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Mexican - US intelligence cooperation in the Mexican Drug War

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Abstract

In 2006 the Mexican Drug War was announced, what followed was extensive intelligence cooperation between Mexico and the US in the fight against drug cartels. This thesis aims to analyse the effect of intelligence cooperation between Mexico and the US in the period of 2006-2018 and the effect this cooperation had on the Mexican Drug War. This thesis focuses on bilateral intelligence sharing and collaboration between Mexico and the US by analysing historical high-profile operations conducted by US and Mexican law enforcement. Through qualitative analysis of publicly available sources, the research has examined the effects of intelligence sharing on specific high-profile law enforcement operations. Furthermore analysing the consequences of how these cases were conducted was on the broader outcome of the Mexican Drug War. The findings of this thesis indicate that although law enforcement operations that received support from the US were overall successful, strategies (like kingpin decapitation) led to unintended consequences. Certain consequences observed during the research include an increase in violence, as well as fragmentation of drug cartels. Other consequences observed during this study include an increased professionalization of the Mexican intelligence service CISEN. Further observations in this thesis include an asymmetric balance of power in intelligence sharing between Mexico and the US, as well as a steady reduction in force-focused security policy by successive Mexican presidential administrations.

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Mexican - US intelligence cooperation in the Mexican Drug War

Introduction

On the 1st of December 2006, the newly elected President of Mexico Felipe Calderón delivered his first speech to the nation, stating that the country of Mexico had started a battle against crime (Los Angeles Times, 2016, para. 2). This speech was followed by an order from President Calderón to send over 4000 soldiers to the province of Michoacan to combat drug cartels (BBC News, 2006, para. 2). What followed were violent clashes between Mexican drug cartels and the Mexican government, leading to the “Mexican Drug War”. The scope of this thesis is focused on how the Mexican government used intelligence in the battle against drug cartels, and specifically what the effect of cooperation between the US and Mexican intelligence was on the Mexican Drug War (e.g. success of arrests, trends in violence, changing strategies). The Mexican Drug war has seen numerous forms of cooperation between Mexican and US intelligence agencies, ranging from the usage of US spy planes, to the training of Mexican government officials by the Central Intelligence Agency (after this: CIA) under Operation SCENIC (Priest, 2013, para. 11). There are numerous works on intelligence cooperation between Mexico and the US. For example, Hussain (2009) writes about how security cooperation between Mexico and the US would be beneficial for the US to curb illegal immigration. Other authors, like Horton (2008), focus on the history of security cooperation between Mexico and the US. And then there are authors like for example Mendoza-Cortes (2020), who specifically focus on Mexican intelligence failures. This thesis focuses on the cooperation between Mexico and the US in intelligence, in particular the cooperation that took place during the Mérida Initiative.

For this thesis the cooperation between the Mexican Centre for Investigation and National Security (after this: CISEN), Federal Police, the Mexican Attorney General, the Mexican armed forces, the US Drug Enforcement Agency (after this: DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (after this: FBI), the Department of Homeland Security (after this: DHS), and the US Attorney General's office has been analysed. The research question that this thesis aims to answer is the following: *How did intelligence cooperation between the US and Mexican governments in the period of 2006-2018 contribute to the evolution of the Mexican Drug War?* This hypothesis argues that intelligence cooperation between the US and Mexican governments from 2006 to 2018 has bolstered Mexican intelligence agencies. This has given Mexican law enforcement the means to act more independently, i.e. conducting successful operations without support from other nations. Simultaneously the support of US intelligence agencies has also led to an increase in violence due to the focus on arresting or neutralizing drug cartel kingpins. This thesis helps exploring how the Global North responds to problems in the Global South that stem from demand created by the Global North. This in turn can help in better understanding the socio-political relation that exists between the Global South and the Global North. In this thesis, it is observed that the US provides more advanced (and more costly) forms of intelligence (e.g. signal intelligence, drone images) to Mexico, as well as means to solidify Mexican intelligence capabilities. A notable trend throughout the years of the Mexican Drug War observed in this research is the increased professionalization of Mexican intelligence agencies, which led to lesser reliance on support from their US counterparts. Another trend that stands out is that from 2012 onwards Mexican presidents have adopted a less force-focused strategy. Instead of taking down drug cartel kingpins, Mexican presidents have started focusing on underlying causes of drug cartel violence (e.g. social issues).

The following chapters of this thesis will first provide a literature review that includes the wider academic framework that this thesis is set in, after which the research design will be

explained, followed by a discussion of the results, finishing with a conclusion and reflection on this research.

Theoretical framework

Currently existing literature on intelligence cooperation between the United States and Mexico during the Mexican Drug War (2006–2018) is relatively limited. While certain papers have addressed elements of security cooperation and joint law enforcement efforts, a focused analysis of how intelligence cooperation specifically impacted the evolution of the Mexican Drug War is still emerging. This thesis aims to fill that gap by answering the question: *How did intelligence cooperation between the US and Mexican governments during 2006–2018 contribute to the evolution of the Mexican Drug War?* This question aims to identify and explain the evolution of the Mexican Drug War and to assess how intelligence in the war has evolved. The analytical framework for this research centres on the nature, forms, and effects of intelligence cooperation within US-Mexico intelligence cooperation from 2006-2018.

The analysis, follows a historical timeline of key events in the Mexican Drug War during the Mérida Initiative. The Mérida Initiative was a security cooperation agreement between the US, Mexico, and several South American nations with the goal of combatting (international) crime and terrorism (Botello, 2009, p.103). Mexico received several hundred million US dollars in funding during this cooperation. Financial aid granted under this initiative includes funding for intelligence agencies (Seelke, 2008, p.5). To help better understand this research question a few essential concepts will be discussed below.

Intelligence cooperation

One of the crucial concepts to further understand is intelligence cooperation. Lefebvre (2003, p.534) describes intelligence cooperation as a quid-pro-quo practice. Intelligence agencies commonly work together to fill capacity gaps of one another (Lefebvre, 2003,

p.534). By granting support to the governments of Mexico, as well as to several South American nations, the US federal government directly benefited themselves. Botello (2009, p.105) describes how it was assumed by the US federal government that organised crime posed a threat to the democracy and stability of Mexico and South America, indirectly threatening stability of the US. The initiative directly benefited the government of Mexico as it provided the Mexican state with hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of equipment and training for its security services (Seelke, 2008, p.5). The understanding that the Mérida Initiative helped pursue US interests was also reinforced by Payan (2020, p.256), who described the security cooperation between Mexico and the US as something that was mostly beneficial to the US.

Sovereignty

Another important concept to further outline is state sovereignty. State sovereignty is commonly understood as the power of a state to independently rule over territory without interference from others (Philpott, 1995, p.355). There is extensive security cooperation between Mexico and the US, including large numbers of DEA agents that are embedded in Mexico (Priest, 2013, para. 22). These DEA agents illustrate the balance between cooperation and sovereignty, as these agents may operate (e.g. help in investigations) in Mexico but do not directly partake in arrests, thus preserving the authority of the Mexican judicial system. This balance shapes the way intelligence cooperation takes place between the two countries, allowing space for some forms of collaboration (gathering evidence) while not allowing others (arrests of suspects).

Literature review

This section discusses scholarly work on intelligence cooperation between Mexico and the US, focusing on its forms, motivations, and effects in the context of the Mexican Drug War.

Form of intelligence cooperation between Mexico and the US

Herrera-Lasso M. (2011, p.1) argues in their paper that historically intelligence sharing between Mexico and the US has been minimal, but that this has increased due to threats related to drug trafficking. The author further argues that a joint agenda between Mexico and the US, as well as further compatibility between Mexican and US agencies, is crucial for the effectiveness of intelligence cooperation (Herrera-Lasso M., 2011, p. 5-6). This notion is reinforced in a congressional research report by Seelke & Finklea (2017, p.6) in which they discuss the effectiveness of aid meant for combatting drug crime, granted by the US government to the Mexican government. Payan (2020, p.255) argues that intelligence cooperation between Mexico and the US took the form of trans-governmental networks (TGN) which they classify as “(...) links between governmental actors across national boundaries to carry out global governance tasks.” Payan further explains that these TGNs are used for several different forms of cooperation, for example information sharing, cooperation in joint operations, and network compliance (Payan, 2020, p.256). Furthermore, they describe that several US agencies (DHS, FBI, and DEA) have gained unprecedented access to the Mexican intelligence community through TGNs (Payan, 2020, p. 267). This description by Payan (2020) further underlines the extensive form of intelligence cooperation between Mexico and the US that has taken place.

Effects of intelligence cooperation

Is it challenging to assess the overall success of the Mérida Initiative due to the difference in goals Mexico and the US had, according to Seelke & Finklea (2017). They also argue that there are achievements (extradition of criminal leaders, improvement of judicial infrastructure, etc.) but that large security challenges in Mexico still remain (Seelke & Finklea, 2017, p.24-25). The extradition of criminal leaders is also discussed by O’Neil (2012), who stated that several high-profile arrests of Mexican drug kingpins were the result of bilateral intelligence (O’Neil, 2012, p.1). Shirk & Wallman (2007) note that homicides in Mexico were on a sharp increase after 2007 compared to the decrease in the late 1990s to mid-2000s. They

state that this is due to several factors, including the strategy of kingpin removal (Shirk & Wallman, 2015, p.15). Intelligence cooperation is not explicitly linked to this strategy by Shirk & Wallman (2015). The strategy can, however, be linked back to both Seelke & Finklea (2017) and O'Neil (2012) as both these authors explain that extradition of certain cartel kingpins was the result of intelligence cooperation. Shirk & Wallman (2015) explain that after the removal of a high-profile leader, wars of succession break out amongst the cartel members left behind. These members try to take over the position of their former leader (Shirk & Wallman, 2015, p. 17). They continue to describe how kingpin removal leads to the intensification of violence as other cartels may also try to take over operations from the, possibly weakened, cartel that had its leader removed (Shirk & Wallman, 2015, p. 17).

Research design

This thesis utilizes a qualitative case study approach to examine the influence of US and Mexican intelligence cooperation on the evolution of the Mexican Drug War. Central to this case study is a timeline of key events between 2006 and 2018. This timeline analyses how US intelligence support affected the outcomes of Mexican law enforcement operations during these key events.

Research method

The research method of this thesis is process-tracing analysis. Process tracing is a qualitative method designed to trace and analyse causal mechanisms. It connects dependent and independent variables in historical operational results. This in turn may offer deeper insights into the dynamics of intelligence-led security collaboration. Beach & Pedersen (2019) explain that the strength of process tracing lies in the ability to provide insight into how causal processes unfold in real-world scenarios. It provides guidance in explaining how US intelligence contributions shaped key events in the Mexican Drug War. Furthermore, it provides help in

understanding the broader trends in the Mexican Drug War. This approach also highlights that the outcomes of law enforcement operations are not isolated events but the product of interconnected processes and decisions.

Data collection

Due to the classified and sensitive nature of intelligence operations, much of the relevant data for the analysis of this thesis is not publicly available. As a result, this thesis focuses on a selection of high-profile and well-documented key events within the Mexican Drug War for which open-source material is available. Data collection for the analysis relied on digital archives, official government publications, journalistic investigations, and academic sources detailing US-Mexico intelligence cooperation. A full list of the online archives that have been used, along with the specific search queries used, is provided in Appendix 1. Because this research is focused on Mexico, a large portion of the source material was in Spanish. To ensure adequate understanding and translation of source material, both Google Translate and DeepL translation software have been used. The use of two translation tools has allowed for cross-checking translated texts, in turn reducing the risk of misinterpretation as well as increasing the reliability of the interpretation of data.

Ethical considerations

No ethical concerns emerged during this research, as all data was obtained from publicly accessible archives and secondary sources. The study did not involve human subjects, direct interviews, or sensitive personal data. This helped to avoid the usage of data with particular ethical considerations.

Analysis

The start of the Drug War in 2006

In December 2006 newly elected president Felipe Calderón launched “Operation Michoacán”, in which over 4000 military and law enforcement personnel were sent to the state of Michoacán. Their goal was to counter excessive drug-related violence, as well as combatting the Familia Michoacana transnational criminal organisation (BBC News, 2006). This will form the start of the analysis of this thesis. Unfortunately at the time of writing this analysis, there is no publicly available information on how and, or, what types of intelligence were utilized during Operation Michoacán. Although it may not prove useful for this analysis, it is important to take note of the absence of information as this may prove to be a gap in the literature for further research.

Joint investigations and arrests in 2007

In 2007 the Mérida Initiative was implemented. This bilateral security cooperation between Mexico and the US was announced after Mexican President Felipe Calderón requested increased security support from the US government to combat drug cartels (Ribando Seelke, 2024). In the first year of the Mérida Initiative, the Mexican government approved the instalment of a signal-intelligence (SIGINT) installation in the form of a communications interception system. This system helped with processing, storing, and analysing phone calls throughout Mexico, as reported by the Mexican newspaper Excélsior (Lara, 2013). This SIGINT installation proved to be a key source of intelligence in the years of 2007-2013, according to details found in contracts that are in possession of Mexican newspaper Excélsior (Lara, 2013). This form of intelligence cooperation can be classified as burden-sharing, in which the US federal government has taken on the burden of providing funding for an expensive SIGINT installation for which, in return, Mexico provides the US with intelligence on Mexican citizens. Another pivotal event in the Mexican Drug War in 2007 was the arrest of Zhenli Ye Gon. Ye Gon is a Chinese businessman who was based in Mexico. He was charged with providing precursor chemicals, used to produce illegal narcotics, to the Sinaloa Cartel. In 2006

the DEA started working with the Mexican attorney general's organized crime unit to investigate Zhenli Ye Gon. This cooperation included DEA agents travelling to a Mexican chemical factory operated by Ye Gon in order to gather sample evidence (District of Columbia, 2011). Zhenli Ye Gon was arrested in Maryland, US by DEA agents after Mexican law enforcement raided his home in Mexico City (NBC News, 2007). Another key event in 2007 was the extradition of Osiel Cárdenas Guillén, the former leader of the Gulf Cartel in Mexico. He was arrested by Mexican authorities in 2003 and sentenced to life in prison in the US in 2013 (DEA, 2013). Guillén was sentenced based on an investigation conducted by the DEA, Homeland Security Investigations, FBI, and the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (DEA, 2013). The arrest of Guillén is another example of cooperation between Mexican and US law enforcement agencies in the Mexican Drug War. Just as in the case of Zhenli Ye Gon, an important cartel operative was arrested and extradited to the US based on joint-investigations and arrests.

Operation Solare 2008: a joint multilateral DEA operation

In 2008 Operation Solare was initiated. This international operation was led by the DEA and targeted drug cartel members in Mexico, the US, Guatemala, and Italy (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). This operation aimed to damage the link that the Mexican Gulf Cartel had with the Italian 'Ndrangheta mafia. According to a press release sent out by the US Attorney of the Southern District of New York, significant support for this case was provided by the DEA (including from DEA offices in Mexico). These Mexico-based DEA offices were in turn assisted by their Mexican counterparts (U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). In this operation, two leaders of the Gulf Cartel as well as the leader of the Los Zetas paramilitary group were arrested. Apart from these arrests several millions of US dollars' worth of illegal narcotics, cash, and other assets were seized according to an article by the Mexican El Universal newspaper (Jaime Hernández, 2008). This same newspaper, however, noted a few months after Operation Solare

took place, that the Gulf Cartel was still actively working with the 'Ndrangheta (El Universal, 2008). Based on these press releases and news articles, the conclusion can be drawn that there was cooperation between Mexican and US authorities during Operation Solare (e.g. Mexico-based DEA offices working together with their Mexican counterparts). Documents that contain concrete proof of intelligence operations during this operation are not publicly available. However, it is assumed that intelligence sharing between Mexico and the US took place during Operation Solare as it is assumed that during joint investigations law-enforcement agencies share intelligence. Based on this assumption Operation Solare is another chapter on intelligence cooperation between Mexico and the US in the Mexican Drug War. The effect of Operation Solare can be seen as having had a minimal impact on the functioning Mexican cartels. In particular on the Gulf Cartel, as this Cartel continued to cooperate with the 'Ndrangheta even after Operation Solare as noted by El Universal (2008).

Vicente Zambada, a kingpin turned informant

In 2009 a few notable Mexican drug kingpins were arrested or killed. One of these includes Vicente Zambada, who was the leader of operations of the Sinaloa Cartel and arrested in 2009 (NBC News, 2009). This was followed by the killing of Arturo Beltrán Leyva, one of the leaders of the Beltrán Leyva Cartel, by Mexican marines later that year (Castillo, 2009; Grupo Zócalo, 2009; Malkin, 2009). Information derived from publicly available court filings by Zambada's lawyer claims that Zambada had a deal with the US federal government. This deal would provide Zambada with immunity from prosecution in return for information on his competitors (Michaelson, 2011). This claim, however, is denied in a reply by the US attorney general (Fitzgerald, 2011b). There is not much publicly known on the intelligence procedure behind the arrest of Vicente Zambada, except for a claim by Zambada that he was arrested hours after a meeting with US agents in Mexico City (Fitzgerald, 2011a), which in turn is strongly denied by the US Government (Fitzgerald, 2011a). There is however more information

available on the role of Zambada after he was extradited to the US (Fitzgerald, 2011a). From further released court documents it becomes clear that Vicente Zambada served as a top informant during his time in a US prison, providing the US with information on the Sinaloa Cartel (Fitzgerald, 2011a). The case of Vicente Zambada is difficult to analyse due to the lack of publicly available information on his role in the intelligence process in the Mexican Drug War, as well as the conflicting nature of the court filings by his lawyer and the US Government. The impact of his arrest on the Mexican Drug War however, is quite clear as through him valuable information on the Sinaloa Cartel was provided to the US Government (Fitzgerald, 2011a). His arrest by Mexican authorities and later extradition to the US has provided the US with valuable information that has potentially been used against the cartels in the period between 2010 (the year he arrived in the US) and 2018.

The usage of human intelligence (HUMINT) in practice

In a leaked cable sent by the US Embassy in Mexico City, it is explicitly stated that the US Embassy relayed detailed information on the location of Arturo ‘‘El Jefe de Jefes’’ Beltrán Leyva to the Mexican Navy (Wikileaks, 2009). The Mexican Navy in turn acted on this information, laying siege on the apartment of Leyva, and killing him in the process. The cable also states that the marines that raided Leyva’s apartment had received extensive training from the US Military. The intelligence sharing between Mexico and the US Embassy interagency is quite clear in the case of Arturo Beltrán Leyva. The effect of the collaboration between US intelligence agencies and the Mexican Navy directly led to the death of Arturo Beltrán Leyva. The US Embassy cable further mentions that a short-term spike in inter-cartel violence was to be expected due to a cartel leadership gap materializing after Beltrán Leyva’s death. This corresponds with the theory of Shirk & Wallman (2015, p. 17) that the neutralization of a kingpin leads to more violence. It later became clear that Beltrán Leyva was found based on information provided by another member of the Beltrán Leyva cartel, the United States-born

Edgar “La Barbie” Valdez Villareal. This was revealed in US court documents published by Mexican journalist Anabel Hernández (2020). The documents published by Hernández (2020) reveal that Valdez Villareal was an informant for the DEA and FBI between 2008 and 2010. In this period, he provided both agencies with intelligence on corrupt Mexican officials as well as other drug cartels (Hernández, 2020). The case of Valdez Villareal has some similarities with that of Vicente Zambada, but a notable difference between the two is the fact that the US Department of Justice confirmed that Valdez Villareal was an informant for the US government (Hernández, 2020).

The arrest of Valdez Villareal

In 2010 Valdez Villareal was arrested by Mexican authorities. According to the Mexican newspaper Proceso (2010), his arrest was the result of an intelligence operation that started in June 2009. There is not much more (at least not publicly) known about the intelligence that led to the capture of Villareal, except for the fact that the Mexican government started tracking him in 2009. US magazine Rolling Stone describes in an article from 2011 that an assistant of Villareal was coerced into giving Mexican police officers the location of Valdez Villareal (Grigoriadis and Cuddehe, 2011). Even though there is not much publicly known about what kind of intelligence (cooperation) led to the capture of Valdez Villareal, his capture at the time sparked fear that the Los Zetas Cartel or the La Familia Michoacana Cartel might move into the former territory of Villareal according to an article by Bremer & Rosenberg (2010). This again corresponds with the theory of Shirk & Wallman (2015, p. 17) as they described that rival cartels may take over operations from weakened cartels.

A DEA and Mexican federal police joint effort cartel takedown

The year 2011 saw a spike in violence, as well as takedowns of multiple drug kingpins. One notable case was the arrest of José de Jesús Méndez Vargas, the former leader of the La

Familia Michoacana cartel. The La Familia Michoacana cartel split into two factions after its leader was presumed to have died in 2010 (he was later confirmed to have died in 2014), with Vargas taking over the leadership of one of the factions (InSight Crime, 2020). According to an article published by the Mexican newspaper *El Economista* (2011), the arrest of Vargas was due to an extensive intelligence cooperation effort between the Mexican federal police and the DEA. The Mexican federal police were able to arrest Vargas at a roadblock after they spent several months tracing him (*El Economista*, 2011). This is confirmed in a press release by the US Attorney's Office, which mentions that the arrest of Vargas was part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force operation (US Attorney's Office, 2025). From the statements published in *El Economista* (2011) and by the US Attorney's Office (2025) it can be concluded that due to intelligence sharing between the Mexican federal police and the DEA, José de Jesús Méndez Vargas, the then-leader of the La Familia Michoacana Cartel was arrested. The effect his arrest had on the Familia Michoacana Cartel at first seemed quite large as the Mexican government reported that the cartel had ceased to exist. This, however, seems not to be the case according to a report in InSight Crime as recent as March 2025, in which it is described that the cartel remains in action (Jaramillo, 2025). This raises the question of how large the impact of the joint effort between the Mexican Federal Police and the DEA was when arresting José de Jesús Méndez Vargas.

The new Mexican Drug War strategy of President Peña Nieto and the splintering of Los Zetas

In 2012, Enrique Peña Nieto took over office from then-President Calderón. President Peña Nieto announced a change in the strategy towards fighting drug cartels. President Peña Nieto co-opted for a focus aimed at reducing violence as opposed to targeting kingpins (Corcoran, 2012). This newly announced approach, however, did not correspond with the killing of the Los Zetas Cartel leader Heriberto "El Lazca" Lazcano. On the 9th of October 2011, a few months before President Peña Nieto was sworn into office, Lazcano was shot and

killed by Mexican marines. The killing of Lazcano was not a targeted operation, but the result of a routine control of a suspicious vehicle (Justice in Mexico, 2012; United Press International, 2012). US forensic scientists checked DNA samples to confirm that the body was indeed Lazcano (United Press International, 2012). Although US intelligence did not aid directly in finding Lazcano, US forensic aid was used to confirm that the body was indeed Lazcano's. According to a report by InSight Crime (2024), the death of Lazcano led to a further splintering of the Los Zetas Cartel, which is by now no longer a centrally organised cartel. A reason for this could be that wars of succession amongst the surviving cartel members started as members tried to take the place of their former leader. This would have led to a conflict amongst the members, which in turn leads to members starting their own cartel factions, further splintering the organisation.

The continuation of kingpin takedowns under President Peña Nieto

In 2013, the administration of President Peña Nieto continued to follow the line of his predecessor's numerous arrests. One notable arrest in 2013 was that of Miguel Ángel "Z 40" Treviño Morales, another Los Zetas Cartel leader. According to unnamed US government officials who spoke to the US newspaper The New York Times, US intelligence played a crucial role during as well as after the arrest of Treviño Morales (Archibold & Thompson, 2013). According to the article by Archibold & Thompson (2013), US intelligence in the form of wiretappings and tips from informants helped locate Treviño Morales in a remote area of Mexico near the Texas border. Treviño Morales was subsequently apprehended by Mexican marines. United States authorities provided further assistance after Treviño Morales was captured, in the form of identification through DNA tests and biometric data of Treviño Morales (Archibold & Thompson 2013). In the case of the arrest of Treviño Morales, a form of burden-sharing seems to have taken place. United States authorities provided their Mexican counterparts with expensive SIGINT (wiretaps) as well as biometric data used to identify

Treviño Morales. In return, the Mexican government ensured Treviño Morales was apprehended and extradited to the United States. This was a long-standing wish of the US government as Treviño Morales was already indicted on federal US charges in 2008 (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). The arrest of Treviño Morales was met with little enthusiasm by the Mexican public at first according to an article published in *Proceso*, as the public feared a new spike in violence (Villamil, 2013). The effect of the arrest of Treviño Morales disrupted the operations and leadership structure of the Los Zetas Cartel even further, which in turn led to more fragmentation as reported by Asmann & Bonello (2024). However, according to the same article, Treviño Morales still led his faction of the Zetas after his conviction and along with his brother, from prison (Asmann & Bonello, 2024). The notion of Morales leading his faction from prison again raises the question of how effective the strategy of kingpin takedowns is in terms of crime-stopping.

Technical support in the takedown of kingpins under Peña Nieto

Despite President Peña Nieto's announcement of prioritizing the reduction of violence over the arrest of kingpins, one of the most well-known cartel leaders of the past two decades, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, was arrested under Peña Nieto's administration (Tuckman, 2014). During Guzmán's US court case in 2019 it became evident that the FBI, CIA, DHS, and DEA provided intelligence to the Mexican government. This intelligence came from extensive surveillance operations targeted at Guzmán, which included: wiretapping, drone surveillance, and HUMINT (Palmer & Fueler, 2019; Altman, 2014). This has been confirmed in a hearing on US-Mexico security cooperation from the 113th US Congress (Taking down the cartels: examining United States-Mexico cooperation, 2014). Additional support in the arrest of Guzmán may have been provided in the form of Mérida Initiative aid.

Based on leaked emails from the Italian malware company Hacking Team, a link between CISEN and Hacking Team can be established. In one of these emails, mention is made

of the renewal of a contract between Hacking Team and CISEN, which is discussed between account managers of Hacking Team (WikiLeaks, 2015a). In another leaked email an employee from Hacking Team sent a link to an article from the US newspaper The Washington Post to the CEO of Hacking Team. In the shared article, malware that was used to track down Guzmán was mentioned (WikiLeaks, 2015b). The CEO of Hacking Team refers to quotes mentioning this specific malware, asking the employee if those quotes are the reason the article was shared with them. The employee confirms in a reply-email that that is the case (WikiLeaks, 2015b). This may lead to the assumption that under the Mérida Initiative, technical aid in the form of Hacking Team malware has been provided to CISEN. This malware could have then been used by the CISEN to trace and arrest Guzmán. This assumption can, however, not be proven since no public records on the usage of malware provided by Hacking Team to the Mexican government are available. This could potentially mean that apart from support in the form of HUMINT as well as imagery intelligence (IMINT; drone footage) technical support under the Mérida initiative provided by the US government to the Mexican government has directly led to the arrest of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán.

The increased professionalization of Mexican intelligence agencies

In 2015, the leader of the Knights Templars Cartel, Servando Gómez “La Tuta” Martínez, was arrested in Michoacán. The arrest of Martínez was of high priority for the Peña Nieto administration in order to reduce violence in Michoacán (Heinle et al., 2016). There is no publicly disclosed information on the involvement of US intelligence agencies in the arrest of Martínez, but there is more information available on the intelligence operation conducted by Mexican law enforcement before the arrest of Martínez. In 2014, the Mexican federal government had a lead which led them to individuals that were heavily trusted by Martínez. These confidants were then in turn monitored by the Mexican federal government (Infobae,

2022). This was confirmed in a press conference by the national security commissioner after the arrest of Martínez (Monroy, 2015). The arrest of Martínez saw no direct involvement of any US law enforcement based on publicly disclosed information. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the Mexican federal government has increased their skills since the start of the Mexican Drug War. This could explain the successful execution of high-profile arrests without outside support from US law enforcement. US support and, or, influence may still have played a role in the arrest of Martínez in the form of support granted to the Mexican government under the Mérida Initiative. The amount granted under the Mérida Initiative in 2015 amounted to 142.6 million USD which included spending on the improvement of surveillance technology according to the United States Government Accountability Office (2019). Based on this, involvement of the US federal government can still be traced back indirectly to the arrest of Martínez's support in the form of intelligence capabilities improvement was provided in the year of Martínez arrest. The effectiveness of arresting Martínez can be questioned, though. The state of Michoacán saw a sharp increase in homicides after 2015, with an increase of 510 homicides in 2016 compared to 2015 in absolute terms, with an all-time-high in 2021 whereafter homicide rates were trending down again (Observatorio Nacional Ciudadano, n.d.). This could indicate that the arrest of Martínez did not lead to a decrease in violence (particularly homicides) in Michoacán, which was the intention behind his arrest. This again supports the theory by Shirk & Wallman (2012).

The second arrest of El Chapo, further professionalization of Mexican intelligence

In 2016 Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán was arrested again after he escaped from a high-security Mexican prison in 2015. The operation to re-capture Guzmán was code-named Operation Black Swan. Cooperation between the Mexican and the US government in Operation Black Swan is directly confirmed in a US congressional report (Beittel & Seelke, 2016). More concrete information on what type of US support was given to the Mexican government is

mentioned in an article by US newspaper The Wall Street Journal, in which several (anonymous) US as well as Mexican officials confirm that US authorities provided IMINT to their Mexican counterparts (Fischer & Bergengruen, 2025). After a tip from a resident, a team of Mexican marines raided the safehouse of Guzmán to re-arrest him (Webber, 2016; Justice in Mexico, 2016; Al Jazeera, 2016). The re-arrest of Guzmán made it more clear that the intelligence gathering that led to his recapture had mostly been conducted by Mexican authorities themselves, as opposed to his first arrest which involved a larger amount of US support. In the re-arrest of Guzmán, only one type of direct support by the US authorities has been publicly mentioned, IMINT, whereas in the first arrest of Guzmán a broad range of intelligence support was provided by the US authorities. Support provided in the first arrest included HUMINT, SIGINT, and IMINT (Altman, 2014). As well as (assumed) technical support in the form of Hacking Team malware. A conclusion that can be drawn from the re-arrest of Guzmán, is that the Mexican authorities relied less on US intelligence support than in the first arrest in 2014. A possible explanation for decreased US intelligence support in the re-arrest of Guzmán is that the Mexican authorities have improved their intelligence-gathering capabilities in the years after Guzmán's first arrest, leading to a lesser reliance on US intelligence.

A possible trend in professionalization, observed through another kingpin arrest

In 2017 one of the leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel, Dámaso “Licenciado” López Núñez, was arrested by members of Mexico's Criminal Investigation Unit as well as Mexican armed forces (Muedano, 2017). In an article published by El Universal an undisclosed IT professional, referred to as “the hacker”, describes how the intelligence he gathered led to the arrest of López Núñez (Loret De Mola, 2017). A video made by this anonymous hacker helped the Mexican Office of the Attorney General to locate López Núñez (Loret De Mola, 2017). This is also stated in an interview given by the hacker to Vice Media's website Motherboard (Franceschi-

Bicchierai & Anderson, 2017). In this interview, the anonymous hacker describes how he took a video of López Núñez with an app on his phone subsequently providing this video to the Mexican Attorney General (Franceschi-Bicchierai & Anderson, 2017). The hacker also states that he described López Núñez's vehicle to the Attorney General as well as the location of López Núñez. This has been described as critical information for the investigation by an anonymous Mexican government agent who is mentioned in the same article by Franceschi-Bicchierai & Anderson (2017). Based on a press release from the US Department of Justice both the DEA and the FBI as well as Columbian authorities provided significant assistance in locating and arresting López Núñez (U.S. Attorney's Office Eastern District of Virginia, 2018). The type of assistance that was provided in the operation targeting López Núñez is not disclosed in the press release. Therefore, it is difficult to assess what kind of impact US-Mexico cooperation had on the arrest of López Núñez. This operation seems to primarily be based on intelligence gathered through HUMINT and IMINT gathered by a Mexican source. Based on the information that the hacker disclosed to media outlets Motherboard and El Universal newspaper (Franceschi-Bicchierai & Anderson, 2017; Muedano, 2017). This could indicate a trend of being less dependent on US-provided intelligence by Mexican law enforcement. This was also observed during the arrest of Servando Gómez Martínez in 2015 as well as the arrest of Joaquín Guzmán in 2016. This trend can be explained by an increased professionalization of Mexican intelligence gathering.

A new president continuing the trend of a force-reduction-strategy

There were several prominent arrests in 2018. There is, however, a lack of publicly available information on the intelligence behind these arrests. Arrests in 2018 include José "El 15" Guadalupe (Martínez, 2018) and José María "Z-43" Guízar Valencia (BBC, 2018). Both held high positions in respectively the CJNG Cartel and Los Zetas Cartel. It is difficult to analyse how intelligence helped in their arrests as little is publicly disclosed. Their arrests do,

however, mean that there were high-profile arrests in which the US had an interest in 2018. The belief that the US had an interest in these two individuals is based on an indictment against Guadalupe by the DEA (Underwood, 2013) and a guilty plea in the US by Guízar Valencia (U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas, 2023). The belief that the US was interested in these two suspects leads to the assumption that there was some form of intelligence-sharing between the US and Mexico in these cases.

The new strategy of President López Obrador

Another notable event in 2018 was Mexican President Andres Manuel López Obrador taking office. When President López Obrador took office in 2018 he promised to target social structures facilitating crime, as opposed to directly confronting drug cartels with violence in hopes of reducing overall violence (Beittel, 2022). According to a US Congress report, President López Obrador avoided large-scale police actions against cartels, and let US-Mexico security cooperation decline (Beittel, 2022). As President López Obrador took office in December of 2018 his influence on arrests made in 2018 was minimal. His policy to avoid of large-scale police action as well as a decrease in security cooperation may have proven to be form a new dynamic in the Mexican Drug War though. His predecessor President Peña Nieto already announced a strategy that focussed on the reduction of violence (Corcoran, 2012). But there still were numerous high-profile arrests that involved extensive US security cooperation. The predecessor of both these presidents, President Calderón, started the Mexican Drug War. His successors all continued this war, except for (at time of writing, current) President Sheinbaum. They do, however, seem to have implemented a strategy of force reduction. Current Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has announced that there will be no renewed war on drug cartels (McDonnel, 2024). It currently is difficult to assess if this trend will keep going under US President Donald Trump who designated Mexican cartels as terrorist organisations (The White House, 2025).

Conclusion

Overview of the thesis

The analysis of this thesis has examined a series of high-profile operations, arrests, and intelligence efforts taking place in the Mexican Drug War. With the main focus of the analysis being on intelligence. The early years of the Mexican Drug War were marked by the launch of Operation Michoacán and the implementation of the Mérida Initiative. This set the stage for enhanced bilateral cooperation between Mexico and the US in the domain of security and intelligence. The cases discussed in the analysis were mostly successful if assessed from a strict law-enforcement perspective. However, operations frequently had negative side effects. Due to a focus on taking down the leadership of drug cartels (especially during the early years of the Mexican Drug War under President Calderón) splintering of large cartels was common. This splintering subsequently led to waves of violence. The strategic consequences of taking down cartel leaders did not necessarily result in the long-term weakening of cartel structures, as cartels either reformed through fragmentation or chose a new leader. Taking down cartel leaders resembles the mythical Hydra of Lerna; for every kingpin taken down multiple new cartel leaders stepped up. Another notable effect observed from 2006 to 2018 is the evolution of Mexican law enforcement, which became more independent in conducting intelligence operations without support from their US counterparts. Another observation that is less directly related to intelligence cooperation between the US and Mexico is the change in strategy of Mexican presidents starting under President Peña Nieto.

Main findings

This research has displayed an asymmetrical balance in terms of power in the US-Mexico intelligence sharing. Operations in which US intelligence sharing played a role led to the capture and, or, killing of multiple high-profile cartel leaders. However, these captures and

killings also revealed the dependency that the Mexican intelligence agencies have on more advanced and costly US intelligence systems (e.g. SIGINT, forms of IMINT). Meanwhile, Mexican authorities were placed in the direct line of fire when executing arrests. This imbalance bears resemblance of broader patterns in Global North–Global South relations, with Mexico bearing the violent consequences that occur when suspects wanted by the US are arrested. Another explanation for this imbalance may also be traced back to sovereignty. US authorities are permitted to assist in investigations but are prohibited from arresting suspects on Mexican soil themselves. This information-sharing relationship does place limitations on Mexico's autonomy in both operational and judicial matters. The United States holds control over valuable intelligence and often advocates for the extradition of suspects to face trial in a US court of law. This indirectly decides which suspects receive priority in neutralizing.

Under the Peña Nieto administration a strategy prioritizing the reduction of violence, as opposed to targeting kingpins, was introduced. Still, there were several high-profile arrests of kingpins under this administration. For example the arrest of Miguel Ángel Treviño Morales and Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. US agencies played important roles in the arrest of these kingpins with SIGINT, HUMINT, and IMINT support. However, the arrest of Servando Gómez "La Tuta" Martínez in 2015, with a lack of (known) US assistance, suggests a growing level of professionalism and an increase in the capabilities of Mexico's intelligence and law enforcement agencies. While official speeches of successive Mexican presidents after President Calderón suggested a shift from a force-centred strategy to a less force-focused strategy in the Mexican Drug War, the analysis of this thesis indicates that high numbers of arrests and significant levels of violence continued after the Calderón administration.

Thesis limitations

A primary limitation of this thesis is the reliance on secondary sources (e.g. newspaper articles) for much of the analysed data. This dependence was mainly driven by the fact that

most data on intelligence remains confidential, leading the research to journalists who had sources that were willing to speak based on anonymity. The secretive and often classified nature of intelligence operations made it difficult to access sufficient primary source material for the cases discussed. In terms of concerns regarding generalizability and transparency, the author has documented the databases consulted. This was done to improve replicability and to clarify from where the data was collected. Another limitation encountered in the research process was the author's limited proficiency in the Spanish language. This led to a reliance on translation software for both the creation of certain search queries as well as the interpretation of Spanish language source material. While translation software provides valuable support, it inevitably falls short in terms of understanding nuances as well as context. These limitations have been considered throughout the research process and are acknowledged to provide transparency regarding the constraints of this thesis.

Recommendations for further research

Future research on the topic of US-Mexico intelligence sharing could explore comparative analyses between the US-Mexico intelligence partnership as well as similar intelligence-sharing arrangements between the US and other countries that are part of the Global North. Examining potential differences between North-South and North-North intelligence cooperation may offer new insights into how geopolitical positioning influences the structure, balance of power, and operational dynamics within intelligence-sharing. Comparisons like these could contribute to a broader understanding of the relationship between the Global North and the Global South in the field of intelligence collaboration.

Additionally, further research could be conducted to examine how the intelligence strategies of successive Mexican presidential administrations have evolved over the course of the Mexican Drug War. As observed in the analysis, there appears to be a gradual shift from highly force-focused approaches under the Calderón administration toward strategies that

increasingly emphasize violence reduction in later administrations

A systematic study of these policy changes could help further understand how domestic political priorities and external pressures shape national security and intelligence policies in Mexico over time.

Apart from improving academic knowledge, further research on these topics may also help policymakers seeking to improve bilateral intelligence cooperation as help in developing more effective strategies to address transnational security challenges.

Conclusion to the thesis research question

The research question of this thesis ‘‘*How did intelligence cooperation between the US and Mexican governments during the period 2006–2018 contribute to the evolution of the Mexican Drug War?*’’ has made it clear that there is no single comprehensive answer. Rather, the contribution of this cooperation materialized in several ways.

In the context of kingpin takedowns, US intelligence assistance played a significant role. Particularly in the areas of technical intelligence such as SIGINT and IMINT. In turn, Mexican law enforcement agencies were primarily responsible for the kinetic side of these operations, including the arrests of suspects. While these operations were successful in neutralizing cartel kingpins, an unintended consequence was that these arrests also led to increased fragmentation of criminal organizations, contributing to an increase in violence as splinter groups competed for control. This has ultimately led to more violence in Mexico over the years of the Mexican Drug War.

Secondly, this period of cooperation appears to have accompanied a gradual professionalization and increase in the capabilities of Mexico’s intelligence and law enforcement agencies. This has notably been reflected in operations such as the 2015 arrest of Servando Gómez "La Tuta" Martínez, which was conducted without known US involvement. In turn, this suggests an increased operational capability of the Mexican authorities.

Finally, a broader consequence of these developments has been a shift in policy priorities among successive Mexican presidents. In response to persistent violence, later governments progressively moved away from exclusively force-focused strategies toward approaches aimed at tackling underlying social causes of organized crime.

To conclude: US-Mexican intelligence cooperation during this period intensified violence, largely as a result of cartel fragmentation following high-profile arrests. This cooperation also contributed to the professionalization of Mexican security forces. Furthermore, it has indirectly influenced the evolution of Mexican national policy approaches, leading to a shift in focus from militarized responses to more socially oriented strategies to address organized crime.

This thesis gives insight into the complex causal relations between international intelligence cooperation, domestic security policy, and unintended consequences of state intervention in organized crime. They also underline the importance of critically examining the asymmetrical balance within security partnerships, particularly between Global North and Global South actors.

The thesis has demonstrated that the Global South, in this case Mexico, experiences severe consequences as a result of demands from Global North. These consequences include high levels of violence and instability. With demands from the Global North including the pursuit and arrest of high value target suspects well as a persistent demand for illegal narcotics, which both fuel severe levels of violence in Mexico.

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WikiLeaks. (2015b, July 8). *Re: The Washington Post: U.S. and Mexican authorities detail coordinated effort to capture drug lord*. <https://wikileaks.org/hackingteam/emails/emailid/177560>

Table of databases including queries used per source

year	Query	Database	Source
2007	U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation:	congress.gov	https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10578
2007	Verint Systems	https://www.excelsior.com.mx	https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2013/07/09/908167
2007	Zhenli Ye Gon	https://www.law.com	https://www.law.com/nationallawjournal/allmID/1202432522319/
2007	Zhenli Ye Gon	https://www.nbcnews.com	https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna19922809
2007	Zhenli Ye Gon	https://www.bbc.com	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37699634
2007	Zhenli Ye Gon	https://www.gob.mx/fgr/	https://www.gob.mx/fgr/es/articulos/zhenli-ye-gon-fue-entregado-en-extradicion-por-las-autoridades-del-gobierno-de-eua-a-nuestro-pais
2007	extradition zhenly ye gon	https://www.govinfo.gov	https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCOURTS-dcd-1_08-mc-00596/pdf/USCOURTS-dcd-1_08-mc-00596-3.pdf
2007	Osiel Cardenas-Guillen	https://www.dea.gov/	https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2013/05/14/gulf-cartel-plaza-boss-heads-prison-life
2008	operation reckoning	justice.gov	https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/2008/September/08-ag-824.html
2008	operation solare	wikipedia, later retrieved archived link from https://web.archive.org/	https://web.archive.org/web/20090208160855/https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/164282.html
2008	operation solare	wikipedia, later retrieved archived link from https://web.archive.org/	https://web.archive.org/web/20080919203058/https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/162453.html
2009	Arturo Beltrán Leyva	wikipedia.com	https://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/americas/12/17/mexico.cartel.leader.killed/
2009	Arturo Beltrán Leyva	wikipedia.com	https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/18/world/americas/18mexico.html?_r=2&hpw&
2009	Arturo Beltrán Leyva	wikipedia.com	https://www.zocalo.com.mx/quedo-desangrado-en-un-piso-de-lujo/

2009	Vicente Zambada Niebla	wikipedia.com	https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna29773111
2009	Vicente Zambada Nieblas	article was found through public forum website "reddit.com" on sub-page "r/prisons" under query Vicente Zambada Nieblas https://web.archive.org/web/20111006161825/https://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/bill-conroy/2011/10/us-prosecutors-confirm-classified-information-colors-zambada-niebla-s-c	https://web.archive.org/web/20140325153136/http://narcosphere.narconews.com/userfiles/70/GovCipaRespond.pdf
2009	Vicente Zambada Nieblas	article was found through public forum website "reddit.com" on sub-page "r/prisons" under query Vicente Zambada Nieblas https://web.archive.org/web/2014032211059/http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook	https://web.archive.org/web/20140322104944/http://narcosphere.narconews.com/userfiles/70/Pleadings.Sinaloa.Zambada.pdf

		/bill-conroy/2011/07/us-court-documents-claim-sinaloa-cartel-protected-us-government	
2009	NO QUERY	Article was received from a journalist on LinkedIn who worked on the specific case.	https://web.archive.org/web/20120118181732/http://narcosphere.narconews.com/userfiles/70/148-main.pdf
2009	Arturo Beltrán Leyva	https://wikileaks.org	https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09MEXICO3573_a.html
2010	Edgar Valdez Villarreal	insidecrime.org	https://aristeginoticias.com/1106/mexico/valdez-villarreal-el-narco-testigo-de-la-corrupcion-de-garcia-luna-era-informante-de-la-dea-y-el-fbi/
2010	detención la barbie	https://www.proceso.com.mx/	https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2010/8/30/la-detencion-de-la-barbie-5114.html
2010	Mexican drug lord La Barbie	https://www.rollingstone.com	https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/an-american-drug-lord-in-acapulco-243702/
2010	Mexico arrest La Barbie Reuters	found through a google search on https://www.reuters.com	https://www.reuters.com/article/world/mexico-captures-la-barbie-drug-trafficker-idUSTRE67U08Q/
2011	José Jesús Méndez Vargas	https://insightcrime.org	https://insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news/jose-jesus-mendez-vargas-el-chango/
2011	Jesus Mendez-Vargas	https://www.justice.gov/	https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/mexican-cartel-leader-jesus-mendez-vargas-us-custody-drug-importation-charge
2011	El Chango	https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/	https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/ultimas-noticias/La-DEA-coopero-en-la-captura-de-El-Chango-20110622-0074.html
2012	Mexico elections Peña Nieto	https://insightcrime.org	https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/what-mexicos-elections-mean-for-crime-policy-part-i/
2012	Zetas	https://insightcrime.org	https://insightcrime.org/mexico-organized-crime-news/zetas-profile/

2012	El Lazca	https://justiceinmexico.org	https://justiceinmexico.org/zetas-leader-el-lazca-killed-in-firefight-with-mexican-navy/
2012	Heriberto Lazcano	United Press International	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2012/10/10/Navy-didnt-know-it-killed-Zetas-kingpin/22851349850600
2013	Miguel Ángel Treviño Morales	https://2009-2017.state.gov/	https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/inl/narc/rewards/123683.htm
2013	Miguel Ángel Treviño Morales	https://www.nytimes.com	https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/17/world/americas/capture-of-mexican-crime-boss-appears-to-end-a-brutal-chapter.html
2013	Z-40	https://www.proceso.com.mx/	http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=347601
2013	Miguel Ángel Treviño	https://insightcrime.org	https://insightcrime.org/news/feared-zetas-brothers-reign-from-mexico-prisons-us-prosecutors/
2014	Joaquin Guzman	https://www.congress.gov	https://www.congress.gov/113/chrg/CHRG-113hrg88779/CHRG-113hrg88779.pdf
2014	El Chapo Guzman arrested	https://www.theguardian.com/world	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/22/joaquin-guzman-mexico-drugs-arrested
2014	el chapo trial	https://www.nytimes.com	https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/03/nyregion/el-chapo-trial.html
2014	el chapo guzman	https://time.com	https://time.com/9545/anatomy-of-an-apprehension-the-three-keys-to-catching-el-chapo-guzman
2014	el chapo hacking team	https://wikileaks.org	https://wikileaks.org/hackingteam/emails/emailid/5640
2014	el chapo	https://wikileaks.org	https://wikileaks.org/hackingteam/emails/emailid/177560
2015	Special Reports	https://justiceinmexico.org/	https://justiceinmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/DrugViolenceinMexico-Final-2015.pdf
2015	U.S. assistance to Mexico	https://www.gao.gov	https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-647.pdf
2015	La Tuta detención	https://www.infobae.com/	https://www.infobae.com/americas/mexico/2022/07/07/por-que-cayo-la-tuta-el-insignificante-descuido-que-precipito-la-detencion-del-peligroso-narco/
2015	La Tuta detención	https://www.eleconomista.com.mx	https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/politica/La-Tuta-vivia-en-casa-de-maestro-de-normal-de-Michoacan-20150301-0009.html
2015	líneas de tendencia > explorar municipios: Michoacan > tipo de delito: homicidio	https://delitosmexico.onc.org.mx/	https://delitosmexico.onc.org.mx/tendencia/michoacan?unit=folders&indicator=researchFolders&group=anual&crime=1100&states=0&domain=

	culposo > indicador: números absolutos > agrupacion: anual		
2016	el chapo recapture	https://digital.library.unt.edu/	https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc824698/#collections
2016	El Chapo drone	https://www.wsj.com	https://www.wsj.com/world/americas/mexico-cartel-us-drone-boss-capture-a0c8e429
2016	el chapo recapture	https://justiceinmexico.org	https://justiceinmexico.org/joaquin-el-chapo-guzman-loera-recaptured-by-mexican-marines
2016	recapture Joaquin Guzman	https://www.aljazeera.com	https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/1/9/mexico-recaptures-fugitive-drug-kingpin-el-chapo
2017	Dámaso López Núñez	https://insightcrime.org/news/brief/sinaloa-cartel-leader-arrested-mexico-city/	https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2017/05/02/1160985
2017	Dámaso López Núñez	https://www.vice.com/en/	https://www.vice.com/en/article/hacker-revealed-sinaloa-drug-lord-mexico-damaso-chapo/
2017	Damaso Lopez Nuñez	https://www.justice.gov/opa	https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/senior-sinaloa-cartel-leader-extradited-united-states
2017	Herederero del Chapo video	https://www.eluniversal.com.mx	https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/entrada-de-opinion/columna/carlos-loret-demola/nacion/seguridad/2017/04/24/el-video-del-heredero/
2018	cartels	https://www.whitehouse.gov	https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/designating-cartels-and-other-organizations-as-foreign-terrorist-organizations-and-specially-designated-global-terrorists/
2018	Mexico president plan to reduce violence	https://www.latimes.com	https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2024-10-08/no-war-on-narcos-mexicos-new-president-vows-as-she-outlines-plans-to-reduce-violence
2018	José Guadalupe	https://www.borderlandbeat.com	https://www.borderlandbeat.com/2018/07/arrest-cjng-member-for-murder-of-three.html
2018	José Maria Guízar Valencia	https://www.borderlandbeat.com	https://www.borderlandbeat.com/2018/02/captured-el-z-43-jose-maria-guizar.html
2018	Jose Guadalupe Tapia-Quintero	https://www.dea.gov	https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2013/03/28/high-ranking-sinaloa-

			cartel-member-indicted-various-drug-and-money
2018	z-43	https://www.justice.gov	https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdtx/pr/z-43-pleads-guilty-trafficking-tons-cocaine-united-states
2018	drug trafficking organizations Mexico	https://www.congress.gov	https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R41576