



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on January 18, 2011

Mexican Cartels Buy Afghan Heroin — Drug Wars Claim 507 in 14 Days

According to Borderland Beat (BB) Jan. 5, Mexican drug cartels have formed elaborate and strategic alliances with Middle Eastern drug traffickers, and those supply chains are also being used for arms trade and money laundering. BB obtained the report from *El Universal*, a major Mexican newspaper, and added that Mexican groups are also making inroads into European Union markets.

Ninety percent of the world's heroin supply comes from Afghanistan, and the shipments destined for Canada and the U.S. are very profitable to criminal groups in Mexico.



Edgardo Buscaglia, investigator and fellow at the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico, told *El Universal* that Mexican drug traffickers establish business alliances with gangs in places such as Afghanistan and Turkey and operate like multinational emissaries. With bases of operation in Mexico, the groups work on an international level "to establish contacts and place operatives that can deal with the Turkish and Indian criminal organizations in order to facilitate the production and sale of drugs," specifically heroin. Buscaglia explained,

It is in the interest of these Mexican groups (specifically the Sinaloa alliance) that they open smuggling routes for the distribution of heroin to the U.S. market. Furthermore, they are not only focusing on the movement of Afghan heroin through Mexico; they are also taking positions of power as major players in the international world of the heroin trade.

It is not as if [Joaquín] El Chapo Guzmán [Loera] himself travels to Turkey; it is up to his emissaries to maintain good relations in that country. They keep the flow of heroin packages and money that belongs to the Sinaloa cartel moving to their appropriate destinations. Money and heroin make [sic] its way to Chicago, or New York. It is like the concept of outsourcing labor: the Mexican cartels receive the product from their overseas suppliers and they distribute the merchandise locally.

Joaquin Guzman-Loera, known as El Chapo (Shorty), heads the international drug trafficking organization known as the Sinaloa cartel, named after the Mexican State of Sinaloa on the country's west coast. Rated by *Forbes* as one of the richest and most powerful people in the world, El Chapo is Mexico's top drug kingpin.

Buscaglia continued,

The Mexican groups arrive to the Turkish and Afghan markets with contacts established by emissaries or companies where cartel members hold minor positions. Often, the exporters themselves come with the credentials of being overseas suppliers and representatives of people in the business of illicit services.



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When the heroin bound for the North and Central American markets arrives, these emissaries often exchange drugs for arms, or for other items. Nothing is out of the question, it really just depends on the region.

Buscaglia asserted that while Mexican groups are emerging as international players in drug trafficking, they've also expanded their involvement in Romanian and Bulgarian arms smuggling and money laundering schemes. He said the cartels' world positions have expanded to benefit the groups' operations deep in Mexico, similar to the way Russian and Italian mafias benefited when those groups were dominant.

He explained to *El Universal* that this confirms why cartels are using weapons manufactured in Asia, because of the interchange of drugs and arms.

The most important gun suppliers at the moment (other than the U.S. and China) are the Russians and the Albanians. Places where the purchase of illegal arms is often [paid for] in drugs.

Despite the international power of Mexican drug cartels, their influence is still felt mostly in Mexico, but isn't confined only to its border with the U.S. Incidences of drug war-related deaths, beheadings, violence, and torture continue to rise all over Mexico at an alarming rate. A stunning report from BB on January 15 revealed that [507 people were executed in just the first 14 days](#) of 2011. Among those were 22 minors and 3 city mayors.

In the same period of 2010, there were 428 such deaths, according to Grupo Reforma's "executionmeter." In 2009, the number was 179. The Mexican state of Chihuahua, bordering Texas and New Mexico, topped the list of states with the highest number (96) of executions. Acapulco claimed the most violent deaths in a single day on January 8: 25 executed by organized crime — 14 of those beheaded.

National Institute of Penal Violence professor and researcher Martin Barron reports that most offenders are never punished, because most killings are never investigated.

What the state authorities have done is say: "I'm not getting involved because it was an execution, because there were guns, rifles, etc., it's not my responsibility, it's the responsibility of the federal authorities because it is drug trafficking."

So, that's how the State evades its responsibility, because we must remember that the murders are crimes of common law.

Carlos Humberto Toledo, an expert on national security issues, argues that the positive results the federal government says it's making in its anti-drug fight have in reality never been verified. "Organized crime has not been weakened. On the contrary, it is active, operative, strong, and fighting tooth and nail for their territory."

A stronger case cannot be made for securing America's border.

Photo: Federal Police agents escort Flavio Mendez Santiago, center, alias "El Amarillo," alleged member and co-founder of the Zetas drug cartel, in Mexico City, Jan. 18, 2011: AP Images



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