THE INTERNATIONAL EXPLOITATION OF DRUG WARS AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

OF THE

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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THE INTERNATIONAL EXPLOITATION OF DRUG WARS AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2011

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 o'clock a.m., in room 2200 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Dana Rohrabacher (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. This hearing of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee is called to order.

I am Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, and I will have a short- or a medium-sized opening statement, and opening statements from the other members who are here, including the ranking member Carnahan. We will then hear from our witnesses, and then we will proceed to have questions after the testimony of each witness.

And I would ask—if indeed your testimony can be summarized, that would be nice. And then we would proceed to go into greater detail during the question and answer part of the hearing.

Today I am reminded of a friend who is not with us. I am reminded of Constantine Menges, who worked with me in the White House and over the years warned us about many of the dangers that threatened the security of the United States of America, and the safety of our people. Constantine passed away, and we miss him very much.

We invited his wife Nancy to testify today, because she picked up his work and his research, but she was unable to join us.

Yesterday, of course, revealed something that Constantine Menges warned us about many years ago, and that was foreign involvement in Mexico, and in a way that did indeed threaten the security of our country and the safety of our people. Yesterday it was revealed that Federal agents had foiled a plot by Iranian officials who were seeking to recruit a Mexican drug cartel to kill Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States.

The idea was to bomb a Washington restaurant, and not only would the Saudi Ambassador clearly have been killed, but there would have been many other victims as well. This case—and I quote,

> "This case illustrates that we live in a world where borders and boundaries are increasingly irrelevant, a world where indi-

> viduals from one country sought to conspire with a drug trafficking cartel in another country to assassinate a foreign official on United States soil."

And that was a quote from FBI Director Robert Mueller.

This kind of linkage between foreign enemies and drug traffickers, as well as other domestic criminals, is not new. It has been growing for years, and nowhere is that more evident than in Mexico, right next door to the United States. And that is beginning to have a real and dangerous repercussion here in our own country. So today we look at the foreign elements that are engaged in Mexico and how that might affect not only the people there but also the safety and security of the United States.

Jayne Garcia Valseca is an American citizen who, along with her husband Eduardo, was the victim of a brutal abduction in Mexico. She was released a few days—after a few days, but he was held for 7 long months during which he was tortured and he was shot. In 2008, he was recovered alive after the payment of a substantial sum, a substantial ransom.

The likely perpetrators of this crime, which is not, again, just against this particular family, but is being experienced throughout Mexico and in other countries in Latin America, the perpetrators of this crime and the continuing crime against these other folks south of the border, were members of the Popular Revolutionary Army—that is the EPR—or one of its splinter groups.

The EPR is a Marxist insurgency with ties to FARC—that is, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—which is both tied to the drug trade and backed by anti-American regimes, especially that in Venezuela.

So there is more at work south of our border than just crime for profit. There is an international threat to the stability and the safety of our entire hemisphere. There is also crime and terrorism, of course, being perpetrated for political motives, and those political motives are basically those people with an anti-American agenda.

So we have both criminal elements mixing with political elements, and taking advantage of international borders in order to facilitate their crimes in another country. Yet, looking into the Valseca case, I found little cooperation between the Mexican and American law enforcement organizations.

Yesterday we saw evidence that there was cooperation, at least when trying to save the life of a Saudi Ambassador. But what we need to ask ourselves is: Do we need to have that same sort of cooperation in breaking this threat and eliminating this threat to the hemisphere that I just described? which is the cooperation between criminal elements on a transnational basis.

So, however, in the Valseca case, when we looked into it, even though we have spent billions of dollars to fight the drug cartels, which was supposedly aimed at establishing a level of cooperation between the Mexican Government and Mexican law enforcement, and law enforcement in the United States, we did not see the level of cooperation and we didn't see the cooperation that should have been expected. And we will hear more about that later on in the testimony.

The problem may or may not, however, be solely or even primarily with the Mexican Government. As recent hearings by—with

other Foreign Affairs subcommittees, they have shown that the United States Government has a myopic focus on drug cartels, which has blinded us to larger, more strategic threats in Latin America, which may or may not be drug cartels, may be criminal cartels that are allied with various "revolutionary movements."

Well, that turmoil that these alliances have created, that turmoil is moving northward, and we need to understand that.

And what happened yesterday should underscore that for all of us. Perhaps the exposure of the Iranian assassination plot by a DEA undercover agent posing as a drug cartel gangster will now alert us to the danger that we face, the same sort of kidnappings that the Valseca family has gone through, the hardship and actually in many cases the death of a loved one, in this case the torture of a loved one, and, of course, the taking of a large sum of money and destroying the financial ability of a family. That happened in Mexico. That could be happening here and will be happening here, and we will be anxious to hear from Eduardo about the details of that danger.

Among these threats that we face are forces from outside Latin America, including Hezbollah, which is, of course, backed by Iran, and a growing Chinese influence working through left wing regimes that in turn use "revolutionary groups" to spread their own power and influence.

Our first witness, Eduardo, who will put a human face to this growing danger will be with us. Then, our other witnesses will put Mr. Valseca's experience into a larger strategic concept.

Those witnesses are Douglas Farah, a senior fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, where he specializes in research, writing, and training on transnational criminal organizations and armed groups. He has spent most of his career covering conflicts around the world after graduating with honors from the University of Kansas with degrees in both Latin American studies and journalism.

In 1985, he was named bureau chief for United Press International in El Salvador. And we seem to remember that El Salvador was quite a different place then than it is today, and hopefully it won't go back to what it was then.

Covering the civil war there, he distinguished himself, and he has also written for The Washington Post, the Boston Globe, the U.S. News & World Report, The Financial Times, Foreign Policy, and The Journal for International Security Affairs. He is author of "Blood from Stones: The Secret Financial Network of Terror," written in—published in 2004, and "Merchant of Death: Victor Blout and the New World Order," published in 2007.

Eric Farnsworth is the vice president of the Council of the Americas. He holds an MPA in international relations from Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School. He has worked for the Department of State and in the White House Office of Special Envoy to the Americas from 1995 to '98. Between his government service and his current position, he was the managing director of Manatt Jones Global Strategies LLC.

Mr. Farnsworth has authored or co-authored articles in the American Interest, Americas Quarterly, Current History, the Journal of Democracy, and Latin American Policy.

And, last, Dr. Andrew Selee is the director of the Mexico Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, with a Ph.D. in policy studies from the University of Maryland, a master's degree in Latin American studies from the University of California at San Diego. San Diego—that is good. There we go. We will talk about that later. [Laughter.]

Maybe Eduardo can talk to us about the sun, surfing, and San Diego, but we will leave that for another occasion—in Latin American studies, and from Washington University in St. Louis.

Before joining the Wilson Center, he was an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University from 2006 to the present, professional staff for the House of Representatives right here in 1999 and 2000. He is the author of "Shared Responsibility: U.S.-Mexico Policy Options for Confronting Organized Crime," and he was co-editor of the Wilson Center for last year.

So we have some very fine witnesses, and I would ask my ranking member if he would proceed with his opening statement.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief, but I want to thank you for putting this hearing together. We didn't know just how timely this was going to be when this got started, but it certainly is.

And to our witnesses, thank you for being here, sharing your experiences and your expertise with the committee.

The international drug trade continues to plague countries throughout the world, but—and the U.S. is not immune from that. My home state of Missouri, right in the very heartland of the country, continues to be plagued by a multitude of problems associated with meth. It continues to be one of the hardest hit states in the country year after year.

According to the National Drug Intelligence Center's 2010 national drug threat assessment, methamphetamine availability in the U.S. is directly related to methamphetamine production trends in Mexico, which is the primary source of methamphetamine consumed in the U.S.

There have been numerous reports of other types of drugs, including heroin, cocaine, imported from Latin America that are infiltrating our communities. Last year, Missouri saw an increase in reported deaths from highly potent, low cost forms of heroin. According to the NDIC's 2011 report, increased Mexican heroin production, coupled with increased transportation of South American heroin, has likely contributed to increased heroin availability in some U.S. markets, including Missouri.

We are faced with a difficult problem that clearly has the potential for getting even worse. Over the past several years, legislation has been enacted to address domestic production and consumption of meth and other drugs. However, we also need to ensure that we are addressing this problem from all angles.

Congress has appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars to address drug-related problems in Mexico and throughout Latin America. We need to ensure these programs are operating efficiently and in our best interest here in the U.S.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses here today. Thank you, and I will yield back.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. And we now have Judge Poe, who adds a great deal to this committee, because he was not only a Member of Congress, but also someone who is deeply involved with the criminal justice system at the very top level in terms of being a judge from Texas. So I am sure you have some insights for us, Your Honor.

Judge POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The drug war is bloody, it is costly, and it is bloody and costly not only in Mexico but the United States as well. A thousand people die each month in drug dealing violence in Mexico. And the United States, I think because Mexico is our neighbor and our partner, we should be just as concerned about Mexican nationals being murdered as we are about Americans that may be murdered by the drug cartels.

Meanwhile, the United States sends five times as many drug dealers to prison as it did 30 years ago, but the worst may be yet to come. Terrorists and drug cartels have a mutual enemy—the United States. Our police and our military do the best to stop the drug cartels from smuggling drugs into our country. I have been to the Texas-Mexico border many times, but the border still is an area that is poorest in certain places, and the drug cartels have their way at several places in between the legal ports of entry.

They actually control the turf. The United States doesn't control the area. Mexico doesn't control the area, the drug cartels control the area, and we have to deal with the reality of this truth. We must continue our multi-agency effort to go after the terrorists, and everyone in the Treasury Department to the Department of Defense is involved in finding these folks, weeding them out, tracking them down, and bringing them to justice.

The drug cartels, they are all in it for the money. They don't have a political philosophy. They have a philosophy of greed, and they will do anything to make money. And it is not just in the drug trafficking—kidnappings, extortions, theft, anything that will bring money into their criminal enterprise they are willing to do, and they are willing to do so at any cost, including violence.

A weak United States is great—a great area—turf, I should say, for the terrorists who plan and can carry out greater attacks if the United States wasn't watching them. It is interesting that a scenario, say, in the group of worldwide terrorists joining the drug cartels is something that is not out of the question. And we have seen that yesterday.

Yesterday's scenario was somewhat different, because terrorists normally operate not from state sponsorship of terrorism but cells that are across borders. And yesterday, if the truth comes out that it was the Iranian Government that was behind the assassination of the Saudi Ambassador and killing Americans in the process, that puts a new light on terrorism.

So we should deal with Iran, but we should also understand that the people involved in this assault, this attack on the Saudi Ambassador, on American soil, are willing to work with criminal enterprises—the drug cartels—who are glad to do anything for a buck.

It is important that we understand deal with the reality of Ahmadinejad and his willingness to destroy the United States, Israel, the West, how his mischief is throughout the Middle East,

and the fingers of Ahmadinejad are in much—are in many of the countries that are now having turmoil in the Middle East.

Although Iran was unsuccessful at this time to create as I call an assault, an attack on the United States, thanks to the good work of law enforcement agents in the United States, and apparently in Mexico as well, that doesn't mean they won't try again. But the narco-terrorists' proven ability to come across to the United States at will make them an attractive partner for Iranian Government terrorists. This is an example of how the drug cartels in the poorest border of the United States they cross daily are a threat to the United States.

I personally think that we should specifically make the drug cartels of foreign terrorist organizations, specifically the Zetas, but we have to be realistic. We did, thanks to our law enforcement, were able to thwart this, but the will to commit crimes against the United States by terrorist states, such as Iran, working with the drug cartels, has not diminished.

I think the Iranians are only going to continue to keep trying, especially if there is no consequences for a failed attempt on the United States. If this action by the terrorist from Tehran would have been successful, it would have been interesting to see what the United States would do. But this is still a serious threat, and it remains so, and should not be diminished because we were able to stop this attack on the United States.

So we need to understand what resources the United States has that they are not using against their drug cartels. I think we ought to treat them in a more serious—more seriously than we really are—have been treating them for the last numerous years.

And just a few weeks ago before this very subcommittee we heard testimony arguing that it is the drug cartels, and not Islamic terrorist groups, that are the number one threat to the United States. I repeat: It is the drug cartels, not Islamic terrorist groups, that are the number one threat to this nation. We must deal with that fact.

It really doesn't make a difference who is number one or number two. They are both bad, and they are a joint terrorist criminal enterprise that are willing to work together. They are the new axis powers of evil—the Iranian terrorists working with the drug cartels. And you gentlemen have the answers, and we are looking forward to hearing from you.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Your Honor.

And I understand Ms. Bass has no opening statement, or would you like to say——

Ms. BASS. Let me just very briefly——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Congresswoman Bass, you are welcome to take as much time as you would like.

Ms. BASS. Oh, thank you. I will be very brief, because I am very interested in the witnesses. And, you know, as I think about what is going on right now in Mexico, and then, of course, spilling over into our borders, I recall the whole drug wars that were going on in the early '80s in Colombia and in South America.

And the level of violence that we are seeing in Mexico today just doesn't seem to be compared to what happened before. And maybe you will address that. Maybe I just don't recall, but this is just a

level of violence to me that almost seems, you know, in comparison, and the viciousness in comparison to what we saw in Baghdad, you know, a couple of years ago.

One thing, though, that I was not aware of that the chairman was speaking about is some of the political relationships. So I was not aware of that in terms of connections with the Chavez regime or other regimes in South America, and so perhaps you can talk about that. I do remember those relationships in South America. I don't remember—I am not aware of those relationships in Mexico.

So hopefully through your testimony you can address some of the comparisons with South America and also the political relationships.

Thank you.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much. That was a very thoughtful opening statement.

Just one note from the chairman. I grew up in Southern California, and which means that I have a very special place in my heart for Mexico. And I lived with a Mexican family for 3 months when I was younger. I spent a lot of time on the beach in Mexico and up in the hills drinking Muscao with the caballeros and all that goes along with the beach scene in California.

And I will have to tell you that when I see the turmoil and the agony that is going on south of the border now it brings—and it should bring tears to the eyes of anyone who cares for these people. They are wonderful people. Mexican people have always been wonderful to my family and wonderful to all of the Americans that I know.

And to see them going through the turmoil and the agony where tens of thousands of their people have been murdered—tens of thousands—there is a cloud of oppression over these people's heads every minute of the day realizing that these gangsters and these monsters are around them, and that their family is in grave jeopardy.

We need to make sure that we understand this isn't just statistics, and it is not just the people of the United States, but it is those wonderful people in Mexico. But if we don't do our best to help and solve that problem, it will impact on us, and the danger and the turmoil is heading in our direction. What happened yesterday, or what was exposed yesterday, with a plot by a foreign government, in this case the Iranians, to try to hire these gangsters from Mexico in order to commit a violent crime in the United States, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

And our first witness today, Eduardo Garcia Valseca, will put a human face to the suffering that is going on and the personal suffering that it caused one family. But we have to multiply that by millions of families in Mexico who are so suffering and so much in danger and are crying out for us to join with them to solve this problem and eliminate the danger from their lives and also from our future, if that is the way it is.

Eduardo, would you proceed and give us your story, and then I would like to ask Jayne, his wife, to join us during the question and answer session, if she has something to add to that testimony. Eduardo, you may proceed.

STATEMENT OF MR. EDUARDO GARCIA VALSECA, KIDNAP VICTIM

Mr. VALSECA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and honorable representatives. Thank you for inviting me to share my testimony at this very important and timely hearing.

I am a Mexican citizen, now a resident of the United States of America. On June 13, 2007, my American wife and I were kidnapped from our ranch in central Mexico. My wife was released, but I was held for ransom for 7½ months. I was held in a small box and tortured brutally, both physically and mentally, barely surviving the ordeal.

My kidnappers, after beating me and even shooting me twice, sent photos to my wife to pressure her into paying a multi-million dollar ransom. This was an amount we didn't have. My wife requested that the FBI assist in the investigation of our case, but the Mexican authorities denied that request. Although my wife and I have cooperated completely with the Mexican Federal authorities, there has never been a proper investigation.

There have been thousands of kidnaps in Mexico in the past 5 years. In many of these cases, arrests have been made, but not in our case. There are only two reasons why the current Mexican administration would turn a blind eye to our kidnappers—because they choose to continue their long-standing position of tolerance of criminal terrorist groups like this, or because they are members of the Mexican Federal police implicated in our kidnapping.

According to the members of the Federal police, our kidnappers are members of the Mexican Revolutionary Army, terrorists with international ties. They have committed more than 200 kidnappings in the past 20 years, raising millions and millions of dollars. In almost all of these cases, there has been absolutely impunity.

Since the appearance of these armed revolutionary groups in Mexico, there has been a position of tolerance by the Mexican Government. Their acts of terror, attacks with explosives, kidnappings, have gone largely unpunished. It is also possible that the criminals who kidnapped me are somehow closely related to the Federal authorities. Police also mimic the MO of these revolutionaries knowing they will then go unpunished.

My wife is not the only American to have been victimized by this group of terrorists. This group continues to kidnap, victimizing, even a former Mexican Senator and Presidential candidate. They currently have yet another victim.

The Federal authorities told my wife the following, that this terrorist revolutionary army with international links numbering in the thousands, with cells in every state, they have attacked several Sears, Citibanks, Banamex locations, and Pemex pipelines with the use of explosives.

This group has already infiltrated the Mexican political system with members holding political office in many states. They have ties to the Venezuela Government, former Cuban agents, former ETA members from Spain, who trained them in use of explosives. They have ties to criminal organizations in other Latin American countries. It is suspected that there are members who are American citizens.

The members of these terrorist organizations have Marxist tendencies and are driven by an ideology with a hatred toward the United States and all capitalists.

It should be noted that as soon as my wife and I went public with our story, the Mexican authorities denied any mention of the event. Having the world know that they have been tolerating acts of terror targeting Americans and American companies, among others, could have serious implications.

After all that I have experienced and learned since my kidnapping, I beg that you increase the U.S. involvement in Mexico. The Mexican Government, military, and police are infected with corruption. Any official statistics of crime coming from Mexico are completely unreliable and manipulated. The vast majority of criminal acts, including kidnappings, are never even reported.

Please investigate this armed revolutionary terrorist group with known international links before they have a chance to damage on a bigger scale.

I am very sad to say that Mexico, your neighbor, and the country of my birth, has become an international criminal paradise.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Valseca follows:]

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
21 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

"THE INTERNATIONAL EXPLOITATION OF DRUG WARS AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT"

October 12, 2011

Expert Witness; Eduardo Garcia Valseca, Mexican Kidnap victim and survivor.

U.S. representative of "El Movimiento Blanco", a non-profit organization for peace in Mexico in the face of the kidnapping and crime plague.

Honorable Representatives;

Thank you for inviting me to share my testimony, at this very important and timely hearing.

I am a Mexican citizen, now a resident of the United States of America. On June 13, 2007, my American wife and I were kidnapped from our ranch in central Mexico. My wife was released within minutes, but I was held for ransom for 7 1/2 long months. I was held in a small box, subjected to frequent and brutal torture, including bloody beatings, broken bones, two gunshot wounds, as well as daily psychological torture and starvation. All of this was photographed by the kidnappers and sent to my wife through e mails. All of this was to pressure her into giving them an 8 million dollar ransom payment, an amount that we never had.

My wife requested that the FBI assist in the investigation of our case, but the Mexican

Authorities denied that request.

Although my wife and I have cooperated completely with the Mexican Federal Authorities and the Mexican Attorney General's Office, a proper investigation has never happened.

There have been thousands upon thousands of kidnappings in Mexico in the past 5 years. In many of these cases, eventually arrests have been made, especially with habitual kidnappers, but not in our case.

There are only two reasons why the current Mexican administration would cover up or protect our kidnappers: Because they choose to continue their long-standing position of tolerance of criminal terrorist groups like these, or because there are members of the Mexican Federal Police implicated in our kidnapping.

According to members of the Federal Police, our kidnappers are members of a Mexican Revolutionary Army; terrorists with international ties. They have committed more than two hundred kidnappings in the past 20 years, raising millions and millions of dollars. In almost all of these cases, they have enjoyed absolute impunity. During this time, the different Mexican administrations have maintained a passive stance of not detaining, or punishing these acts of terrorism and kidnapping, when committed by these armed revolutionary groups, even those with known international ties.

It is also possible that my wife and I have been victimized by a group affiliated closely with, or protected by the Mexican Federal Authorities, even at the highest level. Police

at this level would know very well how to mimmic these armed revolutionaries who kidnap to raise funds for their cause. They would also know that the passive governmental stance on these kidnappings, would likely guarantee their impunity.

My wife is not the only American to have been victimized by this group of terrorists. This

group continues to kidnap, victimizing even a former Mexican Senator and presidential candidate. They currently have yet another victim.

The Federal Authorities told my wife the following;

That this a terrorist revolutionary army with international links, numbering in the thousands, with cells in every state.

They have attacked several Sears and Citibank / Banamex locations, and Pemex pipelines with the use of explosives.

This group has already infiltrated the Mexican political system, with members holding political office in many states.

They have ties to the Venezuelan government, former Cuban agents, former ETA members from Spain who train them in the use of explosives.
They have ties to other Latin American countries, and have members from the United States and other countries.

The members of this terrorist organization have Marxist tendencies and are

driven by an ideology, with a hatred toward the United States and all capitalism.

It should be noted that as soon as my wife and I went public with our story, the Mexican Authorities denied any mention of the above. Having the world know that they have been tolerating acts of terror, targeting Americans and American companies, among others, could have serious implications.

My wife and I have warned in media interviews for months now about the links between armed Mexican Revolutionaries and other criminal organizations, and criminals and terrorists from other countries, including countries in the middle east.

Today's headlines announce the alleged Iranian plot to kill the Saudi Arabian Ambassador by using Mexican criminals. Please take this attempt at using Mexican criminals very seriously.

After all that I have experienced and learned since my kidnapping, I beg that you increase the U.S. involvement in Mexico. The Mexican government, military and police are all plagued with corruption. Any "official" statistics on crime coming from Mexico are completely unreliable. The vast majority of criminal acts, including kidnappings are never even reported. Whatever ***is*** reported is commonly manipulated. The truth is that Mexico is a criminal paradise.

In the cities like Tijuana, where there has been noticeable improvement, and a decrease in criminal activity, there has been a much higher level of U.S. involvement.

Please take my warnings seriously, and insist on more U.S. involvement in the war against criminal activity and terrorism in Mexico. Please investigate these armed revolutionary terrorist groups with known international links before they have a chance to damage on a larger scale.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you for your testimony, Eduardo. I am just—before we go to the other witnesses, let me just ask you, when you were kidnapped, how much did you weigh? And how much did you weigh after being kept in that box, that stone box?

Mr. VALSECA. My regular weight, sir, is about 160 pounds, and when I came out of the box I was barely around 82, 83 pounds. And they destroyed my left leg, they shot me with a .45 pistol, and they made a huge damage into my liver that I am still suffering from it. They broke my ribs, they shot me also on the arm. They thought that I was lying.

But the interesting thing about all of this, sir, is that the authorities in my country, they have absolutely no interest in investigating it. They only thing they asked me, the federal—the chief of the Federal police flew his private jet to Austin, Texas, to tell me to be quiet. That is all I have heard from them.

They have never, including Senerro that was kidnapped, they have never asked me to talk to him or for him to talk to me.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, Eduardo, we will go into that during the question and answer period. But I thought it would be important for us all to understand, as we are talking about this "problem or challenge" that we face, we are talking about human beings who are suffering, our neighbors. We are talking about our next-door neighbors, and that is why we should look at the people of Mexico, our wonderful people who live next door, and they are going through agonies like this.

And so behind the statistics, and behind the plans that our Government has, are some real-life suffering of human beings who deserve our attention.

And we will go on now to our other witnesses.

Mr. Farah?

STATEMENT OF MR. DOUGLAS FARAH, SENIOR FELLOW, INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY CENTER

Mr. FARAH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify today on this important topic. As the chairman noted, yesterday the Justice Department announced that it stopped the plot by the Iranian Government using special Quds force operatives to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador in the United States, and carry out other attacks on U.S. soil.

I have been looking at this relationship between transnational organized crime and terrorist organizations for some time, and what makes this plot so different is the allegation that the Quds force operative was seeking to hire an assassin from the Zetas, the notorious Mexican drug trafficking organization, to carry out that hit.

This is significant for many reasons. As my written testimony describes, there are multiple alliances forming across Latin America among transnational criminal organizations, drug trafficking structures, terrorist groups in criminalized states, that present a significant and perhaps unprecedented challenge to the U.S. national security from that region.

The allegation that Iran, a criminalized state which sponsors Hezbollah, one of the world's premier terrorist organizations, which is dealing with the Zetas, a non-state drug trafficking organization

that controls key access points to cross the U.S. border regularly, is surely a perfect storm.

This possibility—a hostile state using special forces and proxy agents to engage criminal organizations for operations inside the United States—has long been downplayed and sometimes ridiculed by policymakers, yet the signs of this type of gathering storm have been evident for some time, including possible collaboration on the transportation of WMD components.

The choice of Mexico as the recruitment stage for these activities is no surprise, given its proximity to the United States and attention to other matters the government there is engaged in. Other designated terrorist organizations, such as the FARC in Colombia and its multiple front groups and allies, in outlined in my written testimony, and the Basque separatists, ETA organizations, and others, have also set up shop in Mexico.

Among the cases that indicate the different threats that run through Mexico are those of Jameer Nasr, arrested in Tijuana, Mexico, in July 2010 and reportedly charged with setting up the Hezbollah network in Mexico, a concern later validated by the Tucson, Arizona police.

In the case of Jamal Youssef, who according to a 2009 indictment in the U.S. Southern District of New York was a former Syrian military officer arrested in Honduras, seeking to sell weapons to the FARC, weapons he claimed that came from Hezbollah and were provided by a relative who was residing in Mexico.

There is no evidence that I am aware of showing that the Mexican Government supports these activities of extra-regional actors or condones them. In the case of Mr. Nasr, the Mexican authorities had him under surveillance and arrested him, showing little tolerance for the establishment of this type of foreign terrorist entity on its soil. They also appear to have helped in yesterday's case.

Rather, the government struggles with a host of intractable problems, and these activities and alliances are largely under the radar and, given the scarce resources, not a priority. But Mexican DTOs—the drug trafficking organizations, both in the United States and Mexico, are often analyzed as entities operating only in Mexico or geographically contiguous regions that directly affect their specific cocaine-related endeavors.

Yet these groups, particularly the Sinaloa cartel, are part of a large and expanding web of alliances that now have operational access to Mexico through the drug trafficking and other transnational criminal activities. It includes not only designated terrorist entities and drug trafficking organizations, but state actors including state sponsors of terrorism.

Mexican drug trafficking organizations are key gatekeepers along an extensive network of highly adaptable criminal pipelines, both organizational and geographical in dimension. These pipelines ultimately breached the southern border of the United States thousands of times a day.

The established presence of Hezbollah in Latin America, a designated terrorist entity that operates as a proxy for Iran, is an important factor and one that raises the possibility of an exchange of knowledge, technology, and lessons learned with the FARC as well as Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

As the chairman noted, China's growing presence, including control of four key ports in Mexico, through which extensive movement of precursor chemicals and significant money laundering operations occur, is another significant factor in the transnational criminal activity in Mexico.

Mexico is a key part of China's comprehensive strategy to expand its influence throughout Latin America and the western hemisphere, in direct challenge to America's vital interest in long-held preeminence in the region. This strategy is already unfolding across a multi-dimensional framework in political, ideological, military, economic, and other realms.

These relationships among criminalized states and non-state proxies have real and important consequences within and beyond drug trafficking. There is growing concern that Hezbollah is providing technology for the increasingly sophisticated narco tunnels now being found along the U.S.-Mexican border, which strongly resemble the types Hezbollah uses in Lebanon.

Numerous former intelligence and law enforcement officials have publicly discussed the appearance in recent years of arrested gang members entering the United States with Farsi tattoos and other items that could indicate Hezbollah influence. Within this context, it is interesting to note Iran's concerted effort to push into Mexico and solidify government-to-government ties and trade alliances.

Since 2009, several senior level Iranian delegations have visited Mexico, the first such envoys since the Shah was overthrown in 1979. The Iranian Ambassador in Mexico has taken an unusually activist role, including being the lead public Iranian voice in accusing the CIA of assassinating Neda, the pro-democracy activist gunned down by Iranian security forces during the anti-regime demonstrations.

As a joint DHS-State Department symposium concluded recently, the confluence of illicit networks and corruption in an enabling environment can facilitate not only the movement of drugs, arms, stolen, and pirated goods, and traffic persons, but also the smuggling of terrorist weapons of mass destruction, WMD materials, and other dangerous weapons and technologies that threaten global security.

The Mexican drug trafficking organizations are well-armed violent structures already at war with the state and are at the nexus of a variety of threats from facilitating the possible transport of WMD components to allies with terrorist groups and hostile nation states who wish to harm our homeland. The reason is obvious: If harming the United States is the ultimate goal, the positioning of hostile actors and structures as close as possible is imperative.

While Mexican drug trafficking organizations pose a significant threat in and of themselves, they are part of a much broader network of entities that raise the threat level exponentially.

In answer to Congresswoman Bass' earlier comments—and it is in my written testimony—I think the clearest indication of the alliances that are developing there is this book Guerra Periferica y el Islam Revolucionario, Asymmetrical Warfare and Revolutionary Islam, which is a book written by a Spanish ideologue whose basic premise is that weapons of mass destruction are a viable, legitimate use against the United States to destroy the empire.

This was adopted as official military doctrine by the Government of Venezuela after—with its close ties with Iran, and it has been published as a pocket-sized book for all of the officer's corps to carry around with them, memorize, and study. It has also been transmitted to the Bolivian military. The Government of Ecuador has so far refused to do that.

And the U.S. Government is now translating it. They were unaware of this book for a considerable period of time, and they are now I think aware of it.

On the issue of violence, I think if you look at the period of Medellin——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I tell you what we will do.

Mr. FARAH. I am sorry.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. During the question and answer period, we will have—go right ahead and finish that point.

Mr. FARAH. I apologize. The homicide rate in Medellin during the worst of the time there—1988, '89, '90—was about 400 people per 100,000. It has never reached that level in Mexico. I think Andrew may know better than me on that, but it has never reached that level.

The average around the world is 10. The U.S. homicide rate is five per 100,000, and Canada is one per 100,000. So 400 is extraordinary.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Farah follows:]

Testimony of Douglas Farah

Senior Fellow, International Assessment and Strategy Center
Adjunct Fellow, Americas Program, CSIS

Before the House Committee on Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

"The International Exploitation of Drug Wars and What We Can Do About It"

October 12, 2011

When the Colombian National Police and military attacked a stationary FARC camp in Ecuador on March 1, 2008, killing Raúl Reyes, a top guerrilla commander, and capturing several hundred gigabytes of data, one thing became amply clear: the designated terrorist organization that produces some 70 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States had multiple active cells inside Mexico, particularly in the national university.

Just before the bombing a delegation of Mexican university students arrived at the FARC and offered a more formal alliance with Mexico's small Marxist-Leninist party, the National Liberation Movement (*Movimiento de Liberación Nacional*).[1]

The ties of Mexico to the FARC are not limited to small, violent Marxist parties, although those alliances offer a significant boost for armed revolution in Mexico and the hemisphere.

My further field investigations show that the FARC, particularly the 48th Front operating on the Ecuadoran border, has developed significant ties to the Sinaloa cartel, which now operates with relative impunity inside the Ecuadoran side of the border. The amply documented ties of senior member of the Correa administration to the FARC and their chief intermediaries with the Mexican drug trafficking organizations offer further indications of the transnationalizaton of the Mexican organizations.[2]

These ties among Mexican DTOs and a designated terrorist entity that is the world's largest cocaine producer are only one facet of the multiple lines among different groups with declared hostile intent to the U. S. Homeland that both strengthen the Mexican organizations and use the turmoil in Mexico to advance their own separate agendas. These agendas include an overtly declared intent to damage the United Stated, usually referred to as the "Empire." The ability of disparate groups to move into Mexico greatly enhances their ability to carry out their objectives over time,

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[1] The entire cache of FARC documents, by far the most extensive captured in the 47-year-old conflict, was analyzed an catalogued by a respected British national security think tank, including a verbatim copy of every e-mail contained in the Reyes' computers. See: "The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of Raúl Reyes," International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011. One email (No. II 2759) dated February 19, 2008 from Reyes to another member of the FARC high command stated the "among the people who have come to visit us are the companions (*compañeros*) of Mexico's National Liberation Movement, (a Communist Marxist-Leninist party that is clandestine and operates under this name.) They have some important project in their own country and across the continent…they wish to link to us and are ready to do so under this name as part of the CCB (*Coordinadora Continental Bolivariana*). The CCB is a FARC political front group.

[2] Douglas Farah and Glenn Simpson, "Ecuador at Risk: Drugs, Thugs, Guerrillas and the Citizens' Revolution," International Assessment and Strategy Center, February 2010.

Among the other cases that indicate the different threats that run through Mexico are those of Jameer Nasr, arrested in Tijuana, Mexico in July 2010 and reportedly charged with setting up a Hezbollah network in Mexico,[3] a concern later validated by the Tucson, Arizona police;[4] and the case of Jamal Youssef, who, according to a July 6, 2009 indictment in the U.S. Southern District of New York, was a former Syrian military officer arrested in Honduras, sought to sell weapons to the FARC – weapons he claimed came from Hezbollah, and were going to be provided by a relative in Mexico.[5]

There is no evidence that I am aware of showing that the Mexican government supports these activities of extra-regional actors or condones them. In the case of Nasr, the Mexican authorities had him under surveillance and arrested him, showing little tolerance for the establishment of a foreign terrorist entity on its soil.

Rather, as the government struggles with a host of intractable problems, these activities and alliances are largely under the radar and, given scarce resources and capabilities, not a priority. Also, given the multiple demands on the law enforcement and intelligence communities in Mexico, directly relating to the violence and drug trafficking, it is in fact an ideal time for other groups to take advantage of the situation and seek to establish a greater presence.

Mexican DTOs, both in the United States and Mexico, are often analyzed as entities operating only in Mexico or in geographically contiguous regions that directly affect their specific cocaine-related endeavors.

Yet these groups, particularly the Sinaloa cartel, are part of a large and expanding web of alliances that now have operational access to Mexico through the DTO and other Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) activities. It includes not only designated terrorist entities and DTOs, but also state actors, including state sponsors of terrorism. Mexican DTOs are key gatekeepers along an extensive network of highly adaptable criminal pipelines, both organizational and geographical in dimension These pipelines ultimately breach the southern border of the United States thousands of times a day.

The pipelines are a series of recombinant chains whose links can merge and decouple as necessary. It includes not only traditional TOC activity, but potential for trafficking of WMD and precursor materials by regional states where the leadership is deeply involved in criminal activities and have publicly articulated doctrine of

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[3] Jack Khoury and Haaretz Service, "Mexico thwarts Hezbollah bid to set up South American Network," Haaretz (Israel), July 6, 2010.

[4] Tucson Police Department, "International Terrorism Situational Awareness: Hezbollah," September 20, 2010.

[5] United States District Court, Southern District of New York, The United States of America v Jamal Yousef, Indictment, July 6, 2009.

asymmetrical warfare against the United States and its allies that explicitly endorses as legitimate the use of weapons of mass destruction.

This rapidly emerging threat from multiple nations acting in concert and combining traditional TOCs, terrorist groups and nation-states that sponsor them should now be viewed as a tier-one security threat for the United States. Mexican DTOs are a crucial nexus in this matrix, not marginal actors or separate from this growing network.

The established presence of Hezbollah in Latin America, a designated terrorist entity that operates as a proxy for Iran, is an important factor, one that raises the possibility of the exchange of knowledge, technology and "lessons learned" with the FARC as well as Mexican DTOs.

Venezuela, under Hugo Chávez, is leading the self-described "Bolivarian" alliance, in which f almost every country's leadership has significant ties to the FARC and other DTOs and foreign terrorist organizations.[6] While Mexico is not a member of the Alliance, it territory, as noted, is used by different groups that are part of that group. The Alliance, in turn, has developed increasingly close ties to Iran, a state sponsor of terrorism and a primary sponsor of Hezbollah.

China's growing presence, including control of four key ports in Mexico through which extensive movements of precursor chemicals and significant money laundering operations occur, is another significant factor in the transnational activity in Mexico.[7]

Mexico is a key part of China's comprehensive strategy to expand its influence throughout Latin America and the Western Hemisphere in direct challenge to America's vital interests and long held preeminence in the region. This strategy is already is unfolding across a multidimensional framework in political, ideological, military economic, transportation, telecommunications, energy, and environmental realms.

For most of the last decade the dominant analysis of China's "rise" in Latin America has been that China is largely focused on advancing its substantial commercial interests (Chinese imports from Latin America grew from $2 billion in 2000 to $91 billion in 2010) in securing energy and other vital natural resources, and markets to

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[6] The Bolivarian alliance, formally known as ALBA, is comprised of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cuba and several smaller Caribbean nations.

[7] The author has documents showing significant money laundering activities by Mexican DTOs through Chinese banks. Mexican investigators and U.S. officials have noticed a rapid increase in the importation of precursor chemicals for making methamphetamines and cocaine through the port of Lázaro Cárdenas since Hutchison Port Holding, a Hong Kong based company with ties the PRC's military, took over operations in 2007. For a look at the Chinese push for Mexican ports see: Will Weissert, "Mexico, top private interests look to revamp Pacific ports south of the border," Associated Press, March 26, 2006.

sustain its own political-economic stability. For the most part this line of analysis has led to conclusions that any Chinese "threat" in Latin America is either an unrealistic, or at most a distant prospect for the United States.

But a gathering preponderance of evidence suggests these conclusions are themselves unrealistic. China is indeed pursuing a comprehensive program to build economic, political and military influence in Latin America, and the criminal state/TOC nexus aids China's aims now, with significant implications for the future. By ensuring the survival of the Bolivarian Alliance's project, China is gaining access to vital sea-lanes, ports and territories on which the security and commerce of the Homeland rely. China is also better able to exploit resources, including rare earth elements, lithium and other vital commodities; control transportation nodes, gain uncomfortably close military and naval proximity to vital U.S. energy and telecommunications nodes; and, secure commercial opportunities – all of which serve China's strategic goal to checkmating the U.S.

China's willingness to empower these actors, offer them alternative markets and military supply lines, and help insure their survival past the life spans of the current leadership – and to ally with them for its own military, political and economic ends -- makes this Bolivarian Alliance a significant regional challenge to the United States. This is enhanced by a troublesome new Iranian influence within the Alliance, and Iran's working relationship with China on nuclear and other vital interests.

These relationships among criminalized states and non-state proxies have real and important consequences, within and beyond drug trafficking. There is growing concern that Hezbollah is providing technology for the increasingly sophisticated narco tunnels now being found along the U.S.-Mexican border, which strongly resemble the types used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Numerous former intelligence and law enforcement officials have publicly discussed the appearance in recent years of arrested gang members entering the United States with Farsi tattoos and other items that could indicate a Hezbollah influence.[8]

As a senior DEA official recently noted, "There are numerous reports of cocaine proceeds entering the coffers of Islamic Radical Groups (IRG) such as Hezbollah and Hamas in Europe and the Middle East. The danger of DTO's and IRG's profiting from the lucrative cocaine trade can lead to an unlimited source of cheap and easy revenue to carry out potential terrorist acts."[9]

This presence has grown in scope and sophistication over the past years as Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has successfully built close alliances with several

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[8] Rep. Sue Myrick, "Myrick calls for Taskforce to Investigate Presence of Hezbollah on the U.S. Southern Border, June 23, 2010, http://myrick.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=22&itemid=558

[9] Statement of Anthony P. Placido, deputy administrator for intelligence, Drug Enforcement Administration, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, March 3, 2010.

governments, particularly those of Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia. These alliances afford Iran and its proxy elements state cover and effective immunity for its covert activities. This includes: unfettered access to global banking facilities, ports and airports; mining of precursor elements for WMD and advanced weapons systems fabrication; and, a regional base for infiltration and contingency operations aimed at undermining the U.S. and its interests, while also abetting corruption and the notable buildup in conventional arms manufacturing.

Within this context it is interesting to note Iran's concerted efforts to push into Mexico and solidify government-to-government ties and trade alliances.[10] Since 2009, several senior level Iranian delegations have visited Mexico, the first such envoys since the Shah was overthrown in 1979.

The most senior delegation was led by deputy foreign minister Ali Reza Salari, who met with senior Mexican officials in February 2009 to discuss ways to broaden "political, economic and cultural" cooperation.[11] This was followed by an Iranian trade exposition in Mexico City, largely devoted to touting the virtues of Shi'ite Islam and the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini and promoting the Palestinian cause.[12]

The Iranian ambassador in Mexico has taken an unusually activist role, including being the leading public Iranian voice in accusing the CIA of assassinating Neda Agha-Soltan, the pro-democracy activist gunned down by Iranian security forces during anti-regime demonstrations.[13] Mexican officials in recent months have arrested several Iranian nationals seeking to enter the United States illegally, and handed them over to the Iranian embassy, after which their whereabouts are unknown.[14]

Given these indicators, the threat therefore is neither remote, discontinuous nor contained, nor is it as well understood as it should be. This – and the overall criminal/terrorist/compromised state challenge of which it is a part -- requires more integrated analytical, intelligence, diplomatic and security approaches driven by a strategic assessment of the threat.

As a joint DHS and State Department symposium concluded:

> *The confluence of illicit networks and corruption in an enabling environment could facilitate not only the movement of drugs, arms, stolen or pirated goods, and trafficked persons, but also smuggling of terrorists, weapons of mass*

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[10] Todd Bensman, "Iran Reaches Out to Mexico," GlobalPost, May 30, 2010.

[11] Mexican ministry of foreign affairs, "Se Reúne subsecrtaria de relaciones exteriors con el viceministro de asuntos para las Américas de Iran," Comunicado 048, February 29, 2009.

[12] For the website dedicated to this event see: http://iranhoy.wordpress.com/

[13] Andrew Malcolm, "Iran Ambassador suggests CIA could have killed Ned Agha-Soltan," Lost Angeles Times, June 25, 2009.

[14] Author interviews with Mexican intelligence officials.

> *destruction (WMDs), WMD materials, and other dangerous weapons and technologies that threaten global security. This trend is particularly powerful when taken in concert with the increasingly blurred line between certain terror groups and the criminal activities that fund them. For instance, organizations such as Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Taliban, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), have been known to engage in criminal enterprises for profit or to advance a terror agenda.*[15]

Mexican DTOs are a crucial link – financially, in terms of geographic control and control of key access points across the U.S. border – in the "increasingly blurred line between certain terror groups and the criminal activities that fund them."

Concurrently we see the further empowerment, training and technological support of the oppressive security apparatuses in the increasingly undemocratic Bolivarian states being provided by the Iran-Hezbollah-ICRG/Qods forces combine. Other outside powers, notably China and Russia further compound these problems (as might, in the future, the still-nascent presence of radical Sunni groups related to the Muslim Brotherhood). However Iran, Hezbollah and the ICRG/Qods forces are the sharpest edge of this sword at present, and the one most openly aimed at the U.S., and least tractable to diplomacy.

All of this comes at the expense of U.S. influence, security and trade -- including energy security and hence economic and infrastructure security (Venezuela is the 4th largest supplier of U.S. petroleum imports, just behind Mexico; indeed Latin America is our 2nd largest source of supply overall, only slightly behind the Middle East). This hearing focuses on external threats to Mexico, so one cannot ignore Hezbollah, the 'non-state', armed branch of radical Shi'ite Islamists, and the direct relationship of this organization to state sponsors. As the DIA noted last year:

> *The Qods Force stations operatives in foreign embassies, charities, and religious/cultural institutions to foster relationships with people, often building on existing socio-economic ties with the well established Shia diaspora. At the same time, it engages in paramilitary operations to support extremists and destabilize unfriendly regimes. The IRGC and Qods Force are behind some of the deadliest terrorist attacks of the past three decades, including the 1983 and 1984 bombings of the U.S. Embassy and annex in Beirut, the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the 1994 attack on the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, and many of the insurgent attacks on Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces in Iraq since 2003. Generally, it directs and supports groups actually executing the attacks, thereby maintaining plausible deniability within the international community.*

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[15] "Chair's Report: Transpacific Symposium on Dismantling Transnational Illicit Networks," Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and Department of Homeland Security U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, February 2010, p. 3.

> *Support for these extremists takes the form of providing arms, funding, and paramilitary training. In this, Qods Force is not constrained by ideology; many of the groups it supports do not share, and sometimes openly oppose, Iranian revolutionary principles, but Iran supports them because of common interests or enemies.*
>
> *The Qods Force maintains operational capabilities around the world. It is well established in the Middle East and North Africa,* ***and recent years have witnessed an increased presence in Latin America, particularly in Venezuela*** [author emphasis]. *As U.S. involvement in global conflicts deepens, contact with the Qods Force, directly or through extremist groups it supports, will be more frequent and consequential.*[16]

Given their expanding territorial control in Central America (with the Sinaloa cartel making significant pushes in Honduras and El Salvador, while the *Zetas* organization now controls significant parts of Guatemala's national territory), the Mexican DTOs now occupy key routes that the Qods Force-Hezbollah-FARC grouping need to function. As the DIA noted, the Qods Force is not constrained by ideology, but rather a pragmatic willingness to collaborate with those who share its minimum interests against a common enemy.

The relationship between these 'Bolivarian states' and Iran is crucial to understanding the threat that Hezbollah in Latin America poses. This relationship -- among groups espousing and actively pursuing seemingly irreconcilable world views (theocratic Shiite Muslim fundamentalism and Socialism for the 21st Century) – is bound by a common aim of the asymmetric defeat of the U.S. and the explicit acceptance of the use of weapons of mass destruction to achieve that goal. Both sides also envision an authoritarian state that tolerates little dissent and encroaches on all aspects of a citizen's life.

Hezbollah's influence in Latin America extends to the nature of aggression and diplomacy employed by Chavez and his Bolivarian comrades. Iran and Hezbollah are among the foremost practitioners today of the franchising model of a state sponsor allocating certain elements of statecraft to non-state armed actors involved in transnational organized crime and terrorist activities.

The nature of the threat to the United States, then, is not merely the drugs in the criminal pipelines and multiple transnational criminal activities that directly affect us every day, with Mexico being the primary entrance point and Mexican DTOs the primary gatekeepers. Rather, it is the establishment of political and financial influence and military presence by Hezbollah, a terrorist organization that enjoys

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[16] Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Burgess, Jr., Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iran's Military Power," Statement before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, April 14, 2010.

the state sponsorship of Iran and, to a lesser degree, Syria, in concert with states that are hospitable to its movements and that are replicating its model, particularly south of our border.

Another central common element between Iran and its Bolivarian allies is the willingness to use non-state allies participating in criminal and terrorist activities as instruments of statecraft. As the DIA noted, the Qods Force supports proxy forces while retaining plausible deniability, and the primary force is Hezbollah. Venezuela, in turn, also hosts not only the FARC, but the ETA Basque separatist terrorist organization, the Bolivarian Continental Movement (*Movimiento Continental Bolivariano*-MCB).

The MCB is a FARC-founded political umbrella group made up of remnants of Latin America's violent Marxist movements and its allies in Europe, the United States and Latin America. A great deal of its activities, fundraising and publishing are carried out in Mexico, particularly through the various front organizations that operate out of the National University. This relationship gives the FARC, Hezbollah and ETA a significant pipeline into Mexico, and therefore access to the Homeland through pragmatic alliances with different Mexican TCOs that control that access.

The core mission of the MCB is to legitimize the FARC's internal and international image as a revolutionary army driven by ideology rather than a criminal organization fuelled by the drug trade. It also is a staunch defender of Chávez and his Bolivarian allies and a favorite forum for calling for armed action against the United States and for armed revolution against the democratically elected government of Colombia.

The FARC and Hezbollah also share a doctrine of asymmetrical warfare against the United States that embraces the use of weapons of mass destruction, massive civilian casualties as acceptable collateral damage and the underlying belief that the acquisition of nuclear weapons to destroy the United States is a moral or religious imperative. This is not a statement of capacity, but a clear statement of intention.

The first does not necessarily imply the ability to accomplish the latter, but it is an indication that these intentions need to be taken seriously, particularly given the level of resources available to them. Hezbollah, viewed by many in our intelligence community as the most effective, well-structured and militarily proficient terrorist group in existence, brings a host of skills and abilities to bear in this regard. While these capabilities had been deployed in our hemisphere before with lethal effect (the 1994 AMIA bombing), they have not been previously deployed under the protection of a network of friendly governments, with access to diplomatic status and immunity and operational freedom.

Earlier this year a senior Venezuelan official publicly endorsed the Iranian position that the United States "arms international terrorists and finances their activities." He added, "discrimination and humiliation of nations is the primary cause of

terrorism...the type of terrorism implemented by imperial powers attacks the sovereignty of nations and the laws that regulate armed conflicts."[17]

One need only look at how rapidly Iran has increased its diplomatic, economic and intelligence presence in Latin America to see the priority it places on this emerging axis, given that it is an area where it has virtually no trade, no historic or cultural ties and no obvious strategic interests. In Bolivia recently the Iranian embassy reportedly asked for more than two dozen spaces for in the international school for children of their newly arrived diplomats there. This is an indication of how rapidly the diplomatic mission is expanding despite having very few overt operations under way.

The gains -- in financial institutions, bilateral trade agreements, state to state shipping by land and sea that undergo no outside review, security forces and intelligence training, and state visits for Latin America (eight state visits between Chávez and Ahmadinejad alone since 2006) -- are almost entirely within the Bolivarian orbit (although there are signs of involvement elsewhere in both Central and Latin America, particularly efforts with mixed results to establish broad new ties with Brazil).

Before going into the origins of this seemingly paradoxical alliance, it is important to note that the relationships Hezbollah has developed with criminal and terrorist groups in Latin America have escalated from one of mutual accommodation and benefit in the spheres of money laundering, contraband and financing to more direct and deadly forms of collaboration.

There has been significant and well documented reporting on Hezbollah's financial ties to the contraband center of the Tri-Border region of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil, the contributions of the Lebanese diaspora communities on Isla Margarita and elsewhere, and the significant profits Hezbollah has derived for some time by taxing a range of illicit activities among the Lebanese diaspora communities.

This type of activity, in many ways, was little different from that of many other transnational criminal networks, and was largely financial. However, the 1994 Iranian government-sponsored bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires, Argentina, using Hezbollah operatives in the Tri-Border region, is a powerful reminder that these groups can and do operate militarily in Latin America.

Currently there are cases being prosecuted in the United States that shed new light on direct cocaine-for-weapons deals between Hezbollah operatives and the FARC.

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[17] Frank López Ballesteros, "Venezuela e Irán unen su vision sobre terrorismo," El Universal, June 27, 2011, accessed at: http://internacional.eluniversal.com/2011/06/27/venezuela-e-iran-unen-su-vision-sobre-terrorismo.shtml

One case that illustrates the breadth of the emerging alliances between criminal and terrorist groups is Operation Titan, executed by Colombian and U.S. officials in 2008 and still ongoing. Colombian and U.S. officials, after a 2-year investigation, dismantled a drug trafficking organization that stretched from Colombia to Panama, Mexico, the United States, Europe and the Middle East. Most of the drugs originated with the FARC in Colombia, and some of the proceeds were traced through a Lebanese expatriate network, to the funding Hezbollah.[18]

Colombian and U.S. officials allege that one of the key money launderers in the structure, Chekry Harb, AKA "Taliban", acted as the central go-between among Latin American drug trafficking organizations and Middle Eastern radical groups, primarily Hezbollah. Among the groups participating together in Harb's operation in Colombia were members of the Northern Valley Cartel, right-wing paramilitary groups and the FARC, demonstrating the ecumenical adaptive nature of Hezbollah's criminal associations and of the 'recombinant networks' system.

Other recent case is the 2008 OFAC designated senior Venezuelan diplomats for facilitating the funding of Hezbollah.

One of those designated, Ghazi Nasr al Din, served as the charge d'affaires of the Venezuelan embassy in Damascus, and then served in the Venezuelan embassy in London. According to the OFAC statement in late January 2008, al Din facilitated the travel of two Hezbollah representatives of the Lebanese parliament to solicit donations and announce the opening of a Hezbollah-sponsored community center and office in Venezuela.

The second individual, Fawzi Kan'an, is described as a Venezuela-based Hezbollah supporter and a "significant provider of financial support to Hezbollah." He met with senior Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss operational issues, including possible kidnappings and terrorist attacks.[19]

In a separate case, in April 2009 police on the island of Curacao arrested 17 people for alleged involvement in cocaine trafficking with some of the proceeds then funneled through Middle Eastern banks to Hezbollah.[20]

Among the first to articulate the possible merging of radical Shi'ite Islamic thought with Marxist aspirations of destroying capitalism and U.S. hegemony was Illich

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[18] While much of Operation Titan remains classified, there has been significant open source reporting, in part because the Colombian government announced the most important arrests. See: Chris Kraul and Sebastian Rotella, "Colombian Cocaine Ring Linked to Hezbollah," Los Angeles Times, Oct. 22, 2008; and "Por Lavar Activos de Narcos y Paramilitares, Capturados Integrantes de Organización Internacional," Fiscalía General de la Republica (Colombia), Oct. 21, 2008.

[19] "Treasury Targets Hizbullah in Venezuela," United States Department of Treasury Press Center, June 18, 2008, http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp1036.aspx

[20] Orlando Cuales, "17 arrested in Curacao on suspicion of drug trafficking links with Hezbollah," Associated Press, April 29, 2009

Sánchez Ramirez, better known as the terrorist leader Carlos the Jackal -- a Venezuelan citizen who was, until his arrest in 1994, one of the world's most wanted terrorists. In his writings, Sánchez Ramirez espouses Marxism tied to revolutionary, violent Palestinian uprisings, and, in the early 2000s after becoming a Muslim, militant Islamism.

In his 2003 book, Revolutionary Islam, written from prison where he is serving a life sentence for killing two French policemen, Sánchez Ramirez praises Osama bin Laden and the 9-11 attacks on the United States as a "lofty feat of arms" and part of a justified "armed struggle" of Islam against the West. "From now on terrorism is going to be more or less a daily part of the landscape of your rotting democracies," he wrote.[21]

In this context, the repeated, public praise of Chávez for Sánchez Ramirez can be seen as a crucial marker of the Bolivarian ideology, and an embracing of terrorist tactics to achieve justifiable ends. Chávez ordered his ambassador to France to seek the release of Sánchez Ramirez and on multiple occasions, including many times after 9/11, referred to the convicted terrorist as a "friend" and "true revolutionary."[22] In a 1999 letter to Sánchez Ramirez, Chávez greeted the terrorist as a "Distinguished Compatriot" and wrote that

Swimming in the depths of your letter of solidarity I could hear the pulse of our shared insight that everything has its due time: time to pile up stones or hurl them, to ignite revolution or to ignore it; to pursue dialectically a unity between our warring classes or to stir the conflict between them—a time when you can fight outright for principles and a time when you must choose the proper fight, lying in wait with a keen sense for the moment of truth, in the same way that Ariadne, invested with these same principles, lays the thread that leads her out of the labyrinth. ...

I feel that my spirit's own strength will always rise to the magnitude of the dangers that threaten it. My doctor has told me that my spirit must nourish itself on danger to preserve my sanity, in the manner that God intended, with this stormy revolution to guide me in my great destiny.

With profound faith in our cause and our mission, now and forever! [23]

In fact, the Bolivarian fascination with the militant Islamist thought and Marxism did not end with the friendship between Chávez and the jailed terrorist. Acolytes of

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[21] "'Jackal' book praises bin Laden," BBC News, June 26, 2003.

[22] See, for example: Associated Press, "Chavez: 'Carlos the Jackal' a 'Good Friend'" June 3, 2006.

[23] Paul Reyes (translator) and Hugo Chávez, "My Struggle," from a March 23, 1999 letter to Illich Ramirez Sánchez, the Venezuelan terrorist known as Carlos the Jackal, from Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez in response to a previous letter from Rarmirez, who is serving a life sentence in France for murder. Harper's, October 1999, http://harpers.org/archive/1999/10/0060674

Sánchez Ramirez continued to develop his ideology of Marxism and radical Islamism rooted in their interpretation of the Iranian revolution.

Since 2005, Chávez has rewritten Venezuela's security doctrine to scrub it of all outside (meaning U.S.), "imperialist" influences. To replace the old doctrine, Chávez and the Venezuelan military leadership have focused on developing a doctrine centered on asymmetrical warfare, in the belief that the primary threat to Venezuelan security is a U.S. invasion.

The main book Chávez has adopted as his military doctrine is Peripheral Warfare and Revolutionary Islam: Origins, Rules and Ethics of Asymmetrical Warfare (*Guerra Periférica y el Islam Revolucionario: Orígenes, Reglas y Ética de la Guerra Asimétrica*) by the Spanish politician and ideologue Jorge Verstrynge.[24] The tract is a continuation of and exploration of Sánchez Ramirez's thoughts, incorporating an explicit endorsement of the use of weapons of mass destruction to destroy the United States.

Although he is not a Muslim, and the book was not written directly in relation to the Venezuelan experience, Verstrynge lauds radical Islam for helping to expand the parameters of what irregular warfare should encompass, including the use of biological and nuclear weapons, along with the correlated civilian casualties among the enemy.

Central to Verstrynge's idealized view of terrorists is the belief in the sacredness of the willingness of the fighters to sacrifice their lives in pursuit of their goals. Before writing extensively on how to make chemical weapons and listing helpful places to find information on the manufacture of rudimentary nuclear bombs that "someone with a high school education could make," Verstrynge writes:

We already know it is incorrect to limit asymmetrical warfare to guerrilla warfare, although it is important. However, it is not a mistake to also use things that are classified as terrorism and use them in asymmetrical warfare. And we have super terrorism, divided into chemical terrorism, bioterrorism (which uses biological and bacteriological methods), and nuclear terrorism, which means "the type of terrorism uses the threat of nuclear attack to achieve its goals."[25]

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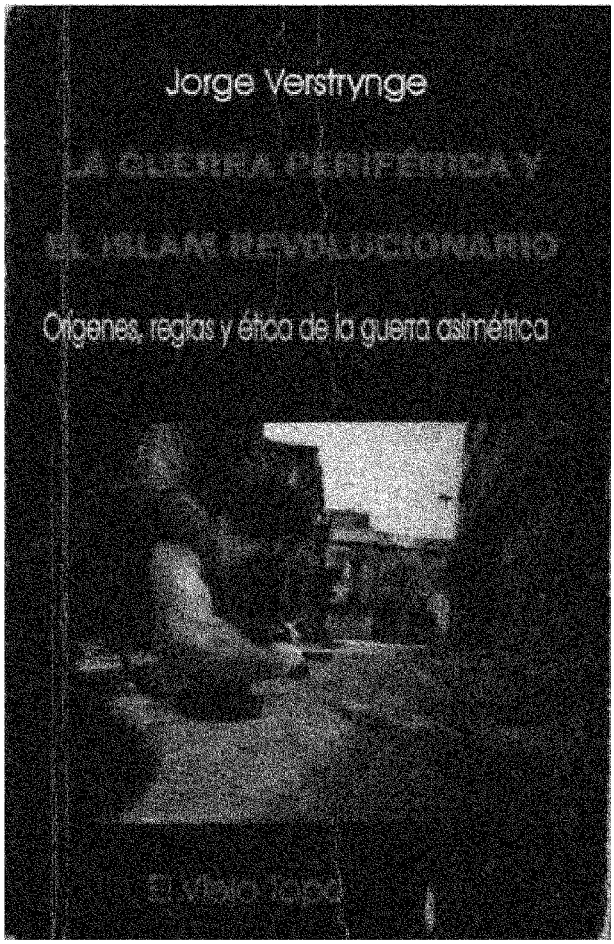
[24] Verstrynge, born in Morocco to Belgian and Spanish parents, began his political career on the far right of the Spanish political spectrum as a disciple of Manuel Fraga, and served in several senior party posts with the Alianza Popular. By his own admission he then migrated to the Socialist Party, but never rose through the ranks. He is widely associated with radical anti-globalization views and anti-U.S. rhetoric, repeatedly stating that the United States is creating a new global empire and must be defeated. Although he has no military training or experience, he has written extensively on asymmetrical warfare.

[25] Verstrynge, op cit., pp. 56-57.



In a December 12, 2008 interview with Venezuelan state television, Verstrynge lauded Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda for creating a new type of warfare that is "de-territorialized, de-stateized and de-nationalized," a war where suicide bombers act as "atomic bombs for the poor."[26]

[26] Bartolomé, op cit. See also: John Sweeny, "Jorge Verstrynge: The Guru of Bolivarian Asymmetric Warfare," www.vcrisis.com, Sept. 9, 2005; and "Troops Get Provocative Book," Miami Herald, Nov. 11, 2005.

Based on this book, Verstrynge was invited by Chávez to give the keynote address to military leaders in a 2005 conference titled "First Military Forum on Fourth Generation Warfare and Asymmetric Conflict" held at the Venezuelan military academy. Following the conference Gen. Raúl Baduel, the army commander and Chávez confidant, ordered a special pocket-size edition of the book to be printed up and distributed throughout the officer corps with explicit orders that it be studied cover to cover.[27]

This ideological framework of Marxism and radical Islamic methodology for successfully attacking the United States is an important, though little examined, underpinning for the greatly enhanced relationships among the Bolivarian states and Iran and their respective non-state proxies, most prominently Hezbollah. And there are clear indications the doctrine is spreading to the FARC. According to Colombian intelligence officials, copies of Verstrynge's book have now been found in FARC camps that were raided by the Colombian military.

In the rapidly changing world where terrorist groups engage in extensive criminal activities and pragmatic alliances to achieve their goals and criminal groups facilitate the movement of multiple types of illicit goods through clandestine transnational transportation networks, the Mexican DTOs have a special role to play due to their control of extensive, key geographic space.

This places these well-armed, violent structures already at war with the state at the nexus of a variety of threats, from facilitating the possible transportation of WMD components to alliances with terrorist groups and hostile nation states who wish to harm the Homeland. The reason is obvious. If harming the United States is the ultimate goal, then positioning hostile actors and structures as close as possible is imperative.

While Mexican DTOs pose a significant threat in and of themselves, they are part of a larger network of entities that raise that threat level exponentially.

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[27] For a more complete discussion of how Verstrynge's concepts fit into Chávez's concept of the Bolivarian revolution see: Mariáno César Bartolomé, "Las Guerras Asimétricas y de Cuarta Generación Dentro Del Pensamiento Venezolano en Materia de Seguridad y Defensa, (Asymmetrical and Fourth Generation Warfare In Venezuelan Security and Defense Thinking), Military Review, January-February 2008, pp. 51-62.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Actually, you will find that as chairman I try to be as generous as I can with—we do have to move on, but I actually made a little statement, too, so thank you for letting me do that.

Mr. Farnsworth, you may proceed.

STATEMENT OF MR. ERIC FARNSWORTH, VICE PRESIDENT, COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAS

Mr. FARNSWORTH. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to you and members of the subcommittee. It is a real privilege to have the opportunity to appear before you.

Yesterday's dramatic news notwithstanding, Latin America is a region transformed from Cold War days when politically motivated violence led to untold pain and suffering across the hemisphere. Out of that difficult period, however, came a hemispheric commitment to democracy, a commitment that was formalized exactly 10 years ago last month with the signing of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in Lima, Peru.

The hemispheric commitment to democracy is a recognition that strong democracies with strong institutions provide the fairest means of governance. As a result, they offer the best inoculation to Latin American societies against the scourge of political violence, much of which flared in previous decades as a result of the perception that authoritarian political and economic systems were exploitative and unfair.

At the same time, however, nations where democratic institutions and state control are weak or threatened can become incubators for criminal activities—and we have heard already about that this morning—creating permissive environments that can be exploited by those intent on pursuing extra legal activities.

An example of such a scenario is the tri-border region of South America, a somewhat lawless region joining Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, that has been linked to fund raising for extra legal global actors, including Hezbollah. Criminal enterprises, primarily smuggling operations, provide ill-gotten gains that can then be used to fund terrorist activities abroad.

Elsewhere in Latin America, the situation is less clear cut perhaps. For many years, the Government of Colombia, for example, exercised only cursory control, if any, over much of the country. The lack of state control was exploited by the FARC, the ELN, and other guerrilla movements, allowing them the freedom to build contacts with other extra-regional revolutionary groups, including Spain's ETA, links with Cuban intelligence and others.

As the Government of Colombia has effectively taken the fight to the guerrillas over the past decade, political violence has been dramatically reduced and the guerrillas have increasingly sought safe haven in neighboring countries. They have also turned to criminal enterprises, making common cause with drug traffickers as a means of survival.

In the case of Colombia, links between the two came in later years as the political insurgency became effectively degraded by the Government of Colombia. There is no doubt that permissive environments can attract global mischief-makers and that the drug trade, by undermining the effectiveness of, and public confidence

in, democratic institutions can lead to such permissive environments.

Central America is perhaps the best example in this regard. The region has become one of the most dangerous on earth—according to a recent Senate report, more violent even than Mexico. After a generation of bipartisan efforts to midwife democracy to Central America—and, Mr. Chairman, you were a leading voice in that effort—the institutions of these mostly young, fragile democracies are being hollowed out, corrupted by the drug traffickers and their allies.

Impunity is rampant, and the police and security forces in several countries have been penetrated by the drug gangs. Violence is a daily reality for far too many citizens of the Central American region. We should be working with these nations, with purpose and resolve, to ensure that the inclination to politically motivated violence does not arise.

So, too, with Mexico. As in Central America, at this point we do not see a pattern of politically motivated violence engendered by the cartels. Rather, we see the cartels fighting each other and the Mexican security forces to maintain control over lucrative drug transit corridors into the United States.

The cartels prefer either a weak state or a state that turns a blind eye to their activities. They do not appear to want to overthrow the state at this point, nor are they using violence to support one political party or political actor over another.

Nonetheless, their activities are undermining the institutions of the state, both in Mexico and in neighboring countries, particularly Guatemala, which has become a safe cross-border sanctuary for Mexican drug cartels. As well, certain drug trafficking groups in Mexico, in particular the Zetas, have served as guns for hire with others involved in the drugs trade.

And to the extent that they are now also willing to offer their services and firepower, not just to other drug traffickers but also to outside groups, including the al Quds force, as has been alleged, this would be a new development and a cause for concern. With this in mind, it is vital that we work in tandem with democratically elected leaders across the region to address these issues to help ensure that criminal activities do not blossom into a politically motivated effort.

This includes, of course, an emphasis on vetting and professionalization of police and security forces and a focus on the entire administration of justice. I would argue, in fact, that such cooperation with Mexico was, in part, responsible for our success in taking down yesterday's alleged plot.

At the same time, of course, we can do a better job in this country to reduce the demand for drugs, which is driving much of the insecurity impacting the region. I would like to see a renewed public campaign, for example, including new media, which potentially would reach more of the target audience that defines drugs, much as the way diamonds, for example, have been defined out of Africa in the blood diamonds trade. I think there is no reason, for example, why we can't link drugs to conflict and death in Mexico and Central America.

We can also think creatively about ways to support our democratic allies in our common fight by considering the transfer of excess equipment, as appropriate, from the downsizing effort in Iraq that is now underway. In particular, mobility and communications equipment would be useful for a region with vast unpoliced and underresourced areas.

At the same time, I believe we also must do a better job working to prevent the supply of firepower into the region. Otherwise, criminals will begin to—will continue to have access to such firepower that can challenge the ability of the state to control its own territory, which is one of the key indicators of a failing state and the means by which politically motivated ends can begin to take root.

For the most part, drug traffickers and others involved in illegal activities prefer weak states which allow them to conduct their affair unmolested. They don't seek to overthrow states. Nonetheless, by their destabilizing presence and ability to generate large sums of untraceable cash resources, they do have the potential of supporting such groups as in Colombia, to the extent such groups may seek to find common cause.

And as we saw just yesterday, they also have the potential to be used as hired muscle by those with extra-regional connections. And in this regard, I believe the best antidote remains for cooperation with Latin America nations as they consolidate and build upon the democratic gains of the past.

So, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Farnsworth follows:]

THE INTERNATIONAL EXPLOITATION OF DRUG WARS AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
OCTOBER 12, 2011

ERIC FARNSWORTH
VICE PRESIDENT

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today. It is a privilege to be with you to discuss a topic of such importance to U.S. national security and to relations with our hemispheric neighbors.

Latin America is a region transformed from Cold War days, when politically-motivated violence led to untold pain and suffering across the hemisphere, from revolution, coups and dirty wars in South America to hot wars in Central America. Out of that difficult period, however, came a hemispheric commitment to democracy, first agreed by consensus at the 1994 Summit of the Americas in Miami. The Summit institutionalized the concept that full participation in the hemispheric community requires democratic governance, a commitment that was formalized almost exactly 10 years ago with the signing of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in Lima, Peru.

The hemispheric commitment to democracy is a recognition that strong democracies, with strong institutions, provide the fairest means of governance. As a result, they offer the best inoculation to Latin American societies against the scourge of political violence, much of which flared in previous decades as a result of the perception that authoritarian political and economic systems were exploitative and unfair.

At the same time, however, nations where democratic institutions and state control are weak or threatened can become incubators for criminal activities, creating permissive environments that can be exploited by those intent on pursuing extra-legal activities.

Perhaps the best example of such a scenario is the tri-border region of South America, a somewhat lawless region of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay that has been linked to fund-raising for extra-legal global actors including Hezbollah. Criminal enterprises—primarily smuggling operations—provide ill-gotten gains that can then be transferred abroad. At the same time, the lack of effective state control has encouraged extra-regional actors to set up and expand their operations from the tri-border region to elsewhere in Latin America.

Elsewhere in Latin America, the situation is less clear-cut. For many years, the Government of Colombia exercised only cursory control, if any, over much of the country. This lack of state control was exploited by the FARC, ELN, and other guerrilla movements, allowing them the freedom to build contacts with other extra-regional revolutionary groups including Spain's ETA. As the Government of Colombia has effectively taken the fight to the guerrillas over the past decade, political violence has been dramatically reduced and the guerrillas have increasingly turned into criminal enterprises, making common cause with drug traffickers as a means of survival. In the case of Colombia, however, political insurgency pre-dated drug trafficking; links between the two came only in later years as the political insurgency was effectively degraded.

There is no doubt that permissive environments can attract global mischief-makers, and that the drugs trade, by undermining the effectiveness of, and public confidence in, democratic institutions, can lead in some ways to such permissive environments. Central America is perhaps the best example in this regard. The region has become one of the most dangerous on earth, according to a recent Senate report, more violent than Mexico. After a generation of bipartisan efforts to midwife democracy in Central America, the institutions of these mostly young, fragile democracies are being hollowed out, corrupted by the drug traffickers and their allies. Impunity is rampant, and the police and security forces in several countries have been penetrated by the drug gangs. At this point we do not see a pattern of politically-motivated violence in Central America stemming from the drugs trade, but it is certainly true that several of these countries are in difficult straits. Violence is a daily reality for far too many citizens of the Central American region. We should be working with these nations to ensure that the inclination to politically-motivated violence does not arise.

Mexico, too, of course, is faced by the scourge of the illegal drugs trade. As in Central America, at this point we do not see a pattern of politically-motivated violence engendered by the cartels; rather, we see the cartels fighting each other, and the Mexican security forces, to maintain control over lucrative drug transit corridors into the United States. The cartels prefer either a weak state or a state that turns a blind eye to their activities; they do not appear to want to overthrow the state at this point nor are they using violence to support one political actor or party over another. Nonetheless, what they are doing is eroding the sovereignty of their neighbors, particularly Guatemala, by crossing the border and setting up operations in Central America. Much of Guatemala's huge Peten region lacks effective state control and has become a safe cross-border sanctuary for Mexican drug cartels.

With this in mind, it is vital that we work in tandem with democratically-elected leaders across the region to address these issues and help to ensure that criminal activities do not blossom into politically-motivated efforts. We can best do this by supporting the institutions of democracy. This would include an emphasis on vetting and professionalization of police and security forces and a focus on the entire administration of justice, which in some cases has been overwhelmed by the demands of the fight against drugs. It also implies an attack on corruption and the elimination of violence against journalists, including social networkers, who work to expose violent offenders.

At the same time, we can do a better job in this country to reduce the demand for drugs which is driving much of the insecurity impacting the region. For example, we should re-stigmatize illegal drug use by linking it publicly to death and destruction in Mexico and Central America, much as the blood diamond and conflict minerals campaigns have effectively done in parts of Africa. A renewed public campaign, including new-media which potentially reaches more of the target audience, would be an important place to begin. Violence has spiked and people are dying gruesome, preventable deaths in Mexico and Central America as a result of U.S. consumer tastes. This needs to stop.

We can also think creatively about ways to support democratic allies in our common fight by considering the transfer of excess equipment, as appropriate, from the downsizing effort in Iraq that is now underway. In particular, mobility and communications equipment would be useful for a region with vast un-policed and under-resourced areas. At the same time, we must also do a better job working to prevent the supply of automatic guns and other weaponry to the region. Otherwise, criminals will continue to have access to firepower that can challenge the ability of the state to control its own territory, one of the key indicators of a failing state and a means through which politically-motivated ends can begin to take root. Without weaponry, the threat of violence of any sort is reduced.

For the most part, drug traffickers and others involved in illegal activities prefer weak states which allow them to conduct their affairs unmolested. They do not seek to *overthrow* the states. Nonetheless, by their destabilizing presence and ability to generate large sums of untraceable cash resources, they do have the potential of supporting such groups, as in Colombia, to the extent they may seek to find common cause over time. In this regard, the best antidote remains: full support for Latin American nations as they consolidate and build upon the democratic gains of the past.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much.

Dr. Selee.

STATEMENT OF ANDREW SELEE, PH.D., DIRECTOR, MEXICO INSTITUTE, WOODROW WILSON CENTER

Mr. SELEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the ranking member. Thanks for the opportunity to testify.

I also want to recognize Chair Ros-Lehtinen of the committee, and the ranking member Berman, who have a great commitment to the relationship with Mexico and Latin America. The chairwoman is actually hosting a dinner on U.S.-Mexico relations tonight.

And I especially want to acknowledge Eduardo Garcia Valseca and Jayne for their courage in coming here to testify. They have gone through, you know, one of the most horrible experiences that anyone could imagine, and to have the courage to come here—and they have also been in the news talking about this, trying to make people aware of what has gone on, and so that takes enormous, enormous courage.

You know, this hearing couldn't be more timely, given the events yesterday, what we found out yesterday, and I think it is important to know this is the first attempt we know of of trying to link terrorism and the cartels, the first we know of, and it failed.

And I think there are two lessons here that are important to take away. One is that we need to be vigilant—the reason for this hearing—it is important to keep this on our radar screen. It is important for the U.S. and Mexican Governments to be talking about this, as we have been, and perhaps to put it up a notch in our conversations, our bilateral conversations.

And, secondly, the cooperation worked in this case. This is a case where there was a common interest. The U.S. Government is monitoring terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, and Mexico is also monitoring it, because the Mexican economy—you know, not only are they trying to be good neighbors, but they are also concerned about what would happen if there ever were a terrorist attack from Mexico. Hugely in Mexico's interest.

The borders and boundaries are irrelevant, as the chairman said earlier, for crime. But states remain incredibly relevant, and cooperation among states, for trying to disrupt those criminal networks. And so to the extent that we can continue to work with our partners in the region, I think this is fundamental for trying to interrupt these criminal networks.

Let me say that Mexico has seen a sharp rise in crime over the past 3 years. Some of this represents a rise in homicides because of seven criminal organizations that have been fighting with each other, often called "cartels." They primarily get their income from illegal narcotics smuggling into the United States, but some of the rising crime is by other groups—kidnapping rings, smaller smuggling organizations, extortion gangs and local thugs, who proliferated in the environment of violence created by the large groups.

And what we have seen is an increase in these smaller groups out there. Sometimes they are supported by the large cartels. It is their folks who are allowed to do this. And sometimes they are sim-

ply freestanding folks who are taking advantage of the perceived climate of impunity.

There is little, if any, real evidence yet of foreign influence in these criminal enterprises, large or small, except of course that the largest and best organized groups are transnational organizations and operate in multiple countries. Cocaine appears to represent about half of the illegal narcotics income of the large Mexican trafficking organizations, according to a recent Rand study.

This means that these groups work closely with suppliers in Colombia, transshipment specialists in Central America, and of course U.S. gangs, mafia organizations, and other distributors who distribute the narcotics in the United States. And there are $6–$9 billion in illegal drug sales, according to the Rand study, that come back from U.S. consumers of illegal narcotics back to Mexico every year.

As they say, we have seen the enemy, and it is us in this case. I mean, this is $6–$9 billion a year. This is the Rand study. The U.S. Government manages slightly higher numbers, but this is based on a market study of the narcotics.

There are also—and it is worth saying—Mexican-led immigrant smuggling rings that specialize in non-Mexicans. The Zetas have gotten into this business, Central Americans, Cubans, South Americans, Chinese, Iraqis, and others. And there is, of course, in addition to the smaller kidnapping rings that do most of the kidnapping, there is the group that Eduardo was talking about, which is an excision from the EPR, from the Popular Revolutionary Army, which has done a number of kidnappings and continues to operate with impunity in Mexico.

This is a Mexican-run organization, but obviously they do have ties abroad, much as the smugglers. I mean, Mexican-run organizations, but with ties abroad.

There is no evidence to date of operational ties between terrorist organizations, I say again, and the Mexican cartels or the Mexican turrett has been used successfully by terrorist organizations. However, we should be aware that in the underworld of illegal enterprises these groups may well be in contact with each other. It would be surprising if they weren't.

And if the U.S. and Mexican Governments, in fact, in monitoring these links—and it is probably one of the greatest unheralded successes of cooperation to date, and one we may want to consider upping a notch in terms of our cooperation.

And let me finish by pointing to four challenges. They are developed more in the written remarks, but I just point them out very quickly. There are four things that we could be doing better in our relationship with Mexico to deal with organized crime.

First is developing a strategic plan for intelligence sharing that goes after the most violent groups first, and that look at the kind of violence that particularly affects citizens like Eduardo and Jayne and others, and the kind of violence that specifically is affecting civilians. And there are certain kinds of violence that are worse than others.

I mean, it is all bad, but there are certain things that really affect the life of people who are outside the business. And we can help the Mexican authorities do this, if the Mexican authorities are

open to it, which I think they are. I think it is something that they want to be doing.

Secondly, we can do a better job of mapping the trafficking organizations in the United States. We don't really have a critical mapping on how they organize once they get across the border. They try to keep their heads down in the United States. They are much less violent on this side of the border, much, much less violent. So we could do a great—a much better job of that, and also following their money trail in the United States, again, the $6–$9 billion that flows southward to Mexico every year.

Third, we could do much more to support reforms of the police, prosecutor, and courts. One of the things that would be particularly helpful, by the way, is—and we have put money in there, if I am not mistaken—is a police database that actually fingerprints, does retina scan—does fingerprint, voice recording, and retina scan of all police in the country.

It is something that partially exists, but not completely, because that way when police do collaborate with organized crime groups the Mexican Government can identify them, which right now is very hard to do. They are working on it, but a lot more to do. There is a lot more we can do to protect journalists, civic leaders, and elected officials, who are standing up and being courageous and denouncing violence, and a lot more we can do to invest in communities that are under stress.

And, finally—we can talk about this later if you'd like—there is a lot more we can do on this side in terms of curbing demand of narcotics, which is a long-term challenge. But we actually do know some of the things that work, and it would be good to actually be investing in some of the things that work to bring down demand. That is a domestic challenge for us as a country, and this is a public health challenge for us, but it would do a great deal to actually help our neighbors to the south as well.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Selee follows:]

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Hearing:
"The International Exploitation of Drug Wars and What We Can Do About It"

Andrew D. Selee, Ph.D.
Director, Mexico Institute
Woodrow Wilson Center

October 12, 2011

I would like to thank Chairman Rohrabacher and Ranking Member Carnahan. I would also like to acknowledge Committee Chair Ros-Lehtinen and Ranking Member Berman , who have always shown a commitment to strengthening U.S. ties with Mexico and Latin America.

Rising Violence and Foreign Ties

Mexico has seen a sharp rise in crime in the past three years. Some of this represents the rise in homicides directly related to the fight among seven large organized crime groups, often called cartels, for access to illegal narcotics smuggling routes from South American across Mexico and into the United States.

Some of the rising crime, however, is by other groups: kidnapping rings, smaller smuggling organizations, extortion gangs, and local thugs, who have proliferated in the environment of violence created by the large groups. In some cases, those who engage in other forms of crime also work for the cartels and are protected by them. In other cases, they are simply local criminals or smaller organized crime groups who have taken advantage of the perceived climate of public disorder to act with impunity.

There is little, if any, real evidence of foreign influence on these criminal enterprises, large and small, except, of course, that the largest and best-organized groups are transnational organizations and operate in multiple countries. Cocaine appears to represent about half of the illegal narcotics income of the large Mexican trafficking organizations, according to a recent Rand study. This means that these groups work closely with suppliers in Colombia, transshipment specialists in Central America, and, of course, U.S. gangs, mafia groups, and other distributors in the United States. The transnational pipelines move narcotics northward and bring money – roughly $6-9 billion in illegal drug sales to U.S. consumers each year according to the Rand study – back to Mexico and south into Central and South America.

There are also Mexican-led immigrant smuggling rings that specialize in non-Mexicans, including Central Americans, Cubans, South Americans, Chinese, Iraqis, and others. Of the major drug trafficking organizations, only the Zetas appear to have large-scale immigrant smuggling operations for foreign nationals at this time, but other cartels probably have some relationship to the immigrant smuggling groups, if only to regulate when they can use parts of the border and perhaps to charge them for crossing in territory where they have influence.

One of the most destructive aspects of the rise in crime has been a dramatic increase in some parts of Mexico in kidnapping. Most kidnapping takes place in the same areas of the country where drug-related crimes do, and are probably linked directly or indirectly to those involved in the cartels. However, there is one prominent kidnapping ring, which has emerged as a split from a former guerrilla group, know most recently as the EPR. This group probably has ties to other guerrilla organizations around the world, although its own operations are almost certainly homegrown and domestically run.

There is no evidence to date of operational ties between terrorist organizations and the Mexican cartels or that Mexican territory has been used by terrorist organizations. However, in the underworld of illegal enterprises, these groups may well be in contact with each other, and the U.S. and Mexican governments have been monitoring these links to make sure that no operational ties development. Perhaps one of the greatest and least heralded successes of U.S.-Mexico cooperation in the past decade has been the quiet development of an extensive warning system to prevent terrorist use of the shared border between the two countries. We saw this on display yesterday when charges were filed against the alleged perpetrators of a terrorist attack who sought to use Mexican traffickers as intermediaries and were foiled because of the close cooperation between the US and Mexican governments.

Four Policy Challenges

The U.S. and Mexican governments face four challenges going forward in their cooperation on issues of security, in addition to monitoring external threats to both countries from outside the region:

1. Develop a Strategic Plan for Intelligence Sharing that Reduces Violence
One of the great successes in bi-national cooperation between the U.S. and Mexican governments has been intelligence sharing, which has allowed the Mexican government to arrest many of the top leaders of the trafficking organizations. Indeed, the Mexican government has been able to deal major blows to the leadership of almost all the trafficking organizations thanks to this intelligence, and in some border cities, this cooperation goes even deeper, allowing the Mexican government to dismantle lower levels of the trafficking structure as well, including some of the key hitmen who perpetrate much of the

violence. The Mexican government has vastly improved their own capacities to obtain and process intelligence, but for the time being cooperation will be critical in this arena, especially given the binational and multinational structure of these organizations. The significantly diminished violence in Tijuana, across from San Diego, and somewhat diminished violence in Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, probably have something to do with close intelligence sharing and law enforcement cooperation between the two countries.

However, we could do a much better job at working with the Mexican government to ***develop a strategy that dissuades violence against civilians and public authorities.*** The Mexican government should, of course, continue to pursue all illegal activity and to punish those responsible for it. But, much as we try to do in the United States, it is wise to go after the most violent groups more actively and to give particular priority to cases in which civilians and public authorities are targeted by the trafficking organizations. Killings of journalists, mayors, civic leaders, and innocent by-standers are particularly heinous crimes that threaten public speech and send a chilling message to society. The recent casino fire in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon that killed 52 people, a fire set by one of the trafficking organizations, is an example of this kind of chilling violence that deserves an especially intense response. So too are the killings of journalists in many cities around the country. Placing greater emphasis on identifying, arresting, and prosecuting those who plan and execute these crimes would send a message to organized crime groups that it is in their interest to limit the kind of violent acts they engage in. Close collaboration between U.S. and Mexican agencies could help design and execute a strategy like this.

2. Map and Target the Trafficking Organizations' Activities in the U.S.

Strangely enough, we have only a limited idea of how the Mexican trafficking organizations operate in the United States. Our federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have done an excellent job of developing operational intelligence about certain activities of these organizations, but we have little systematic idea about how they are organized in the United States. ***It is critical to develop a systematic mapping of transnational crime organizations in the United States that takes into particular account the way they move money southward.***

In contrast to terrorist financing, we have few sustained efforts to pursue drug trafficking financing in the same way. We have the know-how, but we haven't dedicated the funding to this. Since money is moved through both "bulk cash" shipments and sophisticated financial transactions, the key is developing a map of their operations both in the financial system (for which Treasury has particular expertise) and a map of how they gather cash at safe houses for shipments south (for which ICE and DEA have expertise). Attempts to do increased southbound border enforcement have largely failed to stem the money

flow because cash is well-hidden by the time it reaches the border. We need better intelligence to capture cash flows before they reach the border and identify the complex financial transactions that allow for larger transfers of drug money south.

Similarly, we could do a far better job of intercepting illegal arms shipments headed south to Mexico. Even within existing law, we can do far more to develop an effective mapping of how the trafficking organizations purchase and move weapons across the border. Again, this requires intelligence on these activities before weapons reach the border itself.

3. Support Reforms of the Police, Prosecutors, and the Courts

The U.S. government can also do a great deal to help Mexico deepen its own reforms that strengthen rule of law. Without doubt, the most important challenge facing Mexico is how to create an institutional structure that makes it hard for organized crime groups to operate with impunity and for politicians and government officials to aid and abet them. The current Mexican government and citizen organizations have strongly promoted these efforts, but there is much the U.S. government can do to support these changes.

Through Merida Initiative funding, the U.S. government can support change agents in the federal and state governments who are seeking to systematically reform the police, prosecutors, and courts within their jurisdiction. Recent constitutional reforms in Mexico have helped create the momentum for important changes, but implementing these reforms is not easy and there is a great deal of resistance to change. Finding and supporting those who are promoting meaningful change within the Mexican government, even with limited resources, can help lock in advances. Some of the most effective efforts are those carried out through direct people-to-people exchanges among judges, court clerks, prosecutors, and police officers, including those led by the Council of State Governments (CSG) and the Conference of Western Attorneys General (CWAG), among others. Other efforts, including USAID funding to states implementing judicial reforms, and State Department support for the purchase of crime lab and inspection equipment and training for federal police investigators are extremely valuable efforts to bring about change in the institutional structure of rule of law.

Similarly, efforts to protect journalists, civic leaders, and local elected officials through early warning systems and temporary safe haven when they are under threat can help strengthen the local infrastructure that allows citizens to fight against organized crime groups and develop a civic response to the criminal organizations. Investments in youth and community programs in cities under particular stress, especially those on the border, can also help citizens

reconstruct their own civic infrastructure and face down the criminals that have taken possession of their cities.

Finally, investing in community resilience in areas under extreme stress from violence can help citizens fight back. Pilot efforts by USAID and the Mexican government to invest in community infrastructure in Ciudad Juárez, Tijuana, Monterrey, and elsewhere give average citizens tools to fight back against crime and build a more livable city.

4. Reduce the consumption of illegal narcotics in the United States.

Finally, we can do far more to reduce drug demand in the United States. According to a recent Rand study, cocaine, methamphetamines, and heroin comprise 75 to 80% of all the illegal narcotics profits of the Mexican trafficking organizations, and most of the sales are driven by the 20% or so of users who engage in chronic, heavy use of illegal narcotics. ***Therefore, a particular concentration on prevention and treatment of heavy cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin use could be especially useful in limiting the profits these organizations have.*** Since a large number, if not the vast majority, of heavy users are involved with the criminal justice system, interventions like Project HOPE in Hawaii and drug courts have been shown to be effective in reducing drug use by heavily dependent users and could help cut demand significantly over time. This is a question of redirecting existing resources to programs that work rather than an infusion of new resources.

Conclusions

Mexico is facing an unprecedented rise in violence and associated crime, including kidnappings, extortion, and robbery. While most of the country remains safe and has low homicide rates, areas that are the scene of fights among drug trafficking organizations are also the scene of other forms of crime that are only loosely linked to the drug traffickers.

Major crimes throughout the country are only rarely investigated and prosecuted successfully, creating an overall perception of impunity for those who wish to engage in criminal activity and those public authorities who abet them. To a large extent, Mexico is undergoing a major transition, where parts of the state are trying hard to crack down on crime and improve law enforcement, while other parts of the state remain penetrated by criminal groups.

There is no sign that the major drug trafficking organizations, kidnapping rings, or other criminal enterprises are driven by foreign influences – except, of course, for the $6 to 9 billion dollars in profits from sales to U.S. consumers of illegal narcotics –

but transnational criminal organizations do maintain ties to other illicit organizations and these ties are worth monitoring to prevent convergences.

In the meantime, the U.S. government can make its greatest contribution to greater security in Mexico by supporting efforts at targeting the leadership and networks of criminal organizations both in Mexico and in the United States; supporting efforts to strengthen rule of law in Mexico; and shifting U.S. drug policy to invest in strategies that reduce the incentives of chronic users of heavy drugs to continue their use.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, thank you all very much for your testimony today. And I will begin the question session here, and I would like to start out with Eduardo. Eduardo, you believe that your kidnappers were not just Mexican nationals from the city next door who have gotten out of hand. This isn't a situation, as far as you're concerned, with just domestic—you know, a domestic problem for Mexico.

Why do you believe that there—was there some indication that you have that either while you were being held or in your investigation into the crime against you since then, that would lead you to believe that there was a foreign element involved in this other than Mexico? I would ask your wife Jayne to join us, please.

Mr. VALSECA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I was held in that box, one day I got just overwhelmed with the abuse, and I told the guy who made me call him "el jefe" that to go ahead and kill me. And the first words that I can read on his lips, because he was very careful not to have a voice, so I wouldn't recognize his voice, were English words. he said——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. English words.

Mr. VALSECA. English words. That he got automatically, in the moment that I told him, "Go ahead and kill me," he got very, very vicious and mean. And he went and grabbed a gun and he put a gun in my mouth, and he told me, not in loud words, but he called me son of a bitch and mother fucker and all kinds of things without speaking loud.

When I came out, sir, and I had the opportunity to talk to Ron Lavender—this is an American who was kidnapped in Acapulco from the same group—I had—my wife and I had a chance to talk to him for about 2½ hours privately.

And he—I said to him that—explains what I am just sharing with you, and he said, "I am certain he is from California. He is from your state." And he said, "I am certain that at least three or four members of this group, they speak perfect English from the east coast of United States." So this is not something that was out of my imagination. It is something that I proved with another victim, and we are certain that they are English speaking. And so that is why we know that they are international groups.

My wife just reminded me that one of the things, you know, that also tells you—Mexicans have a large lunch and a very light dinner. That is cultural. In the United States, it is the other way around. You have a very short—a very short time for lunch and then you have a large dinner when you get home.

Well, the way they treat me was always a very small lunch in terms of the—it was just a salad, which in the Mexican diet people don't eat salads, you know? So it was always a salad, and the dinner was always bigger portion. So that is very, very American. So those things, but the most important thing is Ron Lavender.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. And, Jayne, if you could move your microphone up there. So you know that those—so those people who were involved in this kidnapping—and we are talking about—what level of kidnapping is taking place now? How many families are going through what you went through in Mexico?

Ms. VALSECA. Well, it is important to understand that the EPR was sort of the parent group, if you will, and it has splintered

through the years, over the past, say, 20 years. So now you have many different cells that share a similar ideology and way of working. But all of these cells, and specifically the one that had Eduardo, they demand multi-million dollar ransoms. They rarely accept less than $1 million. As a matter of fact, in many cases they have received $40-, $35-, $25 million in one ransom payment.

They typically—this cell alone typically kidnaps two victims per year, and they hold them for a minimum of 6 months. One of the victims—as a matter of fact, the previous victim, the one before Eduardo was kidnapped, was held for almost 2 years. And they collected a multi-million dollar ransom.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And you are convinced that these are, number one, not Mexicans, or at least——

Ms. VALSECA. Not exclusively Mexicans.

Mr. ROHRABACHER [continuing]. At least the leadership is not Mexican. And what makes you think that there is a connection of—number one, these are—they may well be Americans, as you have just testified, or they—there was some indication that they may have been permitted to operate out of another country rather than the United States—Venezuela or Cuba or such? Do you have information about that?

Ms. VALSECA. Yes. Well, that information came directly from the Federal authorities in Mexico, and was expressed to me in private meetings. And this goes all the way to Genaro Garcia Luna himself. They have probably regretted telling me those things at this point. They never imagined we would go public with our story.

But what was expressed to me very clearly by all of these people was that this was a terrorist group with international links. And I asked which countries those links were to, and they didn't mention them all, but they did say that there were suspected former Cuban agents, links to the Venezuelan Government, links to the FARC, links to the United States' members that were suspected to be from the United States, and it went on from there.

ETA from Spain, they—and I asked why that would be, and they said that they were members of ETA who had taken refuge in Mexico, hiding, and that they had joined forces with this group and others like them and shared their information on how to build explosives, among other things.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I am going to let Mr. Carnahan have his shot, and then we are going to do a second round as well after Judge Poe also has his shot. But let me just note, what we are talking about here now is there are criminals in every country, which we know, and there are criminal networks in every country, but we now know that the drug cartel networks have been with this $6–$9 billion that we send—are sending the criminal elements in Mexico every year with our purchases of drugs, that we do know that there are—that criminal web, you might say, or organization exists.

We also know that there are terrorists who are ideologically driven to hate the West, and especially hate the United States and hate our way of life. And so what we have are two elements now that we seem to be seeing as being in some way intertwined in their activity to be mutually reinforcing. Let us just note where the

international or the foreign government connection comes into is this and should not be missed.

The terrorist element that now is intertwined with criminal networks, those terrorists have been given—from day one have been given support from governments that find them—that are headed by people who share their hatred of the West, and of the United States.

So if you have a government that hates the United States, it would not be any way inconsistent for the heads of that government to permit terrorists and actually provide terrorists with not only a safe haven but a means of support, a place to come and a safe haven, and there is indication, as we know—and I will ask the witnesses to comment on this after—on the second round—that terrorists have been given safe haven, and criminals have been given safe haven, in Venezuela. And we know that.

There is—and our witnesses may want to comment on that. And if these same terrorists are tied into an international criminal ring, there is where you have this connection, and it is very consistent.

We had in Cuba for years—certain criminals were permitted to escape from the United States and given safe haven in Cuba. And I remember there was a fellow from the United States who actually was a guy who bilked a lot of people out of his money, he ended up in Cuba for 20 years. And his name will come to me by the end of this hearing—Robert Vesco, there you go.

So here you had Robert Vesco, a recognized international criminal, who was given safe haven in Cuba, very openly over those—well, how about all of the other criminals that we don't know their name? Robert Vesco comes to mind, but what about all of those people at the next level who make their money by kidnapping people?

And maybe Robert Vesco stole about a couple hundred million dollars. He is at—maybe we know about him, but what do we—if they are willing to take the Robert Vescos in, who spent, I might add, an enormous amount of time while in Cuba becoming an in-between to the drug cartels and various networks, what about the other people there? Are the Robert Vescos involved? Are they the English speakers that Eduardo is talking about who threw him into a tiny box and almost destroyed his life? And who would do him harming now if they could get to him?

So we have this—what I guess we call—we have the evil—axis of evil as the Judge—maybe we should call it the evil web or the evil network that now is operating in our hemisphere, as close to us as Mexico. And if we don't do anything about this, we can—I am—let me just note, there is no doubt that it will start spreading across the border.

And what happened yesterday indicates that the type of violence that we have been predicting would spread across our border is on the way, and we need to go and start focusing on this and doing something about it before it starts doing something about us as individuals.

Mr. Carnahan, you may proceed, and you have got as much time as you would like.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank all of you again. I am not going to be able to stay for the second round, so

I am going to try to get in three areas to cover. First, for the Valsecas, thank you for being here and sharing your incredible story and for being forthright. I think it is really helpful.

You mentioned talking to another victim and some of the similar patterns. Have you, or do you know of anyone else who has really analyzed these kidnappers for—is there a similar pattern there in terms of what they do, how they do it, that could be helpful in really targeting how we deal with that?

Ms. VALSECA. I have a copy of a PowerPoint presentation that was shown to me within days of Eduardo's kidnapping. It was shown to me by Mexican Federal authorities, and I do have a copy of that, and I could provide it to American authorities, whoever needs to see that. And it has names, pictures, an outline of all the—of all of the documented previous victims, not—it doesn't include all of them, because so many of those people many years ago didn't even report these cases to the authorities. But I can provide all of that, yes.

Mr. CARNAHAN. If you could——

Ms. VALSECA. And there is a very, very well documented MO.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you. If you could—if you want to provide that to the committee, I think that would be a great addition to the record for this hearing. Thank you.

Secondly, we have a very active group back home where I am from. It is the St. Louis Interfaith Community on Latin America. They have been—they had submitted a question for the hearing today about the Merida Initiative and wondering what is the return on that U.S. investment, given the rise in violence, the increase in cartels, the continuing drug trafficking problems? I would ask the other three witnesses to just give me their quick take on that. Mr. Farah?

Mr. FARAH. Thank you. I think the Merida Initiative is badly needed. I think—I don't deal so much directly with Mexico, as Andrew and others do. I think the biggest failing, in my mind, is the incredible lack of resources allocated to Central America, which is allowing the entire back door of Mexico to stay open.

When you look at the territorial control of the Zetas in Guatemala, more than 40 percent of the Guatemala national territory is now under Zeta control. Sinaloa cartel's deep roots in Honduras, the ongoing struggle and the money laundering activities in El Salvador, they are facing, as you squeeze Mexico a little bit on our side, the rest of the stuff is just flooding into Central America.

So I would say in the Merida Initiative the biggest weakness to me, outside of what specifically goes to Mexico, is the non-factoring in of the balloon effect, which we know so well, and this stuff rolling south in ways that are utterly, utterly destroying Central America, in ways that are very hard to describe.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you. Mr. Farnsworth?

Mr. FARNSWORTH. Thank you, sir. No, I completely agree. I think Merida Initiative is a good initiative. It is solid. If anything, it was conceived to be a national initiative for Mexico instead of the regional initiative that Doug is talking about. Central America has been added to that secondly, but probably should have been part of the initial package that may have also needed to include some of the Andean region as well.

The second thing is there have been reports that some of the assistance promised under Merida have been delayed in arriving, whether it is equipment or other things. But I think the successes are real in that intelligence cooperation has dramatically improved, training has occurred, for the Mexican authorities, necessary and important work. And I think we saw, again, some of the results of that yesterday, fortunately. That is not to say that it is a perfect program. It is not. But I think it is a very timely and important initiative.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Okay. Dr. Selee?

Mr. SELEE. Always good to hear from old friends in St. Louis. Actually, I know some of the people involved there. It is—I would agree with what they have both said, which is I think Merida has been very, very important in stimulating particularly bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico.

It has been absolutely fundamental in getting us to share intelligence, getting us to talk about shared responsibility for the first time seriously and consistently, and to recognize that this is as much our issue as Mexico's. And this is our money. It is their weak rule of law, right? I mean, this is really a coming together of our appetite for illegal narcotics with Mexico's really weak institutions.

Merida is really just starting to flow. I mean, the money is really just starting to flow. The most important part of Merida, as far as I am concerned, is whatever we can do—in terms of the funding part of it, what we can do to help Mexico build their institutions for the long term, the court systems, and they have some really good court reforms going on.

But we need to nurture those, together with the Mexican Government, and we can't do it. We can help the Mexican Government do it, help some of the Mexican states, police reform, prosecutorial reform, creation of intelligence databases, like the one on the police. I think those are critical, building the institutional structure in Mexico.

Mr. CARNAHAN. And my third area I wanted to follow up with you, Dr. Selee, the fourth item of your challenges, you mentioned curbing demand of narcotics in the U.S. I mean, that number, that $6–$9 billion number is really staggering. Can you address some of those initiatives? Has anyone done—who do you think has done the best work in terms of evaluating and focusing on what that should look like?

Mr. SELEE. Some of the people worth looking at—the people that were involved in the study, Peter Reuter, Jon Caulkins, Mark Kleiman, who was not involved int eh study, but Mark Kleiman has done some very good work, and he is the——

Mr. CARNAHAN. You are talking about the Rand study.

Mr. SELEE. The Rand study, yes, exactly. Kleiman wasn't—Reuter and Caulkins were involved in the Rand study, with a couple of other folks. I don't Kleiman was. But they have all done similar work together on looking at what is effective in terms of drug policy. And I think recognizing—I mean, realistically, we are not going to get rid of drug addiction in this country.

I mean, unfortunately, it is—there are some real limits to this. But in terms of what drives the drug trade in Latin America, and in Mexico, and drives the violence, and in terms of the worst health

issues in the United States, there is a set of chronic users of hard drugs who spend—who are actually most of that $6–$9 billion.

We are talking about half of the profits of the Mexican cartels are probably cocaine, from what they have discovered from the Rand study. About 20 or 25 percent is marijuana, and 25–30 percent is methamphetamines and heroin.

Of the hard drugs, the sort of shorthand that they tend to use is that 80 percent of the profits are generated by 20 percent of the users. You know, you have to look at some of the more—I am not a drug policy specialist, so I can't, you know, guarantee that is exactly right. But it is sort of a shorthand there.

I mean, we are talking about 20 percent of the people who use hard drugs drive most of this trade. Most of these folks are in the criminal justice system. And so there is some thinking of things like Project Hope in Hawaii, which takes people who are already in the criminal justice system—I am sure the Judge and Congressman Poe knows this well—it takes people who are already under judicial supervision and gives them incentives to stay off narcotics.

Instead of sort of sending them back to jail, it does sort of short-term—you know, immediate short-term reactions if they aren't clean. And those kind of things give people an ability to get off drugs. About 90 percent of the people who actually get off drugs don't go through rehabilitation. People who are addicts actually get clean on their own. And so creating incentives in the criminal justice system for people who have been hooked for a while doesn't always work, but it has a much higher success rate than other things we have done.

And there are things in prevention we can do as well. Montana has done some things on meth prevention that seem to be fairly successful. So there are models out there. It is worth looking at them.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Carnahan. Let us just note that it may or may not have been the drug cartels that kidnapped Eduardo. They may well have had nothing to do with narcotics or——

Mr. CARNAHAN. I think they didn't, right?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right. So it is a—what you are talking about, it is all interrelated, but even if we eliminated that there might be an increase in kidnapping, because these are evil—there are evil people in the world, and what we are talking about today are evil human beings and how they use their activity.

And one guy who has dealt with evil human beings all of his life—[laughter]—trying to thwart them is the good judge from Texas. Judge Poe, you may proceed.

Judge POE. That is right, Mr. Chairman. I feel like Luke Skywalker sometimes fighting the forces of evil. But thank you for being here.

Eduardo, you are a man to be admired. I have here the Washington Post article and your photograph and how you suffered through this. You are a remarkable man, and you have married, obviously, a remarkable woman. And I thank you both for coming forward and talking about this dastardly deed.

Mr. Chairman, I would like unanimous consent to submit the Washington Post article of August 2009 into the record.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Without objection.

Judge POE. I want to just ask you all a few questions. This happened in Mexico. Is the same group operating in the United States and kidnapping in the United States and taking folks to Mexico? Jayne?

Ms. VALSECA. I don't have any information in that regard. I don't think so, although, of course, it can't be disregarded that it is suspected that there are American members of this group. But it also is worth noting that in the case of the former Mexican senator and Presidential candidate Diego Fernandez de Cevallos, it is a perfect match as far as the MO goes.

It is highly suspected, even at the highest level in the Mexican national authorities, that this was committed yet again by the same group that had Eduardo. And in a communication to the press, following his release after the kidnapping, they have now started calling themselves the Network for Global Transformation.

Judge POE. There are anecdotal instances that I have heard from local sheriffs on the Texas border of Mexican nationals living in the United States being kidnapped and taken back to Mexico for ransom. And then, of course, extortion rings, the same thing—Mexican nationals or Americans of Hispanic descent in the U.S. being extorted for money with the—if they don't pay, then they—some relative in Mexico is going to be harmed.

I am starting to hear sporadic comments by local law enforcement that that is occurring. Like all crimes like this, people who are threatened and the victims do not cooperate with law—they don't want to report it, because they are afraid of their own lives.

I will talk about the ultimate result of all of this is that drugs come to the United States. The United States has a demand. I think there was a study yesterday that said that 9 percent of Americans are chemically dependent, so much so that they are not hirable, they can't get a job because they are chemically dependent.

If that is true, 10 percent of the United States is dependent on some chemical, and makes them non-productive, that is a tragedy. On the long range, we, as a society, must make a social change about our addiction to chemicals, whatever they are, because there is a demand, so there is a source.

Let me ask this question, Mr. Farnsworth. Do you think, just kind of yes or no, should we look to the drug cartels, like the Zetas, and label them a foreign terrorist organization? And then deal with them that way with more laws that we have that are available, or should we just not do that yet?

Mr. FARNSWORTH. I would say not yet. I would like to see more evidence that they are actually linked up. What happened yesterday is not an encouraging sign in that regard. So, but as of now, I think that they remain guns for hire, without much of a political agenda. And I agree with your earlier comments that they are really in it for the money, and whether that is kidnapping, people trafficking, drug trafficking, other bad things, they are doing it primarily for the money, not for political change, as far as I see them.

Judge POE. The situation with the Iranian Government operative, that is my opinion, and the Zeta cartel, which they—obviously

was not, thank goodness. Is that a link—foreign terrorist organizations, whether it is Hezbollah or whoever, working through Mexican drug cartels to do harm in the United States, is that something that we are going to see, or we have been seeing more of? This is just one incident that was captured?

Mr. FARNSWORTH. It is certainly something that we have to watch very, very closely. I completely agree with that. And I guess it is too early to know if this is a one-off or if it is a pattern.

Judge POE. One other thing since my time has expired. When I was in Colombia, it was interesting that the Colombians blame a lot of their problems not on the United States but on Mexico, and the Mexican lack of law enforcement. The Mexican drug cartels are now going to Colombia, and they are competitors with the local drug dealers. They had some pretty harsh words for the nation of Mexico.

Last question, and I am going to ask you questions later at another subcommittee, Mr. Farah, so—just so you know, because I value your expertise. Give me a—when we talk about Mexico, what is the state of the state of Mexico? We hear everything that it is a failed state to "Ah, it is a tourist's paradise." You know, we hear all of that in between. What is your opinion, Mr. Farnsworth? I am going to ask you, Doctor.

Mr. FARNSWORTH. Well, thank you, sir. I think the state of Mexico is a democracy that remains in transition. It certainly has some problems, and the drug issues I would put front and center. But it is a healthy democracy. It is a country with economic growth that is creating jobs, so I wouldn't agree with either extreme, that it is a paradise for tourists or that it is a failed state. I would say that the truth lies in between, and I would say that it is evolving.

The government I think is doing relatively well under some very, very difficult circumstances, not to say, again, that the government is perfect or has done everything perfectly right. But I do think that under some very trying circumstances they have done relatively well.

I do think, however, that this new element that was introduced yesterday is potentially worrisome, and that would change the dynamic somewhat to certainly if this were proven to be more than just a one-time occurrence, and I think that is something that we have to watch very closely.

Judge POE. Just to follow up before I let Dr. Selee answer this question, do you agree or is your opinion that the Mexican Government helped cooperate, to some extent, in thwarting this plot? Mr. Farnsworth?

Mr. FARNSWORTH. Yes, I do.

Judge POE. Okay.

Mr. FARNSWORTH. Yes.

Mr. SELEE. You know, I actually agree with what Mr. Farnsworth says. I mean, I think Mexico is a country that has gone through a democratic transition over the past 10 years, 10, 12 years. It is trying to build a rule of law. It is hard to do when you have organized crime groups with billions of dollars at their disposal, trying to subvert that.

And I think this is, you know, where Mexico is today, trying to become a modern, successful, prosperous democracy. In some ways

it is moving ahead as we become more of a middle class society than it ever has, which is good. There is some growth there. It has become a manufacturing economy. There are some things—the Supreme Court has become relevant. I mean, there are some good things you can talk about, but at the same time, when you get down to the local level, there is a real attempt to subvert rule of law. And it is hard in places where organized crime wants to operate to get around that.

If you look at the overall crime rate, you know, Mexico has much less—has a much lower homicide rate than Brazil does, much lower than Colombia does, about half of Brazil actually, maybe a little bit—maybe it is not quite that anymore, but it is at least—it is not—Brazil not double, at least it is very close to that, one and a half times higher homicide rate. We don't think of Brazil as a failed state.

That said, if you go to Acapulco, Ciudad Juarez, Monterrey, right now, which are all major cities in Mexico—Acapulco, a tourist destination; Monterrey, the industrial capital of Mexico; Ciudad Juarez, a major city on the border—the homicide rate is incredibly high, right? And it has been very hard to control this.

There have been some successes. Tijuana, nearby San Diego, is actually doing better than it has done in years. They were able to get the organized crime rings under control, so there are some successes here. Juarez has actually gotten marginally better as well. I mean, at least homicides are down. It is less open. It is less in the street. Individual civilians seem less at risk than they were a couple of years ago, though it is still bad.

But there are some places that are still, you know, among the worst in the world, and that is—that tells you there is an inability to completely enforce the rule of law in a way that citizens expect.

Judge POE. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I will give the other two witnesses a chance to answer that last question, Mr. Farah, and then Eduardo.

Mr. FARAH. Well, I think that Mexico is exactly in transition. I think that you see these huge spikes in specific areas, because I think what we often don't understand is how important geographic control is to narcotics trafficking organizations or transnational organized crime. They need specific roots and specific places in order to move their product.

And one of the things I think that I have been looking at a lot in my research, both for the U.S. Government and privately, is that what you are seeing increasingly—and the Zetas I think are a perfect example of this—is more and more you see the same—or different criminal organizations and terrorist organizations using the same pipelines to move products.

If you want to move 30 illegal Chinese across Venezuela into Mexico, or 30 AK–47s or 30 kilos of cocaine, you pass the same checkpoints, the same choke points along the way. So you are operating with the same small group of people who control that transnational pipeline.

And I would also like to say just briefly on the kidnapping issue—you know this well—if you look at what happened right after the Central American wars, what did both the unrepentant,

unregenerate far right and the Communist Party and other groups do immediately? They went into kidnapping.

They would train in kidnapping. They went to the ETA for training, as these groups have done. And the premier group for sponsoring this type of kidnapping now across the region are all tied to the FARC, and I think that that is one of the incredible misunderstandings or lack of understandings we have about the FARC is the Colombian Government has done better in pushing them to the margins of Colombian political life.

They retain an incredibly vibrant transnational organization and front group structure. It goes to Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, many other places, and those groups are trained specifically in how to kidnap, how to negotiate, and how to raise—and this group that you are talking about, the global transformation, directly tied to the FARC.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. So you are suggesting that this kidnapping cartel, for lack of a better description, is not tied to the drug cartel in the sense that they may have different roots.

And, in fact, when you think about it, it is a totally different type of a criminal activity in the same way that there is a different profession in the legal professions, too, where you have to have different expertise to kidnap people and to extort money from their family as compared to transporting drugs and selling it and then getting the money laundered.

Mr. FARAH. It is a specialization, without a doubt.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. It is a specialization.

Mr. FARAH. And the FARC, and particularly the Communist Party, the remnants of the Communist Party in El Salvador, remnants of the Sandinista government, or what was the hardline Sandinista that never demobilized, as well as factors on the far right that maintain exactly the same structures they did during the war, are masters at that. And I think it—the effects are being felt across Latin America in ways that we often find incomprehensible, but they are not that hard to understand.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Well, that is fascinating. And, Eduardo, did you have a comment for Judge Poe's last question?

Mr. VALSECA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to share that the comment about Tijuana is doing better was a very good article just 2 or 3 days ago in The Washington Post. And one of the most important reasons Tijuana is doing better is because they have a lot of American enforce helping them to grab these guys.

I think that the Mexicans alone, they are not capable of doing—they don't have the manpower. They don't have the will of doing it. The corruption is tremendous. And it is thanks to the enforcement of the United States right on the border, and they were really suffering because they were not making any money anymore. These people were going somewhere else. And thanks to the authorities of the United States, that is a good proof why we need so much the support of the United States. This is the only way that we can do better is by sharing that.

And another thing I want to share with you is that my son lives in California, my older son, that you met, and he went to Mexico. He is in the film industry, and he was taking a film about, you know, what happens in Mexico with most—we have 7 million peo-

ple in Mexico in poverty, and they come to the United States like a dream to come across illegal and get a job here, of cutting people's grass or whatever.

And he came filming this guy—the real person that is leaving his family and coming to the United States, saying bye to his mother and all of—the whole thing. The incredible part was—and he shared with me—when he came to Laredo, crossed into Texas, it is totally controlled by Zetas.

And when I asked him, "Where is the police?" he laughed at me. He says, "That is the business of the police." There are like a hundred Zetas with machine guns and with very good pistols, brand new, and a very sophisticated way of communicating, and $300 apiece, I mean, each illegal Mexican who comes across. And he said there are thousands of illegals coming across.

Each one of them have to give $300 or they won't come across. If you try to play smart, they kill you right there. And the police knows about this thing is going on, and they control certain areas of the border. They know about it; they don't do a thing about it. So that is what I want to share with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. All right. Thank you. And we have been joined by Congressman Rivera, which you may proceed with your line of questioning. Then, we will have one more round of questions after Congressman Rivera's.

Mr. RIVERA. Thank you very much. I am sure we have exhausted the topic throughout the hearing, but there is just one item that I would like to try to focus in one if—and if you could provide some insight into someone called El Chapo Guzman. Mr. Selee, can you tell us, who is El Chapo Guzman?

Mr. SELEE. He is the reputed leader of the Sinaloa cartel, the largest drug trafficking organization in Mexico.

Mr. RIVERA. What is it called?

Mr. SELEE. The Sinaloa cartel.

Mr. RIVERA. And that is the largest in Mexico.

Mr. SELEE. Yes.

Mr. RIVERA. And do we know——

Mr. SELEE. I think certainly.

Mr. RIVERA [continuing]. His whereabouts or his latest activities?

Mr. SELEE. I mean, media reports put him in Durango, in the state of Durango, in northern Mexico. But to be honest, I don't have any intelligence myself on that. I mean, that is what you hear from people who follow this in Mexico, from good reporters. He is in a rural area of Durango. But, again, I can't—you know, I have no independent confirmation of this.

Mr. RIVERA. And media reports as to also relatives of his, his son, for example, and presence in Bolivia, have you heard of any connection between Bolivia and El Chapo Guzman's drug cartel?

Mr. SELEE. I have not, to be honest, but obviously these are transnational networks. I am sure they do have relationships in Bolivia and Peru and Colombia and Ecuador and elsewhere, you know, as well as in Central America——

Mr. RIVERA. Mr. Farah?

Mr. SELEE [continuing]. As well as throughout the U.S.

Mr. FARAH. I spent a great deal of time working on Bolivia, and I think it is—El Chapo Guzman's son actually crashed an aircraft there. So, and according to internal intelligence reports, there is—I think that he has been there. They have a fairly robust structure. I don't know if he is still there. I don't think he is a permanent fixture there. I think he moves around a lot. But I think that given their transnational spread that they have—they are—he maintains operational control in the southern——

Mr. RIVERA. And you said his son crashed an aircraft in Bolivia. When was that?

Mr. FARAH. I would have to go back and look. I think 2009, 2010. It was fairly relatively recently.

Mr. RIVERA. So a few years ago. That aircraft—he survived the crash, I assume.

Mr. FARAH. All I have seen is a brief intelligence report that said he crashed it, and I assume he survived, yes. It didn't say he perished in it.

Mr. RIVERA. Because I had also heard that previous to that crash that he was taking flight lessons. That is where he was learning to fly was in Bolivia. What do we—do we know of any cooperation between members of the Bolivian Government and drug cartels narco trafficking?

Mr. FARAH. I think the case of General Sanabria, who was just convicted in a Miami court and sentenced to 14 years, the former head of the Counter Narcotics Police, is clear evidence. I think if you look at the structure that he ran inside the Bolivian Government, it goes up very high.

I think if you look at the internal reporting that went on between members of the Bolivian law enforcement community and their superiors, including ministers in the cabinet where they warned that these things were happening and were ignored, I think that there is ample evidence that very senior levels of the Bolivian Government are deeply involved, at least protecting drug trafficking, if not sponsoring it.

Mr. RIVERA. And any other—this conviction, did the conviction have—do you know if the conviction had anything to do with the relationship between his activities in the Bolivian Government and Mexican drug cartels?

Mr. FARAH. In this particular case, what he was tried for was not that. It was a shipment that went out through Chile to Panama and then to Miami where he talks explicitly about the support he is receiving from the Bolivian Government and his ability to move large sums for specific amounts of money, or large amounts of cocaine for specific amounts of money. In that particular case, I am not aware of any tie to Mexico.

Mr. RIVERA. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I am going to ask a couple more questions, or at least have a bit of discussion here, and then we will close up hopefully before noon.

So today what we have heard is that there seems to be networks that seem to be meshing, evil networks that seem to be meshing into something that is turning into a nightmare for honest people, not only in Mexico but could well turn into a nightmare for the people of the United States as well. Underscoring that was yesterday's

revelation that a foreign government, terrorist government, was attempting to utilize—hire a drug cartel gangsters to commit an assassination here in the United States.

If that sort of thing becomes prevalent, we could face the same enormous challenge—and other countries—where honest judges are murdered, where honest generals are murdered, where honest police officers are murdered, and others are corrupted. And we have to put ourselves in the position of these people. People do not understand that if someone comes up to you in Mexico and says, "We will give you $50,000 a month, or we are going to kill your family, you make the choice," how difficult a decision that would be for even an honest person to do that. That is the type of incredible pressure that is going on.

We need to recognize that this meshing of the networks between a criminal network and a terrorist network may well be happening. Mr. Farah's observation that the type of kidnapping, international kidnapping, that—how this perhaps relates actually to the modus operandi of terrorist and ideological groups, based on the Marxist philosophy anyway, more than fits just simply what the drug cartels are doing. That was very insightful and something that should help members of this committee in how we judge what is going on.

Mr. Selee, let me just note about your observations about drug use and the resources that are available. I personally don't believe that we should be putting people in jail in the United States for consuming whatever substance they want to consume. I think it is a waste of our money, when there are other people in the United States who are being victimized by rapists, murderers, et cetera. We need a criminal justice to focus on them.

But with that, then there is some argument that even if you just do that that would bring the price of drugs down, if people were now no longer facing these criminal penalties, et cetera. However, I don't necessarily buy that part of the argument, and I would suggest that there are other ways of dealing with the drug problem that we have not tried.

And, for example, we—I would think that drug testing is something that we played around with for a while, and they never, as a society, decided that drug testing was the way to go. And it seems to me that as long as we are testing people for drugs, but not for a criminal penalty, meaning that they are discovered—if you have drug testing within certain professions, and you discover someone who is involved with drugs, that is legal to do that, because it is not self-incrimination, unless you plan to prosecute that person for using those drugs.

But certainly drug testing, if we discover people are using drugs, we can put impediments in the way of people. For example, young people who would like to get driver's licenses should have to test, maybe in their gym classes in high school, before they can get a driver's license. Not to put them in jail, but to make sure they don't get their driver's license. That may deter the use of drugs dramatically among young people.

For example, drug testing should be required of airline pilots, truck drivers, cab drivers, et cetera, et cetera, because drugs do affect people's ability to do their job. And in their job, if there is a

life—people's lives are at stake by their job, they should be drug tested.

But, furthermore, perhaps if someone is, you might say, dining at the public largesse, meaning receiving government stipends of some kind, whether they are—whether it is scholarships or whatever they are, or welfare payments, that perhaps drug testing should be required before someone receives government largesse.

If we indeed have that kind of commitment, frankly, I think that would be a great deterrent than our current system of simply locking—trying to lock people up.

Mr. SELEE. Can I just clarify something, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yes.

Mr. SELEE. I completely agree with you, actually. I would not suggest locking more people up. In fact, I think we lock up too many people for consumption, which makes no sense. And I don't think I explained myself well. I mean, I am not saying we should lock up more people. There is a high correlation between people who have addictions to hard drugs who are already in the criminal justice system, often for other sorts of crimes, not only drug-related crimes, but often for robbery and other things.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right.

Mr. SELEE. In terms of probation, what Project Hope does and other experiments like this, South Dakota does this actually on drunk driving, interestingly enough, with people who are on probation, make sure they stay clean as long as they are in the system. And they actually have a very high success rate in getting people to stay clean, creating the incentives to help them get off drugs, so they don't commit crimes again and they stop using heavy drugs.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Yes, I would——

Mr. SELEE. If we can focus on that population, surprisingly, that is already in the criminal justice system, surprisingly, we can be fairly effective at getting rid of a large set of consumers of——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. And if we are talking about $6–$9 billion going into the hands of criminal elements, that is an overwhelming challenge for a country like Mexico, and even an overwhelming challenge for people in the United States I might add.

So I think we have covered some really—some good ground here, and let me—before I finish up, one last question or two, but, Congressman Rivera, do you have anything else? I found Congressman Rivera's focus on Bolivia interesting. And would someone like to comment on that? Because we focused so much on Mexico, and Bolivia and Venezuela and Cuba are national entities that we need to—obviously need to pay attention to as well. Mr. Farnsworth?

Mr. FARNSWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I do want to congratulate you for this hearing and the timeliness of it, but also for bringing the human dimension, the human element into these discussions—very important.

I think it highlights the fact that the narcotics trade is truly regionwide, and that strategies to address it really have to be conceived in that type of manner. And if we break them down to a bilateral issue or even a subregional issue, we find, as we did when we focused on Mexico with Merida, that it is like a balloon. You push on one side and it bubbles out somewhere else, and that is what is happening in Central America.

It doesn't help in the Bolivia context, for example, however, that the government has kicked out the DEA and has intentionally tried to change the relationship with the United States in the way that, frankly, is against some U.S. interests, I would argue, in trying to address some of these very difficult issues.

So it does go to the point that when there are governments in the region that are cooperative with us and we can be cooperative with them, it lends to a much greater level of success, as we have seen in Colombia, as we have seen with Peru, as we have seen with some of our other friends and allies in the region.

And when there are leaders who may democratically elected, and may be serving at the behest of their people, who nonetheless take a different view on these issues, whether it is through production of some of these substances or serving as safe havens or transit points, or what have you, it immeasurably complicates these issues.

So I think that points out a very important aspect, and I am glad you raised the question. Thank you for allowing me to address it.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. And let us note, again, we—this hearing was meant to focus on foreign governments' influence on these issues. A foreign government can—their involvement means a lot. I mean, for example, if a foreign government simply gives safe haven, let us suggest that Eduardo believes that perhaps the people who kidnapped him were Americans, you know, from the United States, but the chances of those Americans actually operating in Venezuela rather than in the United States may be very high.

If in Venezuela they determine that their job is to bring down—that the government feels some sort of kinship with those who would bring down the Mexican Government and replace it with a radical left wing government, they would then provide a safe haven.

When I mentioned Robert Vesco—and thank you for reminding me what his name was—Rivera knew what that—knew Robert Vesco very well. But Robert Vesco was given safe haven for decades in Cuba—decades—and he was deeply involved, we now know, in helping the international drug cartels and was actually—I remember there was some intercept that suggested that there was a dispute and he was going to become the arbiter of the dispute, which shows you his deep involvement.

And why did Fidel Castro permit a guy like Robert Vesco, right? Money and Fidel Castro thinks this is a good way to bring down the United States, so it couples his financial interest with his ideology. And I think that—so as we close today, we are talking about and this seems to be revealing, you might say, a network, an evil network, and an evil meshing of two different groups.

And between the terrorists and the drug cartel, and what goes along with that, that meshing is a national government's—other government's involvement, because of their ideological desire as well as their desire for money. So I think we have reached the point where there—we have demonstrated that there is a correlation between these factors and why there is a correlation between these factors.

We will perhaps have another hearing on this issue in the near future, and I think that it is worth us to document what is going

on in Bolivia and what is going on in Cuba, what is going on in Venezuela, that will lead to the horrible crime that was committed against this family and how this family represents thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of other families who have been victimized by this criminal element that is now part of, as we say, an evil meshing and an evil network that threatens the—eventually will threaten the United States.

So thank you all very much. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:03 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Material Submitted for the Hearing Record

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), Chairman

October 11, 2011

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, to be held in **Room 2200 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live, via the WEBCAST link on the Committee website at http://www.hcfa.house.gov):**

DATE: Wednesday, October 12, 2011

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

SUBJECT: The International Exploitation of Drug Wars and What We Can Do About It

WITNESSES: Mr. Eduardo Garcia Valseca
Kidnap victim

Mr. Eric Farnsworth
Vice President
Council of the Americas

Mr. Douglas Farah
Senior Fellow
International Assessment and Strategy Center

Andrew Selee, Ph. D.
Director
Mexico Institute, Woodrow Wilson Center

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Oversight and Investigations* HEARING

Day *Wednesday* Date *October 12, 2011* Room *2200 RHOB*

Starting Time *10:06* Ending Time *12:03*

Recesses *n/a* (__ to __) (__ to __) (__ to __) (__ to __) (__ to __) (__ to __)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Dana Rohrabacher

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session [✓]
Executive (closed) Session [ ]
Televised [✓]

Electronically Recorded (taped) [✓]
Stenographic Record [ ]

TITLE OF HEARING:

The International Exploitation of Drug Wars and What We Can Do About It

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chairman Rohrabacher, Ranking Member Carnahan, Rep. Poe, Rep. Bass, and Rep. Rivera.

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes [✓] No [ ]
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Washington Post, "Kidnappers Stole More Than Money When They Took Eduardo Garcia Valseca." by David Montgomery. August 12, 2009.
Prepared Statement of Mr. Eduardo Garcia Valseca
Prepared Statement of Mr. Eric Farnsworth
Prepared Statement of Mr. Douglas Farah
Prepared Statement of Dr. Andrew Selee

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *12:03 pm*

Subcommittee Staff Director

ARTICLE SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE TED POE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

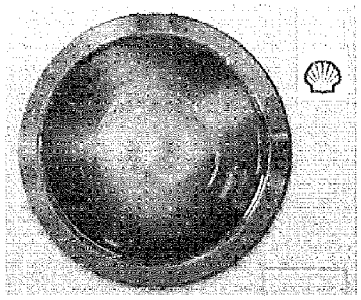
The Washington Post

For Kidnap Victim, Tranquility Taken

Kidnappers Stole More Than Money When They Kept D.C. Area's Eduardo Garcia Valseca for 71/2 Months

By David Montgomery
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, August 12, 2009

Advertisement



It begins so normally, on a June morning two years ago. The breakfast scramble, the packing of lunches, and now they are driving their kids to school, bouncing down a country lane edged with mesquite trees and barbed wire.

At the wheel of the jeep is Eduardo Garcia Valseca, the son of a Mexican newspaper baron. Beside him is his wife, the former Jayne Rager, whom Eduardo met by chance on an enchanted evening in the parking lot of the old Sutton Place Gourmet in Bethesda, near where he lived at the time. She grew up in Silver Spring, graduated from Paint Branch High School and starred in scores of television commercials in the 1970s and '80s. She played the perky blond counter girl for McDonald's.

He was smitten, she was swept off her feet, and now here they are, settled into their life on a ranch outside the picturesque Mexican town of San Miguel de Allende. In back are little green-eyed Nayah, 6, and bubbly Emiliano, 7; big brother Fernando, 12, is ahead on his four-wheeler. They pull into the parking lot of the bilingual Waldorf school that they founded. Jayne takes the kids inside.

The parents are heading home when this normal ends and another kind of Mexican normal intrudes. It takes seconds, a precision routine perfected in recent years. A white SUV appears in front of the jeep, going in the same direction on the narrow lane. Its driver slams on the brakes. A blue pickup behind the jeep rams it into the SUV.

Men with handguns swarm the jeep, smashing the windows, hauling the couple out. Eduardo gets cracked on the head and bleeds. Jayne clings to the barbed wire fence and slices open her finger. They are bundled into the white SUV. Thick cotton sacks are thrown over their heads. He is handcuffed. Her wrists and feet are bound with duct tape. Off they go.

* * *

It will not spoil the story to say right away that the ending is happy, more or less.

Jayne, now 43, was freed that first morning. Eduardo, now 60, spent 7 1/2 months in a tiny, filthy box. The couple decline to say exactly how much ransom was paid, for fear of future extortion attempts. They say it was less than $1 million. The kidnappers had demanded $8 million.

Eduardo weighed about 160 pounds when he was kidnapped. He came home weighing about 90, with two gunshot wounds, three broken ribs and other ailments.

Now, with the ordeal over, the scene has shifted to a hilltop home about an hour outside Washington. After taking more than a year to recover, the family is talking about the ordeal to a reporter for the first time. In the kitchen, they have assembled the 30 e-mails sent by the kidnappers, the handwritten notes scrawled by Eduardo to Jayne, the photos of Eduardo, emaciated and bleeding in his cell, which the kidnappers e-mailed to Jayne.

It's the first time Eduardo has seen the pictures, read the e-mails. He pores over the images with a magnifying glass, searching for hidden clues, deeper meaning. He sees a stranger, a man with no hope. "It looks like a dead person," he says.

The bloody bullet holes in his left arm and leg are easy to see. The kidnappers told him in advance which days he would be shot, and they were punctual. They would drape the cell in white sheets like a photo studio.

Now, in the United States, their story is a window into an increasingly familiar normal gripping Mexico, where officials estimate that about 70 people are kidnapped each month. Some experts say the true number is much higher because so many cases go unreported.

It's a normal where children must be told, "Your daddy's not on a business trip, he has been stolen."

It's a routine of shell e-mail accounts and coded ransom negotiations conducted via classified newspaper ads.

It's a normal of competing cottage industries -- kidnap security consultants hired by frightened families, kidnap rings that route hostages through makeshift cells, human coops.

It's a routine of choreographed moves by police and kidnappers, with each side seeming to know how the other will dance this tango.

The police "know this game really intimately," says Ricardo Ainslie, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin whose documentary on Mexican kidnapping is called "¡Ya Basta!" or "Enough!" " 'Choreographed' is right. They feel it has to be very carefully scripted" to get a hostage home safely.

On the other side, "the kidnappers do develop this modus operandi," Ainslie says. "So their side of it is very choreographed as well."

It's a normal where many survivors abandon Mexico.

"They're in San Antonio, Houston, San Diego, Miami," Ainslie says.

And now Washington.

"I call it the kidnapping diaspora."

Rich-Sounding Name

The men in ski masks passed a metal detector over Eduardo and peered inside his mouth. They were looking for implanted locational transmitters -- a new-normal precaution taken by some people who fear kidnapping.

But Eduardo had taken no precautions. There were wealthier people in San Miguel, an idyllic, relatively low-crime haven for artists, tourists and American retirees, about a 3 1/2 -hour drive northwest of Mexico City.

He had a rich-sounding name, though, akin to Hearst in the United States. His father, the late Col. José Garcia Valseca, built a chain of about 40 daily papers. Colorful, imperious, the old man walked with a limp from a bullet wound that his son says he suffered fighting under Venustiano Carranza in the revolution. The colonel traveled Mexico and the United States in his own Pullman train car. He lost control of his empire to government-backed investors and died in 1980, at 79.

The money he left was diluted among a large family. Eduardo managed his father's investments. Semi-retired in San Miguel, he and Jayne bought ranch land out of foreclosure and built a home and the school. The colonel's Pullman car sat well-preserved on a siding on the property.

The morning everything changed, the white SUV pulled behind a screen of trees. Lying in back, Jayne heard the kidnappers exit with her husband. With her wrists and ankles still bound with duct tape, she got out, as another car sped away.

An envelope lay on the ground by the abandoned white SUV. "What really gave me chills was, it said 'Señora Jayne' on the front," she says. "My entire life everyone misspells my name. But it had the 'y.' . . . How did they know that?"

Inside was a note in Spanish: "We have your husband."

She hopped to the side of the main road. "I'm saying, 'Please, please, please!' Cars are going in both directions, Americans, big burly Mexicans in pickup trucks. And nobody would stop."

The Two Señors

When Eduardo stood, the chamber was a few inches wider than his shoulders. When he lay down, it was a foot longer than his body. In 7 1/2 months, he would leave the box once -- to be moved to another box.

The light bulb was always on. A tiny camera kept watch. Two speakers blared the same music over and over: Elvis Presley, Sting and Mexican narco-folk songs. Two holes led to ventilation tubes, one pumping air in, one sucking it out.

He found strands of gray hair, which he guessed belonged to the previous occupant.

He never saw the kidnappers' faces or heard their voices. They wore ski masks and wrote him obscenity-filled commands. They repeatedly referred to "the people of your class," a bit of leftist-sounding contempt. He was forbidden to speak. Given paper and pen, he had to address the leader in writing as "Señor Jefe," Mr. Boss, and the others as "Señor Guardia," Mr. Guard. He had to write for permission to urinate in a bucket.

Señor Jefe was a large, muscular man with a mustache that Eduardo glimpsed though the mouth hole of the ski mask. One day Señor Jefe wrote that he was going to beat Eduardo, using a phrase uncommon in Mexico but sometimes heard in South America. Another time, Señor Jefe lost his temper and the first words that appeared on his moving lips -- under his breath, no sound came out -- looked to Eduardo like a string of familiar obscenities in English. He theorized that Señor Jefe was not Mexican and wondered whether he might even be American.

"Your stupid wife doesn't want to cooperate," Señor Jefe would write. "The little stupid money she's offering is not worth it. We don't play games."

As months passed, they treated Eduardo more harshly. They cut his food rations. He ate eggshells and chewed chicken bones to powder so he could swallow them.

Señor Jefe wrote, "The 31st of October, I'm going to shoot your left leg. Sixteen days later I'm going to shoot your left arm. . . . I'm going to keep going to see how much your body can take."

Eduardo had conversations in his head with one of his best friends, Bethesda chiropractor James Flood. "'Look, Jim, they shot me with a .45. Look how I am, I'm not getting up, I'm bleeding. Look how skinny I am. They're going to come back and shoot me again.' . . . He would say to me, 'What other options do you have, Eduardo?' It was like an outside person telling me to be strong."

He could not fathom what was going on beyond his narrow, fetid prison. What was taking Jayne so long to get him out?

"In the beginning, I trusted her 100 percent, but then after a few months, I was just overwhelmed," Eduardo says. "All the trust and all the love started turning into the opposite. . . . It's like they were pulling out of my heart all the love of my life."

Hard Choices to Make

This being Mexico, Jayne had a series of choices to make. Should she call the police or a private kidnapping consultant? Which police?

U.S. Embassy officials in Mexico City said there was little they could do because Eduardo is Mexican.

State Department travel alert: "In recent years, dozens of U.S. citizens have been kidnapped across Mexico. Many of these cases remain unresolved."

Jayne spoke to private consultants, including Felix Batista, an American who himself was kidnapped in December 2008. She decided to place the case in the hands of the Agencia Federal de Investigación, the AFI, a kind of Mexican FBI.

An AFI agent moved into the ranch and coached her through communications with the kidnappers. She was told the kidnapping bore hallmarks of the Ejército Popular Revolucionario, the Popular Revolutionary Army, a violent leftist group.

Five days after Eduardo disappeared, the kidnappers sent their first e-mail: "We hope the señora arrived well at her house. . . . For Eduardo's freedom we demand 8 million American dollars."

To accept the deal, Jayne was to take out a classified ad in the daily El Universal, saying, "I want to buy a chow chow puppy. . . . 8,000 pesos."

On advice from the AFI, Jayne's ad said the asking price for the chow chow was beyond her "realistic economic possibilities."

The kidnappers replied: "Our demands are within your 'realistic economic possibilities.' "

So began the tango. Most of the couple's assets were in Eduardo's name, beyond Jayne's reach. Even if she could have paid a large sum immediately, the AFI advised against it. The kidnappers would interpret it as a sign they hadn't demanded enough. Eduardo would be gone for months no matter what, the AFI predicted, until the kidnappers were satisfied they had extracted all they could.

Over the months, Jayne's ads purported to negotiate for chow chows, pheasants, spa treatments. "The AFI kept telling me . . . you're going to have to negotiate this in a very cold manner, as if it was a business deal," Jayne says. "The merchandise is your husband."

"I started pretending that it was just life as normal. And somehow the pretending made it easier and easier to start feeling more normal."

Everyone's role was scripted. Against Jayne's poker face, the kidnappers launched Eduardo's panicked pleading. His psychic defenses had been demolished by terror and pain. He was forced to write her letters.

"They told me, You've got to be convincing," Eduardo says. "I was so desperate. . . . I just couldn't take it anymore."

In November, the kidnappers scanned and e-mailed a note from Eduardo with a scheme for raising a few million dollars.

He wrote: "Humiliated, tortured, terrorized, almost losing my sight, now my body perforated with a bullet. . . . Still you continue without paying. To me there is no reason other than to leave me dead. . . . Thanks for your useless efforts. . . ."

He was becoming that trembling creature he would later study under the magnifying glass.

Then came the phone calls. Señor Jefe held a gun to Eduardo's head and Señor Guardia held the phone to his mouth.

"His voice sounded robotic," Jayne says. "They had him say things like, 'How is it possible that you're offering so little? You know they're going to kill me. You're such a bitch.' . . . As soon as he started hitting me with that, it was just such a cold reminder that this is that business."

"I thought a lot that I'm hurting her feelings," Eduardo says.

She continued selling possessions, emptying accounts, hitting up friends for loans.

Finally it was enough money: "Tenemos un acuerdo," the kidnappers wrote. We have an agreement.

A final note from Eduardo: "Many thanks for all your efforts. . . . Te amo." I love you.

And: Instructions for delivering the ransom. It was a demented late-night scavenger hunt across Mexico City, from the "Holiday Inn de Revolución" to a KFC to a series of public phone booths where further instructions were concealed.

After hours of this, one of the two volunteers carrying the ransom was himself kidnapped. He was released months later.

Finding a Way Home

Señor Jefe and his men covered Eduardo's eyes and drove him to a cemetery.

They told him to walk away from the car and count to 200 without looking back.

He was dressed in cheap dark clothes, sneakers and a baseball cap they had bought. He was carrying an absurd bright yellow lunch box containing fruit, eggs and 300 pesos.

He turned around and found himself in the enormous, unsupervised outdoors at 4 a.m. He felt the breeze. He looked at the stars. He heard dogs barking.

He caught a bus home.

The kids were brushing teeth, breakfast was being cleared, the morning scramble. Nayah and her grandmother -- Jayne's mother, Jane Rager -- saw someone they didn't recognize coming to the door.

Jayne: "I pick up the key and I go to stick it in the door and I look up. And he's standing there. I almost passed out."

Eduardo: "I couldn't talk. So I just grab her and she hugs me."

Jayne: "I was kissing him. But there was nothing there, it was just so weird. He was trying to hold on to me but he was just so weak, and I just kept trying. You remember what it feels like to hold the person you love -- but it just felt like a bag of bones. There was no expression on his face, even when he talked, there was no feeling behind anything. It was just, like, almost like a revived dead body talking to me."

Eduardo went to bathe for the first time in 7 1/2 months and to look at himself in a mirror. He leaned in, exploring his features with his bony fingers, introducing himself to himself. He was free. He was home.

Eduardo: "When I got out and I felt the love of my family and all that, everything was just like, I'm back again to the people who are the most important in my life."

Jayne: "I think things were normal after the first 30 seconds."

A Family Again

Is normal always provisional?

Eduardo sets down the magnifying glass. The children have come into the kitchen. He doesn't want them to see the pictures with blood.

"He can see this picture," Eduardo says, showing Emiliano an image of that haunted stranger who is holding up a newspaper to prove he exists.

Around the kitchen table, Fernando, now 14, stands with his arm around his father's shoulders, while Nayah, 8, sits in his lap. Emiliano, 9, sits in Jayne's lap.

Nayah pats her father's belly. "Now he has a Santa tummy."

They tell Eduardo what it was like for them while he was in the box. Emiliano asked Santa Claus for a pile of play money to contribute to the ransom fund. Fernando's melancholy 13th birthday was Jan. 23, 2008.

"I think I know what your wish was when you blew out the candle," Nayah says.

"Yeah?" says Fernando.

"For Daddy to come back."

"The next day, it came true."

Fernando daydreams of a career with the FBI, hunting down kidnappers. Emiliano imagines having a bazooka and a school of sharks to punish the kidnappers.

Eduardo encourages them to stay positive.

He will never return to Mexico. That life was stolen from the country lane between the mesquite trees and the barbed wire, and it could never be ransomed.

"I lost my country, I lost my home, I lost my business," he says.

"For me, the most important thing is I got my husband back," Jayne says.

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