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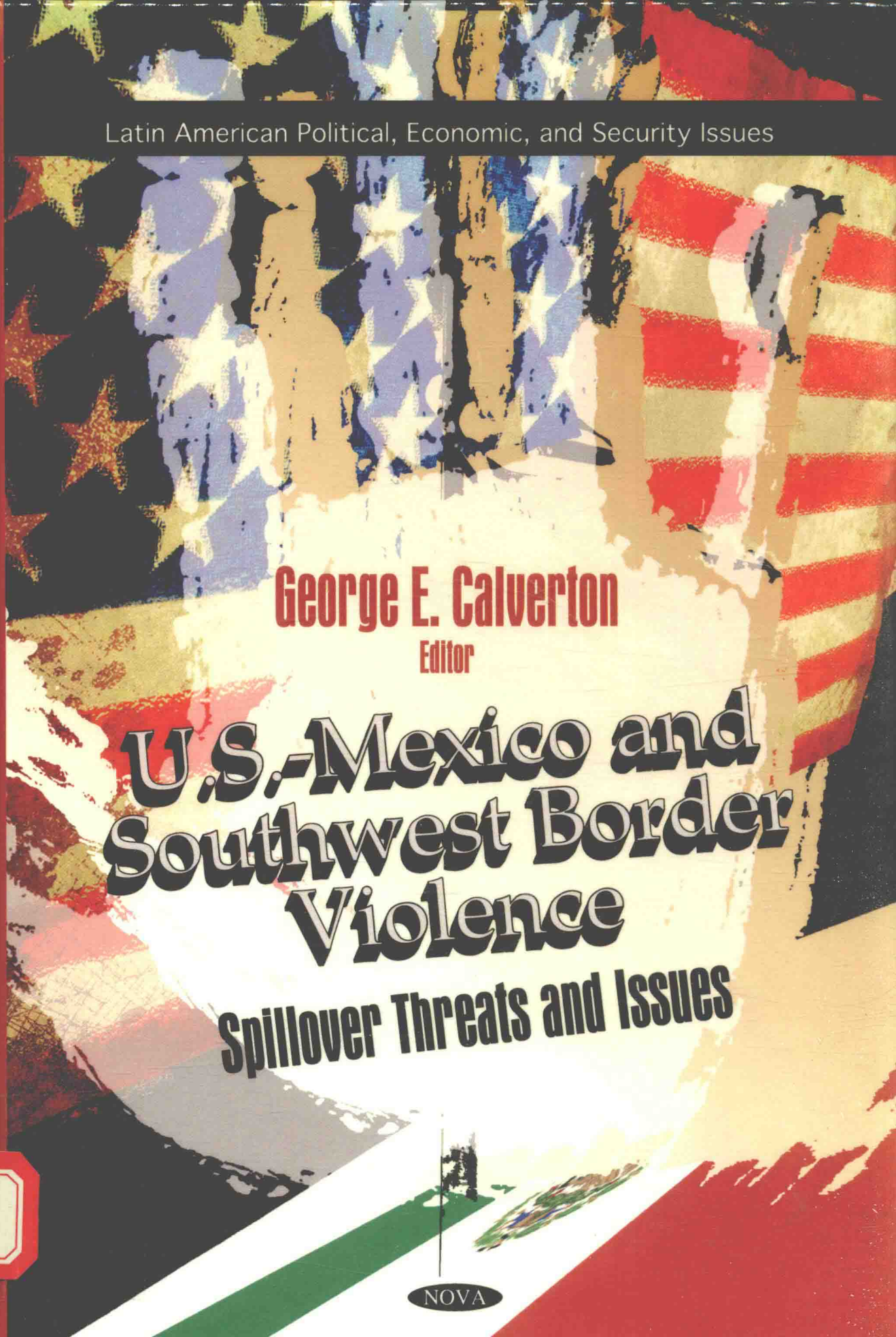

George E. Calverton
Editor

U.S.-Mexico and Southwest Border Violence

Spillover Threats and Issues

NOVA

LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SECURITY ISSUES

U.S.-MEXICO AND SOUTHWEST BORDER VIOLENCE: SPILLOVER THREATS AND ISSUES

GEORGE E. CALVERTON
EDITOR

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PREFACE

There has been a recent increase in the level of drug trafficking-related violence within and between the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. This violence has generated concern among U.S. policy makers that the violence in Mexico might spill over into the United States. The most recent threat assessment indicates that the Mexican drug trafficking organizations pose the greatest drug trafficking threat to the United States, and this threat is driven partly by U.S. demand for drugs. This book is an overview of the potential spillover violence and related issues between the U.S. and Mexico in the ongoing drug-trafficking operations on the Southwest borders.

Chapter 1 - There has been a recent increase in the level of drug trafficking-related violence within and between the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. This violence has generated concern among U.S. policy makers that the violence in Mexico might spill over into the United States. Currently, U.S. federal officials deny that the recent increase in drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico has resulted in a spillover into the United States, but they acknowledge that the prospect is a serious concern.

The most recent threat assessment indicates that the Mexican drug trafficking organizations pose the greatest drug trafficking threat to the United States, and this threat is driven partly by U.S. demand for drugs. Mexican drug trafficking organizations are the major suppliers and key producers of most illegal drugs smuggled into the United States across the Southwest border (SWB). The nature of the conflict between the Mexican drug trafficking organizations in Mexico has manifested itself, in part, as a struggle for control of these smuggling routes into the United States. Further, in an illegal marketplace—such as that of illicit drugs—where prices and profits are elevated due to the risks of operating outside the law, violence or the threat of violence becomes the primary means for settling disputes.

When assessing the potential implications of the increased violence in Mexico, one of the central concerns for Congress is the potential for what has been termed "spillover" violence—an increase in drug trafficking-related violence in United States. While the interagency community has defined spillover violence as violence targeted primarily at civilians and government entities— excluding trafficker-on-trafficker violence—other experts and scholars have recognized trafficker-on-trafficker violence as central to spillover. When defining and analyzing changes in drug trafficking-related violence within the United States to determine whether there has been (or may be in the future) any spillover violence, critical elements include who may be implicated in the violence (both perpetrators and victims), what type of

violence may arise, when violence may appear, and where violence may occur (both along the SWB and in the nation's interior).

Currently, no comprehensive, publicly available data exist that can definitively answer the question of whether there has been a significant spillover of drug trafficking-related violence into the United States. Although anecdotal reports have been mixed, U.S. government officials maintain that there has not yet been a significant spillover. In an examination of data that could provide insight into whether there has been a significant spillover in drug trafficking-related violence from Mexico into the United States, CRS analyzed violent crime data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report program. The data, however, do not allow analysts to determine what proportion of the violent crime rate is related to drug trafficking or, even more specifically, what proportion of drug trafficking-related violent crimes can be attributed to spillover violence. In conclusion, because the trends in the overall violent crime rate may not be indicative of trends in drug trafficking-related violent crimes, CRS is unable to draw definitive claims about trends in drug trafficking-related violence spilling over from Mexico into the United States.

Chapter 2 - Drug-related violence in Mexico has spiked in recent years as drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) have competed for control of smuggling routes into the United States. Drug trafficking issues are prominent in Mexico because the country has for at least four decades been among the most important producers and suppliers of heroin, marijuana and (later) methamphetamine to the U.S. market. Today it is the leading source of all three drugs and is now the leading transit country for cocaine coming from South America to the United States. Although previous Mexican governments had accommodated some drug trafficking in the country, when President Felipe Calderón came into office in December 2006 he made battling the Mexican drug trafficking organizations a top priority. He has raised spending on security and sent thousands of troops and federal police to combat the DTOs in states along the U.S.-Mexico border and throughout the country. In response to the government's crackdown, the DTOs have responded with escalating violence.

In recent years, drug trafficking violence in Mexico has claimed thousands of lives and reached a level of intensity and ferocity that has exceeded previous periods of drug-related violence. The government's intensified campaign against the DTOs resulted in changes in the structure of these criminal organizations. The seven major DTOs in Mexico have reconfigured. The fracturing of some of the most powerful drug trafficking syndicates and the reemergence of once powerful DTOs have led to bloody conflict within and among the DTOs. Today a small number of DTOs control the lucrative drug trafficking corridors through which drugs flow north from Mexico into the United States and high-powered firearms and cash flow south fueling the narcotics trade.

President Calderón has demonstrated what has been characterized as an unprecedented willingness to cooperate with the United States on counterdrug measures. In October 2007, both countries announced the Mérida Initiative to combat drug trafficking, gangs and organized crime in Mexico and Central America. To date, the U.S. Congress has appropriated a total of $700 million for Mexico under the Mérida Initiative. The program, which combines counternarcotics equipment and training with rule of law and justice reform efforts, is still in its initial stages of implementation.

The scope of the drug violence and its location—much of it in northern Mexico near the U.S.-Mexico border—has been the subject of intense interest in Congress. The 111th Congress has held more than a dozen hearings dealing with the increased violence in Mexico as well as

U.S. foreign assistance and border security efforts. This chapter examines the causes for the escalation of the violence in Mexico. It provides a brief overview of Mexico's counterdrug efforts, a description of the major DTOs, the causes and trends in the violence, the Calderón government's efforts to crackdown on the DTOs, and the objectives and implementation of the Mérida Initiative as a response to the violence in Mexico.

Chapters 3 through 17 feature testimony before the U. S. House of Representatives.

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Chapter 1

SOUTHWEST BORDER VIOLENCE: ISSUES IN IDENTIFYING AND MEASURING SPILLOVER VIOLENCE*

Jennifer E. Lake, Kristin M. Finklea, Mark Eddy, Celinda Franco, Chad C. Haddal, William J. Krouse and Mark A. Randol

SUMMARY

There has been a recent increase in the level of drug trafficking-related violence within and between the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. This violence has generated concern among U.S. policy makers that the violence in Mexico might spill over into the United States. Currently, U.S. federal officials deny that the recent increase in drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico has resulted in a spillover into the United States, but they acknowledge that the prospect is a serious concern.

The most recent threat assessment indicates that the Mexican drug trafficking organizations pose the greatest drug trafficking threat to the United States, and this threat is driven partly by U.S. demand for drugs. Mexican drug trafficking organizations are the major suppliers and key producers of most illegal drugs smuggled into the United States across the Southwest border (SWB). The nature of the conflict between the Mexican drug trafficking organizations in Mexico has manifested itself, in part, as a struggle for control of these smuggling routes into the United States. Further, in an illegal marketplace—such as that of illicit drugs—where prices and profits are elevated due to the risks of operating outside the law, violence or the threat of violence becomes the primary means for settling disputes.

When assessing the potential implications of the increased violence in Mexico, one of the central concerns for Congress is the potential for what has been termed "spillover" violence—

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an increase in drug trafficking-related violence in United States. While the interagency community has defined spillover violence as violence targeted primarily at civilians and government entities— excluding trafficker-on-trafficker violence—other experts and scholars have recognized trafficker-on-trafficker violence as central to spillover. When defining and analyzing changes in drug trafficking-related violence within the United States to determine whether there has been (or may be in the future) any spillover violence, critical elements include who may be implicated in the violence (both perpetrators and victims), what type of violence may arise, when violence may appear, and where violence may occur (both along the SWB and in the nation's interior).

Currently, no comprehensive, publicly available data exist that can definitively answer the question of whether there has been a significant spillover of drug trafficking-related violence into the United States. Although anecdotal reports have been mixed, U.S. government officials maintain that there has not yet been a significant spillover. In an examination of data that could provide insight into whether there has been a significant spillover in drug trafficking-related violence from Mexico into the United States, CRS analyzed violent crime data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report program. The data, however, do not allow analysts to determine what proportion of the violent crime rate is related to drug trafficking or, even more specifically, what proportion of drug trafficking-related violent crimes can be attributed to spillover violence. In conclusion, because the trends in the overall violent crime rate may not be indicative of trends in drug trafficking-related violent crimes, CRS is unable to draw definitive claims about trends in drug trafficking-related violence spilling over from Mexico into the United States.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a recent increase in the level of drug trafficking-related violence within and between the drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) in Mexico—a country with which the United States shares a nearly 2,000-mile border.[1] Some estimates have placed the number of drug trafficking-related deaths in Mexico since January 2007 at over 14,000.[2] Mexican media estimates have placed this death toll around 7,300 for 2009 alone. Further, Mexico's most violent city, Ciudad Juarez—with about 2,100 murders in 2009—is located directly across the border from El Paso, TX. This violence has generated concern among U.S. policy makers that the violence in Mexico might spill over into the United States. Currently, U.S. federal officials deny that the recent increase in drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico has resulted in a spillover into the United States, but they acknowledge that the prospect is a serious concern.[3] As an extension of its counternarcotics policy, as well as in response to the possibility of violence spillover, the U.S. government is supporting Mexico's crackdown campaign against drug cartels in Mexico through the Mérida Initiative.[4] It is also enhancing border security programs and reducing the movement of contraband (drugs, money, and weapons) in both directions across the Southwest border.

When discussing drug trafficking-related violence in the United States, one important point to note is that the *mere presence* of Mexican drug trafficking organizations in the United States is not in and of itself an indication of the *spillover* of Mexican drug trafficking-related violence in the United States. While their presence may be an indication of the drug

problem in general, it does not necessarily reflect activity directly tied to the recent violence seen in Mexico. The DTOs (Mexican and others) have been developing sophisticated illicit drug smuggling and trafficking networks for years. These activities engender violence and associated criminal activity, not just along the border but in other areas throughout the country, such as along domestic interstate distribution networks and in major metropolitan areas.[5] The United States has experienced levels of drug trafficking-related crime for many years.[6] The immediate question confronting policy makers is whether the increasing violence between the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico affects either the level or character of drug trafficking-related violence in the United States. Arelated question is whether evidence of spillover violence would necessitate a policy response from Congress qualitatively different from the current efforts to combat drug trafficking.

This chapter focuses on how policy makers would identify any spillover of drug trafficking-related violence into the United States. This chapter provides (1) an overview of Mexican drug trafficking organization structures, how they conduct business, and the relationship between the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico and their partnerships operating here in the United States; (2) a discussion of the illicit drug trade between Mexico and the United States, as well as a discussion of factors implicated in drug trafficking-related violence; (3) an analysis of the possible nature of any spillover violence that may arise, as well as issues involved in accurately identifying and measuring such violence; and (4) an evaluation of available crime rate data and a discussion of how this data may or may not reflect changes in drug trafficking-related crime. This chapter does not include a discussion of illicit drug enforcement issues,[7] nor does it include specific policy options that may be considered to stem a potential uptick in drug trafficking-related violence. The **Appendix** describes selected recent U.S. efforts undertaken to address the possibility of spillover violence and the drug control problem.

THE SOUTHWEST BORDER REGION AND THE ILLICIT DRUGTRADE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

The nature of the conflict between the Mexican DTOs in Mexico has manifested itself, in part, as a struggle for control of the smuggling routes into the United States.[8] Therefore, the prospects for spillover violence are most keenly anticipated in the Southwest border (SWB) region of the United States because the region represents the arrival zone for the vast majority of illicit drugs that are smuggled into the country. The size, geography, and climate of the SWB region have long presented unique challenges to law enforcement. The southern border with Mexico stretches nearly 2,000 miles in length, is sparsely populated in some areas, and is dotted with legitimate crossing points (ports of entry)—both large and small. *The National Drug Threat Assessment, 2008*, summarized the illicit drug threat scenario along the SWB in stark terms:

> The Southwest Border Region is the most significant national-level storage, transportation, and transshipment area for illicit drug shipments that are destined for drug markets throughout the United States. The region is the principal arrival zone for most drugssmuggled into the Unites States; more illicit drugs are seized along the Southwest

Border than in any other arrival zone. Mexican DTOs have developed sophisticated and expansive drug transportation networks extending from the Southwest Border to all regions of the United States. They smuggle significant quantities of illicit drugs through and between ports of entry (POEs) along the Southwest Border and store them in communities throughout the region. Most of the region's principal metropolitan areas, including Dallas, El Paso, Houston, Los Angeles, Phoenix, San Antonio, and San Diego, are significant storagelocations as well as regional and national distribution centers. Mexican DTOs and criminalgroups transport drug shipments from these locations to destinations throughout the country.[9]

The most recent threat assessment indicates that the Mexican drug trafficking organizations pose the greatest drug trafficking threat to the United States.[10] Demand for illicit drugs in the United States partly drives this threat.

Demand for Drugs in the United States

The United States is the largest consumer of illegal drugs and sustains a multi-billion dollar market in illegal drugs.[11] According to the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States is the largest consumer of Colombian-produced cocaine and heroin, as well as a large consumer of Mexican-produced heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine.[12]

The latest National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH),[13] in 2008, surveyed individuals aged 12 and older regarding their drug use during the previous month. Survey results indicated that an estimated 20.1 million individuals were current (past month) illegal drug users, representing 8% of this population. This percentage of users had remained relatively stable since 2002.[14] Among these drug users, marijuana was the most commonly used drug, with an estimated 15.2 million users (6.1% of the population), followed by nonmedical use of prescription-type psychotherapeutic drugs (6.2 million users, or 2.5% of individuals). The survey also estimated that there were 1.9 million users of cocaine (0.7% of Americans), as well as 1.1 million users of hallucinogens (0.4% of the population)—of which 555,000 reported use of Ecstasy. Results also estimated 314,000 methamphetamine users.

Supply of Illegal Drugs from Mexico

Mexican drug trafficking organizations are the major suppliers and key producers[15] of most illegal drugs smuggled into the United States across the SWB. Moreover, Mexico is the major transit country for cocaine, according to the U.S. State Department; as much as 90% of the cocaine consumed in the United States comes through Mexico.[16] Further, cocaine trafficking isthe leading drug threat[17] in the United States, according to the NDIC's 2009 National Drug Threat Assessment.[18] According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), cocaine availability was lower in 2007 and 2008 (relative to 2005 and 2006) in certain areas of the United States for a number of reasons, including cocaine eradication, cocaine seizures, pressure on drug trafficking organizations in Mexico, inter-cartel violence, and border security.

Mexican drug trafficking organizations are also the main foreign suppliers of marijuana and methamphetamine in the United States. There was a decline in seizures of Mexican-

produced methamphetamine beginning in 2006 and continuing in 2007 and 2008, in part because of Mexican import restrictions on precursor drugs beginning in 2005, as well as because some Mexican-based methamphetamine producers have more recently moved their laboratories into the United States.[19] Despite the declines in the presence of Mexican-produced cocaine and methamphetamine, there was an increase in the flow of Mexican-produced marijuana to the United States in 2007,[20] as well as an increase in distribution of Mexican-produced heroin (particularly in the eastern and northeastern states).[21]

The true quantity of drugs produced and transported by Mexican drug trafficking organizations, however, is unknown. Available data provide insight into the quantity of drugs seized along the SWB, though this data cannot speak to the total amount of drugs produced and/or transported into the United States, nor does it provide information about the proportion of these drugs that are actually seized along the SWB. For instance, Table 1 illustrates federal seizures of illegal drugs along the SWB for calendar years (CY) 2003-2008. Total cocaine seizures along the SWB decreased in 2007 and 2008 relative to previous years when cocaine seizures had been increasing. Additionally in 2008, cannabis seizures along the SWB decreased while seizures of heroin and methamphetamine seizures increased over 2007 levels. These data, however, do not provide insight into the total amount of drugs illegally produced and transported by the DTOs. Rather, this data reflect an unknown proportion of drugs that the Mexican drug trafficking organizations are bringing into the United States through a variety of transportation modes.

Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations[23]

Mexican drug trafficking organizations are transnational organized crime groups[24] whose criminal activities center primarily around the drug trade. In general, organized crime groups attempt to fill particular illicit market niches. Specifically, DTOs respond to the societal demand for illegal drugs. Some experts have likened drug trafficking organizations to corporations or even small nation-states. They are influenced by factors such as geography, politics, economics, and culture.[25] Geographically, for example, Mexican DTOs are situated between the world's largest producer of cocaine (Colombia) and the world's largest consumer of cocaine (United States), leading Mexico to be a natural drug transshipment route between the two countries.[26] In addition, major Mexican criminal organizations focus primarily (though not exclusively) on drugs, because the drug trade has, to date, generally proven to be more economically lucrative than other illicit activities such as kidnapping and extortion.[27]

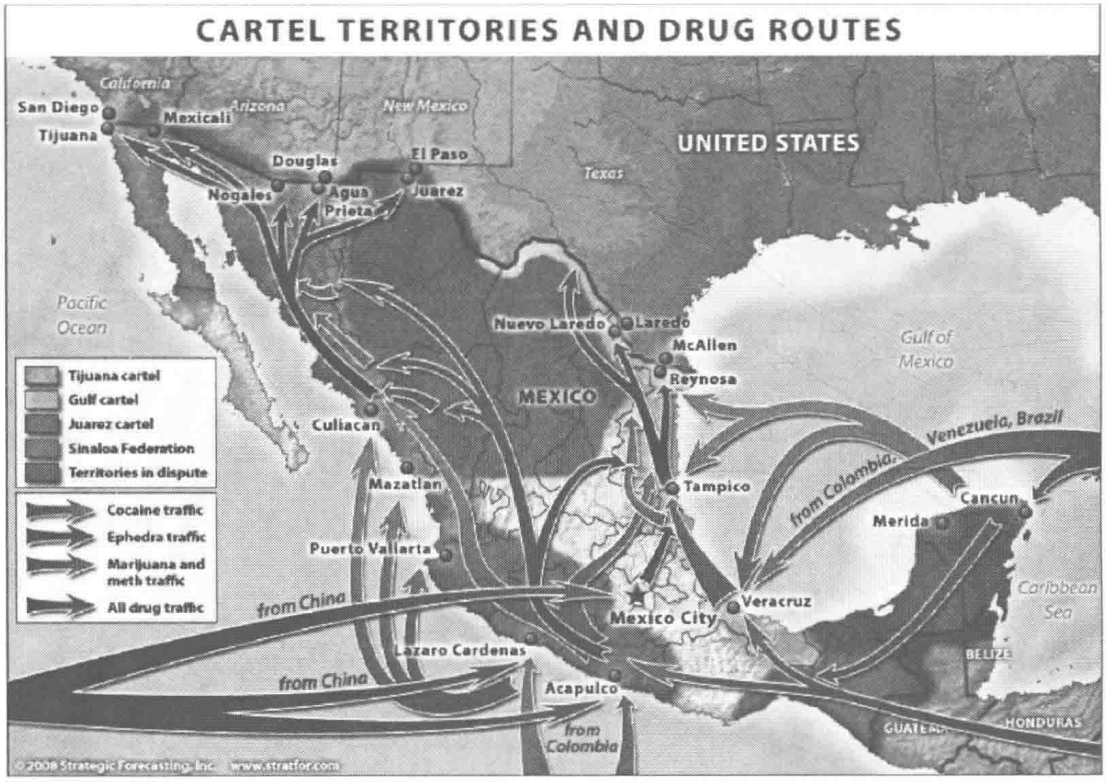
Mexican drug trafficking organizations either (1) transport or (2) produce and transport drugs north across the United States-Mexico border.[28] Figure 1 illustrates the drug trafficking routes within Mexico and at the United States-Mexico border. After being smuggled across the border by DTOs, the drugs are distributed and sold within the United States. The illicit proceeds may then be laundered or smuggled south across the border. The proceeds may also be used to purchase weapons in the United States that are then smuggled into Mexico.[29] This leads to a general pattern of drugs flowing north across the border and money and guns flowing south.

Table 1. U.S. Illegal Drug Seizures along the Southwest Border (in metric tons)

	CY2003	CY2004	CY2005	CY2006	CY2007	CY2008
Heroin	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.6
Cocaine	16.3	22.0	22.7	28.2	20.9	16.1
Cannabis	1201.0	1106.6	1025.7	1132.0	1367.8	1254.4
Methamphetamine	1.9	2.9	2.9	2.8	1.7	2.2
Total	1219.5	1131.9	1051.5	1163.5	1390.8	1273.3

Source: US DEA, in response to CRS request, March 27, 2008 and March 31, 2009.

The 2009 *National Drug Threat Assessment* indicates that Mexican drug trafficking organizations, in addition to being the major supplier of illegal drugs being smuggled into the United States, also have a strong presence within the United States.[22]



Source: Fred Burton and Ben West, *When the Mexican Drug Trade Hits the Border*, Stratfor Global Intelligence, April 15, 2009, http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090415_when_mexican_drug_trade

Figure 1. Drug Routes Within Mexico and at the United States-Mexico Border.

Although Mexican drug trafficking organizations have been active for some time, they have become more prominent since the decline of the powerful Colombian drug trafficking organizations beginning in the 1980s.[30] The NDIC estimates that Mexican drug trafficking organizations maintain drug distribution networks—or supply drugs to distributors in at least 230 U.S. cities (as illustrated in Figure 2)—and annually transport multi-ton quantities of illicit drugsfrom Mexico into the United States using a variety of multi-modal transportation

methods.[31] Estimates are that these drugs generate between $18 billion and $39 billion in U.S. wholesale drug proceeds for the Colombian and Mexican drug trafficking organizations annually.[32]

When conceptualizing Mexican drug trafficking organizations as businesses, policy makers may question the impact of possible drug trafficking-related violence spillover (into the United States) on the drug trafficking *business*—selling drugs in the U.S. black market. Although the effects of violence on businesses in the black market may not mirror those effects on business in the licit market, one way of examining this question may be to look at the impact that violence or violent crimes have on business in general. One recent study, for example, examined the impact of surges in violence on businesses in various industries in locations of varying crime rates.[33] Results suggested that surges in violence had the most negative impact on those businesses that were service-related (e.g., retail and personal service industries) and located in typically low-crime areas. Specifically, the impact on business was in terms of a reduction in the number of new businesses, a decrease in business expansions, and a lack of overall business growth. In order to generalize these findings from retail businesses to drug businesses, one underlying assumption must be that the locations for buying retail goods and personal services are the same as those for purchasing drugs. If these findings are generalizable to the drug trafficking business, this could suggest that any spillover in drug trafficking-related violence to the United States could adversely affect those service-related businesses (including drug trafficking businesses) in cities with relatively (pre-spillover) low crime rates. On the other hand, if violence affects businesses in the licit and illicit markets differently, these findings may not apply to potential effects of drug trafficking-related violence on drug trafficking business.

Already, there have been anecdotal predictions regarding the impact of violence on drug trafficking business; Douglas, AZ, police chief Alberto Melis has said that "spillover violence would be bad for business ... and they're [the drug traffickers] businessmen."[34] Further, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has expressed moderate confidence that there will not be a significant increase in spillover violence—at least in the short term—because "Mexican trafficking organizations understand that intentional targeting of U.S. persons or interests unrelated to the drug trade would likely undermine their own business interests."[35]

Partnerships in the United States

The NDIC has indicated that in order to facilitate the distribution and sale of drugs in the United States, Mexican drug trafficking organizations have formed relationships with U.S. street gangs, prison gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs.[36] Although these gangs have historically been involved with retail-level drug distribution, their ties to the Mexican drug trafficking organizations have allowed them to become increasingly involved at the wholesalelevel as well.[37] These gangs facilitate the movement of illicit drugs to urban, suburban, and rural areas of the United States. Not only do these domestic gangs distribute and sell the drugs, but they also aid insmuggling and enforcing the collection of drug proceeds.[38] For example, Barrio Azteca is one of at least nine prominent U.S. prison gangs with ties to Mexican drug trafficking organizations.[39] Barrio Azteca primarily generates money from smuggling marijuana, heroin, and cocaine across the Southwest border for the

drug trafficking organizations, but they are also involved in other crimes, such as extortion, kidnapping, and alien smuggling.[40]

Activities

Like other organized crime groups, Mexican drug trafficking organizations are profit-driven. While the primary goods trafficked by drug trafficking organizations are drugs, some experts have noted that these organizations do generate income from other illegal activities, such as the smuggling[41] of humans and weapons, counterfeiting and piracy, kidnapping for ransom, and extortion.[42] If the drug trafficking organizations are not able to generate income from the drugs— due to any number of reasons (increased Mexican or U.S. law enforcement, decreased drug supply, decreased drug demand, etc.)—they may increase their involvement in other money- generating illegal activities, such as kidnapping and home invasions. Take, for example, the number of drug trafficking-related kidnappings for ransom in Phoenix, AZ.[43] The NDIC reported 358 such incidents in 2007 and 357 in 2008 (through December 15, 2008), and indicated that nearly every incident was drug-related.[44] Further, the NDIC reports that these numbers may be underreported because victims may fear retaliation for reporting or may expose their own involvement in drug trafficking. Still, Tucson, AZ, police have reported that although there has been an increase in kidnappings for ransom and home invasions, the suspects in the cases are local criminals—not active drug trafficking organization members from Mexico.[45] This disparity in reports indicates that while there may be an increase in certain illegal activities that *may* be tiedto drug smuggling and trafficking, these illegal activities are *not necessarily* directly related to drug trafficking in general or to Mexican drug trafficking organizations in particular.

Relationship between Illicit Drug Markets andViolence

In an illegal marketplace, where prices and profits are elevated due to the risks of operating outside the law, violence or the threat of violence becomes the primary means for settling disputes and maintaining a semblance of order—however chaotic that "order" might appear to the outside observer. This was a fundamental conclusion reached by the National Academy of Sciences Panel on the Understanding and Control of Violent Behavior.[46] Because illegal drug markets operate outside the law, no courts or other forms of peaceful mediation[47] exist for resolving disputes between drug producers, traffickers, and their customers. As with other black markets, drug markets are necessarily governed by the threat of violence, which may lead to actual violence. Illegal drugs and violence, then, are linked primarily through the operations of underground drug markets.[48]

Drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico has been on the rise; in 2008, there were more than 5,100 drug trafficking-related murders in Mexico—a 126% increase over 2007.[49] Mexican drug trafficking organizations are now at war with each other as well as with the police and military personnel who are attempting to enforce the drug laws in northern Mexico along the U.S. border. The drug trafficking organizations, as a result of enforcement actions in Mexico, along with increasing border enforcement measures taken by the United States,

are finding it more difficult and more costly to control the production zones and smuggling routes. One of the consequences of this increasingly competitive environment is a rise in the level of violence associated with the illicit drug trade as the drug trafficking organizations struggle for control over territory, markets, and smuggling routes. Policy makers are thus confronted with the uncomfortable possibility that increased law enforcement (which leads to increased difficulty and costs to control production zones and smuggling routes, and which in turn leads to the need to resolve disputes over such territories) could result in increased drug trafficking-related violence. This appears to be the situation that has recently developed in Mexico.

This relationship gives rise to a number of important issues for policy makers. One such matter is evaluating the relative costs and benefits of increased enforcement of the current drug policy against the potentially elevated levels of violence that such increased enforcement might engender.[50] Could the drug trafficking-related violence currently evidenced in Mexico reach alevel that would prompt U.S. policy makers to consider policy actions that could alter the underpinnings of the illegal drug market? It does not appear as if the violence has reached such a level as yet. Policy makers, however, have expressed significant concern over the possibility of the current violence in Mexico spilling over into the United States.

WHAT IS SPILLOVER VIOLENCE?

When assessing the potential implications of increased violence in Mexico as a result of the increasing tensions between the drug trafficking organizations located in Mexico, one of the central concerns for U.S. policy makers is the potential for what has recently been termed "spillover" violence—an increase in drug trafficking-related violence in United States. Given this concern, it is critical to develop an understanding of what "spillover" is, what it might look like, how it might be measured, and what potential triggers for policy action can be identified from this analysis.

To date, Congress has not adopted a formal definition of spillover violence. Several definitions and/or qualities of spillover violence have been provided by government officials, as well as experts and analysts. For instance, according to the DEA, the interagency community has defined spillover violence in the following manner:

> [S]pillover violence entails deliberate, planned attacks by the cartels on U.S. assets, including civilian, military, or law enforcement officials, innocent U.S. citizens, or physical institutions such as government buildings, consulates, or businesses. This definition does not include trafficker on trafficker violence, whether perpetrated in Mexico or the U.S.[51]

This definition of spillover provides a relatively narrow scope of what may constitute spillover violence. In particular, it excludes the category of violence—trafficker-on-trafficker violence—in which the vast majority of drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico has occurred. If policy makers and law enforcement are concerned that the drug trafficking-related violence, as seen in Mexico, may spill over into the United States, they are necessarily concerned with this predominant category of trafficker-on-trafficker violence that is excluded from the interagency community's definition of spillover violence. The boundaries of what may constitute spillover violence, as defined by the interagency community, thus makes the