



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on January 18, 2010

Obama Backs Mexico's Failed 'War on Drugs'

The Obama administration has continued the expansion of unconstitutional U.S.-government support for the military-led "War on Drugs" in Mexico under the Merida Initiative. He has provided more resources and personnel than even former President George W. Bush, despite the program's questionable use of resources and widespread reports of human-rights abuses.



"The Obama administration has supported the plan and even requested, and received from Congress, additional funds beyond what the Bush administration requested," [noted](#) expert Laura Carlsen, the director of the Americas Program for the Center for International Policy in Mexico City. "The [Obama] administration has given its full support to the failed drug war."

Under the Merida Initiative, also known as Plan Mexico, the U.S. government provides hundreds of millions of dollars per year to Mexico and other Latin American nations supposedly for border security and to battle terrorism and, particularly, drugs. Approved in 2007 under George W. Bush, the program was originally supposed to unconstitutionally provide about \$1.6 billion of "assistance" over three years.

So far, the consequences of the initiative have been disastrous. "In the three years since Calderon launched the war on drugs in Mexico with the support of the U.S. government, drug related violence has shot up to over 15,000 executions, and formal reports of violations of human rights have increased six-fold," said Carlsen. The U.S.-funded militarization of Mexico's drug war has caused a dramatic surge in homicides, along with "rape and abuse of women by soldiers in communities throughout the country," she added.

In addition to those atrocities, there are also frequent accusations that a lot of the resources provided by Washington are actually being used to target political dissidents. "There has been an increase in human rights violations by the armed forces," Carlsen said. "In some regions, dissident leaders have been targeted by the military." She also reports on the development of what rights groups in Mexico refer to as "the criminalization of protest," citing harassment of communities and the round ups of anti-NAFTA leaders and other protestors under the military's anti-drug campaigns.

"Militarization is not the way to deal with Mexico's political crisis," she said. "Providing exclusively security-focused equipment and training to Mexico is like pouring gas on a fire." And indeed, she is not alone in her conclusion.

Mexican human-rights organizations have even petitioned the United States to stop. "We respectfully request that the U.S. Congress and Department of State, in both the Merida Initiative as in other programs to support public security in Mexico, does not allocate funds or direct programs to the armed forces," read a petition from a coalition of 50 Mexican human-rights groups.



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Other analysts have offered similarly damaging assertions, including Jorge Castañeda, a former Foreign Minister of Mexico. "The Mexican drug war is costly, unwinnable, and predicated on dangerous myths," he wrote in an [analysis](#) for the New America Foundation. He also points out that cartel-related violence has exploded since President Felipe Calderon decided to crank up the war and break out the military. "If the war is to continue, it will be as much Obama's as Calderón's, and it will continue to distract from far more important matters."

But the Obama administration has every intention of continuing to support the failed program. After a particularly horrible set of murders, Obama vowed to "stand firm" with Mexico's government "in our commitment for total cooperation and shared responsibility in this fight against a common enemy."

American Ambassador to Belize Vinai Thummalapally, when asked whether the \$1.5 million the nation is set to receive under the Merida Initiative would be "adequate," explained to Belizean newspaper [Guardian](#) that "the funds to Belize can only increase."

The Merida plan also continues the integration of North America by furthering the notion of a so-called "common security perimeter" with Mexico. The Council on Foreign Relations' 2005 report entitled [Building a North American Community](#) actually called for the implementation of the common North American security perimeter by 2010. So the project appears to be mostly on track as integration based on NAFTA and the Security and Prosperity Partnership continues to deepen with Merida.

There are many reasons why Congress should end the Merida Initiative and countless other, similar programs. For one, they are not authorized by the Constitution. Second, the results are counterproductive and in this case, extremely deadly. What the people of Mexico need is not more military equipment and training. And what the American people need is not more unconstitutional spending, crushing debt, and cartel/drug war-related violence. Border enforcement and an end to unconstitutional policies should be the priorities of Congress, and the results would likely be far superior to the current path.



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