



DEA VS. CARTELS



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In-House 3

INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Briefing on the Mexican Drug War

The Mexican government's attempts to quell the impacts of drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs) over the past decade have proven largely unfruitful. In 2018 alone, many of the 28 000 homicides that occurred in the nation were linked to the activities of drug cartels. The flow of drugs across the shared border between the Mexico and the United States has forced the latter into the war, with many billions of funds being granted to the Mexican government to bolster the nation's security forces and judicial system. While the US is now fully committed to helping end the drug war, it goes without saying that it can only do so much without encroaching on Mexican sovereignty. Historically, attempts by the US to overstep their boundaries and assert dominance have been met with disapproval and reprisal by Mexico.

The efforts of the Mexican government to suffocate the flourishing drug trade have been largely confined to strengthening security. However, while this has led to the takedown of some of the most notorious kingpins across the industry, it has also bred countless splinter groups with violent and vengeful intentions. Former President Felipe Calderon's administration is a prime example of these outcomes. More recently, newly-elected President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has pledged to liberalize the country's drug laws and grant amnesty for lower-level members of the drug trade. Nonetheless, he too has voiced his plans to create a new national guard, one critics argue may reap the same negative outcomes as the attempts of his predecessors.

Who are the Cartels?

The idea behind drug cartels is fairly self-explanatory; they are entities with operations centered around supplying drugs. In terms of organization, most cartels follow a traditional hierarchical structure, with power distributed in a vertical direction and each member having a designated rank. This is not unlike the organization of a legal business or a military force. However, some of the larger cartels with global operations, such as the Sinaloa Cartel, have transitioned to the more egalitarian horizontal structure. Under this approach, the authority for decision-making flows more freely across the organization's many parts. Among the most notorious cartels currently ravaging Mexico are the Sinaloa Cartel, Jalisco New Generation, the Juarez Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, and the Beltran-Leyva Organization.

What is the DEA?

Aside from the Mexican government, the most forceful opponent of the aforementioned drug cartels and all of their offshoots is the United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). As the name implies, the DEA focuses on pursuing drug lords, many of them based in Mexico, and bringing them to justice. They additionally trace the finances of DTOs through banking systems and generally strive to keep the United States free of illicit drugs, be they originating from Mexico or elsewhere.

Premise

The premise of the conference is that a new recreational “wonder drug” has been produced, and is immensely popular. The United States, through its Drug Enforcement Agency, will attempt to slow or stop the spread of this dangerous drug, perhaps even by toppling the Cartel behind it. Meanwhile, the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico will attempt to capitalize and make as much money via smuggling to the US market as possible (while careful not to arouse heavy U.S intervention).

DEA vs. Cartels

During the conference, there will be two separate rooms, the Mexico and the United States rooms. The participants of the two rooms will be working amongst themselves and against their rival room in pursuit of their individual goals. The Cartels in Mexico will have to deal with the meddlesome DEA, whereas the DEA will have to deal with an uncooperative Mexican government and police, as well as the bothersome bureaucratic red tape back home. It may even be possible, if they are not careful, for Cartel members to be arrested and extradited (temporarily) to the U.S, or for the DEA to be (temporarily) forced out of Mexico.

Characters, Powers, and Currencies

Each participant in the conference will have a character, and with it certain motivations, powers and abilities exclusive to them. These powers often work with other characters in a hierarchy to undertake large actions. These powers will also often cost (or provide) money and/or political power to perform, the two currencies of the joint crisis. Running out of either will spell disaster for both the DEA and the Cartel, so it is important to be wise in the spending of those currencies!

Enacting powers, responding to events and/or scheming elaborate plots will be done through note-passing with the crisis committee, who will operate in a separate, third room. Messages will be exchanged via the wonderful UWMUN pages.

Communication will be key during this conference, both inside and between the rooms. Be sure to take some time at the start to learn of the powers and abilities of your teammates! Moreover, coming up with creative and practical solutions to problems, while involving several people, is the best way to ensure victory. Here are two examples from Netflix's *Narcos*:

- ❖ *The U.S ramped up security at the border, and not enough product was getting through by truck or boat. In response, the Cartel organized a system of drop deliveries by small plane, into rural areas for pickup by locals.*
- ❖ *The U.S wanted to capture the head of the Sinaloa cartel, Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo, but the Mexican police were on his payroll and they lacked the authority. So, they arrested his banker and set a trap where Miguel would be forced to travel to the U.S to take care of a 'financial matter'.*

Finally, be sure to keep track of your finances and political power as they change during the day!

Should you have any further questions, please email us at president@uwmun.ca

FURTHER READING

1. <https://www.cfr.org/background/mexicos-drug-war>
2. https://www.thecipherbrief.com/column_article/the-structure-and-psychology-of-drug-cartels
3. <https://www.justthinktwice.gov/inside-dea>
4. <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/02/world/americas/mexico-drug-war-fast-facts/index.html>
5. <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-to-win-mexicos-drug-war/>
6. <https://www.drugenforcementedu.org/what-is-the-drug-enforcement-administration/>