

2016

Preserving the status quo: the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs,” 1969-1978

Clyfford Young
Vassar College, clyoung@vassar.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone

Recommended Citation

Young, Clyfford, "Preserving the status quo: the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs,” 1969-1978" (2016). *Senior Capstone Projects*. Paper 552.

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Window @ Vassar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Window @ Vassar. For more information, please contact DigitalWindowAdmin@vassar.edu.

Clyfford Young
American Studies 302/03: Senior Project
First Reader: Leslie Offutt
Second Reader: Carlos Alamo

Preserving the Status Quo:

The U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs,” 1969-1978

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Camarena Affair – 3

Looking Back: The Beginnings of the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs” – 5

Review of Literature – 8

Chapter 1: The Southern “Southern Strategy”

The “Southern Strategy” and the “Mexican Problem” – 14

Operation Intercept: The First Shot in the “War on Drugs” – 18

Operation Intercept and Racial Profiling – 19

Cold War Complications – 23

Circumventing the Cold War – 30

Drug Eradication: The Beginning of “Drug War” Militarization – 35

Chapter 2: The Golden Age of the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs”

Money, Guns, and the Mexican “Dirty War” – 39

Mexico’s Opium Problem – 46

Drug Eradication: Joint U.S.-Mexico “Progress” and CIA Meddling – 50

Conclusion

The End of an Era – 57

Bibliography – 60



Introduction

The Camarena Affair

On February 9, 1985, members of the Mexican Guadalajara drug cartel murdered U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency special agent Enrique “Kiki” Camarena Salazar.¹ At the time of his murder, American drug enforcement agents working in Mexico were not allowed to conduct or participate in surveillance flights documenting drug cultivation and production.² Be that as it was, in the months leading up to their deaths, Camarena and Mexican pilot Alfredo Zavala Avelar had been flying undercover reconnaissance

¹ Elaine Shannon. *Desperados: Latin Drug Lords, U.S. Lawmen, and the War America Can't Win*. (New York: Viking, 1988), Chapter 11.

² United States Embassy. “Narcotics—GOM Requests Elimination of DEA Spotters.” 1978. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 2.

missions in northwestern Mexico, and in doing so came across a drug cultivation oasis in the middle of the desert. In an uninhabited area of Chihuahua, Camarena and Zavala spotted an enormous marijuana plantation. Rumors of large-scale, desert marijuana-growing operations had reached DEA ears, but to date there had been little evidence to substantiate claims that such operations existed. Camarena and Zavala now had proof.³

Called Rancho Búfalo, the plantation was owned by, among others, the founding members of the Guadalajara Cartel. Elaine Shannon describes the plantation in her 1988 book *Desperados: Latin Drug Lords, U.S. Lawmen, and the War American Can't Win*. Approximately 7,000 Mexicans labored on and operated Rancho Búfalo.⁴ Shannon states that Mexican security forces, in addition to cartel gunmen, patrolled the perimeter of the operation. Although high-level drug traffickers owned the plantation, an operation the size and scope of Rancho Búfalo could not exist if authorities did not purposely look away. Camarena and Zavala had not only happened upon the largest drug production operation in Mexican history to date; their discovery also served to corroborate the purported corruption that permeated all levels of the Mexican government.

DEA agents including Camarena and Mexican law enforcement personnel raided Rancho Búfalo in November 1984, three months before the special agent's assassination. Although the raid produced one of the largest seizures of illegal drugs of the decade, neither the managers of the plantation or the leaders of the Guadalajara Cartel were

³ Shannon, 194-198.

⁴ Although Elaine Shannon's book is based, at least in part, on scholarly research and primary source materials like newspapers and personal interviews, her description of the U.S.-Mexico "War on Drugs" can only be relied upon to a limited extent, as her writing is decidedly sensational and pointedly provocative. *Desperados* is repeatedly cited by other works consulted for this thesis, a fact that should inspire some confidence in her writing. Her depiction of the Camarena murder and Rancho Búfalo must nevertheless be taken with a grain of salt.

caught. There had been an information leak. Those in charge had fled after being tipped off. The bust netted only the low-level laborers still working at the ranch who hadn't been informed about the raid.⁵

Camarena and Zavala were killed for their discovery. The news of Camarena's slaying touched off a major diplomatic incident between the U.S. and Mexico. Furthermore, the U.S.-Mexico "War on Drugs"⁶ became a subject of interest for the American population at large in the wake of the ordeal. Shannon's *Desperados*—in which she uses the Camarena murder to argue that the U.S. can't win the "War on Drugs"—was a best seller and later adapted into an Emmy-winning miniseries. Although the U.S.-Mexico "War on Drugs" did not begin with the Camarena murder, it seems that his death was a tipping point for the "war" in the American popular imagination. But what had led up to the Camarena affair?

Looking Back: The Beginnings of the U.S.-Mexico "War on Drugs"

The U.S.-Mexico "War on Drugs" garnered comparatively little attention before the American agent's murder. Of course, a major international incident will garner widespread attention, especially when it is perceived as a "new" issue. But the U.S. and Mexico had been waging the "drug war" in the years leading up to Camarena's death. It appears that the U.S.-Mexico "War on Drugs" dates from at least 1969, the year that Richard Nixon assumed the presidency of the United States.

The history of the U.S.-Mexico counternarcotics relationship is dense and convoluted. The pre-Camarena period is no less confusing than the post-Camarena

⁵ Ibid., 194-198.

⁶ I put "War on Drugs" in quotes because the "drug war" is not necessarily a real war, nor is it necessarily a war on drugs, a societally defined group of inanimate substances.

period. Looking at the U.S.-Mexico “drug war” from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, however, provides a lens through which one can analyze the conflict in its post-1985 state. This lens might help to answer the question of why the DEA, an American law enforcement agency, was operating in Mexico. Yet any answer will be incomplete and messy, as the “War on Drugs” is not as simple as its name makes it out to be.

The “War on Drugs” was one of several “wars” being fought by both Mexico and the United States from the late 1960s to late 1970s. Mexico was an active participant and key ally of the United States in the Cold War. Additionally, the 1970s were the worst years of Mexico’s “Dirty War,”⁷ a period of time during which the country’s ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), repressed political dissidents, leftist students, and other marginalized populations. The confluence of these “wars” with the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs” represents a complex time. Although these conflicts sometimes pursued parallel goals, the Cold War, the “Dirty War,” and the “War on Drugs” contradicted one another in surprising and frustrating ways. But one purpose appears to have motivated them all: the desire to preserve and perpetuate a U.S.-centric “status quo.”⁸

Although the “wars” cannot be compared in their entirety, elements of them can be. Certain policies, motivations, and actions of the “wars” overlap. And it is when they overlap that this “status quo” can be defined. Domestically, the U.S. used the “War on Drugs” to maintain its traditional racial and social “status quos.” After the abolition of

⁷ “Dirty War” appears in quotes, as that is how I have seen it written in several different sources. Like the “War on Drugs,” the “Dirty War” was also not necessarily a real war, pitting two belligerent combatants against one another.

⁸ I decided to put “status quo” in quotation marks because, like the “War on Drugs,” it is something that is up for a great deal of interpretation.

Jim Crow segregation, the U.S. government started the “War on Drugs” to preserve white, conservative hegemony.⁹ African Americans were disproportionately affected by the “drug war.” John Ehrlichman, one of Nixon’s trusted assistants, admitted this in a 2016 *Harper’s Magazine* article titled “Legalize It All: How to Win the War on Drugs.” According to Ehrlichman,

The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people... We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.¹⁰

African Americans and the antiwar left, however, were not the only groups to suffer because of the “drug war.” Mexicans, too, suffered from Nixon’s “law and order” politics and the “War on Drugs.”

But was the United States’ “drug war” in Mexico designed to achieve racist ends? Maybe, but the U.S. government’s drug control agenda in Mexico is not so clear. Looking at U.S.-Mexico counternarcotics policy from the late 1960s to late 1970s, one can see how the “drug war” enabled the U.S. “[to do] overtly what it had often done covertly: subordinate Latin American nations”¹¹ politically, economically, and socially.

As the United States’ neighbor, Mexico has felt the weight of this reality arguably more than any other country in the Western Hemisphere. The “drug war” has allowed the United States government to criminalize Mexico as a nation, and to demonize its people

⁹ Michael H. Tonry. *Punishing Race: A Continuing American Dilemma*. (New York: Oxford UP, 2011), Chapter 1.

¹⁰ John Ehrlichman, quoted in Dan Baum. “Legalize It All: How to Win the War on Drugs.” (*Harper’s Magazine*, April 2016), 22.

¹¹ Bruce Bullington, and Allen A. Block. “A Trojan Horse: Anti-Communism and the War on Drugs.” (*Contemporary Crises* 14.1, 1990), 39.

while distancing America's politically powerful white majority from the onus of its drug problem. Although the U.S.-Mexico "drug war" has accomplished precious little in the way of interdicting, intercepting, and eradicating drugs,¹² it has been an effective method of social control and of maintaining the American "status quo."

Review of Literature

This thesis uses the arguments of legal scholar Michelle Alexander and Latin American historian Greg Grandin to analyze the ways in which the U.S.-Mexico "War on Drugs" preserved and perpetuated a U.S.-centric "status quo." Alexander concurs with Ehrlichman's assessment. She describes the "drug war" in the United States as a means to permanently relegate black and brown people to a criminal underclass. In her estimation, the U.S. created a drug crime problem to solve a social control problem.¹³ Drawing on Alexander's argument, this thesis contends that the U.S. used the "War on Drugs" from the late 1960s onwards as a form of social control that criminalized Mexicans, and that perpetuated a "status quo" in which a white, conservative U.S. could continue to dominate the Western Hemisphere.

In fact, the "War on Drugs" in Mexico may predate the "drug war" in the U.S. as a form of social control. Ehrlichman intimated this in 1969 when he said "there is apprehension [that the U.S. gives] higher priority to drug control in the U.S. than to good relations in Latin America."¹⁴ Greg Grandin's work *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* describes Latin America as a

¹² Arthur Benavie. *Drugs: America's Holy War*. (New York: Routledge, 2009), Chapter 1.

¹³ Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. (New York: New, 2012), Chapter 1.

¹⁴ United, States Embassy. "Negotiations on Operation Cooperation." 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

“workshop” for the American Empire. In this sense, Latin America is a proving ground in which the U.S. has perfected strategies, tactics, and policies it has applied at home and elsewhere in the world.¹⁵ This thesis takes Grandin’s assertion and applies it to the “drug war.” The U.S. may used the “War on Drugs” in Mexico to experiment with law enforcement strategies that were later implemented in the U.S. and in other Latin American countries. In doing so, it could be argued, the U.S. used Mexico as a laboratory in which to experiment with the preservation of its “status quo.”

While Alexander sees the domestic “drug war” as the progeny of Jim Crow, scholars like Bruce Bullington and Allen A. Block view the U.S.’s “War on Drugs” in Latin America as an extension of the Cold War. For Bullington and Block, the “drug war” was born not of Jim Crow, but of the U.S.’s pressing desire to halt the spread of communism in Latin America. Grandin’s work can be used to elaborate on this analysis of the “drug war,” as well. In his work *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, Grandin treats the Cold War in Latin America as a counter-revolution against elements of the Latin American left.¹⁶ This thesis employs Grandin’s counter-revolutionary conception of the Cold War in Latin America to draw a connection between the U.S. “drug war” in Mexico and the U.S. anticommunist agenda. In attempting to establish this link, this thesis suggests that the Cold War and the “War on Drugs” in Mexico essentially served the same purpose—the preservation of an anti-leftist “status quo.”

¹⁵ Greg Grandin. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*. (New York: Metropolitan, 2006), Introduction.

¹⁶ Greg Grandin. *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*. (Chicago: U of Chicago, 2004), Conclusion.

Documentation produced by U.S. government agencies must be examined in order to understand the United States' political agenda in Mexico, however. The Digital National Security Archive's (DNSA) collections of declassified U.S. government documents entitled *U.S.-Mexico Counternarcotics Policy, 1969-2013* provides this material. In addition to the Counternarcotics Policy archive, the DNSA has published U.S. government documents concerning the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre. The documents contained in these archives provide a rare window through which one can observe inner workings of the U.S. government. And because the information contained therein was classified, it is likely that DNSA material offers a less-filtered presentation of the U.S.'s political intentions. Because of the content and origins of these collections, sources from the DNSA are the backbone of this thesis.

Although sources from the DNSA's collections form the archival foundation of this thesis, the examined material is not without information gaps and contradictions. In other words, the DNSA's collections of declassified U.S. government documents do not constitute a proverbial smoking gun that leads to a clear understanding of the U.S.'s "drug war" in Mexico. Confusion, ineptitude, and secrecy are manifest throughout the archive. In addition, the bureaucratic language of the government documents can be maddeningly vague. On top of that, the documents are often redacted, sometimes to the point of near-total censorship. Moments of candor like that offered by John Ehrlichman are few. Analyzing the preservation and perpetuation of a U.S.-centric "status quo" through these documents therefore requires reading between the lines. Thus, firm conclusions based on information found in the DNSA's archives are tough to make. Reading the DNSA documents alongside Alexander, Grandin and others can,

nonetheless, provide insight into the mayhem of the early years of the U.S.-Mexico “drug war.”

Although Alexander’s argument that the “War on Drugs” is a means of maintaining racial hierarchy applies only to the United States, her analysis is still useful when thinking about Mexico. The documents treated in this thesis do not definitively say that the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs” is concerned with the perpetuation of a racial hierarchy. Even so, the U.S.-Mexico “drug war,” is indisputably an extension of the U.S.’s domestic quest to sustain a racialized social order. In turn, there is reason to believe that the “War on Drugs” performed a similar function vis-à-vis Mexico and its people. This is but one of many possible explanations for U.S. international drug enforcement, however.

This thesis builds on Grandin’s argument that the U.S. used Mexico as a laboratory for developing drug enforcement tactics that were eventually implemented in the United States and elsewhere in Latin America. While the documentation is insufficient to allow an unequivocal argument for this case, evidence does point to this possibility. Grandin’s idea that the Cold War was a counter-revolution against the left in Latin America is not explicitly reflected in U.S. government documents, either. Even so, there is an anticommunist element of the U.S. documents. But if waging “war” on illegal substances was a permutation of Cold War, the “drug war” soon proved more than an effective disguise for anticommunist intervention. In Mexico’s case, it is feasible that the U.S. used the “drug war” to intervene in Mexican internal affairs and perpetuate a U.S.-centric “status quo” without having to raise the issue of communism. If this was so, the “drug war” in Mexico can be seen as a smokescreen for U.S. anticommunist intervention

and as an independent “war” capable of perpetuating the U.S. “status quo” outside the structures of the Cold War. Again, this hypothesis cannot be presently taken as fact given that U.S. government documents from this period do not bear out this claim.

Another important caveat: the research done for this thesis does not include Mexican government materials. The Mexican government’s perspective is, thus, notably absent. Further, DNSA declassified documents, as government sources, do not—and cannot—represent the people who were most affected by the U.S.-Mexico “drug war.” Despite the many limitations of the DNSA’s collections of declassified documents, looking at them in conjunction with secondary sources like Alexander, Grandin, and others is sufficient to construct an analytic frame with which one can begin to make sense of the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs” from the late 1960s to the late 1970s.

Two U.S.-Mexico interactions of the period are especially relevant when attempting to understand the complicated nature of the “War on drugs,” its purposes, its successes, and its failures: Operation Intercept (1969) and Operation Condor (1975-1978). Operation Intercept was, at the time, the largest peacetime search and seizure operation ever conducted;¹⁷ Operation Condor was the largest aerial drug eradication campaign in history.¹⁸ Both Operation Intercept and Operation Condor are riddled with contradictions and further complicated by the convergence of the three “wars” in which the U.S. and Mexico were involved. Yet complexities of Intercept and Condor serve to underscore their importance in the effort to decode the intractable early years of the U.S.-Mexico “drug war.”

¹⁷ Richard B Craig. "Operation Intercept: The International Politics of Pressure." (*The Review of Politics* 42.4, 1980), 564.

¹⁸ Peter Watt, and Roberto Zepeda Martínez. *Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy*. (London: Zed, 2012), 50.

Chapter 1 discusses Operation Intercept, the context in which it occurred, and other events relevant to the earliest days of the U.S.-Mexico “drug war.” Chapter 2 discusses Operation Condor as a seminal moment in the “War on Drugs,” but focuses more generally on the 1970s. One could argue that today’s world still bears the marks of Operation Intercept and Operation Condor. Even so, it is not within the scope of this thesis to conclude the meanings, consequences, and legacies of Operation Intercept, Operation Condor, or the first decade of the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs.” What is done is offer an in-depth analysis of the beginning of the U.S.-Mexico “drug war” and why the first decade of the “war” matters.

*The Southern “Southern Strategy”*¹⁹

The “Southern Strategy” and the “Mexican Problem”

“In just four years—1964 to 1968—a [United States] that had been as united as never before fell apart, fragmented into polarized factions.”²⁰ Richard Nixon inherited this fractious situation upon assuming the U.S.’s highest political office from Lyndon B. Johnson in January 1969. The late 1960s was a particularly charged political, social, and economic time for the U.S. The Civil Rights Movement, women’s movements, the sexual revolution, anti-war movements opposing the Cold and Vietnam wars, and various other countercultures were, in the eyes of conservatives, threatening to tear the United States asunder. U.S. industrial dominance, undisputed since World War II, was being challenged by Germany and Japan. The U.S. economy was slowing after 25 years of uninterrupted growth.²¹ The Cold and Vietnam wars were raging. For the first time since the end of World War II, it appeared that “America’s unchallenged supremacy in the world was no longer a given.”²²

The Republican Party and Nixon had no intention of unifying the disparate factions of the late 1960’s. Instead, the Republican Party developed the “Southern Strategy.” Wielding a rhetoric decrying a failing United States, the Republican Party

¹⁹ The title of this chapter comes from a conversation I had with professor Carlos Alamo. The Southern “Southern Strategy” here refers to the Nixon White House’s policy of fomenting anti-African American racism and alludes to the possibility of a similar policy regarding Mexico and other Latin American nations. It is reflective of the U.S. government’s presumption that it has a right to play a role in Latin American politics and illustrative of the U.S.’s position in the world as a hegemonic monolith.

²⁰ William H. Chafe. *The Rise and Fall of the American Century: United States from 1890-2009*. (New York: Oxford UP, 2009), 212.

²¹ Ibid, 229.

²² Ibid, 215.

united whites by blaming racial, political, and economic minorities for the country's declining international status and domestic upheaval. Broadly, the "aim [of the "Southern Strategy" was to appeal to the fears and biases of...working-class whites, and thereby weaken their traditional support for Democratic candidates."²³ In particular, it played on the anti-black, pro-segregation bias of the southern U.S. that had been incensed by civil rights progress. On the surface, the "Southern Strategy" sought to garner white votes for the Republican Party through a politics of racial disunity. But, according to Alexander, the "Southern Strategy" was also one of the first steps in creating a new form of racial subjugation after the abolition of Jim Crow segregation laws.²⁴ In short order, the "Southern Strategy" and "law and order" would mutate into the "War on Drugs" and mass incarceration—the institutions that replaced Jim Crow.

The year before Nixon's first election, "81 percent of those responding to the Gallup Poll agreed with the statement 'law and order have broken down in [the U.S.]' and the majority blamed 'Negroes...and Communists.'"²⁵ Nixon masterfully manipulated these sentiments, using the "Southern Strategy" and "law and order" to "turn middle-Americans against hippies...antiwar protestors,"²⁶ and racial minorities. "Law and order" rhetoric became the race-neutral language that replaced the explicitly racist discourse of Jim Crow.²⁷ Coded anti-black rhetoric and racial polarization were the keys to the Republican Party's new majority.²⁸ The "Southern Strategy" and "law and order" gave

²³ Tonry, 2.

²⁴ Alexander, 44.

²⁵ Alexander, 46.

²⁶ Chafe, 218.

²⁷ Alexander, 40.

²⁸ Ibid., 45.

crime “a black face,”²⁹ especially crimes involving drugs and street violence that could be selectively policed in African American communities.

Alongside these anti-African American strategies, Nixon seems to have recycled the “Mexican Problem” narrative in his pursuit of racial disharmony. Nixon’s “Southern Strategy” didn’t deal with Mexico or its peoples explicitly. And in some respects, the “Southern Strategy” didn’t have to demonize Mexicans. Well before Nixon, U.S.-Mexico narratives had, according to Gilbert G. Gonzalez, “described [Mexicans] as inferior beings in comparison to Americans,” and Mexico as a “Land of Mañana,”³⁰ comprised of a people afflicted by various defects threatening serious social problems for both Mexico and the United States. These nebulous defects became known as the “Mexican Problem,” which, it was thought, only the total Americanization of Mexico could solve.³¹

In his paper “Mexico ‘Under Siege’: Drug Cartels Or U.S. Imperialism?” Alfredo Carlos shows how justification for the U.S. government’s “drug war” in Mexico was constructed along the line of the “Mexican Problem” “discourse [that] distorts and misrepresents [Mexico]. Its purpose...to provide justification for economic paternalism.”³² This thesis does not argue that economic paternalism was at the heart of the U.S.-Mexico “drug war” from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. Even so, Carlos’ basic argument that the U.S. consciously misrepresents Mexico to serve an American agenda is relevant to this treatment of the “War on Drugs.” U.S. conservatives from the late 1960s onwards pinned the inflow of illicit drugs on backward Mexican society. Their proposed

²⁹ Tonry, 10.

³⁰ Gilbert G. Gonzalez. *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930*. (Austin: U of Texas, 2004), 9-10.

³¹ Ibid., 9-10.

³² Alfredo Carlos. “Mexico ‘Under Siege’: Drug Cartels Or U.S. Imperialism?” (*Latin American Perspectives* 41.2, 2014), 43.

solution was to intervene, exercise U.S. dominance, and force Mexico's "Americanization."

While the "Southern Strategy" facilitated the criminalization of African Americans and the U.S. left, the "Mexican Problem" narrative appears to have allowed the Nixon government to blame U.S. drug use and addiction on Mexico. It is worth noting that, according to "Request for a Recommendation on the Heroin Problem," Mexico was supplying 15% of the available heroin and 90% of the available marijuana in the United States circa 1969.³³ The "Mexican Problem" narrative was recycled, however, to blame Mexican drug traffickers and producers for U.S. drug use, while subjecting white U.S. users to comparatively little scorn. The Nixon task force surmised, "only a massive, continuous effort [in Mexico and] directed by the highest officials of Mexico, [would] significantly curtail the production and refinement [of]...drugs."³⁴ In accordance with the "Mexican Problem" narrative, the task recommended that drugs be dealt with at the source and not in the U.S., which consuming Mexican drugs.

Attacking Mexican drug production appealed to Nixon's constituency because such issues posed no threat to Nixon's political base.³⁵ Statistically, constituents of Nixon's white majority were just as likely as any person of a minority population to do and sell drugs. "People of all races use and sell illegal drugs at remarkably similar rates...[and studies] frequently suggest that whites, particularly white youth, are more likely to engage in illegal drug dealing than people of color."³⁶ But rates of drug use

³³ United States Department of Justice. "Request for a Recommendation on the Heroin Problem." 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 4.

³⁴ Ibid, 35.

³⁵ Tonry, 10.

³⁶ Alexander, 99.

among the races were irrelevant to the framers of the “drug war.” In fact, when marijuana laws began to negatively affect white U.S. consumers during Nixon’s presidency, many states moved to lighten the penalties for drug infractions as to not harm their white political power.³⁷ Nixon’s constituency had nothing to fear from attacking Mexican drug producing and smuggling because remedying drug-related crime was truthfully more about demonizing African Americans, Mexicans, and other minorities than ridding the U.S. of drugs. So as much as U.S.-Mexico counternarcotics efforts at this time might have been interested in slowing the flow of drugs into the U.S., they can also be viewed as an extension of the U.S.’s “Southern Strategy.” Nixon’s first action in the “War on Drugs,” Operation Intercept, substantiates this claim.

Operation Intercept: The First Shot in the “War on Drugs”

During his first year in office, President Nixon shut down the U.S.-Mexico border for 19 days in September-October 1969. Beginning September 21, Nixon’s directive, dubbed Operation Intercept, strove to confiscate large quantities of drugs being smuggled into the United States by searching every possible person, car, boat, and plane crossing the border. It was the largest peacetime civilian search and seizure campaign in U.S. history.³⁸ Nixon, annoyed with what he perceived to be the Mexican government’s failure to adequately move against drugs on its side of the border, was prepared to take drastic measures. “This time Mexican officials [were to see] the lengths to which the U.S. Justice and Treasury Departments [were] willing to go to cripple the marijuana trade.”³⁹

³⁷ Tonry, 10.

³⁸ Craig, 564.

³⁹ Ibid., 565.

Around 2,000 people and \$30 million were directed to the task of executing Operation Intercept. Tijuana was declared off limits to U.S. servicemen and women. 23 radar installations between San Diego and El Paso conducted surveillance on unregistered flights suspected of carrying drugs, and coordinated U.S. Customs Service aircraft in pursuit. High-speed planes patrolled the skies, and boats patrolled the coasts. In the end, more than 4.5 million people, their belongings, and vehicles were searched for drugs. Of the millions of border crossers inspected, almost 2,000 were subject to further investigation, with some being forced to submit to a strip search.⁴⁰

Although many Americans living on or near the border suffered from the punitive ineptitude of Operation Intercept, Mexicans bore the brunt of the shutdown. Furthermore, Operation Intercept rearticulated the “Mexican Problem” by criminalizing the Mexican people. Intercept accused the Mexican population, en masse, of being drug traffickers and smugglers. In fact, Nixon’s directive was far more effective in demonizing Mexico than intercepting drugs. The quantity of drugs seized in Operation Intercept was negligible, and it did not succeed in crippling the marijuana trade as Nixon had hoped. In addition to the national injustices that resulted from Operation Intercept, Mexicans trying to cross the border in September-October 1969 were subjected to systemic racial profiling. In this light, Operation Intercept can be viewed within Alexander’s argument that the “War on Drugs” is a racially motivated perpetuation of the white U.S. “status quo.” Although her analysis concerning the racial profiling of African Americans begins in the 1980s and does not examine the racial profiling of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the late

⁴⁰ Ibid, 565.

1960s, her discussion of the relationship between racial profiling and the “War on Drugs” is a good starting point for studying the latter.

Operation Intercept: Social Control and Racial Profiling

While Michelle Alexander maintains that Ronald Reagan launched the “War on Drugs” in the United States in 1982,⁴¹ one could argue that it began earlier, with Operation Intercept. Why might this disparity matter? Greg Grandin’s conception of Latin America as a workshop for American empire is particularly resonant when examining how Nixon decided to start his antidrug crusade. Suggesting that the “War on Drugs” began in 1982 ignores the importance of preceding U.S. antidrug policies. On the other hand, acknowledging that the “drug war” began in the 1960s recognizes the critical role Mexico has played in the evolution of U.S. drug enforcement.

In 1984, the DEA launched Operation Pipeline: “The federal program, administered by over three hundred state and local law enforcement agencies, [trained]...law enforcement officers to use pretextual traffic stops...on a large scale for drug interdiction.”⁴² Operation Pipeline encouraged law enforcement to stop “those who belonged to disfavored groups”⁴³ by assuming that members of these groups were potentially drug couriers. However, using “pretextual” traffic stops as a means to seize drugs on a massive scale on American motorways was not new in 1984. One only has to look back to 1969 to see that the prototype for Operation Pipeline could have been Operation Intercept.

⁴¹ Alexander, 5.

⁴² Ibid., 70.

⁴³ Ibid., 71.

As part of Operation Pipeline, the DEA created “drug-courier profiles” that Alexander argues were notoriously broad, unreliable, and disproportionately affected minorities.⁴⁴ The June 1969 “Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana and Dangerous Drugs” indicates that drug-courier profiling was already established policy. The task force suggested that to expedite the seizure of drugs, “case histories of past and future smugglers should be analyzed to determine identifiable characteristic patterns of smugglers to facilitate primary inspection at the border.”⁴⁵ “Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana and Dangerous Drugs” further states, “[immigrants and aliens are] inadmissible [to the United States] if the Immigration officer knows or has reason to believe such aliens have been traffickers in narcotic drugs.”⁴⁶

The document does not define “identifiable characteristic patterns” or what would constitute a reason to believe that someone had been a narcotics trafficker. However, the report mentions a program through which the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) and the Bureau of Customs would furnish narcotics information to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. One could infer that immigration officers would have had access to drug crime information that they could use to suspect someone of being a trafficker or smuggler. The report, however, does not say this outright, and the program is mentioned only once, and is not treated at length.

Despite the vagueness of the references, Operation Intercept may still be understood as an experiment in mass drug-courier profiling, and one that depicted the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁵ White House. “Action Task Force: Narcotics, Marihuana, and Dangerous Drugs.” 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 11.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 12.

Mexican nation as populated with drug traffickers. According to the “Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana and Dangerous Drugs,”

Most of the marihuana [sic] in the United States today comes from Mexico and is smuggled across the border by various means. Mexico has become by far [the U.S.’s] largest supplier of marihuana and it is also the source of a substantial quantity of other drugs. As the primary source of supply, free-lance smugglers and organized traffickers are largely responsible for the marihuana and drug abuse problem.⁴⁷

Blaming Mexican smugglers exclusively for the perceived U.S. drug problem in the late 1960s was, of course, erroneous. Smugglers were supplying an endless demand for drugs in the U.S. “Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana and Dangerous Drugs” mentions this insatiable demand saying, “the consumption in the United States of drugs...has reached such proportion...as to be in the highest rank of those matters affecting the vital interests of the nation.”⁴⁸ Even so, it is Mexico and not the United States that is blamed. Admitting the U.S. was consuming drugs willingly would undercut the “War on Drug’s” power of negative racialization.

It is possible that Operation Intercept was the antecedent of U.S. mass racial profiling in the U.S. throughout the 1980s—the decade during which the domestic “drug war” gained steam. However, there is no hard evidence in the documents examined for this thesis that conclusively identifies a lineage between Operation Intercept and Operation Pipeline. Even so, the two are similar insofar as both sought to seize drugs primarily by using traffic stops. More than a decade before Operation Pipeline menaced American minorities, Operation Intercept menaced Mexican citizens and Mexican Americans, groups that were ethnic, racial, and economic minorities. If there were a

⁴⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 17.

relationship between these two operations, that link would suggest, as Grandin does, that Mexico is part of the Latin American “workshop” of American empire. Thus, the U.S.-Mexico border and Operation Intercept could be viewed as a laboratory in which the U.S. government tested protocols for and the efficacy of racial profiling. Further, Operation Intercept appears to have functioned as a mechanism to preserve and perpetuate the U.S.’s racial hierarchy, one in which brown and black peoples remain at the bottom.

This perceived objective of Operation Intercept parallels John Ehrlichman’s admission that the “War on Drugs” was a means to criminalize and oppress marginal components of the American racial, political, and economic landscape. Operation Intercept, however, cannot be seen exclusively as an experiment in racial profiling. It must also be viewed within the context of the Cold War due to the U.S.’s anticommunist agenda and its obsession with maintaining a pro-capitalist role in Latin American politics. Although clear conclusions regarding the interrelationship of the Cold War, “drug war,” and Operation Intercept are difficult to establish, there is some connection between the three. To what extent they’re connected can only be partially understood through the declassified documents examined in this thesis. Even so, there is evidence that suggests Operation Intercept was part of an anticommunist agenda.

Cold War Complications

Although U.S. government sources often define the purpose of the U.S.-Mexico “drug war” and Operation Intercept as “[furthering] the elimination of...illicit narcotics...[in] Mexico and the U.S.”⁴⁹ this definition is difficult to take at face value. Further obscuring the purpose of the “drug war” the U.S. government ambiguously

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State. “Narcotics Assistance for Mexico.” 1970. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 9.

claimed its general objective in Mexico was “not so much to change an unsatisfactory situation or to reverse adverse trends but rather to ensure that a generally favorable situation [continued] to evolve in a favorable way.”⁵⁰ The “Country Analysis and Strategy Papers for Mexico” outline four key U.S. interests somewhat more specifically: “Preservation of U.S. national security...Promotion of common economic interests...Strengthening of special bi-lateral relationships...[and]...a more helpful Mexican international role.”⁵¹

All four key interests outlined by the “Country Analysis and Strategy Papers for Mexico” could conceivably relate to the Cold War, especially “a more helpful Mexican international role.” For the U.S. government, this “helpful role” meant “the subordination of Mexican foreign policy to domestic [U.S.] considerations...[in recognition] that Mexican interests may...diverge from [those of the U.S.]”⁵² Indeed, the Nixon administration had surmised that “the consumption in the United States of drugs and narcotics produced abroad and illegally imported into [the] country [had] reached such proportion as to rank highest of those matters affecting the vital interests of [the U.S.]”⁵³ But given the U.S. government’s amorphous and broadly defined aims, it could be argued that it viewed Mexico’s social and economic stability as issues of comparable importance to that of drugs. These issues were important, as Mexico was beset by social instability

⁵⁰ “F.Y. 1971 Country Analysis and Strategy Paper for Mexico.” 1969 (*Digital National Security Archive*), 4; “F.Y. 1972 Country Analysis and Strategy Paper.” 1970. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5, 6.

⁵³ United States Special Presidential Task Force Relating to Narcotics, Marijuana, and Dangerous Drugs. “Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana & Dangerous Drugs--Findings and Recommendations.” 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 35.

and economic downturn in the late 1960s. Furthermore, these were problems that had the potential to foment the kind of communist subversion that the U.S. government feared. According to some sources, this fear was well founded.

In 1969, Nixon commissioned the governor of New York Nelson A. Rockefeller to go to Latin America and report on its state of affairs. His travels resulted in *The Rockefeller Report on the Americas*, which warned Nixon that “the hemisphere [was] again in the throes of violent political, economic, and social convulsions, which...[threatened] ‘more Castros’ in Latin America.”⁵⁴ The report stressed the necessary interdependence of Western Hemisphere nations in the fight against communist insurgency and subversion. It advised Nixon to refrain from economic and political paternalism, and to avoid the American tendency toward isolationist behavior.⁵⁵ Nixon, in Rockefeller’s words, needed “to decide how [U.S.] interests [were] affected abroad by insurgency and subversion elsewhere in the hemisphere and the extent to which [U.S.] programs [could] and should assist in meeting the security requirements of its neighbors.”⁵⁶ Given the context of Rockefeller’s concern about Latin American nations turning left, a more helpful Mexican international role could be construed as the U.S.’s desire for Mexico to take an anticommunist, pro-U.S.-capitalistic stance.

Having the Mexican government as an ally in the Cold War was doubtlessly important for the U.S., especially when considering the state of Mexican political affairs at the end of the 1960s. Evidence suggests that Mexico at that time was experiencing

⁵⁴ Nelson A. Rockefeller. *The Rockefeller Report on the Americas; the Official Report of a United States Presidential Mission for the Western Hemisphere*. (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969), vii.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Chapter 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 41.

what Rockefeller might call social convulsions. The Mexican middle and working classes had lost faith in the authoritarian PRI,⁵⁷ as “structural...crisis generated widespread discontent, and citizens across the political spectrum began to protest.”⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the period of unparalleled economic growth known as the “Mexican Miracle” was slowing down; and it had only been a miracle for some. The “Mexican Miracle” created, according to Mexican intellectual Octavio Paz, “two Mexicos, one modern and the other underdeveloped—poorly clothed, illiterate, and underfed.”⁵⁹

The United States recognized that Mexico had economic problems. It did not, however, believe these problems to be of immediate concern, perhaps because the Mexican government appeared to be doing just enough to alleviate the country’s social ills. According to a U.S. government source,

The chronic ‘poverty problem’ [in Mexico] of widespread subsistence living in the backward ‘traditional sector’... could produce local political explosions and even national repercussions if exploited by extremists. The problem is being attacked through a continuing land redistribution program, through industrialization in urban areas, and through programs aimed at improving agricultural productivity. Even so, about one half of the entrants into the labor force each year cannot find employment in the ‘modern’ sector.⁶⁰

Land redistribution and industrialization, however, did not prevent political upheaval. Mexico had already experienced a national political explosion. Less than a year before the launch of Operation Intercept the Tlatelolco Massacre had rocked Mexico to its core.

On October 2, 1968, the Mexican government, with the help of the army and paramilitary units, murdered a still-unknown number of students at the Tlatelolco Plaza

⁵⁷ Louise E Walker. *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968*. (California: Stanford UP, 2013), Introduction.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 13.

⁵⁹ Octavio Paz, quoted in Walker, 12.

⁶⁰ “F.Y. 1972 Country Analysis and Strategy Paper,” 9.

in Mexico City. Unfortunately, the Tlatelolco Massacre was not the last time the Mexican government would kill students and other dissidents. Throughout the late 1960s and into the mid 1970s, Mexican presidents Gustavo Díaz Ordaz and Luis Echeverría Álvarez waged a clandestine “Dirty War” against the Mexican people, of which the U.S. was aware.⁶¹ Like the Cold War, Mexico’s “Dirty War” is another conflict that complicates a simple analysis of the “War on Drugs.” Mexico, according to Kate Doyle, had a vested interest in suppressing rebellious elements of its population, both rural and urban.⁶² But although the Cold War and Mexico’s “Dirty War” were both anti-left, they must be treated as separate conflicts.

During its “Dirty War,” the Mexican government was quick to blame communist radicals and extremists for inciting violence. Like the Mexican state, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency gathered information on the Mexican people, especially on leftist student-activists with possible communist ties. In trying to make sense of the Tlatelolco Massacre, a CIA cable admits “[that] communists are always plausible and tempting targets [to blame], since they stand to benefit from and have been involved with the [student] disturbances.”⁶³ American agencies operating in Mexico (like the Defense Department, the CIA, the FBI, and the U.S. Embassy) initially believed the Mexican government’s stance: that communists were to blame for the massacre. But as more information came to light incriminating the Mexican government, the U.S. distanced

⁶¹ Kate Doyle. “The Nixon Tapes: Secret Recordings from the Nixon White House on Luis Echeverría and Much Much More.” *The National Security Archive*. (George Washington University, 2003), 3.

⁶² Kate Doyle. “The Dawn of Mexico’s Dirty War: Lucio Cabañas and the Party of the Poor.” *The National Security Archive*. (George Washington University, 2003), 1-3.

⁶³ Central Intelligence Agency. “Situation Appraisal: Status of the Mexico City Student Movement.” 1968. (Digital National Security Archive), 4.

itself from the PRI's claim.⁶⁴ In any case, the U.S.'s willingness to pin the massacre on communist instigators is illustrative of its paralyzing fear of communism. But in the midst of the confusion caused by the Tlatelolco Massacre, it's possible to see how the U.S. could have been misled by the Mexican state.

That Mexico was experiencing the "highest degree of student unrest"⁶⁵ in Latin America made U.S. government uneasy. As a U.S. government source noted, "the October incident did considerable damage to Mexico's reputation as the most stable and progressive country in Latin America."⁶⁶ Of further concern to the U.S. was how "Mexico's unique political system, which was so effective in governing a backwards society and which brought prosperity and education to so many, [was] being outgrown by and increasingly sophisticated, articulate public."⁶⁷ A CIA cable clarifies, "it [was] apparent that the 'status quo' which existed prior [to the Tlatelolco Massacre]...[had] been changed and...[would] have long lasting effects on the Mexican scene."⁶⁸ The cable goes on to describe the waning power of the PRI. "[The Tlatelolco massacre] has shown that the [Mexican] government and the National Revolutionary Party (PRI) do not possess the power and near total control over public behavior which existed previously. The old order [was] passing."⁶⁹ And "For many U.S. analysts, [this] suggested the

⁶⁴ Kate Doyle. "The Tlatelolco Massacre: U.S. Documents on Mexico and the Events of 1968." *The National Security Archive*. (George Washington University, 2003), 2.

⁶⁵ United States Government. "Student Violence and Attitudes in Latin America." 1968. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁷ Central Intelligence Agency. "Challenges to Mexico's Single Party Rule." 1968. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 2.

⁶⁸ "Situation Appraisal: Status of the Mexico City Student Movement," 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

troubling possibility that impoverished Mexicans were waking up to the oppressive bonds of a stultified one-party system that no longer offered hope for change.”⁷⁰

Despite evidence that suggests a deep-seated U.S. fear of the Mexican people and dread of a potential Mexican political explosion, some U.S. sources held Mexico in high esteem. Throughout the Cold War, the United States stood behind Latin American regimes that could militate against the spread of communism. It was an era in which “Washington found that it greatly preferred anti-communist dictatorships [in Latin America] to the possibility that democratic openness might allow the Soviets to gain a foothold on the continent.”⁷¹ Mexico, at least in part, met these criteria. A 1969 American University study endorsed “[Mexico’s] recent history of relative prosperity and security [that had] gone far in creating an environment of general satisfaction.”⁷² The study viewed a strong late-1960s Mexican economy as an impediment to any potential communist subversion.⁷³ The veracity of this sentiment is debatable. It is possible the American University study was a reflection of the U.S. government’s faith in the PRI.

There was some reason for the U.S. to believe in Mexico’s ruling party. Although the Mexican government was publicly sympathetic to the communist government of Cuba, it aligned favorably with Washington’s anti-communist position behind closed doors.⁷⁴ In a 1970 conversation with Nixon in Washington D.C., Luis Echeverría

⁷⁰ Doyle, "The Dawn of Mexico's Dirty War: Lucio Cabañas and the Party of the Poor," 2.

⁷¹ Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*, 41.

⁷² American University. “Area Handbook for Mexico.” 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

⁷³ Ibid, 1.

⁷⁴ “Area Handbook for Mexico.” 2-6.

spent much of his time discussing communism's threat to the region. Latin America was in imminent danger, he told Nixon, beset by poverty and unemployment and bombarded by Soviet propaganda touting Fidel Castro's Cuba as the answer to the hemisphere's problems. The solution, [Echeverría] insisted, was private capital. Echeverría urged Nixon to promote American business investments in Mexico and [Latin America].⁷⁵

Given the above transcription, it's understandable that the United States was convinced "[Mexico posed] no immediate threat to U.S. security interests...[nor foresaw] any change in [Mexican] relations with...Communist countries such as would [have posed] serious...threats to U.S. security interests."⁷⁶ What is one to believe in the face of these inconsistencies? Was Mexico stable, or was it a potential hotbed of communist insurrection? Furthermore, how do the "War on Drugs" and Operation Intercept fit into a discussion of the Cold War? Although examining Operation Intercept cannot fully explain the U.S. government's views, it is a good place to start when trying to link the Cold War and the "War on Drugs."

Circumventing the Cold War

Nixon was "determined to prove he could establish law and order in a [United States] that seemed to be spinning out of control."⁷⁷ For him, restoring "law and order" domestically meant, in part, stopping the flow of Mexican drugs through Operation Intercept. Richard B. Craig challenges Nixon's presumption by describing Operation Intercept's purpose as "not to interdict drugs at the border, but to pressure Mexico through economic denial...[by seeking] a politically expedient solution to...domestic

⁷⁵ Luis Echeverría and Richard Nixon conversation, transcribed by Kate Doyle. "The Nixon Tapes: Secret Recordings from the Nixon White House on Luis Echeverría and Much Much More," 3.

⁷⁶ "F.Y. 1971 Country Analysis and Strategy Paper for Mexico," 3.

⁷⁷ Doyle, "Operation Intercept: The Perils of Unilateralism," 2.

drug abuse.”⁷⁸ The U.S. Department of State appears to substantiate Craig’s point of view in the document “Operation Intercept Under Way” saying “[Operation Intercept infringed] on Mexican sovereignty [and was] an effort to blackmail Mexico to take stronger measures against what is...a U.S. problem.”⁷⁹ But G. Gordon Liddy obfuscates the goal of the operation calling “[Operation Intercept] an exercise in international extortion, pure, simple, and effective, designed to bend Mexico to [the U.S.’s] will.”⁸⁰

In their paper “A Trojan Horse: Anti-communism and the War on Drugs,” Bullington and Block propose that drugs provided a disguise for U.S. anti-communist intervention.⁸¹ They conclude, though, that U.S. “relations with apparently friendly anti-communist governments [would] never be sacrificed for drug control.”⁸² In some instances, Bullington and Block’s argument parallels that of the U.S. government. For example, the “alarming increase in the sale and consumption of [Mexican] marijuana in the United States”⁸³ seems not to have shaken U.S. faith in its anti-communist alliance with Mexico. Nevertheless, Washington regularly jeopardized its relationship with its anti-communist southern neighbor over drugs, which contradicts Bullington and Block’s conclusion.

Operation Intercept is a chief example of this contradiction. With it, the U.S. sacrificed relations with a friendly anti-communist Mexican government to pursue its “War on Drugs” agenda. So what exactly was the U.S. trying to accomplish with

⁷⁸ Craig, 578.

⁷⁹ United States Department of State. “Operation Intercept Under Way.” 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 4.

⁸⁰ Doyle, “Operation Intercept: The Perils of Unilateralism,” 5.

⁸¹ Bullington and Block, 39.

⁸² *Ibid*, 52.

⁸³ “Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana & Dangerous Drugs—Findings and Recommendations,” 4.

Operation Intercept? Craig and the U.S. Department of State acknowledge that Operation Intercept unduly pressured Mexico economically and infringed on the nation's sovereignty in an attempt to curb U.S. drug use. But, as the evidence provided attempts to show, understanding Operation Intercept as purely a measure of drug control is reductive. Though drug control was one of the U.S. government's highest priorities at the start of Nixon's presidency, drug control was not its only priority.

Because of the U.S.'s fervent hatred of communism and fear of communist penetration in Latin America, it might be possible to analyze Operation Intercept as a counter-revolutionary construct of the Cold War. To do so involves examining how the U.S. used Operation Intercept as a means to formalize an American police presence in Mexico. In cooperating with the United States in the wake of Operation Intercept, Mexico agreed to undertake large-scale antidrug efforts and to permit U.S. drug enforcement agents in Mexico. Agents from the BNDD were henceforth authorized to gather intelligence on drug trafficking and conduct surveillance on marijuana and poppy fields in Mexico.⁸⁴ Not long after Operation Intercept, U.S. drug enforcement agents would even come to play a participatory role in Mexican counternarcotics efforts.

The desire to have U.S. law enforcement agencies and agents abroad mirrors *The Rockefeller Report*. Rockefeller perceived many Latin America nations as unable to protect their internal security. This inability, he believed, was in part the fault of each country's police force. In his report, Rockefeller notes, "[police forces in the western hemisphere] have become increasingly less capable of providing either the essential

⁸⁴ Shannon 51-52.

psychological support or the internal security that is their major function.”⁸⁵ He goes on to add: “no one country today can effectively protect its own internal security by itself.”⁸⁶ Although Rockefeller’s report doesn’t call for outright U.S. intervention in Latin American police forces, his beliefs could imply a willingness to do so. Nixon appears not to have heeded Rockefeller’s advice to refrain from economic paternalism or isolationist behavior in the Western Hemisphere. It appears, though, that Nixon took Rockefeller’s concerns about Latin America’s ability to police itself seriously.

Part of the U.S. government’s post-Operation Intercept strategy in Mexico was to develop and expand on “a Military Assistance Program...directed toward the development of a small but highly professional armed force adequately trained and equipped to meet its responsibilities for the maintenance of internal security.”⁸⁷ Unfortunately, “F.Y. 1972 Country Analysis and Strategy Paper for Mexico” does not go on to clarify what the maintenance of Mexican internal security might entail, or if this meant drug control or included social control. Given the concerns of the Cold War and Mexico’s “Dirty War,” this allusion to internal security might have meant the suppression of the Mexican left and other dissident elements within the country.

Perhaps it was because of Mexico’s role as an anticommunist ally that the United States needed to use Operation Intercept as a means to intervene in Mexican policing. U.S. government documents do not explicitly state that the U.S. used the “drug war” and Operation Intercept as tactics to circumvent traditional Cold War intervention as a means of infiltrating Mexican internal affairs. But the fact remains that one of Intercept’s most

⁸⁵ Rockefeller, 62.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 62.

⁸⁷ “F.Y. 1972 Country Analysis and Strategy Paper for Mexico,” 6.

notable outcomes was to allow the permanent presence of American law enforcement agents in a foreign, sovereign nation.

Saying that Operation Intercept's sole purpose was to legalize a U.S. law enforcement presence in Mexico is a stretch. But given the presence of the BNDD in Mexico after Intercept and that Mexico was politically unstable at the time, the U.S.-Mexico "drug war" could be viewed as having counter-revolutionary intent. Even if Operation Intercept was in no way a counter-revolutionary construct of the Cold War, there is still validity in the claim that the U.S. used Mexico as a workshop in which the U.S. experimented with ways to preserve and perpetuate its "status quo."

David H. Bayley argues that in the post-Cold War world, the perception of police forces changed from "a necessary evil [to]...co-producers of a desirable political order...[and] a key component of social stability and economic development."⁸⁸ In his argument, Bayley contends that the United States began intervening in and modeling foreign police forces after its own in the 1980s and early 1990s. But U.S. behavior towards Mexico in the late 1960s shows that the U.S. interest in and practice of intervening in foreign policing predates 1980s policy. "The core," says María Celia Toro, "of the United States-Mexico [antinarotics] program...was the training of a special antinarotics unit in Mexico, following the DEA model."⁸⁹ Toro goes on to argue that the DEA has often been the guiding force in Mexican antidrug policy.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ David H. Bayley. *Changing the Guard: Developing Democratic Police Abroad*. (New York: Oxford UP, 2006), 10.

⁸⁹ Maria Celia Toro. "The Internationalization of Police: The DEA in Mexico." (*The Journal of American History* 86.2, 1999), 637.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 628-630.

But post-Operation Intercept, the DEA model hadn't yet been solidified. When the presence of U.S. drug enforcement personnel in Mexico became permanent in 1969, the DEA was still the BNDD. According to Alexander, the DEA was instrumental in the escalation of the "drug war" as a method of social control in the U.S in the 1980s.⁹¹ But before the department became the DEA, the BNDD was instrumental in the escalation of the U.S.-Mexico "drug war." This chronology, like others analyzed in this thesis, suggests that Mexico was a testing ground for the U.S. government's drug-control agenda and for the maintenance of its "status quo." By establishing a permanent U.S. drug enforcement presence in Mexico, Operation Intercept may have opened the door to large-scale drug eradication. This strategy would become the U.S.'s go-to method of drug control not only in Mexico, but around the world.

Drug Eradication: The Beginning of "Drug War" Militarization

"The Department of State...[gave] no subject higher priority...than to realize an eradication...in Mexico of opium poppies and marijuana...Only a massive and continuous effort...[it was believed, could] significantly curtail the production and refinement of marijuana and other dangerous drugs."⁹² Richard Kleindienst, U.S. Attorney General under Nixon, believed "crop eradication was the essential element in stopping drug traffic."⁹³ But to get drug source countries like Mexico to undertake eradication campaigns, the U.S. needed "a specific threat to hold over the [drug

⁹¹ Alexander, Chapter 2.

⁹² "Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana & Dangerous Drugs—Findings and Recommendations," 17.

⁹³ United States National Security Council. "10:40 a.m., Monday, 3 November Meeting on the Subject of "Heroin Traffic." 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 3.

producing] nations, or at least hold behind [the U.S.'s] back.”⁹⁴ Others in the Nixon White House agreed. In a candid moment, a White House memorandum says “that the Mexican government [should] be forced into a program of defoliation of marijuana plants (using borrowed or leased equipment from the United States) by commencing a campaign of strict enforcement and customs enforcement [sic] at the border.”⁹⁵ Although government documents don’t clarify what the specific threat should be, it’s probable that the threat was Operation Intercept. The threat worked. With Mexico as its Guinea pig, the U.S. government proved that it could use economic intimidation to further its drug agenda in the hemisphere. With no other option but to meet the U.S.’s demands, “Mexico stated its purpose to continue intensifying...enforcement programs against the illicit traffic”⁹⁶ and to start conducting large-scale drug eradication campaigns.

Predictably, the U.S. government believed that an “intensified Mexican effort would be greatly aided by [the] U.S....[and that the U.S. should] express [its] willingness to make funds available...if [the request was] made by Mexicans.”⁹⁷ It is unclear, however, if Mexico had the option to refuse assistance. If the U.S. government was willing to shut down the border indefinitely to prove a point about drugs, it’s possible that the U.S. did not need Mexico to request counternarcotics aid. Mexican president Gustavo Diaz Ordaz blamed the Mexican government’s perceived inability to combat drugs on a

⁹⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁹⁵ White House. “Task Force Report.” 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

⁹⁶ United States Department of State. “Joint Mexico-U.S. Communiqué on Narcotics Cooperation.” 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 2.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 3.

lack of sufficient equipment.⁹⁸ In doing so, he seems to have indicated an interest in obtaining U.S. assistance for the “drug war.”

The U.S. was quick to provide Mexico with drug enforcement funding following Operation Intercept and allocated \$1 million for chemical drug eradication experiments, remote detection equipment for locating marijuana and poppy fields, three observation planes, three helicopters outfitted to spray defoliants on crops, and training for pilots.⁹⁹ According to a U.S. document titled “Narcotics Assistance for Mexico,” the purpose of the \$1 million was to “provide training and technical assistance in the specialized area of detection, eradication, equipment maintenance, and such other fields related to the elimination and control of narcotics, marijuana, and dangerous drugs as both countries deem necessary.”¹⁰⁰ Additionally, Mexico was to use the U.S. equipment for “aerial photography, defoliant spraying, aerial search, border and [drug] route surveillance, inspection of crops, enforcement, and [drug crop] destruction parties.”¹⁰¹ Considering the equipment that the U.S. gave Mexico in the aftermath of Operation Intercept, this period, and not the 1980s, could be viewed as the beginning of the militarization of the “War on Drugs.”

At least one organization within the U.S. government foresaw some of the problems the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico “drug war” could cause. Voices condemning Operation Intercept were few in the U.S. government materials examined for this thesis. The Budget Bureau, however, did articulate some concern. Although the

⁹⁸ United States Department of State. “Assistance to Mexico for Narcotics Control.” 1970. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 2.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰¹ United States Department of State. “Helicopters and Light Planes for Mexico.” 1970. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 7.

document “Budget Bureau Comments on Marijuana Policy” did not predict the full effects or consequences of Operation Intercept, drug eradication, or militarization, it did suggest that Nixon’s “policy in [the marijuana] area may have more political costs than benefits.”¹⁰² Importantly, the Budget Bureau valued the Mexican marijuana crop to be more than \$100 million. The Budget Bureau contended that marijuana in Mexico “may [have been] up to 40 times the value of any alternative crop [to individual farmers]. [And that] this [would provide] substantial incentive for large scale [sic] resistance”¹⁰³ if the U.S. or Mexican governments were to move against the source of drugs, as Nixon desired. Despite the potential for resistance, source-country drug crop eradication was Washington gospel. This may have been because drug eradication was an effective way to oppress marginal elements of Mexican society, to disguise the Cold War, and to perpetuate the U.S. “status quo.” And the 1970s were the heyday of drug eradication in Mexico. Maybe this is why they were considered the golden age of the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs.”

¹⁰² White House. “Budget Bureau Comments on Marijuana Policy.” 1969. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1-2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2.

The Golden Age of the U.S-Mexico “War on Drugs”

Money, Guns, and the Mexican “Dirty War”

The narcotics epidemic that was ravaging the U.S. in the 1970s might have been more myth than reality. According to Christian Parenti, “evidence of a national narcotics siege did not exist.”¹⁰⁴ In any case, it was a decade in which the U.S. public perceived drugs to be tearing at the fabric of the nation. For some it appeared that “America was under attack [by drugs], [and that] even its war crimes (referring to the My Lai Massacre) [were]... animated by heroin and weed.”¹⁰⁵ Even though narcotic use may not have been on the rise, manufactured drug hysteria was an effective way to unite white, conservative American voters and spur government spending. The Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 granted \$189 million for treatment programs and another \$220 million for drug enforcement.¹⁰⁶ The BNDD grew by 300 agents that same year, some of whom were tasked with the drug enforcement and eradication training of Mexican law enforcement.¹⁰⁷ The U.S. was also providing Mexico with the necessary money and materiel to wage “war” on drugs.

The “War on Drugs” in Mexico militarized rapidly. In 1972 alone the U.S. gave Mexico \$1.3 million worth of equipment, including helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft,

¹⁰⁴ Christian Parenti. *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*. (London: Verso, 2001), 10.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰⁷ William O Walker. *Drug Control in the Americas*. (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1981), 192.

portable radios, small arms, and ammunition.¹⁰⁸ In addition to this aid, a 1971 U.S. Embassy source documents a Mexican government request for over \$3 million in military technology and arms. The memorandum states that the Mexican government was asking for “a lot of firepower.”¹⁰⁹ Whether the arms in question made it to Mexico is uncertain. Also uncertain is whether or not the Mexican government planned to use the requested military assistance exclusively for drug enforcement. The fact remains that, at the time, the Mexican state was waging a “Dirty War” against leftists and dissidents. Despite the absence of evidence detailing the eventual use of the arms, the Mexican government’s request for “a lot of fire power” within the context of the “Dirty War” could lead to some speculation that the aid could have been destined for repressive acts of state violence.

Luis Echeverría inherited the Mexican presidency and the “Dirty War” from Gustavo Diaz Ordaz in 1970. During his presidency, Echeverría proved as quick to violently repress leftists and dissidents as he had during his time as a member of Diaz Ordaz’s cabinet. Although the “Dirty War” didn’t necessarily begin during Echeverría’s term, his presidency largely spanned the worst years of the violent state repression.¹¹⁰ Mexico’s military was in disrepair during what the United States government might have called a Mexican internal security crisis. Its equipment was outdated and rusting, and soldier morale was abysmal due to poor pay and a low standing in society.¹¹¹ Doyle states that some U.S. analysts believed “Echeverría [ought] to give the [Mexican] military more

¹⁰⁸ United States Department of State. “Foreign Assistance Act Financing of Narcotics Control – Mexico.” 1972. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 3.

¹⁰⁹ United States Agency for International Development Office of Public Safety. “Equipment Requested by Mexico.” 1971 (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

¹¹⁰ Walker, 27.

¹¹¹ Doyle, “The Dawn of Mexico’s Dirty War: Lucio Cabañas and the Party of the Poor,” 3.

resources and freedom to operate”¹¹² to restore its social standing. She goes on to argue that this is what Echeverría did in an effort to “tamp down military dissatisfaction by giving the army and the security forces carte blanche to attack the left.”¹¹³

Is it possible that the U.S. provided arms and training to Mexican security forces under the cover of the “drug war” as a means to anti-leftist ends? Finding a connection between the suppression of the Mexican left during the “Dirty War” and the “War on Drugs” would be a major windfall, as such a link would definitively corroborate the hypothesis that the “War on Drugs” was a counter-revolutionary ploy. But it is a tenuous assumption at best because the U.S. government documents studied for this thesis do not bear out such a link. If there is a connection between the “War on Drugs” and the “Dirty War,” though, perhaps it can be fleshed out by examining some of the changes that U.S. foreign aid policy underwent during Echeverría’s presidency. U.S. agencies and structures that had been created to assist the police forces and militaries of foreign countries were failing. On top of that, it seems likely that U.S. international drug enforcement replaced these agencies and structures. This is most observable in the dissolution of the U.S. Office of Public Safety (OPS) and the ascent of the DEA.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy founded the OPS in 1962 as an organization responsible for, among other things, providing police aid to foreign countries.¹¹⁴ “During its twelve year existence, [OPS] provided aid to police agencies in approximately fifty Third World nations [including Mexico], spending more than \$300 million on training, weaponry, and

¹¹² Ibid., 4.

¹¹³ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁴ Ethan A. Nadelmann. *Cops across Borders: The Internationalization of U.S. Criminal Law Enforcement*. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993), 113.

telecommunications.”¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, the OPS’s effects on foreign police forces were often catastrophic. Law enforcement agencies outside of the U.S. trained and aided by the OPS were regularly found to be corrupt and to engage in the torture and murder of civilians. Operation Phoenix in Vietnam, infamously funded by the OPS, was a program that tortured and killed suspected Viet Cong members. Within the Western Hemisphere, the OPS funded and trained notorious Guatemalan police forces that participated in the brutal oppression of that nation’s people.¹¹⁶

The OPS was dissolved amidst allegations of torture, murder, and espionage in 1974. But, in many ways, the OPS simply became the DEA, which was founded in 1973 as the successor of the BNDD. In fact, when the OPS shut its doors, many of its officers became DEA agents. Even in its earliest days the DEA was training more than 2,000 foreign police officials a year.¹¹⁷ During Nixon’s tenure, the BNDD/DEA’s international presence skyrocketed from 24 agents to more than 200.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, “a foreign police agency interested in obtaining U.S. training and funds for equipment had little chance of success if it could not establish some connection with drug enforcement.”

This is curious when considering the U.S. “War on Drugs” in the 1980s. According to Alexander, the Byrne Program, instituted in 1988, “was designed to encourage every [U.S.] federal grant recipient to help fight the War on Drugs...[and] resulted in the proliferation of narcotics tasks forces.”¹¹⁹ In deciding that drug enforcement was the issue it wanted to police, Washington created financial incentives to

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 113.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 113-118.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 119-120.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 119.

¹¹⁹ Alexander, 73.

assure that police agencies across the nation fought in the “drug war.” As many police agencies needed federal money, they had little choice but to enforce the U.S. federal government’s drug agenda. But the practice of financially incentivizing the “drug war” appears to predate the Byrne program. As Ethan A. Nadelman points out, this was something the U.S. did in Latin American countries in the 1970s. In this case, nations like Mexico could have provided a testing ground for how the U.S. achieved nationwide and international drug enforcement. Although the link between the Byrne Program and U.S. financial incentives for the “drug war” in Latin America is shaky, it does not negate the U.S.’s success in getting western hemisphere nations to participate in the “War on Drugs.” In fact, it seems that instead of dying with the OPS, the U.S.’s international policing regime flourished under DEA supervision. Within a year of its foundation, the DEA was the most powerful counternarcotics agency on the planet and the most active and powerful force in the U.S.-Mexico “drug war.”

Despite evidence that the DEA was, in part, the offspring of the dubious OPS, there is no outright connection to be seen in U.S. declassified documents between the DEA’s behavior in Mexico and the oppressive actions of its predecessor. In addition, U.S. government sources plainly state that “Under no circumstances [was] a DEA agent [operating in Mexico to] be party to the abuse, torture or other denial of human rights of any prisoner, Mexican or American; should such action occur, the DEA agent [was] to withdraw from the premises immediately.”¹²⁰ But the origin of the DEA should give one pause when considering its preeminent position in the U.S.-Mexico “drug war.” As journalist Craig Pyes observes, “there is no [definitive] link between training and

¹²⁰ United States Embassy. “Guidelines for DEA Operations in Mexico.” 1975. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

torture.”¹²¹ Pyes, however, adds, “American [DEA] agents stood by without protest during the torture and execution of Mexican nationals at the hands of Mexican personnel.”¹²² He even contends that DEA agents may have been involved in the torture of drug suspects themselves.¹²³ Furthermore, Peter Watt and Roberto Zapeda suggest that “In Mexico...anti-narcotics discourse and policy...served more often than not to create a climate of fear...which [served] to justify and legitimate political violence against marginalized sectors of society.”¹²⁴

The rise of the DEA and the issue of drugs suggest that the two replaced the OPS and communism as the arm and purpose of U.S. international law enforcement. Taking these observations and arguments into account, 1970s U.S. military aid destined for Mexico under the auspices of the “War on Drugs” should be looked at suspiciously. Whether or not American law enforcement personnel were party to atrocities committed by the Mexican government during the “Dirty War” cannot be verified at this time. If DEA agents were involved in Mexico’s “Dirty War,” though, the “drug war” in which DEA agents were participating could be viewed as a counter-revolutionary endeavor as well as a counternarcotic one. It is possible that U.S. military aid given to Mexico for the “drug war” was part of a larger oppressive, anti-leftist objective.

But under pressure to reform the U.S.’s human rights image, Washington began to fix the mechanisms through which it financed and aided foreign police forces and militaries. Atrocities committed by U.S.-aided police elements abroad led the U.S.

¹²¹ Craig Pyes. “Legal Murders: Mexico’s War on Drugs, Operation Condor, Is Responsible for Torture, Murder, Extortion.” (*Village Voice* [New York City] 4 June 1979), 11.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹²⁴ Watt and Zapeda, 31.

government to incorporate human rights clauses into its foreign aid policies. Washington set up safeguards in hopes of preventing the U.S. from financing and providing aid to nations that perpetrated such crimes. “Through a series of increasingly tough measures, congress ordered the White House and the Department of State to slow or slash aid to countries responsible for human rights abuses.”¹²⁵ The issue of international drug trafficking, however, may have provided a way to sidestep such policy roadblocks.

The U.S. government was aware that leftist and dissident Mexicans were being “abducted, tortured, and murdered”¹²⁶ by the Mexican state. Even so, U.S. financial and military aid for the “drug war” continued to flow to Mexico. Quoting the Mexico City CIA station chief Lawrence Sternfeld, “[it] was the height of the Cold War, and our efforts were against the Soviet target. Not that [the U.S. government wasn’t] aware that the Mexicans were doing bad things...but we didn’t raise that with them.”¹²⁷ An Embassy document titled “FAA Section 32 – Political Prisoners” acknowledges the Mexican government’s perpetration of human rights violations. The document concludes, however, that despite the violations the “Mexican army commitment to joint U.S./GOM (government of Mexico) antidrug effort...far [outweighed] the monetary value of training provided by the USG (United States government).”¹²⁸ In other words, the PRI’s brutal “Dirty War” could be forgiven as long as Mexico continued to participate in the U.S. government’s “War on Drugs.” Perhaps the U.S. government’s hesitation to cut off aid to Mexico was because of the success of the U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs” as an

¹²⁵ Kate Doyle. "Human Rights and the Dirty War in Mexico." *The National Security Archive*. (George Washington University, 2003), 3.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁷ Lawrence Sternfeld, quoted in Ibid., 1).

¹²⁸ United States Embassy. “FAA Section 32 – Political Prisoners.” 1974. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 4.

anticommunist intervention tactic. There is another argument to be made, though: The U.S.'s hesitation may have been predicated on the perception that the 1970s were, actually, a golden age of U.S.-Mexico drug enforcement.

Mexico's Opium Problem

In his book *Drug Control in the Americas*, William O. Walker lauds Mexico for its antidrug effort saying, "Mexico, with its own resources and \$90 million from the United States during the [1970s], was winning the war against heroin and perhaps marijuana as well."¹²⁹ Quoting former White House Director of Drug Abuse Policy Peter Bourne, "the ongoing activities of the Mexican and American governments in the field of drug control [ranked] among the most exemplary forms of international cooperation in the world."¹³⁰ This view that the U.S. and Mexico were winning the "War on Drugs" in the 1970s appears to have been rooted in reality, albeit a complicated reality.

Mexico became a major producer of heroin for the United States almost overnight. Although Mexican drug producers and smugglers had long supplied the United States with heroin, it wasn't until the dissolution of the French-Turkish heroin apparatus (The French Connection) in 1972 that Mexico became the U.S.'s primary supplier of the narcotic. Before U.S. antidrug agencies broke up the French Connection, Mexico accounted for about 38% of the heroin consumed in the United States. But the end of the French Connection left a hole in the heroin market. Mexican heroin producers filled the void in short order. According to a 1975 U.S. government document titled "The Potential of a Forward Strategy Against Heroin in Mexico," "brown" Mexican heroin accounted

¹²⁹ Walker, 201.

¹³⁰ Peter Bourne, quoted in Jonathan Marshall. "CIA Assets and the Rise of the Guadalajara Connection." (*Crime, Law and Social Change* 16.1, 1991), 89.

for 77% of the total heroin in the U.S by 1974. Meanwhile, Middle Eastern and Asian heroin combined to account for the middling remainder.¹³¹ From 1969 to 1974, the percentage of Mexican heroin on the U.S. drug market had exploded from between 15-20% to dominate more than three quarters of the total market.

Was it U.S. antidrug policy in Europe and Asia that propelled Mexico from a mostly marijuana-producing nation to the single largest provider of narcotics for the U.S.? There is an argument to be made that this was the case. The correlation between the shutdown of the French Connection and the explosion of Mexican heroin on the U.S. drug market is hard to dispute. By creating a vacuum in its domestic drug market, it appears that U.S. drug enforcement in Europe and Asia Minor generated the necessary conditions for Mexico to become the world's largest producer of heroin. There is no evidence to suggest that this was intentional, and it is unlikely that U.S. drug enforcement action outside of Mexico was the only reason for the Mexican heroin spike.

The Mexican economy was still in disarray in the mid-1970s. Inflation reached 15%. Mexico's deficit had spiraled out of control, reaching \$2.8 billion. Its foreign debt was estimated to be \$22 billion. GDP per capita income was \$1,153.¹³² All the while, massive population growth was threatening to further destabilize the Mexican economy. As confidence in the government and the economy collapsed, there seemed to be one business that was seemingly unaffected by Mexico's volatility: the drug trade.

¹³¹ United States Domestic Council on Drug Abuse. "The Potential of a Forward Strategy Against Heroin in Mexico." 1975. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

¹³² White House. "Mexico: Highlights." 1975. (*Digital National Security Archive*),1; United States Department of State. "Mexico: Outlook for the López Portillo Administration." 1977. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

“[Opium was] much more lucrative than any legitimate crop, including opium for commercial use...[opium producers could] sell the product for over \$1,000 per kilo.”¹³³ But neither Mexico nor the U.S. promoted structural changes such as economic or social reform as remedies to drug trafficking. The U.S. did propose introducing substitute crops to minimize the economic benefits of planting illicit drugs, but found this not to “be a feasible and worthwhile program...to pursue in Mexico.”¹³⁴ Drug eradication was the be all and end all for the U.S. It was the only way Washington saw fit to staunch the torrent of drugs coming into the U.S. from Mexico.

For its part, the Mexican congress passed mandatory sentences for drug trafficking offenses. The Mexican government “established penalties, including the confiscation of land and livestock, for persons who [permitted or induced] the planting of opium poppy or marijuana.”¹³⁵ These laws seem pointedly directed at rural Mexicans. Indeed, it appears that the U.S.-Mexico “drug war” mostly targeted poor and marginalized populations outside of the Mexican mainstream.

Certainly, drug cultivation, production, and trafficking were common in rural Mexico. For example, an estimated 200,000 campesinos in the Sinaloa area were involved in the drug traffic. Craig, quoting a Mexican drug official, notes, “[the Mexican rural poor wanted] to have a nice pair of pants, a nice hat, and a shirt. Like thousands of their countrymen, the Sinaloa campesinos [were] desperate, and they [sought] desperate

¹³³ “The Potential of a Forward Operating Strategy against Heroin,” 16.

¹³⁴ United States Agency for International Development Office of Public Safety. “IGA Report on Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) Financing of Narcotics Control—Mexico.” 1972 (*Digital National Security Archive*), 3.

¹³⁵ United States Department of State. “Narcotics Country Paper: Mexico.” 1972. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 2.

solutions to their problems.”¹³⁶ These desperate solutions were drug cultivation, production, and trafficking. According to Craig, Mexico’s “War on Drugs” was much more a war on the poor than it was on the opium poppy or the marijuana leaf.¹³⁷ In addition, he argues that rural Mexicans saw the “drug war” as a federal government attempt to “depistolize the campo”¹³⁸ more than a drug eradication campaign. Craig’s argument here suggests, like Alexander’s, that the “War on Drugs” was primarily concerned with the perpetuation of a “status quo” than curbing drug use or traffic. U.S. government sources, though often disparaging of Mexico and Mexicans, do not call the “drug war” a war on the poor or a war on a certain race. But taking into account how the Mexican government’s proposed penalties for drug production and smuggling and the number of rural Mexican estimated to have been involved in the drug trade, it is feasible that the Mexican government treated the “drug war” as a means to assert control over poor, rural populations—the same populations that were vulnerable to leftist extremism. In conjunction with the criminal justice system, the Mexican government used force to oppress the poor and the left.

The Mexican state militarized the “drug war” by mobilizing the Mexican Federal Judicial Police (PJF) and armed forces. Additionally, the Mexican government established a drug enforcement police academy, and increased the size of the PJF by

¹³⁶ Unnamed Mexican Counternarcotics official, quoted in Richard B. Craig. "Operation Condor: Mexico's Antidrug Campaign Enters a New Era." (*Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 22.3, 1980), 352.

¹³⁷ Richard B. Craig. "Human Rights and Mexico's Antidrug Campaign." (*Social Science Quarterly* 60.4, 1980), 699.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 698.

more than 400 agents.¹³⁹ Like the United States, Mexico spent the vast majority of its antidrug budget on enforcement, eradication, and interdiction. All told, the Mexican government spent \$24 million in 1975 on the three phases of counternarcotics policy that the United States deemed so critical.¹⁴⁰ Eradication, in fact, may have been critical given the proliferation of the Mexican drug crop. Mid 1970s Mexican government estimates held that 600,000 square kilometers of Mexican land were being used to grow marijuana and opium poppies, making up perhaps 30,000 plots. Some of the plots were said to be in excess of 40 acres.¹⁴¹ Believing that eradication was the only way to get Mexican drug production under control, the U.S. and Mexican governments designed Operation Condor.

Drug Eradication: Joint U.S.-Mexico “Progress” and CIA Meddling

The greatest accomplishment of Operation Condor might have been its scale. The joint U.S.-Mexico operation is still the largest drug eradication campaign ever undertaken.¹⁴² The Mexican government sent thousands of security personnel to the triángulo crítico, comprised of the states of Chihuahua, Durango, and Sinaloa, the most prolific drug-producing region in Mexico. Forces were sent to the states of Guerrero, Zacatecas, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Sonora and others, as well.¹⁴³ In total, Mexico spent \$35 million on Operation Condor and mobilized 5,000 soldiers and 350 PJF agents for the drug eradication campaign. The American side of the operation, called Operation Trizo

¹³⁹ United States Department of State. “Narcotics Country Paper: Mexico” 1975. (*Digital National Security Archive*), ii.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴¹ Watt and Zepeda, 47.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁴³ United States Department of Justice. “Status Report Re Operation Trizo,” 1976. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 7-8.

(short for Tri-Zone), was also directed primarily at the triángulo crítico. For its part, the United States supplied 76 aircraft and a whopping \$150 million. Also, 30 U.S. agents were sent to Mexico to oversee and participate in the effort.¹⁴⁴

Even with the incredible proliferation of drug cultivation in Mexico, initial statistical returns from Condor were spectacular. A 1976 memo praised Condor saying, “in short, the eradication program [represented] a major success.”¹⁴⁵ According to a U.S. government source, from November 1975 to April 1976, the joint U.S.-Mexican operation destroyed more than 22,000 opium fields, almost 3,000 marijuana fields, and 14 heroin processing labs, and seized 116 kilograms of heroin, and 202.5 tons of marijuana. Additional statistics are similarly remarkable. Operation Condor resulted in the arrest of 1,602 Mexicans, and the confiscation of almost 1,000 guns, and more than 200,000 rounds of ammunition.¹⁴⁶ Another U.S. source exclaims, “the eradication phase of [Operation Condor was] a technological triumph in the first intensive...joint Mexican-U.S. opium poppy eradication campaign.”¹⁴⁷ DEA agents stationed in Mexico City believed they destroyed between 70-80% of the total Mexican brown heroin crop.¹⁴⁸ Incredibly, the United States government estimated that Operation Condor had successfully destroyed \$692,040,000 worth of heroin.¹⁴⁹ Gaudy statistics produced by Operation Condor made the U.S.-Mexico “drug war” appear winnable. And because of

¹⁴⁴ Watt and Zepeda, 49.

¹⁴⁵ (IND 76, 1).

¹⁴⁶ “Status Report Re Operation Trizo,” Appendix A; United States Office of Management and Budget. “International Narcotics Developments.” 1976. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

¹⁴⁷ United States Government. “Operation TRIZO – Intelligence Assessment.” 1976. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 1.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴⁹ “Status Report Re Operation Trizo,” 88.

the success of drug eradication, heroin on the streets of the United States became more expensive, less pure, less plentiful, and overdoses dramatically declined.¹⁵⁰

Although these statistics have to be taken with a substantial grain of salt because of the clandestine nature of the drug trade, such estimates still represent a concerted blow to the Mexican drug trafficking apparatus. Due to its perceived success, Operation Condor and drug eradication more generally became the model antidrug strategy for Latin American source countries like Bolivia.¹⁵¹ The exportation of this drug eradication strategy and the militarization it employed proves Operation Condor to be a pertinent example of the U.S. using Mexico to test the effectiveness of its burgeoning drug enforcement empire.

In support of the theory that Operation Condor was a template for U.S. hemispheric drug control, it appears that the DEA played a large role in the U.S.-Mexico drug eradication campaign on the ground. In addition to training and arming the Mexican army and PJF, the DEA appears to have participated in Mexican drug enforcement. According to a U.S. government memorandum entitled “Drug Enforcement Administration re Operation Trizo,” the DEA “[furnished] assistance and aid to the Mexican eradication forces in the form of actual participation”¹⁵² throughout Operation Condor. Also, as stipulated in a U.S. Embassy document, “DEA [agents could] participate in MFJP (Mexican Federal Judicial Police) enforcement actions involving actual raids and seizures if the presence or participation of DEA agents [was

¹⁵⁰ United States Special Assistant to the President for Health Issues. “Use of Paraquat.” 1978. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 2.

¹⁵¹ Shannon, 355-357.

¹⁵² “Status Report Re Operation Trizo,” 8.

required].”¹⁵³ Seeing as how the “Mexican government...encouraged an active DEA role in support of its program,”¹⁵⁴ it’s possible that DEA participation in Mexican drug enforcement was common.

Exactly what these raids and other forms of participation in Mexican drug enforcement entailed is not made clear by the documents. If we are to believe Pyes, Mexican drug enforcement was brutal. His claims remain, however, unsubstantiated by U.S. government sources. In any case, the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico “drug war” throughout the 1970s and the participatory presence of the DEA could suggest that paramilitary tactics used in drug enforcement were, in part, developed during the U.S.-Mexico drug eradication effort. Interestingly, Alexander posits that police forces and SWAT teams didn’t start using paramilitary tactics in the U.S.’s domestic “drug war” until the 1980s:

SWAT teams originated in the 1960s and gradually became more common in the 1970s, but until the drug war, they were used rarely [in the U.S.], primarily for extraordinary emergency situations such as hostage takings, hijackings, or prison escapes. That changed in the 1980s, when local law enforcement agencies suddenly had access to cash and military equipment specifically for the purpose of conducting raids... In 1972, there were just a few hundred paramilitary drug raids per year in the United States. By the early 1980s, there were three thousand annual SWAT deployments.¹⁵⁵

Before the proliferation of U.S. SWAT teams, Mexican drug enforcement agents had access to and were using military equipment on a massive scale by the mid 1970s. The U.S. government source detailing the quantity of drugs seized and the numbers of people arrested in Operation Condor does not describe the raids in which arrests and drug

¹⁵³ United States Embassy. “Guidelines for DEA Operations in Mexico.” 1975. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 2.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵⁵ Alexander, 74.

seizures occurred. Even so, one could presume that such drug enforcement activities had a paramilitary feel given the Mexican government's penchant for such action. Whether or not the U.S. adopted domestic paramilitary drug enforcement strategies from Operation Condor and the U.S.-Mexico "drug war" is uncertain. The chronology suggests, nonetheless, that this is a possibility.

Despite the apparent progress, the specter of communist subversion in the hemisphere continued to complicate U.S.-Mexico counternarcotics relations. Notably, Mexico City was home to the largest CIA station in Latin America throughout the Cold War.¹⁵⁶ Inevitably, the CIA crossed paths with drugs in Mexico. This may have been, in part, because of the CIA's relationship with the notoriously corrupt Mexican Federal Security Directorate (DFS). The near 40-year history of the DFS is sordid, and it worked closely with the CIA throughout the Cold War. Among the DFS's many tasks was the violent repression of the Mexican left.¹⁵⁷ It is speculated that "the DFS and the CIA shared information on suspected subversives, and anti-narcotics operations were frequently used as a device for quelling social movements and justifying the repression of political adversaries."¹⁵⁸ Besides its possible function as an anti-left paramilitary force, the DFS was considered the highest level of drug enforcement in Mexico. But instead of being responsible for drug enforcement, the DFS may have facilitated Mexican drug traffic. Scholar Jonathan Marshall believes that the DFS was the most powerful organizational force in the Mexican drug trade. Furthermore, Peter Watt and Roberto Zepeda observe that "so long as the DFS acted as an enforcer of anti-left wing repression,

¹⁵⁶ Watt and Zepeda, 28.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 28.

minor issues like its control of the flow of narcotics into the United States were tolerated”¹⁵⁹ by the CIA. There’s no way of proving this with the U.S. government documents found in the DNSA collections. If this were the case, however, the “War on Drugs” in Mexico could conclusively be considered a counter-revolutionary mechanism of anti-leftist oppression.

Marshall’s argument is similar to that of Watt and Zepeda. According to Marshall, the “route to [drug] market domination [in Mexico lay] in developing ties with corrupt political leaders...and law enforcement authorities...[and] one of the most critical sources of such institutional protection for the drug trade [was] the [CIA].”¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, Marshall argues, the CIA may have been responsible for the meteoric rise of one the largest drug traffickers in Mexico of the 1970s, the Cuban-born Alberto Sicilia Falcón. He was, before his 1975 arrest, “the leader of the world’s largest cocaine and marijuana trafficking organization.”¹⁶¹ How he supposedly came to power is noteworthy. Sicilia claimed to be a CIA protégé and that he had been a participant in the U.S.’s secret war against Cuba. More importantly however, he is thought to have shipped arms to anti-leftist groups throughout Latin America for the CIA in exchange for the protection of his drug empire.¹⁶²

Sicilia’s name does not appear in any of the U.S. government documents. Neither do the names of any major 1970s Mexican traffickers. In fact, all names not belonging to U.S. government higher-ups are redacted. Unfortunately, without names or even descriptions of actions that could explicitly identify Mexican traffickers like Sicilia, it is

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁶⁰ Marshall, 85.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 86.

¹⁶² Ibid., 86.

impossible to say definitively how Mexican drug traffickers and the CIA were intertwined. Even so, given that the CIA has been involved in anticommunist drugs-for-arms shadiness in Nicaragua in the 1980s,¹⁶³ it wouldn't be a stretch to believe that something similar had happened in Mexico during the preceding decade. Maybe the counter-revolutionary drugs-for-guns strategy was even developed by the CIA in Mexico. Evidence, again, is scarce, but CIA facilitation of drug traffickers in Mexico may indicate that the "War on Drugs," at its highest levels, was more counter-revolutionary than counternarcotic. In any case, the CIA's supposed involvement in the 1970s U.S.-Mexico "drug war" further obfuscates what was going on at the time. Considering these hypotheses, it is difficult to understand how the 1970s were considered a U.S.-Mexico counternarcotics golden age.

¹⁶³ Shannon, 377.

Conclusion

The End of an Era

1978 saw the end of Operation Condor. The Mexican government made it known that it no longer wished for the DEA to be involved in Mexican drug eradication campaigns. Yet, the only major change to be implemented was that DEA pilots would no longer be allowed to participate in or supervise Mexican eradication efforts.¹⁶⁴ Otherwise, the DEA was still free to investigate, order arrests, and run undercover operations while Mexico ran its own eradication campaigns. Despite how this change seems trivial, it would prove to be a major setback for the U.S.-Mexico “drug war.” According to Shannon, the DFS and other Mexican officials corrupted Mexican drug eradication efforts in the absence of U.S. oversight. Drugs continued to be destroyed by Mexican personnel, but they destroyed drugs selectively. Supposedly, traffickers who had the money and power would pay off Mexican officials to protect their crops from the government. In turn, state-run drug crop extermination in Mexico, Shannon argues, was the catalyst for the formation of international drug cartels like those that sprung up on the Gulf Coast and in Guadalajara.¹⁶⁵

The centralization of drug trafficking in Mexico, however, may not have been caused solely by the absence of American supervision. In a 1990 *Washington Post* article, “DEA and Mexican officials [were] interviewed...[and] said that at a minimum, the CIA had turned a blind eye to a burgeoning drug trade in cultivating its relationship with the DFS and [pursued] what it regarded as other U.S. national security interests in

¹⁶⁴ “Narcotics—GOM Requests Elimination of DEA Spotters,” 2.

¹⁶⁵ Shannon, Chapter 7.

Mexico.”¹⁶⁶ Predictably, the Cold War and the CIA continued to complicate the “War on Drugs” well after the 1970s. The Cold War may have even factored in the murder of Enrique Camarena. Those responsible for killing Camarena are said to have operated with “virtual impunity—not because [they were] in league with Mexico’s powerful Federal Security Directorate...but because...[their] activities were secretly sanctioned by the CIA.”¹⁶⁷ Are the Cold War circumstances of Camarena’s murder indicative of the “War on Drugs” counter-revolutionary nature? Perhaps the CIA turning a blind eye to drug trafficking in Mexico was an integral strategy in the U.S.’s Cold War protocol in Latin America. Perhaps a more unsettling question is whether or not the U.S. was intentionally trying to foster drug-related disorder and chaos in its southern neighbor. But this is impossible to prove. Wherever the truth lies, it is a fact that the intersection of U.S.-Mexico “War on Drugs” the Cold War, and the Mexican “Dirty War” did not result in peace of any kind.

At least one source seems to have believed in the U.S. government’s power to create peace. In mid-February of 1979, Mexican President José López Portillo and American President Jimmy Carter met in Mexico City. This was the end of the Carter administration and three years before Ronald Reagan, according to Alexander, began to wage an all-out “War on Drugs” in the United States.¹⁶⁸ A communiqué summarizing the meeting affirms Portillo and Carter’s belief in the United Nations. Both presidents saw it as the instrument through which the world would achieve peace. But there appears to be a typo in one of the first paragraphs of the communiqué. “United Nations” is mistakenly

¹⁶⁶ William Branigin. “Trial in Camarena Case Shows DEA Anger at CIA.” (*The Washington Post*, July 16, 1990), A1.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, A1.

¹⁶⁸ Alexander, 49.

replaced with “United States.” The error reads as follows: “Upon reviewing the international scene and the grave problems that affect world peace, both presidents reiterated their confidence in the United States [sic], convinced that this institution is the best alternative to achieve a peaceful world with equity and justice.”¹⁶⁹ Whether this is intentional or a careless mistake is not clear. The U.S.’s antidrug policies between 1969-1978, however, had created and resulted in anything but peace, equity, and justice for Mexico. By mandating drug eradication, interdiction, and enforcement, the U.S. government seems to have forced its southern neighbor into helping Washington preserve and perpetuate a U.S.-centric “status quo.”

¹⁶⁹ United States Embassy. “Joint Communiqué upon Conclusion of the Visit of President Jimmy Carter to Mexico.” 1979. (*Digital National Security Archive*), 2.

Bibliography

- American University. "Area Handbook for Mexico." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- Astorga, Luis. "Drug Trafficking in Mexico: A First General Assessment." 36 (1996): UNESCO. Web.
- Astorga, Luis. "Organized Crime and the Organization of Crime." *Organized Crime and Democratic Governability*. U of Pittsburgh, 2000. 58-82. Print.
- Astorga, Luis. "The Limits of Anti-Drug Policy in Mexico." *International Social Science Journal* 53.169 (2001): 427-34. *ProQuest*. Web.
- Bayley, David H. *Changing the Guard: Developing Democratic Police Abroad*. New York: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.
- Benavie, Arthur. *Drugs: America's Holy War*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Branigin, William. "Trial in Camarena Case Shows DEA Anger at CIA." *The Washington Post*, July 16, 1990. *ProQuest*. Web.
- Bosworth, Mary, and Jeanne Flavin. *Race, Gender, and Punishment: From Colonialism to the War on Terror*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2007. Print.
- Bullington, Bruce, and Allen A. Block. "A Trojan Horse: Anti-Communism and the War on Drugs." *Contemporary Crises* 14.1 (1990): 39. *ProQuest*. Web.
- Carlos, Alfredo. "Mexico 'Under Siege': Drug Cartels Or U.S. Imperialism?" *Latin American Perspectives* 41.2 (2014): 43-59. Print.
- Central Intelligence Agency. "Challenges to Mexico's Single Party Rule." 1968. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- Central Intelligence Agency. "Latin America: Regional and Political Analysis Mexico: Further Developments in the Military's Anti-Narcotics Role." 1977. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- Central Intelligence Agency. "Operation Condor I: Mexican Military's Anti-Narcotics Campaign Latin America: Regional and Political Analysis." 1977. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- Central Intelligence Agency. "Situation Appraisal: Status of the Mexico City Student Movement." 1968. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- Chafe, William H. *The Rise and Fall of the American Century: United States from 1890-2009*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

- Chronology: Mexico-United States Counternarcotics Policy, 1969-2013*. ProQuest. Web.
- Craig, Richard B. "Human Rights and Mexico's Antidrug Campaign." *Social Science Quarterly* 60.4 (1980): 691-701. ProQuest. Web.
- Craig, Richard B. "La Campana Permanente: Mexico's Antidrug Campaign." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 20.2 (1978): 107-31. ProQuest. Web.
- Craig, Richard B. "Operation Intercept: The International Politics of Pressure." *The Review of Politics* 42.4 (1980): 556-80. ProQuest. Web.
- Craig, Richard B. "Operation Condor: Mexico's Antidrug Campaign Enters a New Era." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 22.3 (1980): 345-63. ProQuest. Web.
- Doyle, Kate. "Human Rights and the Dirty War in Mexico." *The National Security Archive*. George Washington University, 11 May 2003. Web.
- Doyle, Kate. "Prelude to Disaster: José López Portillo and the Crash of 1976." *The National Security Archive*. George Washington University, 14 Mar. 2004. Web.
- Doyle, Kate. "Operation Intercept: The Perils of Unilateralism." *The National Security Archive*. George Washington University. 13 Apr. 2003. Web.
- Doyle, Kate. "The Dawn of Mexico's Dirty War: Lucio Cabañas and the Party of the Poor." *The National Security Archive*. George Washington University, 5 Dec. 2003. Web.
- Doyle, Kate. "The Nixon Tapes: Secret Recordings from the Nixon White House on Luis Echeverría and Much Much More." *The National Security Archive*. George Washington University. 18 Aug. 2003. Web.
- Grandin, Greg. *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*. New York: Metropolitan, 2006. Print.
- Grandin, Greg. *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2004. Print.
- Gonzalez, Gilbert G. *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930*. Austin: U of Texas, 2004. Print.
- Kappeler, Victor E., Mark Blumberg, and Gary W. Potter. *The Mythology of Crime and Criminal Justice*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1993. Print.
- Marshall, Jonathan. "CIA Assets and the Rise of the Guadalajara Connection." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 16.1 (1991): 85-96. ProQuest. Web.

- Mauer, Marc. *Race to Incarcerate*. New York: New, 1999. Print.
- Nadelmann, Ethan Avram. *Cops across Borders: The Internationalization of U.S. Criminal Law Enforcement*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1993. Print.
- Paley, Dawn. "Drug War as Neoliberal Trojan Horse." *Latin American Perspectives* 42.5 (2015): 109-32. *ProQuest*. Web.
- Parenti, Christian. *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*. London: Verso, 2001. Print.
- Pérez, Carlos Antonio Flores. "Political Protection and the Origins of the Gulf Cartel." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 61.5 (2013): 517-39. *ProQuest*. Web.
- Pyes, Craig. "Legal Murders: Mexico's War on Drugs, Operation Condor, Is Responsible for Torture, Murder, Extortion." *Village Voice* [New York City] 4 June 1979: 11-15. Microfilm.
- Rockefeller, Nelson A. *The Rockefeller Report on the Americas; the Official Report of a United States Presidential Mission for the Western Hemisphere*. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969. Print.
- Shannon, Elaine. *Desperados: Latin Drug Lords, U.S. Lawmen, and the War America Can't Win*. New York: Viking, 1988. Print.
- The Nixon Tapes. "Conversation No. 10-116. Cassette No. 1049, 1050. *Conversation between the President and Daniel Patrick Moynihan*." October 7, 1971. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- The Nixon Tapes. "Conversation No. 568-9. Cassette No. 1088. *Conversation between the President, H.R. Haldeman and John Connally*. September 9, 1971. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- Tonry, Michael H. *Punishing Race: A Continuing American Dilemma*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Toro, María Celia. *Mexico's "war" on Drugs: Causes and Consequences*. Boulder: L. Rienner, 1995. Print.
- Toro, Maria Celia. "The Internationalization of Police: The DEA in Mexico." *The Journal of American History* 86.2 (1999): 623-40. *ProQuest*. Web.
- United States Agency for International Development Office of Public Safety. "Consolidated Agency Reply to IGA Report on Foreign Assistance Act Financing of Narcotics Control—Mexico." 1972. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Agency for International Development Office of Public Safety. "Equipment Requested by Mexico." 1971. *ProQuest*. Web.

United States Agency for International Development Office of Public Safety. "IGA Report on Foreign Assistance Act Financing of Narcotics Control—Mexico." 1972. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Agency for International Development Office of Public Safety. "Mexican Internal Security, Police, and Narcotics Control." 1973. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Congress. "Moratorium on use of Paraquat." 1978. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Congress. "Operation Condor." 1979. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of Justice. "Mexican Border Narcotic, Marihuana, and Dangerous Drug Traffic." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of Justice. "Operation Trizo." 1976. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of Justice. "Request for a Recommendation on the Heroin Problem." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of Justice. "Status Report Re Operation Trizo." 1976. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Assistance to Mexico for Narcotics Control." 1970. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Helicopters and Light Planes for Mexico." 1970. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Joint Mexico-U.S. Communiqué on Narcotics Cooperation." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Mexico: Outlook for the López Portillo Administration." 1977. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Narcotics Assistance for Mexico." 1970. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Narcotics Country Paper: Mexico." 1972. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Narcotics Country Paper: Mexico." 1975. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Operation Intercept." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Department of State. "Operation Intercept Under Way." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Domestic Council on Drug Abuse. "The Potential of a Forward Strategy Against Heroin in Mexico." 1975. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Embassy. "Assessment of U.S. Security Assistance Programs for F.Y. 1979." 1977. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Embassy. "FAA Section 32 – Political Prisoners." 1974. *The Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Embassy. "F.Y. 1971 Country Analysis and Strategy Paper for Mexico." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Embassy. "F.Y. 1972 Country Analysis and Strategy Paper." 1970. *ProQuest*. Web.

United States Embassy. "Joint Communiqué upon Conclusion of the Visit of President Jimmy Carter to Mexico." 1979. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Embassy. "Narcotics—GOM Requests Elimination of DEA Spotters." 1978. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Embassy. "Operation Trizo--1976 (Phase I) GF-TA-75-8001." 1976. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Government. "Student Violence and Attitudes in Latin America." 1968. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States National Security Council. "10:40 a.m., Monday, 3 November Meeting on the Subject of 'Heroin Traffic.'" 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States National Security Council. "Review of US Policies Toward Mexico." November, 1978. *The Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Office of Management and Budget. "International Narcotics Developments." 1976. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

United States Special Assistant to the President for Health Issues. "Paraquat." 1978. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

- United States Special Assistant to the President for Health Issues. "Use of Paraquat." 1978. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- United States Special Presidential Task Force Relating to Narcotics, Marijuana, and Dangerous Drugs. "Task Force Report: Narcotics, Marijuana & Dangerous Drugs--Findings and Recommendations." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- Walker, Louise E. *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968*. Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 2013. Print.
- Walker, William O. *Drug Control in the Americas*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico, 1981. Print.
- Watt, Peter, and Roberto Zepeda Martínez. *Drug War Mexico: Politics, Neoliberalism and Violence in the New Narcoeconomy*. London: Zed, 2012. Print.
- White House. "Action Task Force": Narcotics, Marihuana, and Dangerous Drugs." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- White House. "Budget Bureau Comments on Marijuana Policy." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- White House. "Major Program Issue with Proposed Marijuana Policy." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- White House. "Mexico: Highlights." August, 1975. *The Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- White House. "PRM 41--Narcotics." 1978. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- White House. "Summary of Conversation between Presidents Jimmy Carter and José López Portillo of Mexico." 1977. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.
- White House. "Task Force Report." 1969. *Digital National Security Archive*. Web.

