

AMERICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

AMERICAN MILITARY UNIVERSITY

**HOW WOULD BELIZE, GUATEMALA, AND MEXICO REACT TO  
A REDUCTION IN DEMAND FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS IN THE  
UNITED STATES?**

ANALYTICS I

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## Introduction

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010, an El Paso Department of Corrections employee, Arthur Redelfs, and his wife Leslie Enriquez, an American consulate employee, were ambushed and killed in broad daylight in the Mexican city of Juarez, only 1 block from a major U.S. border crossing. They were simply on their way home from attending a child's birthday party. The fact that their seven month old child was sitting in the back seat of the car that they were murdered in underscores the brutality of the incident. The husband of another American consulate employee, Jorge Salicido, was also ambushed and killed about a mile away after he left the same birthday party (Hawley 2010). The media coverage of the killings of these American citizens is likely the first time that that many Americans have ever heard of the Mexican city of Juarez. Mexicans know about Juarez, however, because out of every 100,000 people in Juarez, 165 are murdered, making Juarez one of the most dangerous cities in the world (International Debates 2010).

The situation in Juarez is a small glimpse into the significant problems beyond the United States' southern border. Violence is rapidly increasing in Mexico, organized crime is prevalent in Belize, and Guatemala is on the verge of becoming a failed state. Criminal drug trafficking operations are a major cause of these problems. Currently the United States is providing substantial aid to the Mexican government to combat drug trafficking. The Merida Initiative, announced in 2008, gives the Mexican authorities \$400 million dollars in international aid to help fight the drug cartels (Munks 2009).

An interesting concept, however, is the thought that organized crime in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize is only successful because Americans are willing to pay enormous amounts of money for illegal drugs. This thought process leads to a new strategy in the

war on drugs: the best way to defeat the drug cartels is to cut off their cash flow. This is a function of simple economics – when the demand for a product decreases, the price decreases, and the profit decreases. Many experts are advocating for a “reduction in demand” policy. They believe that this policy will be more effective than the current “interdiction and eradication policy” (Cook 2007, 8). One of the strongest advocates for reducing demand is the Mexican government itself. In a report prepared for the U.S. Congress, Colleen Cook writes that the government of Mexico feels that it “cannot succeed in its efforts against the cartels so long as cartels stand to earn billions of dollars annually from the U.S. illicit drug market” (Cook 2007, 8).

In order to assess the benefits of reducing demand for illegal narcotics in the United States, the following research question was devised and investigated using the Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction (<http://www.lamp-method.org>):

**Step 1. Define the issue for which you are trying to determine the most likely future.**

The research question attempts to adequately discuss the topic, yet limit the scope of the study, keeping it manageable. Overall, the intent of the study is to predict a future for Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico in an environment where U.S. demand for illegal narcotics is reduced. Therefore, the specific research question is:

*-How would Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico react to a reduction in demand for illegal drugs in the United States?*

## **Step 2. Specify the national "actors" involved.**

While the United States is also an actor, it is the independent variable in this study. The *cause* of the scenario is the reduction in demand for illegal drugs in the U.S.; the *effect* of the scenario is the future for the 3 remaining national actors. Therefore, the national actors involved in this study are the nations of **Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala.**

\*For the purposes of this study is essential for the reader to not misinterpret these actors as simply the legitimate government of each nation. The actor is the whole nation, so the courses of action that each nation could undertake are determined by the interactions between the legitimate government, the civilian population, and the criminal organizations within each nation.

## **Step 3. Perform an in-depth study of how each national actor perceives the issue in question.**

### **MEXICO:**

Any causal observer of world events would notice that the security situation in Mexico has deteriorated in recent years. The 25 billion dollar a year drug trade (Padgett and Ioan 2008) has fueled much of this violence. In 2009, there were 6,500 drug related killings in Mexico. This number increased from 6,200 deaths in 2008 and 2,700 deaths in 2007 (International Debates 2010). Juarez, just across the border from El Paso, Texas, has become one of the most dangerous cities in the world to live in, with 165 deaths per

every 100,000 people (International Debates 2010). On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010, 5 police officers and 8 civilians were murdered (four beheaded) in Acapulco, a popular tourist attraction in southern Mexico (*Arabia 2000* 2009).

Chiapas, a border area between Guatemala and Mexico, has also seen a dramatic increase in violence. Los Zetas, one of Mexico's most dangerous drug cartels, controls the drug trafficking routes through Chiapas. As other cartels attempt to move in on these smuggling routes, Los Zetas is forced to defend their turf – leading to more murders (Mexico Security Memo 2009). Drug Cartels are increasingly becoming power brokers in Mexico, with local police and government officials on their payrolls (Becerra 2010). The drug cartels are waging an insurgency against the Mexican Government, with the goal of establishing safe havens for their narco-trafficking businesses (Becerra 2010). While many senior policy makers are reluctant to suggest that Mexico could become a failed state or a nation controlled by the drug cartels (a narco-state) (International Debates 2010), this fate is a distinct possibility. After seven police died in a botched raid on a drug house in Culiacán, northern Mexico, a local civilian remarked "I realized that the power of the narcos has surpassed the power of my government." (Padgett and Ioan 2008) The ability of the drug cartels to take on the legitimate security establishment and win consistently has led to 53% of Mexico City residents believing that the drug syndicates are winning the drug war (Padgett and Ioan 2008).

Criminal Syndicates are becoming increasingly well equipped and trained. Some possess equipment and capabilities that rival modern military forces. For example, in 2008, a Mexican Army unit fought a three and a half hour gun battle with six cartel members holed up in a safe house. When the siege ended, the Army discovered that the

fighters were wearing level 4 body armor, had M-16 assault rifles, a Barrett .50 caliber sniper rifle (arguably the most effective military sniper rifle in existence), and military grade first aid equipment. Criminal syndicates possess encrypted communications equipment and are organized into military-like units (International Debates 2010). It is no surprise that the Mexican security establishment is having difficulty defeating the drug cartels, especially since the cartels possess equipment that rivals the Special Forces.

Some of the Mexican cartels possess sophisticated training and military experience. This training increases their effectiveness and their ability to threaten the Mexican security establishment. For example, the “Los Zetas” drug cartel was formed by an initial cadre of Mexican Army defectors. Prior to their defection, Los Zetas members were instructed by US trainers “in techniques including intelligence gathering, communications interceptions, counter-intelligence and surveillance, use of sophisticated weaponry and explosives, defensive/offensive tactical driving training, interrogation techniques and personal defence (*sic*)” (Becerra 2010).

The Mexican government, led by President Felipe Calderon, is attempting to reestablish law and order (International Debates 2010). While the Mexican federal defense budget is 7 billion dollars (much of it through US assistance), the drug cartels receive 25 billion dollars from the narcotics trade (Padgett and Ioan 2008). While the authorities in Mexico and the United States have recently claimed limited success in interdicting the flow of drugs, the violence has continued because different organized crime syndicates and gangs are not only fighting the authorities, but are also battling each other (Mexican Security Memo 2010). Obviously, the current United States policy in Mexico cannot be called a success. The demand in the United States for illegal narcotics

is empowering the drug cartels and fueling the violence. The Cartels have the money to purchase sophisticated weapons, bribe officials, and entice highly trained Mexican police and military personnel to switch sides. The Mexican security forces, especially the police, who reportedly earn \$5000 a year (Padgett and Ioan 2008), are outgunned and underpaid, and currently are ineffective in combating the criminals. In fact, 80 percent of the police in Juarez have been relieved in the last year for “corruption or incompetence” (Hawley 2010).

**BELIZE:**

While Belize has been relatively safe from the violence that has recently plagued Mexico, there is evidence the Belize is also being pulled into the illegal narcotics business. The situation in Belize is different from Mexico in many ways, however. Compared to Mexico, Belize is a relatively safe place. While the security situation in Mexico is deterring tourism, leisure travel has become the number one industry in Belize. The most serious problem facing Belize is the economy. Belize has an unemployment rate of 13 percent and 33 percent of the population live in poverty (CIA, 2006). According to the Belize Country Review of 2010, Belize has a relatively high crime rate, but many crimes are poverty related. Robberies, assaults, and drug trafficking by street gangs are the most prevalent crimes (2010, 33), as opposed to drug violence in Mexico.

Belize’s involvement in the drug trade is substantial, however. According to the CIA World Factbook, Belize is a “major transshipment point for cocaine”, a “small-scale illicit producer of cannabis for the international drug trade”, and a base for “money-laundering activity related to narcotics trafficking and offshore sector” (2006). Belize is

also a major smuggling route for weapons. On May 22, 2010, an arms shipment from China vanished and is thought to have been smuggled through Belize enroute to “terrorists” in Mexico. There is allegedly a smuggling network in Belize that “has been hugely successful at landing containers and slipping them out to destinations overland” (East-Asia-Intel Reports 2008).

Overall, the lack of a significant drug war in Belize is likely due to lax enforcement of international laws and inadequate policing. In 1997, the United States alleged that “due to high-level corruption in their government, Belize did little to stop drugs moving through its country” (Jane’s Intelligence Review 1997). The Belizean police, charged with preventing and investigating crime, only had 856 officers (Hanson et al. 2004) in 2002. The Belizean police are handicapped by insufficient manpower and an insufficient budget. According to Police Practice and Research, “the major hindrance to the Belize National Police is a lack of adequate funding which in turn manifests itself in a severe lack of basic resources for crime control, investigations, and service provision” (Hanson et al. 2004, 241-257). Overall, the Belizean authorities don’t seem to have the overall will or capability to take on organized crime.

While government corruption and inadequate policing contribute to the lack of a high intensity drug war, many sources point to a high amount of drug trafficking through Belize. The fact that criminal organizations exist and make money from illegal smuggling, drug trafficking, and money laundering increases the occurrence of other crimes in Belize. The high crime rate in turn damages Belize’s top industry, tourism. Belize as a nation could stand to benefit from an overall reduction in the regional illegal



narcotics business. The evidence points to the fact that Belize is happy to be on the periphery of the drug business as long as the violence doesn't spill over its borders.

### **GUATEMALA:**

Out of the three nations within the scope of this study, the situation in Guatemala is by far the most perilous. The violent crime rate in Guatemala is among the highest in the world (Munks 2010). There are portions of northern Guatemala that the centralized government has little influence over because the areas are controlled by the drug cartels (Munks 2010). The Government is weak, ineffective, and corrupt – in some cases, officials at the very top are controlled by the cartels themselves. The drug cartels operate with near impunity in Guatemala and the nation overall is on the verge of becoming a failed state.

According to Jane's Intelligence Review, "Guatemala has not yet reached the stage of being a failed state. However, it is undeniably a weak state and failing badly at providing public security" (2008). The Police are woefully ineffective and counterproductive in providing law and order. As with Mexico, the Police are underfunded and are vulnerable to bribes from criminal factions. In 2007, only two percent of the murders in Guatemala were prosecuted. Three members of the government of El Salvador were ambushed, tortured, and killed by four members of the Guatemalan Police in 2008, and Guatemalan prosecutors are often mysteriously killed while investigating police officers for misconduct (Jane's Intelligence Review 2008). Because the criminal justice system is so ineffective, local communities have created militias and neighborhood patrols that deliver their own brutal justice. Almost reminiscent of the

vigilante justice depicted in the history of the American Wild West, over 1000 local citizens in the town of Pelin, Guatemala formed a mob and beat three alleged gang members to death. This was not an isolated incident, and similar incidents are becoming prevalent across the country (Jane's Intelligence Review 2008).

Many Guatemalan government officials are also on the payroll of the drug cartels. According to Munks, "Guatemalan police director Baltázar Gómez, anti-drug coordinator (sic) Nelly Bonilla and another police officer were arrested after an investigation involving the UN's resident International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala" (2010). According to Jane's Intelligence Review, criminal syndicates are increasingly trying to control key posts within the Guatemalan government and security forces in order to "provide cover or impunity for drug production and shipment, human trafficking and other contraband activities as well as intelligence regarding government activities in other ministries and departments" (2007). Overall, the Guatemalan government is increasingly controlled by and supports the interest of the international drug trade. Guatemalan President Berger even admitted in an interview: "these people [the drug cartels] are ruling this part of the world (Jane's Intelligence Review 2007)".

The geographic location of Guatemala is strategically important for drug smuggling. It is a key transit point between producers in South America and consumers in North America. In fact, the DIA estimated that 75 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States passes through Guatemala. Much of this trafficking is controlled by or coordinated through the same Mexican crime syndicates that are contributing to the deteriorating security situation in Mexico (Jane's Intelligence Review 2005). Money (up to \$3 billion) from the sale of illegal narcotics in the United States is laundered through

“remittances” sent by Guatemalan nationals working in the United States to their families in Guatemala.

As with both Belize and Mexico, Guatemala is heavily involved in the drug trade. Guatemala is different though. Criminal Syndicates have thoroughly penetrated the Guatemalan government and security services to create a permissive environment for their operations. The northern Guatemalan region of Peten, on the Mexican border, is a denied area to the Guatemalan government, allowing drug smugglers to operate there with impunity using unregistered railroads, roadways and airstrips (Jane’s Intelligence Review 2005). Corruption has rendered the government so ineffective that the police only prosecute two percent of the murders in Guatemala. The criminal organizations in Guatemala are financially connected to criminal organizations in Mexico (Jane’s Intelligence Review 2005). A large portion of the resources that criminal organizations use to buy Guatemalan government and police officials come from the demand for illegal drugs in the United States.

#### **Step 4. Specify all possible courses of action for each actor.**

There are generally three courses of action available to each actor.

**COA 1.** The legitimate government retains power and secures the state, degrading the capabilities of the drug cartels and re-establishing law and order. (SI)

**COA 2.** The legitimate government retains power but significant drug related violence continues. There is no significant change to the current situation. (VC)

**COA 3.** Criminal organizations render the legitimate government ineffective and nation becomes a narco-state, a safe haven where the drug cartels can operate with impunity. (NS)

**Step 5. Determine the major scenarios within which you compare the alternate futures.**

As specified in the research question, the purpose of this study is to attempt predict the future situation in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize if the United States is able to reduce demand for illegal narcotics. While several strategies have been proposed to reduce demand, such as decriminalization of addiction, increased treatment for addicts, and outright legalization of marijuana, cocaine, and heroin; the purpose of this paper is not to address *how* to reduce demand for illegal narcotics, but rather to assess the effects of doing so.

SCENARIO 1: The United States reduces national demand for the importation of illegal narcotics from South and Central America.

**Step 6. Calculate the total number of permutations of possible “alternate futures” for each scenario.**

According to the Lockwood Analytical Method for Prediction website, the formula for calculating the number of possible permutations is  $X^Y = Z$ .

X equals the number of courses of action available to each actor, Y equals the number of actors, and Z equals the number of alternative futures that will be compared in the study. Because there are three actors, and three courses of action available to each actor, there are a total of 27 combinations of courses of action (or alternate futures) available in each scenario.

**Step 7. Perform a “pairwise comparison” of all alternate futures within the scenario to determine their relative probability.**

Each alternate future is compared to another, with the most likely future (based on the previous research) receiving a vote. This process continues until each alternate future has been compared to each other alternate future. The more total votes an alternate future receives, the more likely it is that that future will occur. The formula for calculating the number of votes is  $X = N(N-1)/2$ , where N = the number of alternate futures.

Therefore,  $X = 27(26)/2$ , the number of total “pairwise comparisons” is 351, so there are 351 total votes. The final tally of votes is as follows:

ALTERNATE FUTURE	MEXICO	BELIZE	GUATEMALA	VOTES
1	SI	NS	NS	19
2	SI	SI	SI	22
3	SI	VC	VC	24
4	SI	NS	SI	10
5	SI	SI	NS	25

6	SI	NS	VC	16
7	SI	VC	NS	23
8	SI	SI	VC	26
9	SI	VC	SI	19
10	VC	NS	NS	11
11	VC	SI	SI	13
12	VC	VC	VC	17
13	VC	NS	SI	22
14	VC	SI	NS	13
15	VC	NS	VC	13
16	VC	VC	NS	5
17	VC	SI	VC	23
18	VC	VC	SI	8
19	NS	NS	NS	4
20	NS	SI	SI	5
21	NS	VC	VC	7
22	NS	NS	SI	0
23	NS	SI	NS	8
24	NS	NS	VC	2
25	NS	VC	NS	6
26	NS	SI	VC	9
27	NS	VC	SI	1

\*NS = Narco-State \*SI = Security Improves \*VC = Violence Continues

**Step 8. Rank the alternate futures for each scenario from highest relative probability to the lowest based on the number of “votes” received.**

Once the votes were cast, ranking the alternate futures from most likely to least probable is achieved simply by sorting the sum of the votes from highest to lowest. The results are displayed on the table below, with the top five most likely scenarios being number eight, five, three, seven, and seventeen.

ALTERNATE FUTURE	MEXICO	BELIZE	GUATEMALA	VOTES
8	SI	SI	VC	26
5	SI	SI	NS	25

3	SI	VC	VC	24
7	SI	VC	NS	23
17	VC	SI	VC	23
2	SI	SI	SI	22
13	VC	NS	SI	22
1	SI	NS	NS	19
9	SI	VC	SI	19
12	VC	VC	VC	17
6	SI	NS	VC	16
11	VC	SI	SI	13
14	VC	SI	NS	13
15	VC	NS	VC	13
10	VC	NS	NS	11
4	SI	NS	SI	10
26	NS	SI	VC	9
18	VC	VC	SI	8
23	NS	SI	NS	8
21	NS	VC	VC	7
25	NS	VC	NS	6
16	VC	VC	NS	5
20	NS	SI	SI	5
19	NS	NS	NS	4
24	NS	NS	VC	2
27	NS	VC	SI	1
22	NS	NS	SI	0

\*NS = Narco-State \*SI = Security Improves \*VC = Violence Continues

**Step 9. Assuming each future occurs; analyze each alternate future in terms of its consequences for the issue in question.**

In order to make the study relevant to the consumer, the next step is to analyze the likely alternate futures and their consequences. It is important to remember that these futures are the most likely in a future scenario where the United States is able to significantly reduce demand for illegal narcotics originating in Central and South America.

Most Likely Alternate Future, number 8: Security improves in Mexico and Belize and violence continues in Guatemala.

In this alternate future, the criminal syndicates in Mexico lose a significant amount of their business in the United States. The drug cartels are no longer able to purchase superior equipment and expertise, and are no longer able to bribe significant police and government officials. The Mexican authorities are able to make significant gains against organized crime, restoring order along the southern and northern border regions, and interdict the major North-South smuggling corridors. The major cartels are defeated, with significant leaders killed or arrested and lower level members returning to normal society.

Organized crime becomes less profitable in Belize due to a decreased market for weapons in Mexico and a decreased demand for drugs such as heroin and cocaine in the United States. This decrease in profitability for organized crime leads to a decrease in overall crime. With a reduction in crime and increased security in Mexico, Belizean authorities are able to contain the limited border with Guatemala. Legitimate business increases in Belize due to a reduction in crime.

The Guatemalan government is able to stop Guatemala's downward spiral into chaos due to less criminal influence and resources from the cartels in Mexico. Due to diminishing corruption of government officials, Guatemala's government is able to retain control of a significant portion of the country. The power of the state remains limited and significant violence continues, partially due to the fact that the police remain unable to prevent, investigate, and prosecute serious crimes.



## Consequences:

- Economic improvement in Mexico and Belize.
- Decreased violence in border regions of Mexico, especially Juarez, and increased (legitimate) cross-border commerce between Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and the United States
- Government corruption is reduced in Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico.
- Decreased international trafficking of people, illegal weapons, and narcotics.
- Increased foreign investment (especially tourism in Mexico and Belize).
- Guatemalan government is able to establish a state presence in Peten, northern Guatemala, and demolish illegal airstrips.
- Decrease in money laundering, especially funds sent to Guatemala from Guatemalan people working in the United States. Also, a decrease in money laundering through Belize.
- High violence remains in Guatemala, especially due to inept police and local “vigilante justice”

Second Most Likely Alternate Future, Number 5: Security improves in Mexico and Belize and Guatemala becomes a narco-state.

In this alternate future, the criminal syndicates in Mexico lose a significant amount of their business in the United States, but continue business by opening new markets in Mexico and the Caribbean. While the cartels are less effective and wield less power, they are still able to purchase effective equipment and bribe minor officials. The

Mexican government is able to re-establish order in major urban areas such as Juarez, and seriously degrade the capabilities of, but not defeat, the major criminal organizations.

Organized crime becomes less profitable in Belize due to a decreased market for weapons in Mexico and a decreased demand for drugs such as heroin and cocaine in the United States, leading to a decrease in crime overall. With a reduction in crime and increased security in Mexico, Belizean authorities are able to focus on the containment the limited border with Guatemala. Legitimate business increases in Belize due to the reduction in crime.

The Guatemalan criminal element is able to continue business and expand. While demand for narcotics is reduced in the United States, Guatemalan cartels sell cocaine, heroin, and cannabis to new markets in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America. The cartels buy the Guatemalan Officials that they can, and assassinate the ones that they cannot. Members of Mexican organized crime organizations relocate to Guatemala. Guatemalan cartels step into the vacuum created by the decline of criminal organizations in Mexico. Safe havens for drug trafficking in northern Guatemala expand throughout the rest of the country. Guatemala becomes a failed state, a safe haven for international drug trafficking.

Consequences:

- Economic improvement in Mexico and Belize.
- Decreased violence in border regions of Mexico, especially Juarez, and increased (legitimate) cross-border commerce between Mexico, Belize, and the United States.

- Continued violence in southern Mexico border regions, such as Chiapas.
- Government corruption is reduced in Belize, and Mexico.
- Decreased international trafficking of people, illegal weapons, and narcotics.
- Increased foreign investment (especially tourism in Mexico and Belize).
- Increase in money laundering, especially funds sent to Guatemala from Guatemalan people working in the United States.
- High violence remains in Guatemala, especially due to inept police and local “vigilante justice”.
- Guatemala becomes a safe haven for international organized crime
- Travel, tourism, and foreign investment in Guatemala are significantly reduced leading to increased poverty.

Third Most Likely Alternate Future, Number 3: Security improves in Mexico and violence continues in Belize and Guatemala.

In this alternate future, the criminal syndicates in Mexico lose a significant amount of their business in the United States, but continue business by opening new markets in Mexico and the Caribbean. While the cartels are less effective and wield less power, they are still able to purchase effective equipment and bribe minor officials. The Mexican government is able to re-establish order in Northern urban areas such as Juarez, and seriously degrade the capabilities of, but not defeat, the major criminal organizations.

The Belizean police forces remain inept at providing basic law enforcement for the citizens in Belize. The weakened criminal element in Mexico and Guatemala

expands smuggling operations in Belize due to the ineffectiveness of Belizean law enforcement and increased border security in the United States. Expanded operation of organized crime in Belize ensures that violence remains high.

The Guatemalan government is able to stop Guatemala's downward spiral into chaos due to a reduction in criminal influence and resources from the cartels in Mexico. Due to diminishing corruption of government officials, Guatemala's government is able to retain control of a significant portion of the country. The power of the state remains limited and violence continues, partially due to the fact that the police remain unable to prevent, investigate, and prosecute serious crimes.

Consequences:

- Economic improvement in Mexico.
- Violence decreases in border regions of Mexico and along smuggling routes
- Increased commercial travel between Mexico and the United States.
- Government corruption is reduced in Mexico and Guatemala,
- Government corruption increases in Belize
- Guatemalan government regains control of northern Guatemala and demolishes illegal airstrips, reducing safe havens for drug trafficking
- High violence remains in Guatemala due to vigilante justice and inept police
- Foreign investment and tourism decrease in Belize and Guatemala, leading to increased poverty
- Safe havens for drug trafficking are reduced in Guatemala
- Increased security in Mexico, combined with poor security in Belize and Guatemala, significantly increase tourism and foreign investment in Mexico

*The fourth and fifth alternate futures received an equal number of votes, so their likelihood is equal.*

Forth Most Likely Alternate Future, Number 7: Security improves in Mexico, violence continues in Belize, and Guatemala becomes a narco-state

In this alternate future, the criminal syndicates in Mexico lose a significant amount of their business in the United States, but continue business by opening new markets in Mexico and the Caribbean. While the cartels are less effective and wield less power, they are still able to purchase effective equipment and bribe minor officials. The Mexican government is able to re-establish order in major urban areas such as Juarez, and seriously degrade the capabilities of, but not defeat, the major criminal organizations.

The Guatemalan criminal element is able to continue business and expand. While demand for narcotics is reduced in the United States, Guatemalan cartels sell cocaine, heroin, and cannabis to new markets in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America. The cartels essentially buy the Guatemalan Officials that they can, and assassinate the ones that they cannot. Guatemalan cartels step into the vacuum created by the decline of criminal organizations in Mexico, and are able to hire experienced personnel relocating from Mexico. Safe havens for drug trafficking in northern Guatemala expand throughout the rest of the country. Guatemala becomes a failed state, a safe haven for international drug trafficking.

Criminal influence spreads to Belize due to the failure of the State of Guatemala. While the weakened Mexican Cartels are no longer trafficking in as many illegal

weapons and drugs through Belize, the newly empowered Guatemalan syndicates are. The Guatemalan cartels begin to expand their influence and markets into Belize, leading to conflict with the organized crime networks that are already there. While the legitimate government retains control of the country, inept Belizean authorities are unable (or unwilling) to control the rising violence.

Consequences:

- Economic improvement in Mexico.
- Decreased violence in northern border regions of Mexico, especially Juarez, and increased commercial travel between Mexico and the United States.
- Violence remains in Southern Mexico border regions.
- Government corruption is reduced in Mexico, but increases in Belize and Guatemala.
- Increased foreign investment in Mexico
- Guatemalan government is increasingly ineffective and corrupt, and criminal elements control the nation.
- High violence remains in Guatemala, and increases in Belize
- Foreign investment and tourism decrease in Belize, leading to increased poverty
- Safe havens for drug trafficking expand in Guatemala and Belize
- Travel, tourism, and foreign investment in Guatemala and Belize are significantly reduced leading to increased poverty

Fifth Most Likely Alternate Future, Number 17: Violence continues in Mexico, security improves in Belize, and violence continues in Guatemala

Decreased demand for illegal narcotics in the United States does little to damage the Mexican cartels. The Cartels are able to expand their markets to consumers in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. While the cartels lose market share due to a decrease in U.S. demand for narcotics, they are able to expand into different criminal enterprises such as human trafficking and illegal weapons smuggling in order to ensure a steady income. The cartels also are in increased competition for limited customers, leading to increased conflict between different organizations. The Mexican government remains unable to secure the border regions and major smuggling routes.

Organized crime becomes less profitable in Belize due to the decreasing demand for drugs such as heroin and cocaine in the United States. The Mexican and Guatemalan drug cartels also have less money to spend on illegal smuggling. The decline of business with the criminal syndicates reduces profitability for gangs operating in Belize, leading to a reduction in crime overall. With a reduction in crime and the continuing decline of security in Mexico, Belize becomes an even more attractive destination for tourists and international investment substantially increases. Foreign business increases in Belize due to the reduction in crime.

The Guatemalan government is able to stop Guatemala's downward spiral into chaos due to less criminal influence and resources from the cartels in Mexico. Due to diminishing corruption of government officials, Guatemala's government is able to retain control of a significant portion of the country. The power of the state remains limited and violence continues, partially due to the fact that the police remain unable to prevent, investigate, and prosecute serious crimes.

## Consequences:

- Economic improvement in Belize.
- Increased travel between U.S. and Belize.
- Continued violence in Mexico leads to a reduction in international tourism and trade.
- Government corruption is reduced in Guatemala and Belize.
- Decreased international trafficking of people, illegal weapons, and narcotics.
- Increased foreign investment (especially tourism in Belize).
- Guatemalan government is able to establish a state presence in Peten, northern Guatemala, and demolish illegal airstrips.
- Decrease in money laundering, especially funds sent to Guatemala from Guatemalan people working in the United States
- High violence remains in Guatemala, especially due to inept police and local “vigilante justice”

**Steps 10 and 11. Determine the “focal events” that must occur in our present in order to bring about a given alternate future and Develop Indicators for the “focal events”.**

Focal events are a tool used to help the consumer determine how each alternate future could come to fruition. “Focal events” are imagined by the analyst in an effort to map a course of events over time from the current situation to each alternate future.

Focal events are events that could happen in order for a hypothetical future become the



real future. Indicators are tangible things that demonstrate that a focal event is happening. Focal events, as well as indicators for these events, that could occur in order to bring about the top five alternate futures are listed below:

\*Example:

- FOCAL EVANT
  - INDICATOR

1. Security improves in Mexico and Belize and violence continues in Guatemala.

- The United States reduces demand for illegal narcotics, degrading the operational capabilities of illegal narcotics operations.
  - Mexican and Guatemalan drug cartels' revenue decreases
  - Illegal trafficking of weapons decreases.
  - Organized crime is reduced in Belize.
  - Desertion decreases in the Mexican Army and Police.
- Authorities are successful in combating the drug syndicates.
  - Mexican authorities capture or kill leaders of major drug syndicates.
  - Amnesty is granted to lower level cartel members.
  - Mexican authorities re-establish order in Juarez, Acapulco, Chiapas, and other regions.
- Guatemala embarks on a military campaign to re-establish control of previously denied areas in northern Guatemala.
  - Illegal airfields and safe havens for narcotics operations are destroyed.
  - Increase in Guatemalan military combat operations.
- Economy transitions from focus on criminal enterprise to legitimate business.

- Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize take significant steps to decrease corruption.
- Legitimate commerce increases throughout the United States, Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala.
- Tourism increases in Mexico and Belize.
- Violence continues in Guatemala
  - Majority of murders remain un-prosecuted
  - Vigilante justice from civilian population continues

## 2. Security improves in Mexico and Belize and Guatemala becomes a narco-state.

- The United States reduces demand for illegal narcotics, degrading the operational capabilities of illegal narcotics operations.
  - Mexican drug cartels' revenue decreases.
  - Illegal trafficking of weapons decreases.
  - Organized crime is reduced in Belize.
  - Desertion decreases in the Mexican Army and Police.
- Mexican authorities are successful in combating the Mexican drug cartels.
  - Mexican authorities capture or kill members of major drug syndicates.
  - Mexican authorities re-establish order in Juarez and other major cities along the northern border of Mexico.
- Drug Cartels open new markets for drug sales.
  - Distribution of narcotics increases in Mexico and the Caribbean.
  - Tourism increases in Mexico and Belize.

- Corruption decreases in Mexico and Belize.
- Mexico and Belize take significant steps to decrease corruption.
- Legitimate commerce increases throughout the United States, Mexico and Belize.
- Guatemalan government can not significantly influence the activities of Guatemalan organized crime
  - Corruption continues in Guatemala.
  - Security increases along Belizean border with Guatemala.
  - Assassination of government officials increases in Guatemala.
  - Safe havens for drug trafficking increase in Guatemala.
- Significant violence continues in Guatemala
  - Majority of murders remain un-prosecuted
  - Vigilante justice from the civilian population continues

### 3. Security improves in Mexico and violence continues in Belize and Guatemala

- The United States reduces demand for illegal narcotics, degrading the operational capabilities of illegal narcotics operations.
  - Mexican and Guatemalan drug cartels' revenue decreases.
  - Illegal trafficking of weapons decreases.
  - Desertion decreases in the Mexican Army and Police.
- Mexican authorities are successful in combating the drug cartels.
  - Mexican authorities capture or kill members of major drug syndicates.

- Mexican authorities re-establish order in Juarez, Acapulco, and other major cities.
- Mexican and Guatemalan economy transitions from focus on criminal enterprise to legitimate business.
  - Guatemala and Mexico take significant steps to decrease corruption.
  - Legitimate commerce increases throughout the United States, Mexico, and Guatemala.
  - Tourism increases in Mexico
- Drug cartels open new markets for drug sales.
  - Distribution of narcotics increases in Mexico and the Caribbean.
- Guatemalan military campaign to re-establish control of previously denied areas in Northern Guatemala.
  - Illegal airfields and safe havens for narcotics operations are destroyed.
  - Increase in Guatemalan military combat operations.
- Operation of organized crime and illegal trafficking increases in Belize.
  - Tourism decreases in Belize.
  - Illegal smuggling operations increase in Belize.
  - Crime increases in Belize.
  - Corruption of Belizean authorities continues.
- Significant violence continues in Guatemala
  - Majority of murders remain un-prosecuted
  - Vigilante justice from civilian population continues

4. Security improves in Mexico, violence continues in Belize, and Guatemala becomes a narco-state

- The United States reduces demand for illegal narcotics, degrading the operational capabilities of illegal narcotics operations.
  - Mexican drug cartels' revenue decreases.
  - Illegal trafficking of weapons decreases.
  - Desertion decreases in the Mexican Army and Police.
- Mexican authorities are successful in combating the drug cartels.
  - Mexican authorities capture or kill members of major drug syndicates.
  - Mexican authorities re-establish order in Juarez, Acapulco, and other major cities.
- Mexican economy transitions from focus on criminal enterprise to legitimate business.
  - Mexico takes significant steps to decrease corruption.
  - Legitimate commerce increases throughout the United States and Mexico.
  - Tourism increases in Mexico.
- Drug cartels open new markets for drug sales.
  - Distribution of narcotics increases in Mexico and the Caribbean.
- Guatemalan government can not significantly influence the activities of Guatemalan organized crime
  - Corruption continues in Guatemala.
  - Security increases along Belizean border with Guatemala.
  - Assassination of government officials increases in Guatemala.

- Safe havens for drug trafficking increase in Guatemala.
- Operation of organized crime and illegal trafficking increases in Belize.
  - Tourism decreases in Belize.
  - Illegal smuggling operations increase in Belize, especially through the Belize\Guatemalan border.
  - Crime increases in Belize.
  - Corruption of Belizean authorities continues.
- Significant violence continues in Guatemala.
  - Majority of murders remain un-prosecuted.
  - Vigilante justice from civilian population continues.

5. Violence continues in Mexico, security improves in Belize, and violence continues in Guatemala

- The United States reduces demand for illegal narcotics, but Mexican organized crime organizations are able to continue operations.
  - Armed conflict between different criminal organizations in Mexico increases due to increased competition.
  - Organized crime increases in areas other than drug trafficking.
  - Mexican drug cartels open new markets for narcotics in Mexico and the Caribbean.
  - Illegal trafficking of weapons continues between the United States and Mexico.
  - Corruption continues in Mexico and Guatemala.

- Desertion continues in the Mexican Army and Police.
- Mexican authorities are unsuccessful in combating organized crime.
  - Security does not improve in the vicinity of major smuggling routes.
  - Cartel operations continue, and major leaders remain at large.
  - Mexican authorities fail to re-establish order in Juarez, Acapulco, and other major cities.
  - Increased interdiction of illegal trafficking by U.S. and Belizean authorities
- Significant economic improvement occurs in Belize.
  - Belize takes significant steps to decrease corruption.
  - Legitimate commerce increases between the United States and Belize.
  - Tourism increases in Belize.
  - Belizean GDP increases.
- Guatemala embarks on a military campaign to re-establish control of previously denied areas in northern Guatemala.
  - Illegal airfields and safe havens for narcotics operations are destroyed.
  - Increase in Guatemalan military combat operations.
- Significant violence continues in Guatemala.
  - Majority of murders remain un-prosecuted.
  - Vigilante justice from civilian population continues.

**Step 12. State the potential of a given alternate future to "transpose" into another alternate future.**

Transposition happens because the actions of the “national actors” in the study do not happen in a vacuum, and can alter the course of history for more than just that one actor. The actions of one actor can influence the perceptions, and therefore the actions of all parties involved. The reason that the potential for transposition is important is because this can cause one alternate future to morph into another alternate future. This study will now discuss the potential of transposition among the most likely alternate futures.

The most likely alternate future to transpose into the other alternate futures is alternate future number 17 (Violence continues in Mexico, security improves in Belize, and violence continues in Guatemala). One of the focal events that could lead to alternate future number 17 is an increased amount of conflict between existing criminal organizations in Mexico. The drug syndicates could compete with each other for increasingly scarce resources – customers. Violence may spike in the short term, but could taper off over time as the drug syndicates exhaust their money, people, and resources. This could cause alternate future number 17 to morph into each of the other alternate futures as violence decreases in Mexico over time.

Another potential for transposition is that alternate future number 2 (Security improves in Mexico and Belize and Guatemala becomes a narco-state) could easily transpose into alternate future number 4 (security improves in Mexico, violence continues in Belize, and Guatemala becomes a narco-state). There is a high potential that a deteriorating security situation in Guatemala could negatively impact the security situation in Belize. As the Guatemalan cartels become more powerful, they could try to make inroads into neighboring countries in an attempt to increase their influence. This



would almost certainly lead to “turf wars” with the existing street gangs in Belize. Also, a deteriorating security situation in Guatemala could result in displaced civilians and refugees. The 856 police officers in Belize would be hard pressed to effectively handle a refugee crisis.

## **Conclusion**

The average American Citizen has been focused on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq for much of the last decade. There is a lethal insurgency being waged much closer to home, however. Admittedly, the United States does not hold complete responsibility for the deteriorating security situation to its immediate south. The United States’ insatiable demand for illegal narcotics is, however, fueling the recent spike of murders in Mexico, increasing organized crime in Belize, and contributing to the likely failure of the State of Guatemala. The money that Americans spend on illegal drugs is enabling criminal organizations in Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala to operate more effectively and, in many cases, defeat their countries’ security forces.

The demand for illegal drugs in the United States is an extremely complex issue. Reducing demand will be a difficult process, and certainly requires action on many fronts. While no one is able to see the future with complete clarity, this study plainly demonstrates that a reduction of demand in the United States will benefit our neighbors to the south. Among the likely benefits of reducing demand are lowering violence and crime and ensuring economic prosperity. It is in America’s national security interest to help restore order in Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala. At a minimum, the United States must ensure that the security situation doesn’t get worse. This study clearly demonstrates

that a reduction in the number of people purchasing illegal drugs in the United States is likely to help ensure regional stability.

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