funding for the Merida program increased significantly and its implementation speeded up.

“The proposed U.S. government spending in support of the government of Mexico is a drop in the bucket compared to what we have spent in Iraq and Afghanistan,” he noted in a December study of Mexico’s drug war. “The stakes in Mexico are enormous. We cannot afford to have a narco-state as a neighbor.”

McCaffrey also wants to see Obama step up cooperation with Mexico on cross-border law enforcement. Mexican officials have tried to organize the 10 U.S. and Mexican border states for this effort, but McCaffrey says cooperation remains “inadequate,” largely because U.S. officials suspect some of their Mexican counterparts are secretly working for the cartels.



What's in the U.S.-Mexico "Merida Initiative": [Click Here to View Chart](#)

Meanwhile, lawmakers from border states have long maintained that the solution to keeping Mexican drugs and drug violence from crossing the Rio Grande is a huge increase in border security. At last month’s House Homeland Security panel hearing, Republican Michael McCaul of Texas, who was previously a federal prosecutor with a specialty in national security and counterterrorism, urged Napolitano to “consider, along with the Merida Initiative, also funding on our side of the border for increased Border Patrol, ICE” agents and more local police.

Noting that Texas Gov. Rick Perry had asked for 1,000 federal troops to beef up security along the border, McCaul characterized the situation in Mexico as “a state of war.”

Administration officials say the Department of Homeland Security will move ahead with a Bush administration plan to build 670 miles of fencing and barriers at critical crossing points along the U.S.-Mexican border, and that the administration also wants to implement Bush’s plan for an electronic fence along the entire 2,000 miles of the border. The \$1 billion project, which combines sensors, radar, thermal imaging equipment, unmanned aircraft and software to provide border officials with a picture of border entries in real time, has been plagued by delays and logistical problems.

The majority of congressional Democrats, as well as Republicans from states along the border, prefer deploying surveillance technology over building physical fences, which, they say, separate people and breed resentment on both sides of the border.

### Growing Calls for Legalization

Administration officials say that, at the April summit in Trinidad, Obama will be eager to listen to new policy ideas about regional security.

Some of the ideas, however, promise to be controversial. In advance of the summit, a group of respected Latin American leaders, including the former presidents of Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, urged current leaders to consider decriminalizing the personal use of marijuana. In a Feb. 11 statement, the group said decades of government attempts to halt the production and trafficking of illegal drugs have failed. Implicit in the statement was that the United States should consider decriminalization as well, in the belief that it would obviate the need for much of the criminal behavior.

“We are further than ever from the announced goal of eradicating drugs,” the statement said. Meanwhile, “most of the damage associated with cannabis use — from the indiscriminate arrest and incarceration of consumers to the violence and corruption that affect all of society — is the result of the current prohibitionist policies.”

The statement is the latest in a trend among regional leaders to openly challenge Washington’s four-decade war on drugs. In October, Honduran President Manuel Zelaya called for the legalization of drugs as a way to stop drug-trafficking violence. In Argentina, the government of President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner is promoting the decriminalization of drug use. Even Mexico’s Calderon has suggested the legalization of small amounts of marijuana and cocaine.

According to Juan Carlos Hidalgo, a Latin America specialist at the Cato Institute, several factors are behind the Latin American calls for a different approach to the drug war. Left-leaning governments that already have strained relations with the United States are less concerned about ruffling its feathers. In other countries, free-trade agreements with the United States have made them feel less vulnerable to losing their wide-open economic relationship as punishment for speaking out.

But most important, Hidalgo says, Latin American governments are feeling increasingly overwhelmed by the problems of drug-related violence and corruption. “Many now regard the U.S. war on drugs as a threat to their own stability,” he said.

The view Obama expressed in the campaign — decriminalize marijuana use but don’t legalize it — would mean federal and state agents would tolerate personal marijuana use but still go after dealers and traffickers.

There is virtually no chance Congress will relax federal anti-drug laws anytime soon. Current and former U.S. drug officials recoil at the suggestion, pointing out that the United States tried that already.

Michael Braun, a former chief of operations at the Drug Enforcement Administration, notes that the worst period of addiction in American history was the 19th century, when opiates and cocaine were generally legal, socially accepted and widely used. Indeed, the popular Sears & Roebuck catalogues of



**BODY COUNT:**  
Ten bullet-riddled victims of drug violence on a Mexican roadside in December. Since 2006, some 7,500 people have died in Mexico’s drug war, including more than 200 U.S. citizens. (GETTY IMAGES/AFP / MARCO MILLAN)

the 1890s offered a syringe and a small amount of cocaine for \$1.50. Three years after the enactment of a law to regulate these drugs in 1915, Congress determined that roughly 1 percent of Americans were drug users. Today, 8 percent of Americans — about 20 million — use drugs, according to government figures.

Braun acknowledges that despite law enforcement and treatment strategies that have reduced drug use in the United States, the problem is never going to disappear. After all, he notes ruefully, the United States remains the world's largest market for illegal drugs.

And unless Calderon — with help from Obama — wins the drug war in his country, the Mexican cartels will continue to supply that market, bribing or killing those who dare to stand in their way. McCaffrey warns that time is not on the side of Obama or Calderon. Since he took office in 2006, Calderon's public support has dwindled as ordinary Mexicans lose faith in the country's corrupt judicial system. Citing another symptom of Mexico's despair, McCaffrey also noted "increasing discussion of legalization of drugs, or acquiescence in the drug trade, which used to be presumed to be a U.S., not Mexican problem."

It is far too early to say how Calderon's crusade against the drug traffickers will end. But Naim, who is also the author of "Illicit," a 2005 book about the challenges posed by the gangs that smuggle drugs and other contraband across the globe, provides some sobering context as Washington policy makers watch the direction of Mexico's drug war.

"As I was researching the book, I did not find one country — including the United States — where the government could claim that it was winning against these guys," Naim said. "So if the most powerful country in the world, with all its money, technology and good government, cannot do it, why should we expect Mexico to succeed?"

*Karoun Demirjian contributed to this story.*

**FOR FURTHER READING:** *Stimulus package* ([PL 111-5](#)), *CQ Weekly*, p. 352; *Napolitano*, p. 137; *border security*, 2008 *CQ Weekly*, p. 2810; *immigration*, p. 2664; *Merida Initiative*, p. 1628.

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