Countering the Evolving Drug Trade in the Americas

Mexico Institute 8th Annual U.S.-Mexico Security Conference

15 January 2020
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The Globalization of Drug Trafficking

Source: UNODC
The Diversification of Global Drug Consumption
The Growing Threat from Synthetic Drugs

Source: Celina Realuyo
The Opioid Epidemic in the U.S.

**THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC BY THE NUMBERS**

- **130+** People died every day from opioid-related drug overdoses (estimated)
- **10.3 m** People misused prescription opioids in 2018
- **47,600** People died from overdosing on opioids
- **2.0 million** People had an opioid use disorder in 2018
- **808,000** People used heroin in 2018
- **81,000** People used heroin for the first time
- **2 million** People misused prescription opioids for the first time
- **15,349** Deaths attributed to overdosing on heroin (in 12-month period ending February 2019)
- **32,656** Deaths attributed to overdosing on synthetic opioids other than methadone (in 12-month period ending February 2019)

**SOURCES**

1. 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Mortality in the United States, 2018
2. NCHS Data Brief No. 329, November 2018

Source: Department of Health and Human Services
Plant-Based Drug Production and Business Cycle

Cultivation

Income
Money Laundering

Production

Distribution
Sales

Transit

Source: Celina Realuyo
Unprecedented Levels of Cocaine Production in Colombia

Source: UNODC
The Growing Threat from Synthetics
Fentanyl

Lethal doses of Fentanyl and Carfentanil relative to a lethal dose of Heroin
Fentanyl Flows to the U.S.

Source: San Diego Union Tribune
Fentanyl Flows Through Mexico

1. Maritime ports handle large volumes of merchandise and a significant portion of international trade, particularly between Asia and Mexico, so are logistically ideal for both legal and illegal trading of illicit substances.

2. The Pacific coast ports of Manzanillo and Lázaro Cárdenas, in particular, absorb fentanyl and fentanyl precursors arriving in Mexico, then dispatch them to storage and production points around Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Culiacán.

3. Precursors are converted into fentanyl. Pure fentanyl is also laced into fake prescription pills. The different forms of fentanyl are then shipped with other drugs, although not mixed with them. The poly-drug loads are transported by land, air, or sea to the US border.

4. Upwards of 75 percent of the fentanyl and fake pills move across the Tijuana-San Diego border via passenger cars, container trucks, or "mules."

Source: InSight Crime
Resurgence of Methamphetamine

Source: UNODC
The Drug Trade Empowered by the Darknet and Cryptocurrency

Surface Web
- Yahoo
- Google
- CNN.com
- Bing
- Reddit

Deep Web
- Academic databases
- Medical records
- Financial records
- Legal documents
- Some scientific reports
- Some government reports
- Subscription-only information
- Some organization-specific repositories

Dark Web
- TOR
- Political protest
- Drug trafficking and other illegal activities

96% of content on the Web (estimated)
U.S.-Mexican Efforts to Address the Evolving Drug Trade

- Demand Reduction and Treatment Measures
- Supply Reduction Measures
- Detection and Interdiction Measures
- Financial and Cyber Measures
- Arms Trafficking Reduction Measures

Source: Celina Realuyo
2019 U.S. National Drug Control Strategy to Reduce Supply and Demand

Source: The White House
Improved Bilateral Detection and Interdiction of Fentanyl and Meth Trafficking

Source: Department of Homeland Security
Bilateral Financial Intelligence Sharing and Collaboration to Combat Money Laundering
Mexico-U.S. Binational Strategy on Illicit Arms Trafficking Discussions - November 2019

Source: Government of Mexico
Policy Options for Countering the Evolving Drug Trade in the Americas

• The United States and Mexico should continue to collaborate on the bilateral security agenda through information and intelligence sharing; joint counternarcotics and border security operations; and financial investigations against Mexican cartels. This collaboration should be continuously reviewed and updated to reflect changing dynamics within criminal organizations, and evolving threats.

• Both countries should remain focused on countering drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations even when the migration crisis dominates the bilateral agenda.

• More human, financial, and technological resources should be marshalled for counternarcotics security forces in the United States and Mexico to anticipate, detect, and interdict new synthetic drugs such as fentanyl and methamphetamines.

• The fight against trafficking should be taken into the cyber domain. This should include better understanding of how drug traffickers are capitalizing on cyberspace to expand their markets, as well as, actual cyber operations to detect and dismantle these networks.

Source: Celina Realuyo
Policy Options for Countering the Evolving Drug Trade in the Americas (continued)

• The United States and Mexico should continue to collaborate on the bilateral security agenda through) To address the unprecedented violence in Mexico, the government should seek to improve the capacity of Mexican security forces. The United States should provide technical assistance for this effort based on Mexico’s identified needs.

• Both the United States and Mexico should work together to reduce the flow of illegal firearms from the United States and the diversion of firearms from the Mexican security forces. This could be accomplished in part by expanded background checks, more control over straw purchasers, expanded border inspections, or greater oversight of sales at gun shows in the U.S.

• Both countries need to exhibit the political will and define effective security strategies and capabilities to counter the evolving drug trade in the Americas.

Source: Celina Realuyo