

The Mérida Initiative, aka Plan Mexico, was defined as a “new security cooperation initiative” between Mexico and the U.S. to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. While the stated goals are to “produce a safer and more secure hemisphere and prevent the spread of illicit drugs and transnational threats,” the reality of the initiative for the Mexican people tells a different story.

- The Mérida Initiative allocated over \$1.5 billion to Mexico from 2008-2010. U.S. military and police aid in each of these years marked nearly a 10-fold increase over 2007 levels. President Obama and the State Department continue to extend military/police aid to Mexico beyond Mérida’s expiration date, requesting an additional \$310 million for 2011 and \$290 million for 2012.
- Congress put four human rights conditions on 15% of the funds: transparency and accountability in law enforcement, civilian trials for military officials accused of human rights violations, consultation with human rights groups, and prohibiting testimony obtained through torture. In 2010, the U.S. State Department decided to withhold about \$26 million in Mérida funds until the Mexican state passed human rights reforms to the constitution and the Military Code of Justice. Mexico has yet to pass either measure.
- The funds will go to military aircraft and drug interdiction equipment and training for Mexican military and police. 108 Mexican soldiers were trained at the U.S. Army’s Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly the School of the Americas) in 2010. The Army “would like to see that number grow.” Members of the Mexican Congress have complained about the lack of transparency in how Mérida funds have been dispersed.

### **The Mérida Initiative ignores two major root causes of drug trafficking: U.S. demand and poverty in Mexico.**

- Widespread drug use in the U.S. makes drug trafficking a lucrative venture. U.S.-designed trade policies such as NAFTA exacerbate Mexico’s impoverishment. Currently 50 million people live in poverty in Mexico. Deeply impoverished and unemployed people in Mexico have three options for survival: migration, tenuous and often dangerous work in the informal economy, and crime. In such conditions, organized crime and drug traffickers find easy prey amongst Mexico’s poor.
- Not one penny of Plan Mexico money is dedicated toward drug prevention or rehabilitation programs in the U.S., nor has there been complementary domestic legislation to reduce demand in the U.S., although Hillary Clinton acknowledges that the “insatiable demand for drugs” in the U.S. “fuels the drug trade.”
- It is estimated that 90% of weapons used by drug cartels come from the U.S.
- A military strategy similar to Plan Mexico has failed to produce results in Colombia. Through Plan Colombia, the U.S. has spent over \$5.6 billion on military aid and coca fumigations. After a decade of trying to stamp out the coca supply, more Colombian farmers are planting coca today than before Plan Colombia began. Military solutions to social problems are proven to fail.

**The Mérida Initiative affects all Mexican people by threatening their human rights.**

- The Mexican military and police have historically been used to repress social movements. For example, between 2006 and 2007 security forces violently repressed peaceful demonstrations in Oaxaca. In 2006, police detained, beat and sexually assaulted over 45 women flower vendors protesting in Atenco.
- Since 2007, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission has received 5000 reports of human rights abuses. There was a six-fold increase in human rights violations committed by soldiers during the first two years of the Calderón administration, jumping from 182 to 1,230. There is no evidence that any of these complaints have been prosecuted.
- Documented cases of military human rights violations since 2009 include disappearances, torturing two dozen municipal officials held captive in a military base, arbitrarily opening fire on a bus of civilians, storming rural communities to torture and threaten residents and injuring dozens of journalists and teachers during President Calderon's most recent visit to Oaxaca. The Washington Post, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have all documented torture, rape, harassment, and other human rights violations committed by the police and military without prosecution.
- There have been almost 35,000 casualties of the war on drugs in Mexico. More than 15,000 of those deaths occurred in 2010.

**Mexican civil society opposes the Mérida Initiative:**

"[In 2007] the army committed severe human rights violations in their supposed counter-drug operations. We are concerned that the funding from the U.S. government will ultimately make this situation worse." --*Espacio Civil (coalition of 52 Oaxaca civil society organizations)*

"The Mérida Initiative, as we see it, is the U.S. implementation of its broader security agenda. It is the visible manifestation of secret negotiating under the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America...It is part of plans to further criminalize social protest, something that is already a fact of life in Mexico." --*Miguel Pickard, Center for Economic and Political Investigation for Community Action*

"The Mérida Initiative is characterized by a lack of a human rights perspective, a human security approach that mistakes the security of states for the security of human beings...It is time for the international community to stop supporting short-sighted policies such as this one." --*Miguel Agustin, Pro Juarez Human Rights Center*

**Take Action.**

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