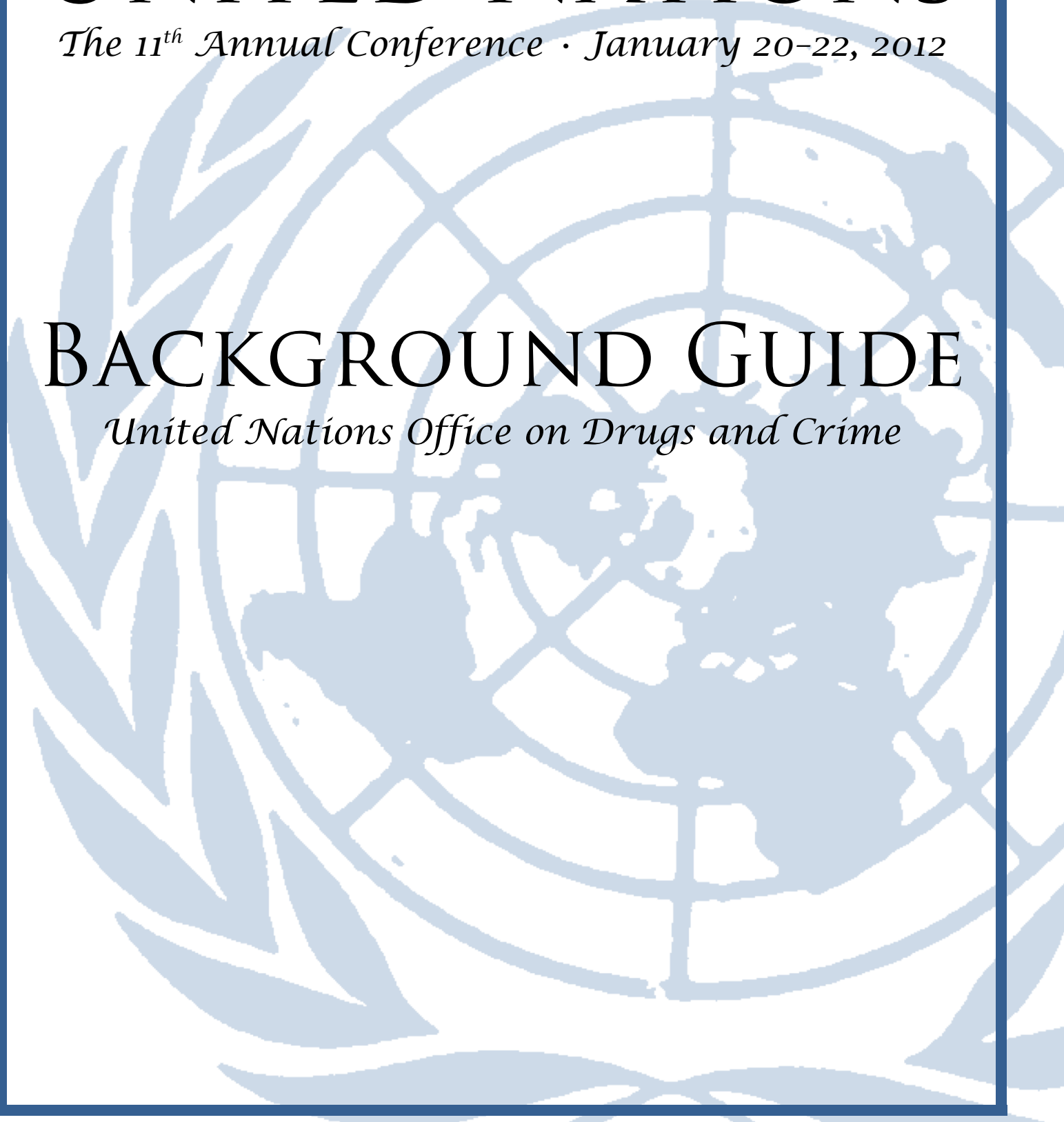


# VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

*The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference · January 20-22, 2012*

## BACKGROUND GUIDE

*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*





# VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

*The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference · January 20-22, 2012*

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Isabel Wade, and I will be your director for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime this year. At the moment, I am a grade twelve student at Crofton House School and Co-Captain of the Crofton House Model United Nations Team. I am very passionate about international affairs, particularly in the aspects of development and human rights. Given this passion, Model United Nations has become a keen interest of mine over the last three years, all of which I have participated in VMUN. I look forward to be participating in VMUN this year as a director.

I hope that the topics selected are as interesting for you as they are for my staff and me. Both topics are extremely current in today's news and global relations. They are not only influential in the political sectors, but they also greatly effect the development of a majority of the world's societies. The problems presented, human trafficking and Mexico-USA drug smuggling, have no easy solutions. Still, the resolution of these issues will bring about the improvement of humanitarian issues in almost every nation, and will lead to the improvement of the standard of living for many individuals around the world. In short, the resolution of these issues will be instrumental in attaining improved peace, equality, and sustainability for our world as a whole.

I believe both topics offer a variety of possible solutions, which I hope will lead to fantastic debate and discussion. I look forward to hearing all the ideas you will bring to the table and wish you the best of luck in research at home and debate at the conference. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Isabel Wade  
Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## Topic B: USA/Mexico Drug Trafficking

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### Introduction

Relations between the United States and its southern neighbour have come a long way since the Mexican-American war early on in Mexico's independence. Nevertheless, the ties between the two major states are still marred by problems. Without a doubt, one of the most contentious issues is that of the massive and illegal smuggling of banned drugs from Mexico into the continental United States. The American government estimates that at least 90% of cocaine entering the U.S. is transported through Mexico. Of course, many other drugs, such as marijuana and heroin, also come through or are produced in Mexico, and drug industry generates billions of dollars annually.<sup>1</sup>

There is no consensus, either on the international stage or domestically within the United States and Mexico, on how to deal with the complex issue of the illegal drug trade. For example, while many American politicians believe that the U.S. should be taking punitive measures against Mexico for their apparent inability to combat the drug cartels and corruption in their own government, many Mexican officials blame the United States for failing to reduce demand for narcotics in their own country. Unfortunately, at this point, the issue has become ingrained in every aspect of trade, travel, and relations between the two countries. The Mexican-American relationship is increasingly defined by the battle against the illegal drug trade. For this issue to be defeated, the two countries will need to implement a unified and effective strategy with help and support from the entire international community.



### Timeline

1954 — President Eisenhower assembles a 5-member cabinet to “stamp out narcotic addiction”

1971 — Nixon declares America’s “War on Drugs”

Mid-1980s — Cocaine smuggling routes shift to largely cross the U.S.-Mexico border

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<sup>1</sup> Image Credit: “Facts on File” Database

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**United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

December 2006 — Mexico designates a federal task force to combat drug cartels and deploys thousands of troops into the Mexican state of Michoacan

May 2008 — In just the first five months of the year, there are 1,400 deaths linked to organized crime and the drug trade

June 2008 — President Bush and the U.S. Congress implement the Merida Initiative, intended to provide 1.4 billion dollars to Mexico and other countries that have helped fight the “War on Drugs” for at least three years

August 2008 — Hundreds of thousands of Mexicans take to the street to protest drug-related violence

December 2008 — The U.S. Department of Justice states that drug traffickers in Mexico pose the biggest organized-crime threat to the United States

March 2009 — The Mexican Army enters the city of Ciudad Juarez, near the U.S. border, to stop open warfare between drug cartels

April 2009 — President Obama visits Mexico, admits that the drug trade is not Mexico’s to fight alone, and states that he will urge the U.S. Senate to ratify the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials

March 2010 — After the murder of three people connected to the U.S. consulate in Ciudad Juarez, President Calderon calls on the U.S. to share in the fight against the drug trade.

August 2010 — President Calderon accepts debate on his new drug legislation, but remains firm that his strategies are working

December 2010 — WikiLeaks releases diplomatic cables revealing that the American Ambassador allegedly questions the authorities’ ability to tackle organized crime

## **Historical Analysis**

Although the United States has spent over 2.4 trillion dollars on combating drug use and the drug trade over the past four decades, the number of Americans involved in drugs has increased to nearly 20 million. Most of the American drug supply comes over the Mexican border. Although the U.S. and Mexico have made great strides in improving their historically rocky relationship, the drug trade has created a thorny problem on which the two countries cannot seem to agree. Nevertheless, recently the United States appears to have become much more cooperative and it is possible that the issue may still be solved through international cooperation after all.

The United States first recognized the drug trade as an issue in 1954 when President Eisenhower assembled a 5-member cabinet to “stamp out narcotic addiction;” however, the drug trade problem can essentially be seen to have started in the 1960s. Drug use started to become fashionable among young, middle class Americans, and drug use becomes a symbol of social rebellion in the so-called “hippie age.” In the late 1960s, the fight against the drug trade started to become more organized, and the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs was founded. There was also an attempt to essentially close the U.S.-Mexico border in order to stop an influx of marijuana. While the American government had already recognized the drug

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trade as a national and international issue, they were still in the very early stages of approaching and handling the problem.

The so-called “War on Drugs” did not begin until 1971, when President Nixon declared that the United States would begin a “War on Drugs” and began a campaign that, while harsh on drug crime, put the majority of its funding towards treatment and not law enforcement. He even opened the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention, and in 1973 President Nixon created the Drug Enforcement Administration in order to initiate “an all-out global war on the drug menace.” These actions, spearheaded by President Nixon, essentially heralded the beginning of the United States’ “War on Drugs”—which has, obviously, not yet solved the problem.

In 1979, the cocaine trade started to become increasingly violent and retaliatory with a deadly shootout between Colombian traffickers in a Miami mall. The incident brought the viciousness of the drug lords to the attention of U.S. law enforcement. As a majority of Colombia’s drugs would soon be transported through Mexico, it was only a matter of time before drug cartels on the border became a major issue. In 1981, the U.S. and Colombia ratified a bilateral extradition treaty, which ramped up the stakes for drug traffickers. Still, the largest threat to the governments remained the drug cartels, and over the next few years the unrelenting brutality and disturbing success of drug cartels, such as the Medellin cartel, brought greater awareness to the American government.

While the anti-drug movement began in 1976, it did not gain popularity until later years due to the glamorization of drugs in the media in the 1970s. In 1984, First Lady Nancy Reagan called for a wave of people dedicated to ending drug use in America. For the next few years, anti-drug campaigns ran rampant in nearly every state and continue to be active to this day. These campaigns, however, have yielded minimal results. Similarly, while President Bush’s goal to reduce marijuana use by 25% led to a crackdown in arrests for marijuana-related crimes, use of that particular drug only went down 6% and use of other drugs actually went up. As these attempts did not appear successful, both administrations turned to harsher action—and, according to detractors, resorted to the “blame game”—in order to deal with the illegal drug trade.

In 1984, Mexico’s massive marijuana industry was revealed through what Time Magazine called “the bust of the century.” The raid was carried out on a processing plant in the Chihuahua desert in which 5,000-10,000 tons of marijuana, worth 2.5 billion dollars, were found and destroyed. This incident made it clear around the world exactly how prevalent drugs were in society and the local economies.

In the mid 1980s, cocaine routes moved to cross the U.S.-Mexico border and sparked major violence in the area. This was mainly as a result of the United States’ effective combat of the drug trade in and around the state of Florida. Cocaine smugglers had to turn to already-prevalent marijuana traffickers to transport their drugs across the Mexican border. As the drug trade became more and more rampant in Mexico, so did violence. This violence drew international attention when DEA Agent Enrique Camerana was kidnapped and murdered in Mexico. This incident not only demonstrated the brutality of the Mexican drug lords, but also revealed that many Mexican officials were corrupt when dealing with drug

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enforcement. This led to the U.S. condemning Mexico's lack of cooperation, and further strained the cross-border relationship.

In 1986, President Reagan signed an enormous drug bill that put 1.7 billion dollars to fighting the drug crisis in the United States. Of the 1.7 billion, 97 million was put towards new prisons, 200 was put towards drug education, and 241 million was put towards treatment. While this financial support was largely comprehensive, the most attention this bill received was based on the minimum penalties for drug offences that the bill set. The different sentencing schemes for each drug caused major controversy.

In 1987, international ties began to fall apart as the drug cartels gained power. Colombia annulled their extradition treaty with the U.S., due to overwhelming threats from drug cartels. This action demonstrated to the international community that in countries with severe levels of the drug trade, cartels were often the true holders of power. The fact that the Colombian government bent to the wishes of the cartels only served to lend the cartels more legitimacy and clout.

In 1988, the Mexican political system once again showed corruption during the presidential elections. Two aides who were responsible for keeping the election clean and fair were found murdered. Those responsible were local drug dealers, which demonstrated the amount of corruption in the system. It is believed by many that Cardenas actually won the election rather than Salinas. While this may only be speculation, it definitely brought to light the crippling corruption in Mexico, as it related to the drug trade.

This violence led to an increasingly military strategy by the United States. In 1990, President Bush proposed that an additional 1.2 billion dollars should be added onto the budget for the "War on Drugs." This included a fifty percent increase on military spending.

Finally, things began to look up for U.S.-Mexico relations. The North American Free Trade Agreement was signed in 1993. However, this agreement made it harder for U.S. officials to unearth narcotics hidden in legitimate free trade goods.

In 1998, Bill Clinton signed a declaration with Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, which pledged that their countries would jointly combat this issue. While President Clinton's campaign was largely effective in crime reduction in the area around the border (he flooded it with police), he still failed to get to the heart of the area: the trafficking of drugs. Still, it would appear that a harsh approach to crime might actually have been effective. Clinton was also committed to helping those countries attempting to combat drug trafficking, and in 2000 he gave 1.3 billion dollars in aid to help Colombia combat drug traffickers. This was still in line with his military strategy, as the money was going towards funding for the Colombian military, among other initiatives.

In 2006, just after he was elected into office, Mexican President Felipe Calderon sent 6500 troops to stop killings between two rival gangs and effectively created his own war against the cartels. He continued his fight by firing of 284 federal police officers accused of corruption and replaced them with handpicked officers. These officers were in fact successful, and arrested several leaders in drug related crime. Still, their actions were not without consequences. In 2008, the drug lords retaliated and killed at least 5,300

people. While the plight of Mexico seemed hopeless at the time, the drug cartels' revenge actually attracted significant international attention and sympathy.

In 2008, President Bush put forth the Merida Initiative, which was supposed to provide 1.4 billion dollars to Mexico and other countries that had helped fight the War on Drugs for at least three years. While this was in theory a reasonable plan, only 465 million dollars has thus far been approved as aid, and the U.S. government is still trying to figure out what to do with the rest of the money. While the government's intentions were good, this plan proved to be another ineffective act in an attempt to implement the War on Drugs.

## **Current Situation**

Currently there are seven main drug cartels inciting violence across Mexico and even the United States. These cartels are currently fighting each other and killing innocent bystanders in the process. While much of the violence remains only in Mexico, these cartels have begun to forge ties with drug gangs located in the United States. Mexican drug trafficking organizations still pose the greatest drug trade threat to the U.S.

On the twelfth of January 2011, the Mexican government revealed a database that showed that the death toll from the drug trade had increased to 34,612 people over the last four years. The database also showed that 2010 had been the worst year to date, with 15,273 drug-related murders. As there has been no update since the database was released, there is speculation that the death toll has reached 40,000. This jump in killings has been mainly attributed to a split in gangs that used to be allied. These splits have caused even more rival gangs to fight, which has caused the deaths of many innocent people. This has also caused the Mexican population to lose faith in their president's strategies and has even led the president to state he would be open to debate over the legalization of drugs.

This violence can also be related to the Mexican government's crackdown on these cartels. While the government states that record amounts of drugs have been seized and senior cartel leaders jailed or killed, violence has erupted with cartels not only fighting amongst themselves but also with the Mexican army. Furthermore, with 50,000 troops deployed to fight the cartels, there are significant concerns over the military's possible lack of accountability. This is very troublesome, as the army was deployed because of lack of trust in the police. Wealthy cartels have infiltrated underpaid police forces countless times, and while the police force is currently under rebuilding, it could take years to rid itself of corruption.

In March of 2009, the U.S. government stated that it would increase efforts to stop the illegal flow of weapons and drug money into Mexico. Unfortunately, in November 2010, a U.S. Justice Department report stated that the United States' efforts to stop weapons smuggling had been unfocused and that the U.S. had not shared enough intelligence with its Mexican partners. A Senate report in June 2011 stated that seventy percent of weapons found at crime scenes in Mexico were traced back to the U.S. This shows that the U.S. has so far been ineffective in stopping the flow of weapons into Mexico.

Currently President Obama has stated that Mexico and the United States must work together to end the drug trade. President Obama has so far added money to the Merida Initiative and has changed the status

of drug traffickers in order to allow their assets to be seized. The aim of these actions is to hopefully increase international cooperation and to prevent the flow of money back to the trafficking operations.

On a more controversial note, President Obama has also called on the Senate to ratify the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, which was signed by the United States in 1997 but has never been ratified. This convention calls for tighter regulations on the import and export of firearms, an issue that leads back to the controversial debate over weapon regulations in the United States. The Convention would hopefully put an stop to the countless weapons received by Mexican drug lords from sources in the U.S. Similarly, President Calderon has called on the United States to reinstate the U.S. assault weapons ban; however, while Obama was in favour of this action in his campaign, he has recently backed off the issue due to party pressure.

As governments continue to crack down on the drug cartels, the cartels' leaderships have become only become more brutal and more creative. Just recently, Mexican soldiers discovered a tunnel that extends from Baja California in Mexico under the U.S. border. While the tunnel was unfinished, it was thought to be intended for drug smuggling. Ten diggers were arrested as they worked on the tunnel (having already crossed into American territory. As more time is spent developing strategies to deal with the drug lords, cartels are finding more and more ways to avoid the authorities.

## **UN Involvement**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has always supported Mexico in its fight against the illegal drug trade. The UNODC has always been particularly interested in the area, as it hopes a decrease in the flow of drugs through Mexico would have a "chokepoint" effect, stemming the flow of illicit drugs into the United States and, in turn, significantly curbing the drug trade worldwide.

The UNODC has also pledged to give assistance to the Mexican government in reducing poverty and improving security by increasing jobs, stimulating the economy, and fighting crime. In fact, in 2006 the UNODC supported a government project to combat crime and drug abuse. This project had elements in the private sector, and aimed to tackle all levels of the illegal drug trade. Furthermore, the UNODC currently aiming to put more support to combating the drug trade in Central America and the Caribbean.

Arguably, the largest international projects that the UNODC has created in relation to the Mexico-U.S. trade issue are the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Both these treaties look towards combating the drug trade through international cooperation and tough law enforcement. The Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances is the most relevant treaty due to the fact that it deals with all facets of the issue, even subtopics like extortion. Both the United States and Mexico have ratified this treaty; however, they still largely disagree on some sections of possible solutions in dealing with drug trafficking. This convention was made in 1988, so many argue that the convention needs to be amended or recreated if it is to be kept effective and relevant. Furthermore, the Convention does not currently keep countries accountable in the fight against the drug trade due to the fact that majority of its resolutions are general enough to be avoided. While perhaps no country should be forced into financing

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**United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

anti-drug programs, many believe that every nation should be held responsible for combating the drug trade as much as possible.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs also plays a large part in UNODC's policy when dealing with the Mexico-U.S. drug trade situation. This commission primarily advises the Economic and Social Council on possible solutions for the drug trade, implements Conventions, monitors the outcomes of other assemblies, and mainly tackles the UNODC Drug Programme. While this Commission plays a major part in how the UNODC tackles this issue, it is important to note that while the United States is a member of the Commission, Mexico is not.

The UNODC has also specifically created the Regional Programme for Central America. The UNODC is specifically committed to solving the drug issue in Central America by solving the issue at a grassroots level. The Programme places a lot of emphasis on community-based cooperation and cooperation from the public sector. It will be important to keep solutions like this in mind when examining all possible solutions. Solving the problem of drug trafficking will not be accomplished simply by being "harsh on crime."

The UNODC has looked to tackle this issue from all sides; however, the problem with this is that not all countries agree on the proposed solutions. Even the U.S. and Mexico, who are arguably dealing with the same issue, have not come to terms on dealing with this issue in similar ways. It has been and will be the responsibility of the UNODC to ensure international cooperation.

## **Possible Solutions & Controversies**

The current strategy that the Obama Administration is attempting to implement is that of preventing the flow of weapons from the United States into Mexico. This has caused major controversy on both ends of the spectrum: many individuals believe that the government is not doing enough and that the ban on assault weapons should be reinstated, while others believe that the U.S. is going too far and that the statistics gathered on weapons in Mexico are not entirely accurate. Most of the time, this debate becomes tangled up with the issue of gun control in the United States. Supporters of the efforts of the U.S. government believe that enforcing the ban on assault weapons that expired in 2004 would not affect Americans buying guns in America, but would only stop the flow of weapons into Mexico. Many supporters of this plan also believe that the legalization of any drugs would not stop the flow of drugs from Mexico to the United States, but would rather increase it. Furthermore, many also believe that the legalization of drugs would only force cartels into other countries, which would not fix the issue. While there are many proposed solutions, each proposal comes with its own set of problems.

The most recently proposed solution that has come up has also become the most controversial: the legalization of some or all narcotics. The point of legalizing the drugs would be a way to eliminate the black market for drugs and so help to stem the violence the drug trade causes. For example, the El Paso City council (El Paso is just across the border from Ciudad Juarez) even passed a resolution calling for "an honest, open, and national debate on ending the prohibition on narcotics;" however, the mayor of the city vetoed the resolution. Still, a small group of U.S. lawmakers from across party lines has come together to call for marijuana legalization. The main argument is that since the drug trade is illegal, it obviously must

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**United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime**

be driven underground. This causes issues in the drug industry to be settled with violence, instead of in court. A comparison is often drawn to prostitution and gambling: where these activities are illicit, violence is common, but where they are legal violence is quite rare. There is also the argument that legalizing drugs would lead to a decrease in the amount of bribery and corruption in law enforcement and government, due to the fact that these officials will not be threatening illegal trade once it is legalized. Finally, it can be argued that the legalization of drugs will cease intrusive police tactics such as warrantless searches and undercover tactics, and will stop the “victimless nature” of the penalization of these crimes and also racial profiling. Of course, there is no shortage of arguments against legalization, and the debate over whether or not to legalize drugs is currently raging in the United States and Mexico and has caused major controversy worldwide.

Finally, many individuals believe that trade along the border between Mexico and the U.S. should be further regulated and that national troops should be stationed along the border. Now aside from the fact that tightening trade between the U.S. and Mexico would be a violation of NAFTA as it currently stands, enforcing more stringent trade regulations would not necessarily fix the issue. Drug traffickers are constantly adapting to changes made by the separate governments along the border. Even now, drug cartels are beginning to use unconventional strategies like building tunnels under the border, so more stringent regulations on trade would not necessarily largely affect the drug trade. Furthermore, many believe that deploying troops to American cities along the border would be unnecessary due to the fact that many of them are not actually prone to violence and are considered some of Texas’ safest cities. While this strategy could be effective, it could also cause more violence in peaceful areas and harm trade agreements.

The illegal trade and transport of drugs over the U.S.-Mexico border is an issue for which many solutions have been offered; however, each solution has met with its own groups of supporters and critics. Not only do governments often fail to form firm policies on the issue, individuals within the governments most often do not agree on how to tackle it. This leaves the drug trade as one of the most complex and controversial issues in international and national politics today.

## **Bloc Positions**

### **Mexico**

Currently the Mexican government is against the legalization of marijuana; however, Calderon has just announced that he is open to debate on the issue. The government has also stated that they are in favor of the Obama Administration’s strategy in stopping the flow of weapons. Some problems that Mexico has with U.S. actions are the statements from certain U.S. officials that Mexico is close to becoming a “failed state,” which they believe will harm their tourism industry, and the fact that money earmarked for the Merida Initiative is not being approved quickly by American lawmakers. Of course, the delegate of Mexico will have to delve much deeper into the issues surrounding drug trafficking than this background guide does.

### **United States**

Currently the Obama administration is in favour of putting all efforts towards stopping the flow of weapons from the U.S. to Mexico; however, President Obama has stepped away from supported the

expired ban on assault weapons. Another major issue the United States has agreed it needs to tackle is the degree of demand for drugs in the United States as this is the largest reason the drug trade from Mexico to the United States is as massive as it is. Finally, the United States is currently opposed to the legalization of any drugs and is not looking towards that option as a solution. Of course, the delegate of the United States will have to delve much deeper into the issues surrounding drug trafficking than this background guide does.

### **South American Countries with Drug Issues**

These countries are most often the location for which cartels are sourcing their drugs. Many of the cartels are based in these countries and transport their goods through Mexico and into the United States. While these countries are committed to combating drug trafficking, corruption is evident in many areas of government and law enforcement. This makes the fight against the drug trade all the more difficult in these countries.

### **Destination Countries other than the US**

While many countries are supportive of the United States' battle against the drug trade, a majority of these countries have recognized the failures of the war on drugs. Many of these countries have open debate on the possibility of the legalization of drugs. While they may agree with one or a few of the policies laid down by Mexico or the United States, their proposed solutions are generally more liberal.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Should the U.S. reinstate the assault weapons ban that expired in 2004 as a way to reduce drug-related violence in Mexico?
2. How much of a factor do you think the availability of firearms in the U.S. is in Mexican violence?
3. Should the U.S. military be deployed to guard the U.S.-Mexico border?
4. Is legalization of some or all drugs in the U.S. a viable way to reduce violence in Mexico associated with the drug trade?
5. How much should international cooperation be used in formulating solutions between Mexico and the U.S.?
6. How large of a role should the United Nations and the UNODC have in formulating and enforcing solutions to this issue?
7. What factors make the drug trade such a difficult issue to combat?
8. How can corruption in governments be prevented?
9. How can countries with known corruption participate in the international fight against the drug trade? Should they be allowed to?

### **Additional Resources**

[www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)

The UNODC website

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

CIA World Factbook

[www.time.com](http://www.time.com)

The website of Time Magazine

<http://www.cnn.com>

CNN

[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)

PBS

[www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)

BBC

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“Facts on File” (requires a login)

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