Will Mexico Become a “Failed State”?  

Transnational Criminal Organizations in the Americas: Responding to the Growing Threat

CLAI, George Washington University  
SSI, U.S. Army War College  
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Manuel Suárez-Mier  
Legal Attaché  
Embassy of Mexico  
Washington D.C.
“In terms of worst-case scenarios for the Joint Force and indeed the world, two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico”
Why does the USJFC tag Mexico as a potentially failed state?

• Growing violence as the government confronts criminal groups specially at its northern border.
• The USJFC correctly highlights that “any descent by Mexico into chaos would demand an American response based on the serious implications for homeland security alone.”
• The gravity of the Mexican government’s war against criminal organizations, cannot be underestimated. What the USJFC asserts is that they do not know who will win this conflict.
Gap between reality and perception

• Since its start, the key priority of the Calderón administration was to restore law and order.
• Transnational criminal organizations (TCO) had gained enormous power and were the *de-facto* rulers of key parts of the country’s territory.
• The frontal assault undertaken by authorities has resulted in heavy losses for the TCOs.
• A side consequence of the disruption in TCOs activities and profits has been a sharp surge in violence as they fight among themselves and with the authorities for space and new income.
Mexico’s government strategy

- Restore law and order in all the territory, but specially where the TOCs were very powerful.
- Break down the operational, logistic, financial and commercial webs of the TOCs.
- Strengthen the public institutions in charge of fighting crime in the 3 branches of government.
- Reinforce policies to prevent crime & violence in order to recover the trust of the population.
- Overhaul of the failing system of international cooperation. Now all affected nations must assume their full and mutual responsibilities.
Results in numbers...

In 25 months of the Calderón Administration:

• 70 tons of cocaine have been confiscated.
• 4,000 tons of marihuana.
• 43 tons of precursors for methamphetamine.
• 31,000 weapons have been seized, more than half of them high caliber assault rifles.
• 4 million rounds of ammo. and 3,200 grenades.
• 14,000 land vehicles and 340 airplanes.
• 56,500 criminals have been detained and $325 million were impounded.
Results in substantive facts...

- The offensive described has resulted in serious damage for the TOCs “business model.”
- Their operations, logistics, protection schemes and financial management are in disarray.
- This led them to seek new revenue sources in kidnappings and the smuggling of other illicit “merchandise” across the northern border.
- To seed panic in the population they resorted to gory executions and extreme violence, trying to use the population as a their hostage in order to force the authorities to declare a ceasefire.
What else are we doing?

- The complete revamping of the country’s penal system through a constitutional amendment to boost its speed, effectiveness and transparency.
- Promote that the countries directly affected by illicit trades of drugs, weapons, people & money work closer and in much better coordination.
- Illicit trades are closely linked with corruption and terrorism, for which we have undertaken a clean-up operation that is reaching to all levels of our justice procurement system.
- In the last 3 years 200 felons were extradited to the countries where they committed crimes.
Wrapping up...

- In the period 2007-09 Mexico is spending $11.1 billion to fight TOCs using its armed force in combination with federal & local police (1,640).
- In the last 2 years 7,853 Mexicans were killed by the TOCs with an jump of 117% in 2008/07.
- The government of Mexico is committed to win this war disregarding the costs that it entails.
- Its pledge for this cause includes the revamping of crucial entities for its national security like all police forces & justice procurement system.
- The Calderón administration has the steadfast resolve to restore law and order in its territory.
…wrapping up

• But Mexico’s commitment to fight TCOs is not sufficient if the other nations affected –the US, Colombia, and Central America- don’t engage.

• That is why the Merida Initiative has to be seen as just the first step in a far more intertwined regional effort to confront illicit trades of drugs, arms, people and money in North America.

• Either we win this conflict together or all of us loose it because not even the mighty US can do it alone in the eventuality that all the nations south of its border were to become failed states.