

# DEA Congressional Testimony

*Statement by:*  
**Donnie Marshall**  
**Drug Enforcement Administration**  
**United States Department of Justice**

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Chairman Hastert, Chairman Grassley, members of the subcommittee and the caucus: I appreciate the opportunity to appear today on the subject of Mexico, Counternarcotics efforts and our cooperation with Mexico. My comments today will be limited to an objective assessment of the law enforcement issues involving organized crime and drug trafficking problems with specific attention on Mexico and Colombia, and their cooperation with U.S. law enforcement. This hearing is extremely timely, and during my testimony I will provide the subcommittee and the caucus with

a full picture of how organized crime groups from Colombia and Mexico operate and affect so many aspects of life in America today.

It is important to demonstrate at the outset why the threat from international drug syndicates is so ominous, and why the United States needs cooperative law enforcement programs in Colombia and Mexico in order to successfully counter the scourge of drugs inside the U.S. Our law enforcement efforts must be compatible with the challenge posed by these syndicates. We must be able to attack the leadership of international drug trafficking systems, through their command and control functions, which is directing the organized drug trafficking activities in this country.

Many phrases have been used to describe the complex and sophisticated international drug trafficking groups operating out of Colombia and Mexico, and frankly, the somewhat respectable titles of "cartel" or "federation" mask the true identity of these vicious, destructive entities. The Cali organization, and the four largest drug trafficking organizations in Mexico are simply organized crime groups. They are not legitimate businessmen as the word "cartel" implies, nor are they "federated" into a legitimate conglomerate. These syndicate leaders--the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers in Colombia to Amado Carrillo-Fuentes, Juan Garcia -Abrego, Miguel Caro-Quintero, and the Arellano-Felix brothers in Mexico are simply the 1990's versions of the mob leaders U.S. law enforcement has fought since shortly after the turn of this century.

But these organized crime leaders are far more dangerous and influential, and have a greater impact on our day-to-day lives than did their domestic predecessors. While organized crime in the United States during the 1950's through the 1970's affected certain aspects of American life, its influence pales in comparison to the violence, corruption, and power that today's drug syndicates wield. These individuals undeniably influence the choices that too many Americans make about where to live, or where they send their children to school. The drugs and the attendant violence which accompanies the drug trade, have reached into American communities across the country and have robbed many Americans of the dreams they once cherished.

Traditional organized crime in the United States was addressed over time, but only after Americans recognized the dangers it posed to our way of life. But it did not happen overnight. American organized crime was exposed to the light of day systematically, stripping away the pretense that mob leaders were anonymous businessmen. Today, the organized crime, as we knew it in the United States, has been eviscerated, a fragment of what it once was.

At the height of its power, organized crime in this nation was consolidated in the hands of a few major families whose key players lived in this nation, and were within reach of our criminal justice system. All decisions made by these organized crime leaders were made within the United States. Orders were carried out on U.S. soil. While it was not easy to build cases against the mob leaders, law enforcement knew that once a good case was made against a boss, he could be located within the U.S., arrested, and sent to jail.

That is not the case with today's organized criminal groups. They are strong, sophisticated, and destructive organizations operating on a global scale. In places like Cali, Colombia, and Guadalajara, Mexico, even operational decisions are made, such as where to ship cocaine, which cars their workers in the U.S. should rent, which apartments should be leased, which markings should be on each cocaine package, which contract murders should be ordered, which officials should be bribed, and how much. They send thousands of workers into the United States who answer to them via daily faxes, cellular phone, or pagers. These workers carry out murders within the United States on orders from the top leadership. These syndicate bosses have at their disposal airplanes, boats, vehicles, radar, communications equipment, and weapons, in quantities which rival the capabilities of some legitimate governments. Whereas previous organized crime leaders were millionaires, the Cali drug traffickers and their counterparts from Mexico are billionaires.

It is difficult---sometimes nearly impossible---for U.S. law enforcement to locate and arrest these leaders without the assistance of law enforcement in other countries. Their communications are encrypted and they intimidate, murder or corrupt public officials and law enforcement officers. These sophisticated criminal groups cannot thrive unless law enforcement officials have been paid bribes, and witnesses fear for their lives. Later in my testimony I will discuss some of these problems in greater detail. It is frustrating for all of us in law enforcement that the leaders of these criminal organizations, although well known and indicted repeatedly, have not been located, arrested, or prosecuted.

The international drug syndicates operating in Mexico and those in Colombia are interconnected. We cannot discuss the situation in Mexico today without looking at the evolution of the groups from Colombia --- how they began, what their status is today, and how the groups from Mexico have learned important lessons from them, thereby becoming major trafficking organizations in their own right.

During the late 1980's, the traffickers from Cali assumed greater power as their predecessors from the Medellin self-destructed. Where the Medellin traffickers were brash and publicly violent in their activities, the criminals from Cali, labored behind the pretense of legitimacy, by posing as businessmen carrying out their professional obligations. The Cali leaders --- the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers, Jose Santacruz Londono, Helmer "Pacho" Herrera-Buitrago--- amassed fortunes and ran their multi-billion dollar cocaine businesses from high rises and ranches in Colombia. Miguel Rodriguez Orejuela and his associates composed what was, until then, the most powerful international organized crime group in history. They employed 727 aircraft to ferry drugs to Mexico, from where they were smuggled into the United States, and then return to Colombia with the money from U.S. drug sales. Using landing areas in Mexico, they were able to evade U.S. law enforcement officials and develop important alliances with transportation and distribution experts in Mexico.

With intense law enforcement pressure focused on the Cali leadership by the brave men and women in the Colombian National Police during 1995 and 1996, all of the top leadership of the Cali syndicate are either in jail, or dead. The fine work done by General Serrano and other CNP officers is a testament to the commitment and dedication of Colombia's law enforcement officials in the face of great personal danger, and a government in which drug corruption has penetrated to the highest levels. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has profound admiration for General Serrano and we salute his deep personal commitment to surmounting the grave obstacles in front of the CNP. General Serrano and the men and women of the CNP are heroes in anti-drug efforts.

Since the Cali leaders' imprisonment, on sentences that in no way match the severity of their crimes, traffickers from Mexico have taken on greater prominence. The alliance between the Colombian traffickers and the organizations from Mexico has benefited both sides. Traditionally, the traffickers from Mexico have long been involved in smuggling marijuana, heroin, and cocaine into the United States, and had established solid distribution routes throughout the nation. Because the Cali syndicate was concerned about the security of their loads, they brokered a commercial deal with the Mexican traffickers, in order to reduce their potential losses.

This agreement entailed the Colombians moving cocaine from the Andean region to the Mexican organizations, who then assumed the responsibility of delivering the cocaine to the United States. Now, trafficking groups from Mexico are routinely paid for their services in multi-ton quantities of cocaine, making them formidable cocaine traffickers in their own right.

About half of the cocaine entering the United States continues to come from Colombia through Mexico and across U.S. border points of entry. Most of the cocaine enters the United States in privately-owned vehicles and commercial trucks. These organizations now control the distribution of cocaine into the Western half and the Midwest of the United States. There is new evidence that

indicates traffickers in Mexico have gone directly to sources of cocaine in Bolivia and Peru in order to circumvent Colombian middlemen. In addition to the supply of cocaine entering the U.S., trafficking organizations from Mexico are responsible for producing and trafficking thousands of pounds of methamphetamine. They have been major distributors of heroin and marijuana in the U.S. since the 1970's.

## **ORGANIZED CRIME SYSTEMS BASED IN MEXICO**

The command and control element for an increasingly large portion of the drug distribution in the United States is based in Mexico. These syndicate leaders are well-known to U.S. law enforcement, and most of them have been charged in numerous indictments in the U.S. The leaders of these criminal organizations are living with extraordinary wealth in Mexico, and have so far escaped apprehension by law enforcement. In order to understand the tragic impact these groups have on citizens, families, and neighborhoods, and sometimes entire communities in the U.S., we need to examine, in detail, who they are and how they operate:

***THE CARRILLO-FUENTES ORGANIZATION:*** Amado Carrillo-Fuentes, based in Ciudad Juarez, was known as the "Lord of the Skies" because of his transporting plane loads of cocaine for Colombian traffickers. Amado Carrillo-Fuentes had extensive ties to a number of officials in law enforcement and the military, up to and including the former Commissioner of the now-disbanded INCD (the National Institute to Combat Drugs) General Gutierrez-Rebollo. Before his death, in July 1997, and after the arrest of General Gutierrez-Rebollo in March, Amado Carrillo-Fuentes was under pressure from law enforcement in the U.S. and Mexico. As a consequence, he had made efforts to disguise his appearance through cosmetic surgery and relocate some of his operations to Chile.

The Carrillo-Fuentes organization is based in Juarez, and is associated with the Cali Rodriguez-Orejuela organization and the Ochoa brothers of Medellin. This organization, which is also involved in heroin and marijuana trafficking, handles large cocaine shipments from Colombia. Their regional bases in Guadalajara, Hermosillo, and Torreon serve as storage locations where later, the drugs are moved closer to the border for eventual shipment into the United States. The scope of the Carrillo-Fuentes network is staggering, reportedly forwarding \$20-30 million to Colombia for each major operation, and generating tens of millions of dollars in profits per week.

Two major DEA investigations in 1997 demonstrated the impact that the Carrillo-Fuentes cocaine distribution organization has on American citizens. The first investigation, Operation RECIPROCITY, showed that just one Juarez-based organized crime cell shipped over 30 tons of cocaine into American communities and returned over \$100 million in profits to Mexico in less than two years. Distribution of multi-ton quantities of cocaine, once dominated by the Cali-based drug traffickers, is now controlled from Mexico in cities such as Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Diego, San Francisco, and Seattle.

A second investigation, known as Operation LIMELIGHT, targeted a Chicago-based transportation and distribution cell of the Carrillo-Fuentes organization. This cell was responsible for the monthly smuggling of at least one and a half tons of cocaine from Mexico to the U.S. The investigation resulted in the arrest of a Mexican distribution cell operating in New York which delivered hundreds of kilograms of cocaine to Dominican and Colombian traffickers in the New York area. The investigation culminated with the seizure of over 1,600 kilograms of cocaine and \$1.3 million from the Mexican organization in New York.

These investigations revealed the manner in which new drug trafficking routes are established by the Carrillo-Fuentes cells in the U.S. This trend is constantly growing and changing. Despite increased intelligence efforts targeting the command and control and identifying the leaders of the Carrillo-Fuentes organization, key lieutenants have not been apprehended in Mexico. For example, Eduardo Gonzalez-Quirarte has been identified as a key manager for the Carrillo-Fuentes organization along the border. He is responsible for arranging shipments of cocaine across the border and ensuring that money is transferred back into Mexico. He has links to corrupt elements of the Mexican military and the law enforcement community which makes him a significant leader in future Carrillo-Fuentes operations.

Like their Colombian counterparts, the Carrillo-Fuentes traffickers use sophisticated technology and counter surveillance methods. The syndicate employs state of the art communications devices to conduct business. We have recently documented attempts by the Carrillo-Fuentes Organization to expand its operations into the lucrative East Coast market that has traditionally been dominated by traffickers from Colombia.

Since Amado Carrillo-Fuentes' death in July 1997, a violent power struggle has ensued as rivals and associates sorted out business arrangements and turf in an effort to control the lucrative Juarez smuggling corridor. Another major Mexican trafficking organization, the Munoz-Talavera organization, is apparently attempting to capitalize on the perceived weakened state of the Amado Carrillo-Fuentes organization. The ensuing power struggle has resulted in over fifty drug-related murders in the Juarez area since Amado Carrillo-Fuentes' death. Approximately 30 of these murders occurred in the last 4 months of 1997. The victims of these murders have included four doctors, two Attorneys, and one Federal Comandante. The violence associated with these murders was never more apparent than during the gangland style machine-gun shooting at the Max Fin Restaurant in August of 1997. This shooting resulted in the murders of six (6) known drug traffickers and two innocent bystanders.

On February 19, 1998, another murder occurred in Juarez as a result of this ongoing turf battle. Attorney Jesus Emilio Lopez Rose was gunned down in a vehicle while travelling on a Juarez city street. His vehicle was hit from the rear by AK-47 automatic gunfire and .45 caliber rounds. Lopez died instantly in the attack. His driver was wounded in the assault and fled the scene on foot.

**THE CARO-QUINTERO ORGANIZATION:** Miguel Caro-Quintero's organization is based in Sonora, Mexico and focuses its attention on trafficking cocaine and marijuana. Miguel, along with two of his other brothers, Jorge and Genaro, run the organization. Miguel was arrested in 1992, and the U.S. and Mexican Governments cooperated in a prosecution, in Mexico. Unfortunately, that effort was thwarted when Miguel was able to use a combination of threats and bribes to have his charges dismissed by a federal judge in Hermosillo under questionable circumstances. He has operated freely since that time.

The Caro-Quintero organization specializes primarily in the cultivation, production, and distribution of marijuana, a major cash-crop for drug groups from Mexico. Despite its specialization in marijuana cultivation and distribution, like the other major drug organizations in Mexico, this group is polydrug in nature. It also transports and distributes cocaine and methamphetamine.

Caro-Quintero's drug-smuggling is based on his capability to coordinate air operations utilizing small single-engine aircraft to transport marijuana and cocaine from the interior of Mexico to the northern state of Sonora, which borders southern Arizona. There is repeated information that indicates a variety of municipal, state, and federal officials in Mexico are bribed to allow Caro-Quintero's organization access to airfields throughout the vast desert of Sonora.

Once the narcotics are stored in the northern zone of Sonora, the organization utilizes horses and human backpackers to smuggle multi-ton quantities per month over desolate sections of the international border, spanning from San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora and Yuma, Arizona in the west to Agua Prieta, Sonora, and Douglas, Arizona in the East.

The July 31, 1997 arrest of one of Miguel's immediate relatives, identified as Alberto Caro-Quintero, further illustrated this organization's capability to smuggle ton quantities of cocaine. The investigation leading to Alberto's arrest in Cancun revealed that he was planning to transport 1,500 kilograms of cocaine from the Gulf coast of Mexico to Sonora for ultimate destination in the United States.

**THE ARELLANO-FELIX ORGANIZATION:** Based in Tijuana, this organization is one of the most powerful, violent, and aggressive trafficking groups in the world. More than any other major trafficking organization from Mexico, it extends directly from law enforcement and judicial systems in Mexico, to street-level individuals in the United States. The Arellano-Felix Organization is responsible for the transportation, importation, and distribution of multi-ton quantities of cocaine and marijuana, as well as large quantities of heroin and methamphetamine in the United States.

The Arellano-Felix Organization has been responsible for the murder of several Mexican law enforcement officials, journalists, and informants, and for threats directed towards DEA/FBI Agents and a U.S. Prosecutor. They are an extremely powerful and aggressive organization which utilizes San Diego and Tijuana street gangs as assassins and enforcers. They have been known to utilize sophisticated communications equipment, conduct counter-surveillance, and maintain a well-equipped and well-trained security force.

The Arellano-Felix Organization has been traditionally thought to control drug distribution in the western US. Interviews of defendant witnesses reveal that the Arellano-Felix Organization is responsible for the importation and distribution of multiton quantities of cocaine annually to these areas. However, recent DEA investigations have shown that the Arellano-Felix Organization has expanded its control, and they are now transporting and distributing drugs to trafficking organizations in Chicago, Kentucky, Ohio, and New York.

The Arellano-Felix Organization pays enormous bribes to Mexican law enforcement officials. Witness statements indicate that the Arellano-Felix Organization is paying as much as \$1 million every week to Federal, state and local officials in Mexico to ensure they will not interfere with the group's drug trafficking activities.

Ramon Eduardo Arellano-Felix, considered the most violent brother, organizes and coordinates protection details over which he exerts absolute control. On September 11, 1997, he was added to the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List. Ramon was indicted in San Diego, California, on charges relating to importation and conspiracy to import cocaine and marijuana. A Joint Task Force, composed of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and state and local officers, in San Diego, California, is continuing its investigation into the Arellano-Felix's, to include Benjamin Arellano-Felix. Our goal is to investigate and prosecute the entire Arellano-Felix Organization as a continuing criminal enterprise that has sent multiple tons of cocaine from Mexico into the United States in this decade.

**JESUS AMEZCUA:** The Amezcua-Contreras brothers, operating out of Guadalajara, Mexico, head a methamphetamine production and trafficking organization with global dimensions.

Directed by Jesus Amezcua, and supported by his brothers, Adan and Luis, the Amezcua organization is probably the largest smuggler of ephedrine and clandestine producer of methamphetamine in the world today. Adan was recently arrested in Mexico, on weapons charges, not drug charges. Jose Osorio-Cabrera, a fugitive from a Los Angeles investigation until his arrest in Bangkok, was a major ephedrine purchaser for the Amezcua's. The Amezcua Organization obtains large quantities of the precursor ephedrine, utilizing contacts in Thailand and India, which they supply to methamphetamine laboratories in Mexico and the United States.

This organization has placed trusted associates in the United States to move ephedrine to Mexican methamphetamine traffickers operating in the United States. Amezcua-connected groups are now operating in California, Texas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Iowa, Arkansas, and North Carolina.

The Amezcua's involvement in the U.S. methamphetamine trade was exemplified by a recently concluded DEA multi-district wiretap investigation that targeted a significant U.S. methamphetamine organization. The investigation, known as Operation META, proved that the domestic organization had links to the Amezcua-Contreras organization in Mexico. The Amezcua Organization supplied the U.S. elements of the organization not only with methamphetamine and precursor chemicals, but also with some of their cocaine. The Amezcua's precursor chemicals came from Colima, Mexico. Associates of the Amezcua organization were also involved in producing methamphetamine in Los Angeles, California.

This investigation resulted in the arrest of 101 defendants, seizure of 133 pounds of methamphetamine, dismantlement of three methamphetamine laboratories, seizure of 90 gallons of methamphetamine solution (converts to 270 - 540 pounds of methamphetamine), 1,100 kilograms of cocaine and assets totaling over \$2.25 million. One of the seized laboratories was operating within 200 yards of a day care center and private school; the other was located in an equestrian center in Acton, California. These laboratories' estimated production capabilities exceeded 300 pounds of methamphetamine. Showing the blatant disregard for public safety of this organization, the individuals responsible for the production and manufacturing of the methamphetamine fled the area, but continued the potentially dangerous cooking process.

## **IMPACT OF THE MEXICAN TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS**

The violence that is an essential part of these ruthless and powerful organizations impacts innocent people who live in the United States. The traffickers' willingness to murder and intimidate witnesses and public officials has allowed these organizations to develop into the present day threat they are to the citizens of the United States and Mexico. Drug traffickers continue their brazen attacks against both U.S. and Mexican law enforcement officials and their sources of information.

### ***Examples of drug-related violence on both sides of the border include:***

- In April, 1997, two agents assigned to Mexico's new Organized Crime Unit were kidnapped and killed. The agents, who had investigated Carrillo- Fuentes, were kidnapped on April 4 and found on April 25 in the trunk of a car in Mexico City. Both had been bound, gagged, beaten, and shot in the face. Reportedly, the two agents were killed because of the unit's raid on the home of Carrillo-Fuentes' son. The OCU's primary function is to implement the modern evidence gathering techniques provided for by the new Organized Crime Law.
- On July 17, 1997, Hector Salinas-Guerra, a primary witness in a McAllen, Texas trial of a major Mexican marijuana drug trafficking organization, was kidnapped by members of

this organization at gunpoint from his place of business in McAllen, Texas. His tortured, badly decomposed body was found on July 22, 1997 in an open field in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Salinas was to testify in a trial that was scheduled to begin on July 21, 1997. Subsequently, on July 25, 1997, a jury in McAllen, Texas reached a verdict of acquittal for the seven defendants in this case. This abduction and murder highlights the violent nature of drug trafficking along the U.S.- Mexico border and the threats posed not only to U.S. and Mexican law officials, but also to cooperating sources and witnesses.

- On November 14, 1997, two Mexican military officers assigned to the Federal Judicial Police in Tecate, Baja California Norte were shot and killed while travelling in an official Mexican government vehicle from Tecate to Tijuana. Upon arriving at the federal court building in Tijuana, the officers' vehicle was ambushed and sprayed with gunshots from AK-47 and 9mm weapons. The two officers worked in the same office that was responsible for the November 8, 1997, arrest of Everado Arturo Paez-Martinez, a high-ranking member of the Arellano-Felix drug trafficking organization.
- On November 23, 1997, a shooting incident occurred at the Nogales, Sonora, Mexico port of entry that left one Mexican Customs official dead, two defendants and one other Mexican official wounded. The incident began when a secondary inspection of a blue and gray van revealed a box that contained \$123,000. An accomplice appeared, joined the passenger and, together, they grabbed the box and ran. Both subjects were subdued and then taken to the Mexican Customs office for processing. About 20 minutes later, eight gunmen, armed with AK47 rifles, 9mm and 45 caliber handguns, arrived at the Customs office and a gun battle erupted. The Nogales, Arizona port of entry was also hit with gunfire from the Mexican side, but no injuries were inflicted on the U.S. side of the border.
- On January 27, 1998, MFJP Agent Juan Carlos De La Vega-Reyes and his brother Francisco were shot to death at the Hotel Las Americas in Guadalajara, Mexico. Agent De La Vega-Reyes was on temporary duty assignment in Guadalajara from Juarez.
- On February 12, 1998, FEADS Commandante Rodolfo Blancas, and several task force officers were conducting an investigation into a suspected stash house for drugs in Nogales, Sonora. While working to corroborate information on the location, they were fired upon by two individuals. The FEADS returned fire and arrested one of the assailants identified as Roberto Ruiz Kempton.

When violent acts such as these do not result in arrest, conviction, and punishment, the impact on the law enforcement community and honest citizens is devastating. Few citizens are willing to cooperate when police commandantes, prosecutors, elected officials, and members of the free press are gunned down in broad daylight. Solving drug assassinations in Mexico will increase the opportunity for successful law enforcement.

## **CORRUPTION AND INTIMIDATION: TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

The corruption of public officials and law enforcement officials is critical to the power of organized crime. The criminal organizations based in Mexico have placed a major emphasis on the corruption of public officials and have demonstrated an ability to corrupt officials serving in high level positions in both law enforcement and the military. Drug-related corruption is probably the single greatest obstacle that law enforcement faces in its global battle against international drug trafficking. President Zedillo has recognized drug-related corruption as a threat to Mexican National security and recently announced a national initiative to fight crime, violence, and corruption.



**The following cases indicate how far these crime lords will go to corrupt public officials so that they can continue their trade.**

- In February 1997, 40 military officers were arrested as part of the Gutierrez- Rebollo investigation. Not one has been brought to trial or convicted to date.
- General Alfredo Navarro-Lara was arrested, by Mexican authorities on March 17, 1997, for making bribes on behalf of the Arellano-Felix organization. Navarro-Lara approached the Delegado for Tijuana with an offer from the Arellano-Felix Organization for bribe money in the amount of \$1.5 million per month -- or \$18 million per year.
- Colonel Jose Luis Lopez Rubalcava, who had been Director of the Federal Judicial Antidrug Police under INCD, was arrested in 1997 on charges in connection with 2.5 tons of cocaine seized in Sombrerete, Mexico in 1995.
- The December 1997 appointment, by the Mayor of Mexico City, of Jesus Carrola-Gutierrez as Chief of the Mexico City Judicial Police was cut short when his well known ties to drug traffickers and human rights violations became a public issue.
- On January 29, 1998, the Organized Crime Unit (OCU) arrested three Morelos State Judicial Police assigned to the State's Anti-Kidnapping Unit. They are suspected of conducting kidnappings and torture of numerous individuals in the Morelos area. They are identified as Comandante's Armando Martinez-Salgado, Miguel Espinoza-Lopez, and Agent Jacinto Arismendi. The three were arrested as they were preparing to discard the body of Jorge Nava Aviles. Morelos State Attorney General Carlos Peredo-Merlo was also detained and questioned in this incident.
- On February 23, 1998, Luis Angulo Soto was arrested in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico in connection with the May 21, 1997 theft of 476 kilograms of cocaine from the PGR office in San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora.

In order to overcome the problem of widespread corruption in law enforcement, the Mexican Government replaced civilian authorities with military officers. Recent experience has shown that military officers, once exposed to the extraordinary opportunities for corruption are equally susceptible as civilians.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION WITH MEXICO**

The Government of Mexico has made some progress by reconstituting its drug law enforcement infrastructure since the disclosure of the scandalous drug corruption of General Gutierrez-Rebollo last year. General Gutierrez-Rebollo was convicted and sentenced in Mexico on March 3, 1998, to thirteen years and nine months in jail for unauthorized use of firearms. There are currently four additional criminal charges pending against Gutierrez-Rebollo. The Mexican Government must also be credited with placing the law enforcement pressure on the Amado Carrillo-Fuentes organization that led, at least in part, to the death of Amado Carrillo-Fuentes, although his organization continues to operate, and a reign of violence has been unleashed as his would-be successors battle for control of the organization.

The Mexican Government has also made progress in several law enforcement cases. Former Jalisco state Governor Flavio Romero de Velasco was jailed on January 24, 1998 in connection with his ties to drug lords Rigoberto Gaxiola Medina and Jorge Abrego Reyna Castro. Romero is accused of laundering drug money, accepting bribes, and providing a safe haven for drug lords in his western state between 1977 and 1983. In February 1998, DEA arrested Jorge Alejandro Abrego Reyna Castro, in Phoenix. The Mexican government had ordered Abrego Reyna's arrest on criminal association and money laundering charges in connection with the case of former Jalisco governor Flavio Romero de Velasco, and requested his extradition. The case is pending,

with the U.S. government continuing to cooperate with Mexican counterparts. The case is a good example of how law enforcement can cooperate when criminals are identified.

The Mexican Government secured extradition to Mexico of Alfredo Hodoyan Palacios and Emilio Valdez Mainero, to stand trial as paid killers for the Tijuana cartel. Valdez was a top operative of the Arellano-Felix Organization. Hodoyan is wanted in connection with the broad-daylight assassination of top federal drug prosecutor Ernesto Ibarra Santes in September 1996. The case was developed in cooperation between the Mexican Attorney General and U.S. prosecutors in San Diego. The two had fled to the United States, seeking to frustrate Mexican justice. Hodoyan pled guilty on weapons charges, and is scheduled to be sentenced on April 30, 1998. On February 19, Valdez pled guilty in San Diego on conspiracy charges and possession of 50 kilograms of cocaine.

Unfortunately the Government of Mexico has made very little progress in the apprehension of known syndicate leaders who dominate the drug trade in Mexico and control a substantial share of the wholesale cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine markets in the United States. There have been a number of procedural changes as the Mexican Government restructures its institutions charged with enforcing the drug laws. New personnel have been brought in to replace corrupt or ineffective officials. However, none of these changes has yet produced significant results. The ultimate test of any progress is measured by successfully apprehending the leadership and bringing them to justice.

One promising program for cooperative law enforcement efforts with the Government of Mexico was a proposed series of Bilateral Border Task Forces (BTF's), although, they have never been fully implemented. The BTF's were totally dismantled after the arrest of General Gutierrez-Rebollo and are now being reconstituted. The lack of sufficient funding until recently left DEA bearing the full cost, which we continued through September, 1997. When the Mexican government began the vetting process, the BTF personnel were thoroughly overhauled. Corrupt officers were removed, but the replacements come with little or no law enforcement experience. By last December, 46 law enforcement officers had been fully screened, trained, and assigned to the BTF's, however, plans call for about 70 Mexican law enforcement officers.

## **PROSPECTS FOR PROGRESS**

A reconstitution of law enforcement institutions is under way in Mexico. This is a difficult and lengthy process. Several programs have been initiated, but the institution-building process is still in its infancy. There are now some individuals and small organizations with whom we are able to interact on specific cases. We limit this exchange, however, to individual cases when we are sure the information would not put our agents or sources of information at risk.

The Government of Mexico is attempting to build a reliable civilian law enforcement agency to replace the former anti-drug agency, INCD, which had been seriously corrupted at virtually every level. The new agency is called FEADS, Special Prosecuting Office for Crimes Against Health. The Organized Crime Unit (OCU), operating in the FEADS headquarters in Mexico City, was set up in 1997 pursuant to the Organized Crime Law passed in 1996. The DEA has provided assistance to the OCU in the development of personnel selection systems and have provided extensive narcotics enforcement training to the new OCU agents.

The problems of establishing a corruption-free law enforcement infrastructure are not insurmountable. However, it is essential that it be established because of the enormous damage these criminal organizations based in Mexico are causing to U.S. citizens. The only effective law enforcement strategy is to bring these criminals to justice and ensure they are punished in a

manner commensurate with their crimes. At present that is not occurring and, as a result, citizens of both the United States and Mexico are suffering greatly.

## **CONCLUSION**

The DEA remains committed to our primary goal of targeting and arresting the most significant drug traffickers in the world today. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners in other countries, to improve our cooperative efforts against international drug trafficking. The ultimate test of success will come when we bring to justice the drug lords who control their vast empires of crime which bring misery to the nations in which they operate. They must be arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced in their own countries or extradited to the United States to face American justice.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee and the Caucus today. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.