

Mexico's Policy in Countering Crimes Against the Nation's Health

By Jorge Carrillo-Olea

I wish to thank The Heritage Foundation for this opportunity to address its members and distinguished guests. We are well aware of the importance of this institution and we know about its remarkable work, so we are pleased to share with you information concerning the transformation and modernization efforts being undertaken by the President of Mexico, Carlos Salinas, and in particular about Mexico's endeavors to fight one of the most devastating scourges in the history of mankind.

The policy of the government of Mexico concerning drug addiction and related crimes is based upon its long standing humanistic belief that the protection of men's and women's physical and mental well-being is one of its highest priorities. Mexico is taking action based upon this conviction by protecting the health of the population and fulfilling in a responsible and cooperative way the commitments undertaken with the international community.

The actions taken by the government of President Salinas arise from the principle that man is the origin as well as the ultimate goal of society. The well-being of the individual members affects the well-being of society as a whole, so that a wholesome society can only be achieved by assuring the health of the individuals. If we believe that in a society each of its members is of such importance to the whole, then the governing bodies of the nation must concentrate in providing for the well-being of its individual members based on the premise that each person's role is society's beginning and end.

This line of thought comes from Mexico's humanistic tradition, which advocates the protection both of the individual and of personal freedom, and the needs that stem from a thriving economic and social development. For such purpose, Mexico has adopted provisions to protect its citizens and the social organization made possible by its historic progress toward higher stages of personal development.

National Security Issue. In Mexico, the problem of addiction and drug trafficking is faced as a national security issue that could undermine social structures and threaten our nation's institutions, and also as a potential obstacle to Mexico's ongoing relations with its neighbors to the north, and with Central America. Hence, Mexico has expressed its growing concern over the fast expanding traffic of cocaine and poppy cultivation in the Central American countries and has started a cooperation program with them. For such reasons, the national security policies must consider drug traffic as one of its main concerns.

In view of these considerations the Mexican government is fully committed to defend and preserve Mexico's national security. This is a belief which has been translated into an essential political decision, and The Mexican Program Against Drug Addiction and Health Related Crimes responds through organization and enforcement of its policies to what has become a social demand.

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The problem of the illegal traffic of narcotics and psychotropic substances is not a regional or an isolated problem, so its resolution cannot take place without the cooperation of the nations involved. Isolated and unilateral measures do nothing but transfer the problem from one latitude to another, which could just result in a stronger comeback. Therefore, it is essential that we understand that without international cooperation, little can be achieved.

SIX MAIN GUIDELINES:

- 1) All anti-drug operations carried out with absolute respect for human rights.
- 2) An increasing participation of all government departments with joint responsibilities on the subject, such as the Armed Forces and the Health and Education Ministries.
- 3) The inclusion of local governments in the task of crime prevention and prosecution within the limits of their jurisdiction.
- 4) The use of high technology equipment in all operations, so as to increase effectiveness and diminish the social friction that results from direct contact with the population.
- 5) The participation of the community in the solution of this problem, through their involvement in educational programs, medical assistance and crime prevention measures as well as the social rehabilitation and reincorporation of drug offenders into the mainstream of society.
- 6) Strengthening of cooperation with international multilateral organizations and with the countries involved in the consumption, production, traffic or financing of drugs.

Commitments with the International Community

First of all, I wish to recall that the Government of Mexico ratified on April 11, 1990, the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances — subscribed in Vienna — and is party to this important international legal instrument since it went into effect on November 11, 1990. Even before the Convention was enforced, Mexico complied with its provisions by amending its legislation accordingly. One example of this is the recently established article of the fiscal code, by which money laundering is now considered a crime.

In this same spirit, Mexico has amended the Federal Criminal Code, the General Law on Explosives and Firearms, the Federal Code of Criminal Procedure and the General Health Law.

Also in the framework of the Vienna convention, Mexico has subscribed bilateral cooperation agreements with sixteen countries — fourteen of them in the South American continent — to fight narcotics trafficking and drug dependency. The agreements with Belize, Canada, Chile, Guatemala, Peru, Venezuela and the United States have been duly ratified. The agreements with Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras and Jamaica are still pending ratification. Other agreements are still being negotiated. These agreements provide for the establishment of cooperation means either through the creation of joint commissions or through periodic meetings or reports; soon the Attorney General of Mexico will open another office attached to our Embassy in Costa Rica for dealing with Central American countries about this problem.

Due to the importance of having a compatible legal framework among nations, to ensure coherent and efficient multilateral and bilateral action on the subject, Mexico is actively participating in international fora and expert groups, working on issues related to money laundering and precursor chemicals. As a recognition of Mexico's anti-drug endeavors, The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission has designated Mexico as its chairman for the current year.

The Mexican-American bilateral relationship on drug trafficking matters is not only good, but is improving with each passing day. There has been a remarkable upgrading of the communication sustained between authorities of the two countries responsible for this difficult issue. We have moved away from a useless and aimless debate based on accusations concerning supply and demand. The stage of confrontation has been overcome, and we have engaged in a process of greater cooperation with absolute respect for our sovereignty rights.

The primary goals of this bilateral cooperation against drug trafficking, as I see it, must be focused on achieving reductions in the following areas:

- 1) Cocaine flow from third countries.
- 2) Production and trafficking of heroin and marijuana.
- 3) Transference of money from the U.S. to Mexico for laundering purposes or for financing illegal operations.
- 4) Shipments of weapons and precursor chemicals to Mexico.

The means to achieve these objectives are:

- ◆ **Improvement of the methods of coordination and cooperation.**
- ◆ **Increase in the amount and the quality of the information to be exchanged.**
- ◆ **Technical assistance in the areas of personnel training, intelligence gathering, telecommunications and interdiction of drug shipments.**

Our cooperation ties in this field are better than ever; and this is something that I can express with great pleasure and assurance. We are working at an excellent level of coordination with the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico and his staff. We also have a very productive relationship with Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, with Under Secretary of State for International Narcotics Matters Melvin Levinsky, with Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Ambassador Richard Schifter, with Customs Commissioner Carol Hallett, with Under Secretary of Defense Stephen Duncan, with Director of the Drug Enforcement Administration Robert Bonner and with Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation William Sessions.

We have recently resumed the dialogue with the White House Drug Control Policy Office, having established a promising relationship with Robert Martinez.

For the purpose of updating and improving its efficiency in this area, Mexico has fortified and modernized the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic by creating The Coordinating Office for Attention to Drug Related Crimes. To achieve its objectives, this Office seeks to increase the quantity and quality of the human and financial resources allocated to the anti-drug campaign. It is also tightening its links with other accountable agencies in this area within Mexico and with international institutions. This has strengthened the institution and has enabled us to carry out our responsibilities in a more timely and efficient manner.

A high priority has been given to the establishment of an intelligence system that will provide for better management of the information regarding the structure, *modus operandi* and financing of organized crime involved in drug trafficking.

Greater attention has also been given in the provision of scientific and technical support to the tasks of investigation and detection with the objective of making a more efficient interdiction of drug smuggling by land, air and sea. The success achieved in this goal will depend on higher qualified personnel, advanced technology and newer systems of communications, which will allow for a more effective and low-risk operation.

Mexico is also improving its methods of recruitment, evaluation and control of the federal judicial police and of the federal prosecutors, by way of education programs. Two regulatory systems have been approved for this purpose, the Bylaws for the Career Members of the Federal Attorney General's Office Prosecutors and the Bylaws for the Career Members of the Federal Judicial Police.

These measures have allowed Mexico to take advantage of the available resources and thus to be more effective in its response to the highly dynamic drug phenomena.

The following drug seizures have been made during the course of President Salinas' Administration (December 1, 1988 to May 1991): 97.4 metric tons of cocaine; 684.1 kilograms of opium gum; 416.2 kilograms of heroin. From January to May of this year, the amounts of the drug seized are: 15.3 tons of cocaine, 24.7 kilograms of opium gum, and 88.3 of heroin (see tables with additional statistics).

However, facing drug-related crimes is not a question of statistics. The significance of these figures must be seen in the light of human life and society. Those of us who serve the community must understand that it is for its sake that we make our best effort; we must also understand that the tasks we have been assigned have to be carried out in an efficient manner, but always with strict adherence to law and justice.

I wish to conclude by saying that in recent months the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic has been able to substantiate that it is possible to have a balance between efficiency and respect of human rights, as provided by our constitution. We have been efficient and we have not denied human rights. This represents progress that is essential, if difficult to measure, and which allows us to face the future with satisfaction and optimism. We have made a commitment with society to go further along this path.



**MEXICO ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE
GENERAL COORDINATION FOR ATTENTION
TO CRIMES AGAINST HEALTH**

SEIZURES	5/1/91- 5/24/91	1/1/91- 5/24/91	12/1/91- 5/24/91
	Amount	Amount	Amount
Cocaine (tons)	6.5	15.3	97.4
Herion (kgs.)	49.4	88.3	416.2
Opium Gum (kgs.)	10.5	24.7	684.1
Marijuana (tons)	4.1	47.4	1,015.3
Pills (units)	93	10,751	885,058
Weapons (units)	28	344	9,629
Vehicles:			
Land	115	827	7,366
Air	3	14	148
Sea	0	1	18
Laboratories	0	2	52
ERADICATION			
Marijuana (hectares)	79.7	496.9	8,612.1
Poppy (hectares)	35.3	1,796.5	8,810.9
ARRESTS			
Mexicans	353	3,733	39,223
Foreigners	13	34	559

Note: 1 hectare = 2.47 acres