

# Call for U.S.-Mexico Anti-Drug Fight

Below you will find extensive excerpts from a December 2008 memo by Gen. Barry McCaffrey (USA-ret.), prepared for West Point, on a recent fact-finding trip to Mexico. General McCaffrey, who was the White House drug czar under President Bill Clinton, after a distinguished career as a U.S. Army commander, blew the lid off a narco-insurgency, targeting both Mexico and the United States, and highlighted the cross-border arms-for-drugs trafficking that poses an existential threat to both nations.

The McCaffrey memo is important in two regards. First, McCaffrey's frank and well-documented assessment of a grave national security crisis, which has been allowed to build up during the eight years of the Bush-Cheney Administration, is a call to action—before it is too late. *EIR*'s own inquiries with relevant anti-drug officials on both sides of the border fully corroborate all of the critical facts, presented by McCaffrey below. Among these facts: Mexican drug cartels have been responsible for 80-95% of all illegal drugs entering the United States from abroad; and the cartels have been armed, principally from weapons smuggling capabilities inside the United States. A recent study by the Justice Department's National Drug Intelligence Center identified over 200 U.S. cities, where Mexican drug-trafficking organizations have a dominant presence, a picture that fully corroborates the McCaffrey map of the cross-border operations of the Mexican cartels.

Second, McCaffrey's report is part of an ongoing series of fact-finding reports that he has submitted to the U.S. Military Academy. Beginning in 2003, McCaffrey made well over a dozen field trips to Iraq and Afghanistan, where he had access to American, NATO, Iraqi, and Afghan military and political leaders. His trip reports have informed the U.S. military and the population at large (posted on [mccaffreyassociates.com](http://mccaffreyassociates.com)) about the deteriorating situations in both war fronts, and have been an important factor in cutting through the propaganda fog, built up around the disas-

trous Iraq and Afghan wars.

In particular, McCaffrey's frank reporting from on-the-ground commanders, and his own assessments, have underscored the extent to which the Bush-Cheney preventive wars have gutted the U.S. military and created a serious national security dilemma that requires urgent attention. In 2007, McCaffrey made fact-finding trips to Colombia and Mexico to assess the security threat to the United States.

McCaffrey has special credentials in both the Afghan-Iraq theater and in the Mexico-Colombia narco-war theater. As a military commander during Operation Desert Storm, and as a U.S. Army flag officer, McCaffrey is one of the most respected military thinkers today. And as Clinton's head of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, ONDCP, McCaffrey was a high-visibility leader of the War on Drugs, and a major opponent of drug legalization. In that capacity, McCaffrey targeted George Soros, by name, as an architect of the drive to legalize drugs, and create the kind of social catastrophe that he has now highlighted in his Mexico report. At one point, McCaffrey publicly challenged Soros to debate him on the issue of drug legalization. Needless to say, Soros refused.



DOD/Sgt. Doug Sample

*Former Clinton Administration Drug Policy Advisor Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.) warned that the Mexican State “is engaged in an increasingly violent, internal struggle against heavily armed narco-criminal cartels,” and urged the incoming Obama Administration to establish a full partnership with Mexico to eliminate this scourge.*

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## After Action Report

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Memorandum for: Colonel Michael Meese, Proessor  
and Head Dept of Social Sciences

Subject: After Action Report; Visit Mexico; 5-7 December 2008

**1. Purpose:** This memo provides a strategic and operational assessment of drugs and crime in Mexico. . . . This paper was based on the first three-day meeting of the Internatinoal Forum of Intelligence and Securtiy Specialists . . . an Advisory Body to the Mexican Federal Law Enforcement leadership. . . .

### 3. The Situation in Mexico

A. The Mexican State is engaged in an increasingly violent, internal struggle against heavily armed narco-criminal cartels that have intimidated the public, corrupted much of law enforcement, and created an environment of impunity to the law.

- Thousands are being murdered each year. Drug production, addiction, and smuggling are rampant. The

struggle for power among drug cartels has resulted in chaos in the Mexican states and cities along the U.S.-Mexico border. Drug-related assassinations and kidnappings are now common-place occurrences throughout the country.

- Squad-sized units of the police and Army have been tortured, murdered, and their decapitated bodies publicly left on display. The malignancy of drug criminality now contaminates not only the 2000 miles of cross-border U.S. communities but stretches throughout the United States in more than 295 U.S. cities.

B. Mexico's senior leadership—President Felipe Calderón, Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora, and SSP [Secretariat of Public Security] Secretary of Federal Police leader Genaro Luna are confronting the criminal drug cartels that have subverted state and municipal authorities and present a mortal threat to the rule of law across Mexico. The Mexican Armed Forces are being increasingly relied on by the Federal Government given the shortcomings of civilian law enforcement agencies.

- The Calderón Administration took power with a tenuous political legitimacy following their less than 1% victory over the PRD in a bitterly contested election. Senior Mexican political and security officials have showed remarkable leadership, courage, strength, and dedication as they seek to assert the rule of law throughout the state and defeat the drug cartels.

- Senior government officials are taking enormous personal risk; the drug cartels have demonstrated their willingness to murder political leaders and law enforcement officers who threaten their well being. The commitment of these senior Mexican Government officials to reestablish the rule of law will become a matter of historical pride to their nation if they succeed.

C. The United States has provided only modest support to the Government of Mexico to date. The bold \$400 million/year Merida initiative conceived by President Bush with both Canadian and Mexican Presidential participation was barely approved by the U.S. Congress after a divisive and insulting debate.

- 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....

D. The incoming Obama Administration must immediately focus on the dangerous and worsening problems in Mexico, which fundamentally threaten U.S. national security. Before the next eight years are past the violent, warring collection of criminal drug cartels could overwhelm the institutions of the state and establish de facto control over broad regions of northern Mexico.

- A failure by the Mexican political system to curtail lawlessness and violence could result of a surge of millions of refugees crossing the U.S. border to escape the domestic misery of violence, failed economic policy, poverty, hunger, joblessness, and the mindless cruelty and injustice of a criminal state.

#### **4. The Leadership Context of the Struggle: Mexico Matters**

A. Mexico is a huge nation three times the size of massive Texas with a population of a 110 million people. It is the 12th-largest economy in the world and the largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world. Mexico City at 20 million people is one of the largest urban concentrations on the globe. Mexico is the 8th-largest crude oil exporter and has gigantic known reserves of natural gas. It has a GDP of just under a trillion dollars.

B. Mexico deals historically with crushing U.S. ignorance of their vital economic contributions to the U.S. The U.S. in turn deals historically with a Mexican official political system which has a paranoid fixation on the perceived injustice of U.S. arrogance and imperialism—and animosity toward bi-national cooperation with any policy initiatives dealing with border issues, water, migration, and security or law enforcement cooperation.

C. Mexico is arguably the most important foreign partner of the United States. The United States is unarguably the most important foreign partner for Mexico. Mexico supplies a third of our imported oil. We account for 47% of all foreign direct investment in Mexico. 18,000 Mexican companies have U.S. investments. 50% of their imports come from the U.S. 82% of their exports go to the United States. Mexican nationals constitute approximately half of the 12 million undocumented aliens in the U.S., many who have found employment in and are critical to our agricultural system, meat packing industry, restaurants, day care centers, and the construction sector. THERE ARE A MILLION LEGAL BORDER CROSSINGS PER DAY along our 2,000-mile shared, and largely unmarked and unfenced frontier. There are probably a million illegal border crossings a year....

F. President Calderón faces these daunting internal problems with inadequate resources and weak institutions. A general sense of impunity from the law and pervasive corruption remain problems, particularly at state and local levels. There is massive underemployment of 25%-plus—and grossly inequitable distribution of income. Only 3% of the land is both arable and irrigated. Wages are low. There are few opportunities for the largely Amerindian population in the southern states. There is lack of clean water and terrible deforestation. The level of kidnappings and murder has paralyzed the population. There are high levels of violence against women, criminal intimidation of journalists (28 reporters killed since 2001), trafficking in persons, and extensive child labor.

G. However, based on my years of watching Mexico—the bottom line is this: the population is extremely hard working, humble, gracious, spiritually devout, patriotic, and family-oriented. The culture and art are rich and fiercely admired by the people. The senior elite political and military leadership is world class—broadly educated, sophisticated, multi-lingual, and very easy to deal with. At a people-to-people level

the affection and cooperation between the Mexican and U.S. populations are unbelievably strong. (More than 500,000 Americans live in Mexico.)...

## 5. The Problem Is Drugs

A. Mexico is on the edge of the abyss—it could become a narco-state in the coming decade. Chronic drug consumption has doubled since 2002 to 500,000 addicts. Possibly 5% or 3.5 million people consume illegal drugs (the U.S. figure is 8.3% or 20.4 million). Since 2002—past month [sic] Mexican national drug consumption has increased by 30% and cocaine use has doubled. The fastest growing addiction rates are among the 12-to-17-year-old population—and the consumption rates among women have doubled.

B. Drug criminal behavior is the central threat to the state. Mexico probably produces 8 metric tons of heroin a year and 10,000 metric tons of marijuana. 90% of all U.S. cocaine transits Mexico. Mexico is also the dominant source of methamphetamine production for the U.S. market. The drug cartels have criminal earnings in excess of \$25 billion per year—and physically repatriate more than \$10 billion a year in bulk cash back into Mexico from the United States.

C. The bottom line—nearly 7,000 people murdered in the internal drug wars since 2006—3,985 murdered this year alone through 25 November. The outgunned Mexican law enforcement authorities face armed criminal attacks from platoon-sized units employing night vision goggles, electronic intercept collection, encrypted communications, fairly sophisticated information operations, sea-going submersibles, helicopters and modern transport aviation, automatic weapons, RPGs, Anti-Tank 66 mm rockets, mines and booby traps, heavy machine guns, 50 cal sniper rifles, massive use of military hand grenades, and the most modern models of 40mm grenade machine guns.

## 6. Crime and Corruption

A. The crime rate is staggering. The U.S. State Department notes that crime in Mexico continues at high levels particularly in Mexico City. Criminal assaults



*The United States has provided only modest support to the government of Mexico to date. Nonetheless, says McCaffrey, President Calderón has taken bold moves to crush the drug cartels. Shown, the kingpin of the Gulf Cartel, Osiel Cardenas-Guillen, captured by the DEA, is extradited to Mexico.*

occur on highways throughout Mexico. Armed street crime is a serious problem in all the major cities. Robbery and assault on passengers in taxis are frequent and violent. Mexican authorities have failed to prosecute numerous crimes committed against U.S. citizens, including murder and kidnapping...

B. Kidnappings are the cruelest of all crimes. Official statistics cite 72 kidnappings a month, according to the Mexican Attorney General. However, the Citizens Institute for Crime Studies estimates more than 500 kidnappings a month, with the overwhelming majority not reported, largely because of lack of trust in the police—or the reality of police involvement in the crime. Kidnappings are not just targeted on the rich who live behind a wall of protection. Now even poor Mexicans present a target for ATM extortion or even death because of non-payment of small ransoms. (The rates of kidnappings in Latin-America in general are astronomical ... the hemisphere represents 8% of the global population but accounts for 75% of the total kidnappings.)

- Law enforcement authorities under President Calderón have fought back with extraordinary measures. More than 7,500 individuals are now in state or Federal prison. 51 kidnapping bands have been dismantled and 377 victims released. However, the crime wave goes on with many vulnerable families now seeking

sanctuary in U.S. cross-border communities.

C. Corruption is pervasive and ruins the trust among Mexican law enforcement institutions at local, state, and Federal level. Corruption reaches into the U.S. Embassy with a DEA Mexican national employee recently arrested for being an agent of the Sinaloa Cartel. He was corrupted by a \$450,000.00 bribe. Six high-ranking law enforcement officials have recently been arrested and the current and former Director of the Interpol Office in Mexico indicted. . . .

D. Mexican law enforcement authorities and soldiers face heavily armed drug gangs with high-powered military automatic weapons. Perhaps 90% of these weapons are smuggled across the U.S. border. They are frequently purchased from licensed U.S. gun dealers in Texas, Arizona, and California. AK-47 assault rifles are literally bought a hundred at a time and illegally brought into Mexico. Mexican authorities routinely seize BOXES of unopened automatic military weapons. The confiscation rates by Mexican law enforcement of hand grenades, RPGs, and AK-47s are at the level of wartime battlefield seizures. It is hard to understand the seeming indifference and incompetence of U.S. authorities at state and Federal level to such callous disregard for a national security threat to a neighboring democratic state. We would consider it an act of warfare from a sanctuary state if we were the victim.

The bottom line—the U.S. is ineffective and unresponsive to Mexican concerns about weapons, bulk cash, and precursor chemicals flowing south into Mexico from the United States—with a blow-torch effect on the security of the Mexican people.

E. The Council on Hemispheric Affairs states that: “Due to pervasive corruption at the highest levels of the Mexican Government, and the almost effortless infiltration of the porous security forces by the cartel, an ultimate victory by the state is uncertain.”

## 7. The Security Forces

A. There is no shortage of courage among Mexican Security Forces. More than 475 police and soldiers have been murdered during the President Calderón offensive to reclaim the streets and rural areas. More than 218,000 prisoners crowd the 455 penal facilities. Of Mexico’s 390,000 police, only 26,000 or 6.8% are Federal. The 39.8% of the force who are Municipal Police (more than 2,600 separate police forces) are badly trained, poorly equipped and frequently corrupt or intimidated. Essential law enforcement tools are lacking.

For example, there is no national registry of police officers nor is there a national registry of vehicle registrations or license plates.

B. The Mexican people believe the justice system is corrupt and ineffective. Mexican police regularly obtain information through torture and prosecutors use this evidence in courts. The suspect is deemed guilty until proven innocent. Most ominously—the Mexican people are losing faith in the system. . . . There is 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.

C. The Mexican Armed Forces (225,000 personnel) are one of the most trusted institutions in the nation. In a general sense they are disciplined, reliable, courageous, and responsive to civilian leadership. Clearly the Armed Forces are also subject to penetration—and also subject to individual intimidation or corruption. . . .

D. The bottom line—the drug cartels cannot defeat the government through direct violent confrontation. The Armed Forces in particular can at any point on the ground or at sea confront and dismantle a direct threat to the security forces. The most effective tool of the criminal cartels is narco-terrorism—and corruption and intimidation of the populace to convince the political authorities to remain passive in the face of criminal behavior.

## 8. The Strategy—The Way Ahead

A. President Calderón has charted a bold and heroic path for the state. His senior law enforcement officer Secretary Genaro García Luna, has placed his life on the line. The Federal police motto is *Ni un paso atras* (Not one step back). Hundreds of law enforcement officers have been murdered. They have seized massive quantities of contraband from these criminal threat forces. (70,000 kilograms of cocaine, 3,700 tons of marijuana, \$304 million, 28,000 weapons, 2000 hand grenades, 3 million rounds of ammo.) President Calderón has for the first time in Mexican history boldly used the tool of extradition to the U.S. (83 major drug criminals sent North.)

B. The strategy articulated by Mexican Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora is to break up the four major drug cartels into 50 smaller entities and take away their firepower and huge financial resources. The senior Mexican leadership have tried to organize the ten U.S. and Mexican Border States to form active

cross-border partnerships for law enforcement and drug prevention cooperation. . . .

C. Finally—we have the promising U.S.-Mexican Merida Initiative. However, this vital program is underfunded and slow to be implemented. Significant cross-border law enforcement and justice system cooperation remains inadequate.

## **9. Summary**

A. Much is at stake for future U.S. economic and national security policy from 2009 through 2017. A stable, economically healthy, and law-based Mexican neighbor is fundamental to U.S. expectations of prosperity and peace within North America. The drug menace and drug addiction is central to much of the U.S. criminal and social malignancy that has put more than 2 million Americans behind bars, clogged our courts, and placed enormous burdens on our health system.

B. Now is the time, during the opening months of a new U.S. Administration, to jointly commit to a fully resourced major partnership as political equals of the Mexican government. We must jointly and respectfully cooperate to address the broad challenges our two nations face. Specifically, we must support the Government of Mexico's efforts to confront the ultra-violent drug cartels. We must do so in ways that are acceptable to the Mexican polity and that take into account Mexican sensitivities to sovereignty. The United States Government cannot impose a solution. The political will is present in Mexico to make the tough decisions that are required to confront a severe menace to the rule of law and the authority of the Mexican state. Where our assistance can be helpful, we must provide it. The challenge is so complex that it will require sustained commitment and attention at the highest levels of our two governments. We cannot afford to fail.