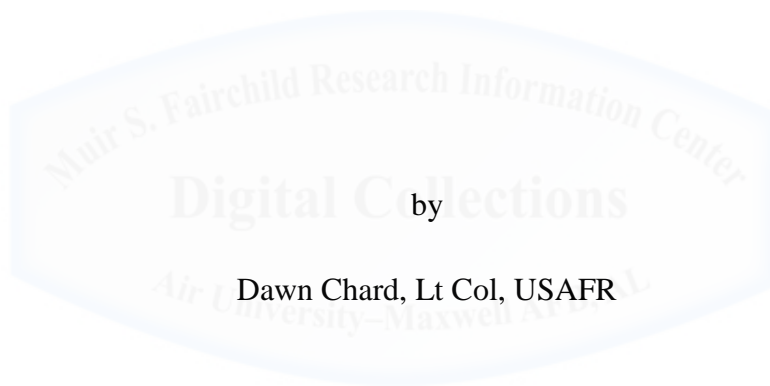


AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

MEXICAN DRUG CARTELS AND TERRORIST  
ORGANIZATIONS, A NEW ALLIANCE?



by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

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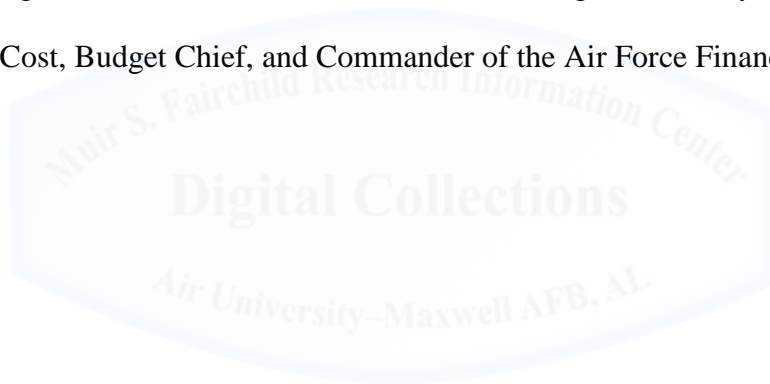
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## **Biography**

Lt Col Dawn Chard is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. Lt Col Chard is a Speechwriter and Special Action Officer for the Commander's Action Group, Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. She is responsible for producing briefings, speeches, testimony, strategic messaging, and planning senior leader conferences for the Commander, Air Force Reserve Command, and the Chief of the Air Force Reserve. She serves as a special advisor to the Commander, providing expert analysis, guidance, and assistance on solutions to complex and sensitive situations affecting the Air Force Reserve. Her background includes duties as a Financial Management Analyst, Cost Analyst, Deputy Chief of Cost, Budget Chief, and Commander of the Air Force Financial Services Center.



## Abstract

United States (U.S.) policymakers claim that a terror-cartel link exists and poses an immediate threat to U.S. national security. The 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) states “While the crime-terror nexus is still mostly opportunistic, this nexus is critical nonetheless, especially if it were to involve the successful criminal transfer of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) material to terrorists or their penetration of human smuggling networks as a means for terrorists to enter the United States.”<sup>1</sup> While both groups independently represent significant threats to U.S. national security, there is not enough evidence to support the claim that the two groups have established an alliance and are working in collaboration against U.S. interests. Rather they both operate in important illicit markets, albeit most likely at arms-length. Mexican cartels exacerbate already demanding law enforcement challenges along the southern U.S. and Mexico border with large scale drug trafficking, gun smuggling, human trafficking and smuggling, illegal immigration, and the violence associated with these activities in pursuit of profits. Terrorist organizations on the other hand seek to destabilize the U.S. and its allies through the use of violence and fear. They threaten the principles, values, and security of Americans and our allies both on the home front and abroad. With such a disparity between the two groups’ objectives, the thought of an alliance between the two is highly unlikely and as the 2011 Strategy stated, opportunistic at best.

## **Introduction**

United States (U.S.) policymakers claim that a terror-cartel link exists and poses an immediate threat to U.S. national security. Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that Mexico (and the U.S.) face a “narco-terrorist” offensive because cartels are demonstrating many attributes of terrorist and insurgent groups such as car bombings, paramilitary organization, and weaponry.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, existing studies provide little evidence to support the claim that a risk of collaboration exists between Mexican cartels and terrorist organizations leading one to conclude that cartels and terror organizations require separate, independent analysis. This paper will analyze the suspected relationship between known Mexican cartels and known terrorist groups by looking into the similarities and differences of both groups and the potential for overlap. This author believes there is not sufficient evidence at this time to indicate that known Mexican cartels (hereafter referred to simply as cartels) have formed an alliance with known terrorist organizations (hereafter referred to as terrorist organizations) to work against the U.S. and whatever nexus might exist is likely to be opportunistic at best.

## **Background**

The claim of a cartel-terror nexus has been around for at least a decade. Many articles have been written on the potential for it and even national policy warns against it. For example, the 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime states “While the crime-terror nexus is still mostly opportunistic, this nexus is critical nonetheless, especially if it were to involve the successful criminal transfer of WMD material to terrorists or their penetration of human smuggling networks as a means for terrorists to enter the United States.”<sup>3</sup>

In order to fully understand the context of the situation one must start with definitions and terminology used by those organizations charged with combating cartels and terrorist organizations. According to the Oxford Dictionary a *cartel* is an association of manufacturers or suppliers with the purpose of maintaining prices at a high level and restricting competition; neither Department of Defense (DoD) nor Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have a published definition for cartel. For purposes of this study it is important to note that the agglomeration of criminal organizations acting in concert can be considered a cartel. When criminal organizations are dispersed and don't act in concert to control supply, then the drug market can be said to be more competitive since a few dominant players are not able to fix prices. More competitive markets are the problematic ones because smaller players might be tempted into taking risks on behalf of terrorist groups.

While DHS does not have a published definition of *terrorism*, there are four (4) separate working definitions used by DoD, Department of State (DoS), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI). DoD's definition is the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political. (JP 3-07.2) Both Department of State (DoS) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) share the same definition taken from Title 22 of US Code, Section 2656f (d), *terrorism* as activities that are premeditated, politically motivated, and violent perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents. Finally, FBI uses Title 18 of U.S. Code, Section 2331 and 2332b to define *terrorism* and breaks it out in terms of *international terrorism*, *domestic terrorism*, and the *federal crime of terrorism* and defines them as activities. According to the 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime, transnational organized crime

(TOC) refers to the associations of individuals under a variety of structures that operate transnationally for the purpose of obtaining power, influence, monetary and/or commercial gains illegally through threats, violence, corruption, exploitation of country differences, and legally through legitimate businesses.<sup>4</sup> Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are among non-state actors that leverage their illicit activities, immense resources, and use of violence to undermine the security and prosperity of the United States and partner nations.<sup>5</sup> Corruption refers to dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery. It is important to understand the meaning of these relevant terms because as demonstrated, interpretation can vary.

In order to develop an effective plan to combat TCOs, one must first understand how they are connected. The U.S. has been fighting both cartels and terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda, Taliban, and Hezbollah for decades and yet despite the vast amount spent in blood and treasure, these two groups are still considered to be significant threats to U.S. national security. Before 9/11, the U.S. was focused primarily on the war on drugs but after 9/11, U.S. efforts, and missiles, were aimed at the terrorist organizations that perpetrated those attacks. As such, U.S. priorities are, terrorism targeting or implicating the homeland, threats that target friends and allies, then the war on drugs. The danger, according to some experts and politicians, lies in the potential for destruction should these two groups come together.

### **Similarities**

One might suppose that cartels and terrorist organizations have nothing in common however, they'd be wrong. They share several similarities. First, both groups are considered to be TCOs as they conduct and carry out criminal operations across international borders and pose

a significant threat individually due to the illicit activities they participate in.<sup>6</sup> According to the 2011 *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*:

TCOs threaten U.S. interests by taking advantage of failed states or contested spaces; forging alliances with corrupt foreign government officials and some foreign intelligence services; destabilizing political, financial, and security institutions in fragile states; undermining competition in world strategic markets; using cyber technologies and other methods to perpetrate sophisticated frauds; creating the potential for the transfer of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to terrorists; and expanding narco-trafficking and human and weapons smuggling networks. Terrorists and insurgents are increasingly turning to criminal networks to generate funding and acquire logistical support.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, globalization has enabled both groups to transform traditional roles as local drug traffickers and terrorists into transnational syndicates with the same motivators, profits and ideology respectively, but on a much more strategic level. For example, cartels have become extraordinarily powerful in several Mexican states, including Michoacán, Sinaloa, and Tamaulipas where a severe lack of governance exists. According to Keene Sheema, “bad governance is a major cause of instability and conflict. Inadequate governments rife with incompetence, coupled with the lack of an effective judicial system, promote a culture that lacks transparency and accountability. This in turn creates an environment where corruption and criminality can prosper. Money and power are key motivations.”<sup>8</sup> For example, just like cartels did in Mexico, Islamist militant group, Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), has recently seized loosely governed land from northern Syria to central Iraq to serve them as they carry out mission planning and training.

A second similarity is that both cartels and terrorist organizations depend on corruption for their endeavors. Mexico has a history of endemic corruption dating back to the 1930s when the country was ruled by the authoritarian Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and lack of governance bred corruption and criminality.<sup>9</sup> The effects of illegal activities, including drug



trafficking, went largely unnoticed by the average person in Mexican society because of the collusion between cartel members and some members of the PRI.<sup>10</sup> The regime enjoyed 71 years of supremacy of power across all levels of government and that coupled with the lack of checks and balances made the political system not only permissive, but protective of drug cartels.<sup>11</sup> Similar to cartels, terrorist organizations thrive in a state of chaos and ongoing conflict, often originating in post-conflict situations and endemic corruption especially within law enforcement and border control agencies since their objective is to destabilize the state and its structures.<sup>12</sup> Profits in this case refer not only to resources used to fund their activities but also to the promotion of their message and garnering of support for their cause. Many of the designated foreign terrorist organizations reside in countries that have corruption, weak government institutions, insufficient interagency cooperation, weak or non-existent legislation, and a lack of resources.<sup>13</sup>

A third similarity is that both groups employ financial and cyber technologies to secure their cash flow, maintain their assets, and further their criminal activities. Cartels launder or “clean” their illegal money through the use of shell companies, mortgages, insurance products, precious stones, real estate, high value goods, charities, and banks.<sup>14</sup> Most activities are criminal but some are legitimate such as financial investments and investments in commodities and real estate. According to National Drug Intelligence Center, Mexican and Colombian cartels launder between \$18- \$39 billion annually.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, many Middle Eastern terrorist organizations use *hawala*, a system of parallel banking. International banking networks are essential to the two groups because banks play a central role in evading international sanctions, washing funds from illegal transactions, and passing funding to and between criminal and terrorist networks.<sup>16</sup>

A final commonality between cartels and terrorist organizations is their level of determination. Despite the amount of risk associated with TOC, both groups continue to promote and prosper from it. Their adversity to risk can best be explained by economics. A fundamental presupposition of economics is that behavior depends on incentives. In other words, the greater the reward (amount received) from engaging in an activity (supplying illicit products), the more motivated people will be to undertake an activity, and the more energy and effort they will devote to the activity.<sup>17</sup> The commitment displayed by the two groups explains why they engage so fervently in asymmetrical activities such as the gruesome violence that has captured headlines and captivated social media over the past few years. They engage in this activity as a means of deterring their rivals, scaring the media, and intimidating politicians in order to secure their illicit markets.

### **Differences**

TCOs differ in very important ways. One difference in these two groups is that cartels are motivated by money and power whereas terrorists are motivated by their ideology and political objectives. Cartels run drugs and guns, and take part in other TOC activities because that is their business and it is profitable whereas terrorist organizations participate in these activities to fund their ideological and political objectives. Ultimately, terrorist organizations exist to undermine the security of U.S. or other nations. Cartels are fueled by the U.S.'s demand for drugs and the relationship between the two countries is basic market opportunism responding to supply and demand. Having originated from U.S. demand for marijuana and heroin after WWII and exponentially grown through the voracious cravings worldwide, cartels have evolved into the organized criminal syndicates they are today. The U.S.'s insatiable appetite for drugs has enabled cartels to expand market share and significantly profit despite the government's attempts at

limiting the amount of drugs coming into the U.S. A 2012 United Nations (UN) report estimates that worldwide illicit drug trade profits at least \$322 billion a year.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, Mexico has grown to be a major producer of heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine destined for the United States which according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), is the world's largest consumer of cocaine, Colombian heroin, and Mexican heroin and marijuana.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, the relationship between the U.S. and terrorist organizations is based solely on the terrorist's ideology and political motivations, versus profits as with cartels, as terrorists seek to undermine the government and dishonor the very principles and freedoms that Americans enjoy today.

Another difference between the two groups is in their organizational structures. Cartels are structured in such a way that when the head of a cartel is taken out, a fierce power struggle erupts between members of that cartel and rival cartels in efforts to gain control of market share for their illicit activities. Terrorist organizations however are structured in a hierarchical manner so that when a leader is taken out, another one rises up, without violence, to carry on the mission. Still yet another difference between the two groups is in their strategies. In line with Shelly's "traditional transnational crime group" theory, cartels have diversified their investments over the years in response to market and security environments.<sup>20</sup> As the federal governments of both the U.S. and Mexico and stepped up the intensity to dampen the drug trade in both countries, cartels have adjusted their illicit goods and activities accordingly. So much in fact that there is no evidence to show that the drug trade has been negatively affected despite many years and vast resources spent trying to do so. This divergence in strategy is in contrast with that of terrorist organizations which continue to fund their activities with proceeds from drug and weapons trafficking and donations from wealthy supporters.<sup>21</sup> Cartels have moved from drug and light arms trafficking to heavy weaponry trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking, counterfeiting,

sea piracy, kidnapping for ransom, and illegal smuggling of commodities such as tobacco and oil.<sup>22</sup> A report in 2009 from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that profits from criminal proceeds exceeded \$2 trillion.<sup>23</sup>

A final difference between cartels and terrorist organizations is that terrorists don't deal human trafficking. Cartels, however, have recently broken into the business of smuggling and trafficking making it more dangerous for migrants looking for a way into the U.S. Smuggling of Mexican nationals to the U.S. has been a dangerous endeavor for migrants for decades, however, since cartels broke into the market, migrants are more likely to be abused, indentured as household servants, or forced into prostitution.<sup>24</sup> The international human smuggling networks are intrinsically linked to other transnational crimes and it is estimated that the smuggling of persons from Latin America to the United States generated approximately \$6.6 billion annually in illicit proceeds for human smuggling networks.<sup>25</sup> An important distinguisher between the two groups is that use of violence by terrorist groups is to affect political behavior (i.e. policy) by instilling fear and inflicting pain amongst citizens of that country. Criminal organizations ultimate objective on the other hand is not policy or power, rather, its profits. They commit ghastly violence to send messages and affect behaviors of rivals of the state, but their political objectives are subjugated to the criminal enterprise.

### **Mutually Beneficial Areas**

Cartels both resemble and distinguish themselves from terrorist organizations in several ways yet it is still unclear what would make them want to collaborate with each other. Based on the research covered in this paper, one possible area where the two groups might benefit mutually is with regards to funding. A means to their ends, both participate in illicit activities and collaboration with one another could cut costs and increase profits for both groups. While it is

conceivable to think that terrorist organizations might diversify more heavily into drugs like Columbia's Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Columbia (FARC) did<sup>26</sup>, it is less conceivable to think that cartels would diversify into FARC or ISIS ideological objectives.

Another area of possible collaboration is recruitment. As previously mentioned, cartels have a plethora of potential recruits in remote and desolate areas of Mexico. These potential recruits could also be enlisted by terrorist organizations, not just as foot soldiers but as operatives inside terrorist organizations. Additionally, cartel members inside the U.S. make prime candidates for terrorist operatives because they are willing to participate in illicit activities for a profit, generally don't have a U.S. allegiance as Temple-Raston claims, "American citizens or longtime residents are "masterminds, propagandists, enablers, and media strategists" in foreign terror groups and working to spread extremist ideology in the West.<sup>27</sup> This trend is worrisome because these American extremists "understand the United States better than the United States understands them."<sup>28</sup> A dangerous subset to this type of recruiting is that some cartel members could be recruited by terrorist organizations to carry out attacks for rogue regimes or nation-states as evidenced in the 2011 case of an Iranian-American arrested in the connection of an assassination attempt on Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Washington D.C. that was coordinated between cartels and Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).<sup>29</sup> According to the National Security Council:

"Terrorists and insurgents increasingly are turning to TOC to generate funding and acquire logistical support to carry out their violent acts. The Department of Justice reports that 29 of the 63 organizations on its FY 2010 Consolidated Priority Organization Targets list, which includes the most significant international drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) threatening the United States, were associated with terrorist groups. Involvement in the drug trade by the Taliban and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is critical to the ability of these groups to fund terrorist activity. We are concerned about Hezbollah's drug and criminal activities, as well as indications of links between al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb and the drug trade. Further, the

terrorist organization al-Shabaab has engaged in criminal activities such as kidnapping for ransom and extortion, and may derive limited fees from extortion or protection of pirates to generate funding for its operations. While the crime-terror nexus is mostly opportunistic, this nexus is critical nonetheless, especially if it were to involve the successful criminal transfer of WMD material to terrorists or their penetration of human smuggling networks as a means for terrorists to enter the United States.’’<sup>30</sup>

Still another area of mutual interest is human smuggling. Since profitability drives cartels, it is feasible to think that they would smuggle people from special-interest countries like China, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan since they reportedly specialize in smuggling special-interest aliens into the U.S.<sup>31</sup> The nearly two-thousand-mile-long border spans four U.S. states, six Mexican states, twenty railroad crossings, and thirty cities that are directly across from each other<sup>32</sup> offers a host of opportunities for cartels to smuggle people into the U.S. Recently, cartels have gained notoriety for their very innovative smuggling methods in cars, trucks, buses, trains, aircrafts, semisubmersible vessels, and sophisticated tunnels. In 2011, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents discovered a 240-yard tunnel in Arizona that was highly sophisticated and equipped with six-foot ceilings, ventilation, hydraulic and other high-tech systems. DEA agents believe that this level of sophistication came from Hezbollah since there has been an increased presence of Hezbollah in Mexico and they are known to have the expertise to build such tunnels.<sup>33</sup> General Kelly expresses concern with this same possibility in U.S. Southern Command’s 2015 Posture Statement, “the relative ease with which human smugglers moved tens of thousands of people to our nation’s doorstep also serves as another warning sign: these smuggling routes are a potential vulnerability to our homeland. As I stated last year, terrorist organizations could seek to leverage those same smuggling routes to move operatives with intent to cause grave harm to our citizens or even bring weapons of mass destruction into the United States.’’<sup>34</sup>

One other area of potential benefit is their collective span of influence. As previously indicated, both cartels and terrorist groups want to expand to better meet their objectives. Currently, cartels are attempting to consolidate their market share within the western hemisphere, protect their operations in Mexico, and expand their reach into the U.S. and worldwide. According to a 2015 DEA report, approximately 41 states are under the influence of major Mexican TCOs.<sup>35</sup> Venezuela has already emerged as a major international drug trafficking hub with its government leading the way, high-ranking government officials in Caracas have all been designated by the U.S. government as “Significant Foreign Narcotics Traffickers.”<sup>36</sup> The Sinaloa cartel has growing supply links in South America, most notably in Argentina and Uruguay, to gain access to needed precursor chemicals for processing of methamphetamine and smugglers are varying their trafficking routes to go through ranches, national parks, and reservations.<sup>37</sup> As previously discussed, terrorist groups also use drug trafficking to garner funding to further their objectives. For example, the Taliban plays a major role in Afghanistan’s poppy and opium market, the FARC is deeply imbedded in the cocaine trade in Colombia, and more recently al-Qaeda has been linked to the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and tied to fund raising through taxing and protecting cocaine shipments headed to Europe via Western Africa.<sup>38</sup> Al Qaeda’s affiliates in North Africa have moved cocaine from West Africa into the European Union, Balkan route, and Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Globalization has enabled smaller groups access to international markets through increased international transport, communications, and mobility. A study in 2013 shows that there is one big connected network as opposed to many smaller networks and terrorists and narcotics dealers play a critical role in connecting disparate parts of the network where terrorists are likely to act as brokers linking unconnected groups.<sup>39</sup> The previously disparate networks converged into an almost fully connected system. Narcotics

smugglers in South Asia were linked to narcotics smugglers in Latin America, and were often separated by only a single degree or relationship. These individuals might be connected by narcotics smugglers in North America, terrorists in Africa, arms dealers in Eastern Europe or financial criminals in Europe or offshore safe havens just as an example.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned before, these groups and their criminal activities perpetuate violence, serve to further destabilize areas with weak economies and institutions, lead to high levels of corruption, and pose a significant threat to U.S. interests both here and abroad. They have not only become more dangerous by increasing their capabilities of carrying out attacks but have also become more flexible because of their continuing ability to obtain support and raise funds, particularly through use of traditional organized criminal activities.<sup>41</sup>

## **Conclusion**

While both cartels and terrorist organizations represent a significant threat individually to U.S. national security, there is not enough evidence to suggest that both groups have conspired together to oppose the U.S. as a nation. The idea of a cartel-terror alliance is alarming, however, evidence suggests that any relationship between the two groups is likely to be opportunistic and at arms-length. Some argue that the cartels most significant potential contribution to terrorism is not direct association but rather by infiltrating terrorists into the U.S. and providing opportunities for them to conduct reconnaissance and attacks.<sup>42</sup> While theoretically possible, there is not enough evidence to even suggest that cartels have united with terrorists to conduct these types of operations. Furthermore, this type of collaboration would not only hurt the cartel's market share but would likely ensure that authorities focused more on their operations thereby forcing them to take on more risk. Additionally, probability of terrorists entering the U.S. via the southwest border is no greater than the risk of them reaching the homeland by other available means.<sup>43</sup> In



2012, The University of Maryland's "National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism," reported that between 1984 and 2004, only 264 people connected to terrorism had crossed the southwest border. This is an infinitesimal number, considering that an average 11 million people cross that border daily.<sup>44</sup>

This paper analyzed the relationship between known Mexican cartels and known terrorist organizations by looking into the similarities and differences of both groups and the potential for collaboration between the two. The material reviewed did not provide sufficient evidence to indicate that known cartels have formed alliances with known terrorist organizations and are working in tandem against the U.S. Any connection between the two is opportunistic and undeveloped at best. Evidence did suggest however that a new type of TCO is evolving from both modern cartels and modern terrorist organizations and these two groups differ from their predecessors. For example, big vertically integrated cartels that were once strong are now being split by policy. Authorities were able to disband cartels in Colombia in this manner and are now doing this in Mexico. The architecture of the illicit market has transformed in response to changes in law enforcement policies and technology yet is still very profitable given the strong demand for drugs. This new type of TCO will adjust its make-up in order to take advantage of this transformation and will likely be more loosely organized and willing to expand their criminal portfolio activities to capture potential profits. Globalization has enabled these smaller, less structured groups access to international markets through increased international transport, communications, and mobility and it is this new type of TCO that warrants further investigation. This area is where new risks need to be examined as this is where the potential exists between the two groups for a cartel, TCO, and terrorist nexus.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*. (D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Payan, A War That Can't Be Won, 154.

<sup>3</sup> *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*. (D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, i.

<sup>5</sup> Realuyo, Celina B. *The Future Evolution of Transnational Criminal Organizations and the Threat to U.S. National Security*. Perry Center Occasional Paper, National Defense University, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> The "New" Face of Transnational Crime Organizations (TCOs): A Geopolitical Perspective and Implications to U.S. National Security, March 2013, 110.

<sup>7</sup> *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*. (D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Keene, Shima D. *The Letort Papers: Operationalizing Counter Threat Financing Strategies*, (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College Press, 2014), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Roxana Gutiérrez Romero and Mónica Oviedo León, "The good, the bad and the ugly: The socio-economic impact of drug cartels and their violence in Mexico," *Departament d'Economia Aplicada*, (Bellaterra: 2014), 5

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Louise Shelley, "The Unholy Trinity: Transnational Crime, Corruption, and Terrorism" *Anti-Corruption Research Network*, 2005, 3. <http://corruptionresearchnetwork.org/acrn-news/articles/the-unholy-trinity-transnational-crime-corruption-and-terrorism-2> (accessed 11 December 2015).

<sup>13</sup> United States State Department, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013, 2013*, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224825.htm> (accessed 26 January 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Shima D Keene, *The Letort Papers: Operationalizing Counter Threat Financing Strategies*, (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College Press, 2014), 10.

<sup>15</sup> Killebrew & Bernal, *Crime Wars Gangs, Cartels, and U.S. National Security*, 69

<sup>16</sup> Shima D Keene, *The Letort Papers: Operationalizing Counter Threat Financing Strategies*, (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College Press, 2014), 10.

<sup>17</sup> William R. DiPietro and Michele S. Flint, "Political Corruption, Economic Incentive, Educational Resource Input, and the Quality of Human Capital: A Panal Analysis Over Twenty-Five Years for the Fifty U.S. States," *International Journal of Economics and Finance*, Vol 4, no 5, 30.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*.

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<sup>19</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Fact book: Mexico*. 15 September 2015. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html> (accessed 21 September 2015)

<sup>20</sup> Louise Shelley, “The Unholy Trinity: Transnational Crime, Corruption, and Terrorism” *Anti-Corruption Research Network*, 2005, 7. <http://corruptionresearchnetwork.org/acrn-news/articles/the-unholy-trinity-transnational-crime-corruption-and-terrorism-2> (accessed 11 December 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Louise Shelley, “The Unholy Trinity: Transnational Crime, Corruption, and Terrorism” *Anti-Corruption Research Network*, 2005, 5. <http://corruptionresearchnetwork.org/acrn-news/articles/the-unholy-trinity-transnational-crime-corruption-and-terrorism-2> (accessed 11 December 2015).

<sup>22</sup> The “New” Face of Transnational Crime Organizations (TCOs): A Geopolitical Perspective and Implications to U.S. National Security, March 2013, 110.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Rexton Kan, *Cartel at War: Mexico’s Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*, (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2012), 80.

<sup>25</sup> *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*, (D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), 3.

<sup>26</sup> Columbia’s Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Columbia (FARC) diversified into drugs to sustain its political objectives.

<sup>27</sup> Dina Temple-Raston, “Terror Made in America,” *NPR*, 10 October 2010 <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130439513> (accessed 11 December 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Jennifer L. Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus*, (Boca Raton, CRC Press, 2013), 277.

<sup>30</sup> *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*. (D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), 5.

<sup>31</sup> The “New” Face of Transnational Crime Organizations (TCOs): A Geopolitical Perspective and Implications to U.S. National Security, March 2013, 80.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Rexton Kan, *Cartel at War: Mexico’s Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*, (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2012), 71.

<sup>33</sup> Jennifer L. Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus*, (Boca Raton, CRC Press, 2013), 276.

<sup>34</sup> 2015 Posture Statement of General John F. Kelly, United States Marine Corps Commander, United States Southern Command

<sup>35</sup> Drug Enforcement Agency. *Intelligence Report: United States: Areas of Influence of Major Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations*. July 2015: 3. [www.dea.gov/docs/dir06515.pdf](http://www.dea.gov/docs/dir06515.pdf) (accessed 22 September 2015).

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<sup>36</sup> Ana Quintana, *Time to Focus on the Real Threat South of the Border: Cartel Violence*, 23 September 2014 <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2014/9/time-to-focus-on-the-real-threat-south-of-the-border-cartel-violence> (accessed 10 October 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>38</sup> Collen Freeman, “Revealed: How Caravans of Cocaine Help To Fund al-Qaeda in Terrorists’ North African Domain,” *The Telegraph*, 26 January 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/mali/9829099/Revealed-how-Saharan-caravans-of-cocaine-help-to-fund-al-Qaeda-in-terrorists-North-African-domain.html> (accessed 21 November 2015).

<sup>39</sup> The “New” Face of Transnational Crime Organizations (TCOs): A Geopolitical Perspective and Implications to U.S. National Security, March 2013, 87.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 89

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>42</sup> The “New” Face of Transnational Crime Organizations (TCOs): A Geopolitical Perspective and Implications to U.S. National Security, March 2013, 80.

<sup>43</sup> Ana Quintana, *Time to Focus on the Real Threat South of the Border: Cartel Violence*, 23 September 2014 <http://www.heritage.org/research/commentary/2014/9/time-to-focus-on-the-real-threat-south-of-the-border-cartel-violence> (accessed 10 October 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



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