



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on October 22, 2009

Hundreds of Mexican Drug Cartel Members Arrested

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder announced on October 22 “the arrest of nearly 1,200 individuals on narcotics-related charges and the seizure of more than 11.7 tons of narcotics as part of a 44-month multi-agency law enforcement investigation known as ‘Project Coronado.’ ”

Project Coronado targeted the major Mexican drug cartel known as La Familia, and it recently ramped up operations. In just the past two days, 303 arrests were made in 19 states through the cooperation of federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.



According to the Department of Justice, more than 3,000 officers and agents participated in the two-day push. Within that short span of time, “\$3.4 million in U.S. currency, 729 pounds of methamphetamine, 62 kilograms of cocaine, 967 pounds of marijuana, 144 weapons and 109 vehicles were seized by law enforcement agents.”

Combining these totals with previous seizures from the past 44 months shows that Project Coronado “has led to the arrest of 1,186 individuals and the seizure of approximately \$32.8 million in U.S. currency, and approximately 2,710 pounds of methamphetamine, 1,999 kilograms of cocaine, 29 pounds of heroin, 16,390 pounds of marijuana, 389 weapons and 269 vehicles.”

“This unprecedented, coordinated U.S. law enforcement action — the largest ever undertaken against a Mexican drug cartel — has dealt a significant blow to La Familia’s supply chain of illegal drugs, weapons and cash flowing between Mexico and the United States,” declared Holder. “We will not allow these cartels to operate unfettered in our country, and with the increases in cooperation between U.S. and Mexican authorities in recent years, we are taking the fight to our adversaries. We will continue to stand strong with our partners in Mexico as we work to disrupt and dismantle cartel operations on both sides of the border.”

La Familia is based in southwestern Mexico in the state of Michoacán. Strangely, La Familia is against the sale of methamphetamine to their fellow countrymen, choosing instead to focus on exporting drugs to the United States for use by Americans. Their violent methods include murder, kidnapping, and assault, and they are acquiring enough sophisticated weaponry that they are shipping hundreds of firearms back to Mexico.

ATF Acting Director Kenneth Melson said that “ATF’s arrest of defendants in Project Coronado highlight the almost inseparable link between illegal trafficking of firearms and narcotics between the U.S. and Mexico.” Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Assistant Secretary John Morton noted: “We at ICE are proud to have played an important role in yesterday’s operation and look forward to continuing to work with our law enforcement partners to target these criminal organizations.”

Although ICE’s involvement was acknowledged by the Department of Justice, there was no mention of how many of those arrested were in the country illegally. Until the breaches at the border are sealed,



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the drug problems coming up from the south will continue spreading across the country.

ATF head Melson put it plainly: “The problem is not just along the southwest border, it is all over our country now.” A CBS YouTube video posted on October 21 shows the seriousness of the problem in Georgia.

Our recent article “[Mexican Gangs Threaten, Extort U.S. Businesses](#)” reported on how bad things are getting as drug-related violence floods across our southern border. It pointed out that groups like [Law Enforcement Against Prohibition](#) believe that the answer is to end the international war on drugs, immediately cutting off the main source of profit for drug cartels.

The article concluded that if the federal government would simply follow the Constitution and faithfully execute its responsibilities — such as defending the border — the problems that currently encourage these high-publicity massive arrest operations would largely go away.

Photo of Eric Holder: AP Images



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