

AAMUN'26

UNODC

Topic 1: The Collapse of Governance Under the Shadow of Drug Cartels: Addressing the Expansion of Transnational Organized Crime in Mexico



Dear Delegates,

Regarding the use of ChatGPT in AAMUN'26, we will allow its use as a **research engine only**. Please be aware it was last updated **August 2026**. We encourage you to fact check the information to prevent any issues throughout the debate.

COMMITTEE

As the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), we are seriously concerned about the growing influence of transnational crime and drug cartels in Mexico. The increase of cartels, drug trafficking, organized crime is placing the Mexican population in danger and undermining the rule of law. The far reaching reports of drug smuggling and trafficking, killings and intimidation continue to threaten democratic institutions and political figures. The extent of the issues requires urgent international cooperation and immediate action and the development of meaningful ways to address the root cause of these crimes.

While Mexico continues to face these obstacles, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is committed to upholding democratic institutions and upholding institutional capacity to prevent a velvet collapse.

Managing the expansion of organized crime is crucial to restoring effective governance and safety in Mexico, while simultaneously maintaining regional stability and peace.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, Mexico has experienced a rise in transnational organized crime. Drug trafficking cartels have evolved from local networks into International criminal organizations. With the rise of these organizations they continue to threaten nations' sovereignty, challenge state authorities and public institutions while undermining the rule of law.

The Mexican government's effort to combat drug cartels began during 2006 during a military led drug war where major crime organizations were dismantled. However, their efforts led to the fragmentation of larger cartels into rivaling groups, intensifying regional tensions and increasing violence in impacted regions. Local cartels have attempted to influence government institutions and undermine government officials.

As a consequence, this issue has developed beyond a matter of national security into a matter of transnational crime. Drug trafficking networks began international operations, while being dependent on international financial systems and transportation routes.

TIMELINE

- 1980s — Rise of Mexico as a major trafficking hub
- Mexican trafficking organizations become increasingly important in transporting cocaine and other drugs from South America into the United States.
- 1989 — Guadalajara Cartel begins to fracture
 - The capture of major Guadalajara Cartel leader Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo contributes to the fragmentation of the organization.
 - Former associates eventually form or contribute to several powerful organizations, including the Sinaloa, Tijuana/Arellano Félix, and Juárez networks.
- 1990s — Cartel fragmentation and territorial competition
 - Mexican criminal organizations become more decentralized and increasingly compete over trafficking corridors.
 - Corruption and infiltration of law-enforcement institutions become major challenges.
- 2006 — Felipe Calderón launches a military-led drug war
 - President Felipe Calderón deploys the military against organized crime.

- This marks a major escalation in the Mexican government's confrontation with cartels.
- 2007–2010 — Violence escalates
 - Cartel fragmentation and competition contribute to rapidly increasing violence.
 - Major organizations, including the Sinaloa Cartel, Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, and Beltrán Leyva Organization, compete for territory and trafficking routes.
 - Los Zetas are particularly notable for expanding beyond drug trafficking into extortion, kidnapping, and other criminal activities.
- 2008 — Mérida Initiative
 - Mexico and the United States establish the Mérida Initiative to strengthen cooperation against organized crime.
 - It provides assistance related to security institutions, law enforcement, justice systems, and border security.
- 2015 — El Chapo escapes prison
 - Sinaloa Cartel leader Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán escapes from the maximum-security Altiplano prison through a tunnel.
 - The escape raises major questions about corruption within Mexico's security institutions.
- 2019 — Culiacán operation
 - Mexican security forces capture Ovidio Guzmán, son of El Chapo, in Culiacán.

- Armed members of the Sinaloa Cartel launch attacks across the city.
- The government releases Guzmán, illustrating the ability of a criminal organization to challenge state authority through coordinated violence.
- 2020 — Cartels diversify
 - Criminal organizations increasingly engage in activities beyond narcotics, including fuel theft, extortion, migrant smuggling, and control of legitimate businesses.
- 2021–2023 — Persistent cartel violence and territorial control
 - Criminal organizations continue competing for strategic territory and trafficking routes.
 - Extortion and violence against local businesses, politicians, journalists, and communities remain significant concerns.
 - Mexico's National Guard expands as the government attempts to strengthen security capabilities.
- 2023 — Fentanyl becomes a major international issue
 - Mexican criminal organizations become central to the production and trafficking of illicit fentanyl into the United States.
 - The issue significantly increases pressure for U.S.–Mexico cooperation against precursor

chemicals, trafficking networks, and cartel finances.

- 2025–2026 — Ongoing transnational organized-crime challenge
 - Mexico continues confronting powerful criminal organizations whose activities extend beyond drug trafficking into money laundering, arms trafficking, human smuggling, extortion, corruption, and control of local economies.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Mexico confronts formidable obstacles as a result of cartel activity and organized transnational crime such as drugs, arms and human trafficking, extortion, money laundering and kidnapping. Its strategic location between the continental USA and South America makes it a hub for drug smuggling and trafficking permitting unlawful activity

The increasing control of these organizations has led to an increase in violence, violent crimes such as abuse, human trafficking and intimidation undermining government institutions in affected regions. These obstacles continue to threaten Mexico's democracy and democratic institutions while minimizing public faith in government organizations. Mexico has pushed back against criminal organizations through precautions such as the establishment of the national guard and security reforms.

Due to the fact that this issue operates transnationally, it is of the utmost importance that there be international cooperation. Delegates should evaluate how the international community can aid Mexico while strengthening governance and supporting human rights.

MAJOR PARTIES

United States of America:

The USA is one of the largest stakeholders in this issue, due its unlawful drug market and close relationship. Their relationship is centered on combating trafficking networks and preventing organized transnational crime

Mexico:

Mexico is the main hub of this issue since cartels operate in Mexico and smuggle drugs from Mexico. Its government faces persistent challenges to prevent organized crime.

Guatemala:

Guatemala's geographic location makes it a hub for the transportation of narcotics moving towards South American countries.

Canada:

Canada is one of the major parties since it's a destination for illegal drugs due to the strong connections between Canadian and Mexican criminal organizations.

PREVIOUS EFFORTS

- In 2006, President Felipe Calderon commanded a Military led drug war against drug cartels resulting in the dismantling of major criminal organizations while simultaneously causing the fracture of major cartels into competing groups
- In 2007, the United States and Mexico establish the Mérida Initiative in hopes to jointly tackle organized crime, while providing law enforcement, justice systems and border security more support
- In 2008, the Mexican government adopted the National Agreement for Security, Justice and Legality. It contained 75 specified actions to enhance public security and combat organized crime.
- In March 2019, the Mexican government established the National Guard to increase their ability to resist insecurity. Its structure highlighted human rights, safety and national security strategy.

GLOSSARY

Drug Trafficking:

The unlawful production, distribution and selling of illegal substances in domestic or international markets.

Drug Economy:

The method of economic activity connected to production, distribution and sale of illicit substances.

Transnational Organized Crime:

Organized crime that operates across international borders such as drug trafficking.

Drug Cartel:

An influential group of people involved in the production and distribution of illegal synthetic drugs.

Trafficking Route:

A route used to transport and illicit drugs, weapons, people and contraband between locations.

Corruption of Institutions:

The infiltration of government institutions by criminal organizations, weakening their ability to enforce the law

HELPFUL LINKS

“Estrategia Nacional Para La Prevención Y El Combate Al

Lavado De Dinero Y El Financiamiento Al

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