

Mexico's Plight Worsens Despite Military Intervention in the War on Drugs

The Drug Reform Coordination Network

Violence continues to escalate in Mexico, despite military support sent in by President Felipe Calderón to help fight drug trafficking organizations. The following viewpoint examines how and why military occupation in border towns is hurting the economy and resulting in many serious human rights issues. The Drug Reform Coordination Network is an international organization working for drug policy reform in hopes of ending drug prohibition. The organization was founded in 1993 by executive director David Borden.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. As explained in the following viewpoint, why are victims reluctant to report abuses from the “narcos”?
2. Why is the planned border wall causing problems for landowners, and why might it fail to control the border?
3. According to arguments presented by both Marco Davila and Juan Manuel Cantú in the article, what would help curtail violence on both sides of the Lower Rio Grande Valley?

The Drug Reform Coordination Network (DRCNet), “No Relief in Sight: Reynosa, Mexico, Military Occupation Yields No Let-Up in Drug War Violence,” *Drug War Chronicle*, no. 523, February 15, 2008. <http://stopthedrugwar.org>. Reproduced by permission.



In the latest move in his ongoing war against Mexico's powerful and violent drug trafficking organizations—the so-called cartels—President Felipe Calderón [in January 2008] sent some 6,000 Mexican soldiers and federal police into the cities on his side of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, from Nuevo Laredo down to Matamoros. They disarmed the municipal police forces, who are widely suspected of being in the pay of the traffickers, established checkpoints between and within cities, and are conducting regular patrols in Reynosa and elsewhere.

A Violent Year for Border Towns

The crackdown on the Tamaulipas border towns came after a bloody year last year. According to the Reynosa-based Center for Border Studies and the Protection of Human Rights (CEFPROD HAC), drug prohibition-related violence claimed sixty-seven lives in Tamaulipas border towns last year. But it was only after a violent shootout in Rio Bravo (between Reynosa and Matamoros) [in January 2008] that resulted in several traffickers killed and nearly a dozen soldiers wounded, and the cartel's retaliatory attacks on army patrols in the center of Reynosa the next day that Calderón sent in the soldiers.