



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on November 1, 2012

U.S. Troops Working with Mexico on Drug War

U.S. troops are indeed working with the Mexican government under the guise of fighting a war on drugs, the Department of Defense acknowledged in the wake of explosive allegations about the U.S. government's role in the bloody conflict raging throughout Mexico. However, multiple official sources on both sides of the border have claimed that the cooperation goes much deeper than simply training and equipping Mexican forces.



In a series of leaked e-mails, law enforcement officials and diplomatic sources claimed that U.S. special-operations forces were actually on the ground in Mexico involved in joint operations. According to the sources, American forces were engaged with Mexican troops in the battle against certain drug cartels even as the U.S. government was reported to be deliberately helping certain criminal enterprises solidify their reign.

While the Pentagon did not confirm whether or not its personnel were directly involved in the fighting, a spokesman did admit in an e-mail to *The New American* that U.S. forces were working with authorities in Mexico. "At the request of the Mexican government, U.S. military teams periodically conduct training engagements with Mexican military units to enhance their security forces' capabilities and their counter-narcotics efforts," explained Army spokesman LTC Jim Gregory.

It is hardly a secret that the U.S. government has been providing training and equipment to the notoriously corrupt Mexican military, especially in recent years, purportedly to fight drug cartels. In 2010, *The New American* [reported](#) that the Obama administration was expanding the so-called Merida Initiative — a drug war cooperation scheme sometimes referred to as Plan Mexico — to unprecedented levels, far beyond what went on even under former President George W. Bush.

In addition to overtly showering billions of dollars on Mexico and other dubious Latin American governments to keep waging the controversial, and critics say failed, war on drugs, Obama tried his best to stamp out increasingly widespread and open talk of legalization among top political leaders in the region. The U.S. and Mexican governments have also seized on the bloody "war" to justify further "[integration](#)" in North America.

Now, however, allegations that U.S. forces are actually fighting in Mexico have raised new controversies on both sides of the border. Of course, American troops are already deployed all over the world, in many cases under the guise of the drug war. Most recently, for example, the Obama administration announced in September that it was [sending hundreds of U.S. Marines to Guatemala as part of "Operation Martillo,"](#) a multi-national coalition of soldiers and law enforcement supposedly aimed at countering narcotics trafficking through Central America.

Mexico, though, is another story entirely. At least officially, American forces are not supposed to be on the ground, let alone doing any fighting, and Mexican officials have stated as much on numerous occasions. However, privately, officials in both governments claimed that U.S. troops are indeed very much involved in the battle.



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The most recent credible allegations of direct U.S. military involvement in what more than a few analysts have described as a sort of “civil war” in Mexico came from correspondence between officials on both sides of the border with the private intelligence-gathering firm Stratfor. A massive batch of e-mails was stolen from the Texas-based outfit before being released online by WikiLeaks.

One 2011 e-mail from an individual described by Stratfor as “a US law enforcement officer with direct oversight of border investigations,” for example, claimed teams of American military forces were active in Mexico. “U.S. special operations forces are currently in Mexico. Small-scale joint ops [operations] with Mexico’s [special forces], but they are there,” the senior lawman, identified only as US714, wrote in the e-mail.

Stratfor did not seem surprised in the slightest by the explosive claim. “Four months ago this was hinted at by one of my sources, as a near future event. Likely USMC [U.S. Marine Corps] snake-eaters (SpecOps), judging by my source’s information at the time,” the intelligence firm’s Victoria Allen wrote in a note about the claim released online by WikiLeaks.

The allegations contained in the e-mail were [echoed by another Stratfor source](#), a U.S.-based Mexican diplomat, “MX1,” identified as a U.S.-educated lawyer stationed in the Southwest named Fernando de la Mora Salcedo. Their claims, however, were hardly unique. In fact, the revelations from Stratfor’s sources merely served to confirm [numerous previous reports](#) of U.S. military operations in Mexico.

Among the most troubling allegations found in the documents so far — aside from accusations by officials of direct U.S. government complicity in the drug trade and favoritism for certain cartels like Sinaloa — were documents detailing supposed “surgical strikes” by Mexican special-operations troops to eliminate targets. Analysts said the controversial schemes, partly funded by U.S. taxpayers, seemed highly suspicious, to put it mildly.

“Stripped of the military jargon, these special strike forces sound very much like death squads,” [explained](#) investigative journalist Bill Conroy with *Narco News*, one of the top reporters covering the drug war and border issues. Other analysts and human rights activists have been making similar allegations for years, and the Mexican military is regularly accused of wanton human rights abuses committed under the guise of prohibition.

At least 50,000 Mexicans have been killed in the bloody conflict in recent years after President Felipe Calderon unleashed a ruthless crackdown. Some estimates put the death toll as high as [100,000](#). While brutal cartels have undoubtedly been responsible for much of the bloodshed — questions about the role of the drug war in fomenting violence notwithstanding — the Mexican military, and by extension, its American counterpart, has certainly participated in the slaughter.

While widely regarded as unconstitutional and a terrible idea, U.S. troops are currently stationed all over the globe for various purposes. The difference with Mexico, however, is that Mexicans have historically been hyper-sensitive about the American military — in large part thanks to the history between the two nations, which included U.S. troops marching on the Mexican capital in the 1800s.

Suspicion about “gringos,” meanwhile, abounds — [especially when it comes to the drug war](#). Critics south of the border say any American involvement in Mexico’s bloody war would be a violation of the Mexican Constitution as well as the nation’s sovereignty. Putting boots on the ground, though, would be taking it to a whole new level.

Last year, Texas Gov. Rick Perry [suggested](#) that the chaos may require American troops in Mexico to help “kill these drug cartels and keep them off our border.” Mexico’s Ambassador to the United States,



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however, quickly [hit back](#) that having U.S. troops set foot on Mexican soil “is not on the table.” That was a short time after the Stratfor sources claimed American forces were already there fighting.

As activists and political leaders throughout the region seek to rein or even end the [United Nations-mandated](#) and U.S.-funded drug war altogether, Obama has been [adamant that the U.S. government will continue to wage it with increasing ferocity](#). Legalization or decriminalization, the administration said after Latin American presidents [called for a new approach](#), will [not even be considered](#).

Meanwhile, as Americans who support the Constitution or at least ending the wild federal spending try to restrain Washington’s seemingly never-ending appetite for foreign militarism, the President has [demanded new powers to send U.S. troops anywhere in the world](#) under the guise of fighting drugs, terror, and regimes he does not approve of. At the same time, the Obama administration is obstructing congressional investigations into [DEA drug-money laundering](#), [ATF arming of Mexican cartels](#), and more, as the CIA [faces mounting allegations of “managing” the drug trade](#).

The drugs, meanwhile, continue pouring across the border in ever greater quantities. And the death toll rises every single day.

Photo: Preview of things to come? Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Barry McCaffrey observes a Mexican special forces training base in the southern

Mexican town of Xtomoc in Quintanaroo, Mexico, Feb. 10, 2000: AP Images

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