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<p>ABSTRACT (<i>MAXIMUM 200 WORDS</i>)</p> <p>SINCE 2006 MEXICAN ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN SUPPORTING MEXICAN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO FIGHT DRUG CARTELS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS. MEXICAN MARINE CORPS HAVE BEEN IN A PROTAGONIST ROLE DESPITE THE FACT THEY ARE THE SMALLEST OF ALL ARMED BRANCHES OF THE MAF. MEXICAN MARINES HAVE TAKEN THE LEAD AGAINST DRUG CARTELS SINCE THEN AND HAVE ACHIEVED THE CAPTURE OR KILLING OF SOME OF THE MOST WANTED DRUG KINGPINS IN MEXICO, INCLUDING JOAQUIN ARCHIBALDO GUZMAN-LOERA, LEADER OF THE SINALOA CARTEL; MIGUEL ANGEL TREVIÑO-MORALES, LEADER OF THE ZETAS CARTEL; ANTONIO EZEQUIEL CÁRDENAS-GUILLÉN, LEADER OF THE GULF CARTEL; AND MARCOS ARTURO BELTRAN-LEYVA, LEADER OF THE BELTRAN-LEYVA CARTEL.</p> <p>HOWEVER, DECAPITATION OF THESE DRUG CARTELS HAS NOT CAUSED THE COLLAPSE OF THE CRIMINAL NETWORKS. VIOLENCE RATINGS WITHIN MEXICO HAVE NOT BEEN DIMINISHED, DRUG CARTELS HAVE NOT BEEN WEAKENED ENOUGH TO BE HANDLED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND THE AMOUNT OF DRUGS SMUGGLED INTO THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT BEEN REDUCED.</p>			
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

MEXICAN MARINES:
PARADIGM SHIFT IN TARGETING DRUG CARTELS IN MEXICO

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Mexican Marines. Paradigm Shift in Targeting Drug Cartels in Mexico

Author: Commander Adrian Villalobos-Monteverde, Mexican Marine Corps

Thesis: The decapitation strategy followed by the Mexican Government against drug cartels and drug trafficking organizations, has not produced the desired end state envisioned: drug cartels weakened enough to be handled by local, state and federal police, the abatement of the violence ratings, and a significant reduction of the amount of drugs entering the United States illegally. Therefore, a shift in the strategy against drug cartels and DTOs in Mexico is required to achieve the envisioned end state.

Discussion: Since 2006 Mexican Armed Forces have been supporting Mexican law enforcement agencies to fight drug cartels and Drug Trafficking Organizations. Mexican Marine Corps have been in a protagonist role despite the fact they are the smallest of all armed branches of the MAF. Mexican Marines have taken the lead against drug cartels since then and have achieved the capture or killing of some of the most wanted drug kingpins in Mexico, including Joaquin Archibaldo Guzman-Loera, leader of the Sinaloa Cartel; Miguel Angel Treviño-Morales, leader of the Zetas Cartel; Antonio Ezequiel Cárdenas-Guillén, leader of the Gulf Cartel; and Marcos Arturo Beltran-Leyva, leader of the Beltran-Leyva Cartel.

However, decapitation of these drug cartels has not caused the collapse of the criminal networks. Violence ratings within Mexico have not been diminished, drug cartels have not been weakened enough to be handled by law enforcement agencies and the amount of drugs smuggled into the United States has not been reduced.

This paper consists of nine sections. The first is the introduction to the current situation of the Mexican war on drugs and especially the current status of the Mexican Marine Corps. The next eight sections examine Targeting Theory, Targeting Approaches, International Military Targeting Methodologies, Analysis of Results, Similarities and Differences among International and México's Targeting Methodologies, Challenges for México and the Mexican Marine Corps, What can be implemented to achieve the desired end state in México, and Conclusions.

Conclusion: Targeting drug cartels' top leaders has been the strategy of the Mexican Government and MEXMAR since 2006. MEXMAR has been successful in kill or capture drug cartels and DTOs top leaders, but these extraordinary successes at the tactical level are not having the same extraordinary effect at the strategic level. Therefore, the desired end state has not been achieved.

Preface

In August 3, 1989 I entered the Mexican Naval Academy. At that moment I had it clear in my mind that I wanted to be a Marine. In 1994 when I finally graduated from the Academy, the main concern of the Mexican government and Mexican Armed Forces was the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in the Southern state of Chiapas. For me, as a recently graduated Ensign, that seemed to be the logical place to be assigned and fight the Insurgency for a couple of years. After 1996, the EZLN was not anymore a real menace to the Mexican National Security. Then, it was not in my mind and not even in my imagination that drug cartels and drug trafficking organizations (DTO) would become so powerful and dangerous to the Mexican society and even to foreign countries' societies.

Nowadays, the main concern to the Mexican Government and Mexican Armed Forces are the extremely violent drug cartels and DTOs. I wrote this MMS paper having in mind the Mexican youth that are tempted every single day by drug cartels. They are the future of Mexico and if we leave them alone the future of our country would be compromised. I have no doubt we will succeed in neutralizing drug cartels and DTOs

Completion of this MMS paper, including the research was made much easier with the help of several individuals. First, I would like to thank all of the persons I interviewed: a Colonel from the US Army, a US FBI agent, a USMC Major, a UKRM Major and a ADF Major, unfortunately, due to security reasons I am not allow to provide their names. Thanks to them again.

I would also like to thank my mentor Dr. Benjamin Jensen, for his patience and help in this project. His support was invaluable to the completion of this paper.

Introduction

The so-called War on Drugs in Mexico started in 2006 when the Mexican federal government ordered the Mexican Armed Forces (MAF) to support law enforcement agencies to fight drug cartels and other Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO). By that time, four drug cartels controlled drug trafficking in México: The Sinaloa Cartel, The Juárez Cartel, The Gulf Cartel and The Michoacán Family.¹ Nowadays, according to the Office of the Attorney-General there are nine main drug cartels in Mexico.² The logical questions here are, what happened? Why has the number of drug cartels increased, despite the fact that Mexican Armed Forces have been quite successful in this task? Why has the amount of drugs smuggled into the United States not diminished?

I will argue in this paper, that the problem is the counterdrug strategy currently followed in Mexico since 2006. Since then, Mexican Marines are fighting drug cartels using Counter Insurgency (COIN) doctrine when they are only organized crime groups. The strategy has been until today the decapitation of the drug cartels and DTOs. As mentioned above, the problem is not the lack of success in capturing or killing drug cartel leaders and other members of the DTOs by the armed forces and/or law enforcement agencies. The problem seems to lay in that we have not been able to realize that the decapitation strategy followed until now has not produced the desired end state envisioned by the Mexican Government: drug cartels weakened enough to be handled by local, state and federal police, the abatement of the violence ratings and, a significant reduction of the amount of drugs entering into the United States illegally. Therefore, a shift in the strategy against drug cartels and DTOs in Mexico is required to achieve the envisioned end state.

Drug cartels and DTOs are profit-based organizations. This means, drug cartels and DTOs are not valued-based organizations. It means there is not a political, social or religious, common cause to fight for. The only recognized “cause” for their members is to obtain the most revenue possible. It means that their leaders are easily replaced because there is always someone else willing to take the risk to assume this position regardless the possibility of being arrested or killed. According to Bryan C. Price, “leadership succession is less difficult in profit- based organizations because the monetary incentives of holding power are usually sufficient to attract a steady stream of successors, even when leading involves tremendous risk.”³ The charismatic leadership required in insurgency or terrorist organization is not applicable here. There is not such a thing as a charismatic drug cartel leader like Augusto Cesar Sandino or Ernesto “Che” Guevara. Drug cartel leaders can be seen as charismatic and benevolent for people outside the organization, but due to the lack of real values within the cartels they rule by force and fear. Again, in words of Bryan C. Price “In profit-based organizations with roles requiring highly routine, non-thinking effort in institutions directed exclusively to economic ends, charismatic leaders would theoretically be less effective.”⁴ This has caused internal disputes within the different organizations to fill the vacuum created by the capture or killing of the top leaders, increasing the level of violence during the process to replace the leader. In some other cases this has generated the formation of different drug trafficking organizations. It means that in some cases instead of making drug cartels/DTOs collapse, a decapitation strategy had created new criminal organizations, increased the level of internal violence in Mexico and failed to reduce the amount of drugs that entered the United States illegally. According to a US Customs and Border Protection report, “while the continued arrest or death of key DTO leadership may have long-term implications as to the control and viability of a specific DTO, there is no indication it will

impact overall drug flows into the United States.”⁵ Totally the opposite outcome desired by the Mexican Government.

Are MAF, especially MEXMAR, targeting drug cartels in the wrong way? Are they targeting the correct target? According to the United States Armed Forces doctrine, Mexican Marines are not conducting counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Mexico. According to the United States Marine Corps (USMC) doctrine an Insurgency “is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify or challenge political control of a region.”⁶ Again, according to USMC doctrine an insurgency emerges when “elements of the population grow dissatisfied with the status quo.”⁷

Therefore, can drug cartels activities be considered as an Insurgency? In the early 20th century certainly DTOs did not want to nullify or challenge the political control of any region in Mexico. But nowadays, it seems that drug cartels are trying to obtain the political control in more than one region of the country. Why is this so important? It is important because Mexican Marines are fighting drug cartels using Counter Insurgency (COIN) doctrine when drug cartels are only organized crime groups. Are MEXMAR doing their work accordingly with the political direction given by President Enrique Peña Nieto? Are they acting as Marines or as law enforcement agents? Is this generating any confusion, misunderstanding or lack of direction?

I will discuss through this work the theory of the targeting process, the doctrine of the United States Armed Forces targeting methodologies: Decide, Detect, Deliver and Assess (D3A);⁸ Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze and Disseminate (F3EAD),⁹ and Find, Fix, Track, Target, Engage, and Assess (F2T2EA).¹⁰ In addition, I will analyze third countries targeting doctrine and even multinational organizations doctrine. In the same way, I will interview US Armed Forces members, a US law enforcement agent and members of international Armed Forces to obtain their opinion regarding targeting approaches and methodologies. I will analyze what is similar

and different to the MEXMAR methodology? What then, would be the challenges to MEXMAR? And finally, I will conclude with some recommendations regarding what can be changed and what can be implemented to improve the final output of fighting drug cartels.

Targeting Theory

Due to the lack of written MEXMAR targeting doctrine, I used as a starting point the US Armed Forces targeting doctrine. A Target is defined by the US Army doctrine as “an entity or object consider possible engagement or other action.”¹¹ Then, a target could be either a non living entity such as equipment, capabilities, facilities or living entities such as military personnel, insurgents, drug cartel members, and animals the enemy can use to operate against our forces or friendly forces. The US doctrine also defines Targeting as “the process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching the appropriate response to them, considering operational requirements and capabilities.”¹² In addition, US Army doctrine defines a High Value Target (HVT) as “an asset that an enemy commander requires for the completion of his mission.”¹³ Finally, a High-Value Individual (HVI) is defined as “a person of interest (friendly, adversary or enemy) who must be identified, surveilled, tracked and influenced through the use of information or fires.”¹⁴ US Army doctrine also mentions that the targeting method evaluates which targets if attacked, will contributed to achieve the desired end state.”¹⁵ In addition, US Joint doctrine defines target as “an entity (person, place, or thing) considered for possible engagement or action to alter or neutralize the function it performs for the adversary”¹⁶ and targeting as “the process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching the appropriate response to them, considering operational requirements and capabilities.”¹⁷

In US Army doctrine the four Targeting principles are: First, the targeting process is focused in achieving the commander's objectives. Second, targeting is concerned with the creation of specific desired effects through lethal and non lethal actions. Third, targeting is a command function that requires the participation of many disciplines and, fourth, targeting seeks to achieve effects through lethal and non lethal actions in a systematic manner.¹⁸ There are eleven effects that can be achieved on the enemy or adversary: Deceive, Degrade, Delay, Deny, Destroy, Disrupt, Divert, Exploit, Interdict, Neutralize, and Suppress. There are two targeting categories: Deliberate and Dynamic targets and finally there are Time Sensitive Targets and Sensitive Targets.¹⁹

As previously mentioned, MEXMAR currently does not have a doctrinal definition for these terms. However, since 2006 MEXMAR has been applying a targeting methodology almost identical to the US Armed Forces'. In that year, President Felipe Calderon Hinojosa launched a frontal attack against drug cartels and organized crime groups, employing the MAF in support of Federal and State law enforcement agencies.

When I say MEXMAR has been applying a targeting methodology almost identical to that applied by the US Armed Forces, I am saying that they are following almost identical HVTs and HVIs targeting models but without hitting significantly the organization's network, because as John Hardy and Paul Lushenko mentioned in an article published in *Defense Studies* "HVT is not only a simple leadership decapitation program."²⁰ In their article, they write that the HVT model provides three methods of applying force against a networked enemy: "Pressuring, leveraging and desynchronizing the network."²¹ At the very end this is the final outcome that the Mexican government is trying to achieve against drug cartels: Making drug cartel networks collapse. But until today, this has not been achieved so far.

Targeting Approaches

First, I will describe the US Armed Forces targeting methodologies. The US Army employs the Decide, Detect, Deliver and Assess (D3A) methodology. The US Army states that the D3A methodology “facilitates the attack of the right target with the right asset at the right time.”²² It is also very important to realize that targeting is described as a Dynamic process.²³ The US Army Targeting doctrine briefly describes each one of the four functions of the D3A targeting process as: Decide which target to engage, Detect the decided target, Deliver (conduct the operation) and finally, Assess the effects of the operation. Of these four functions the US Army describes the Decide function as the most important. In this step through a close interaction between the commander and their staff the Target Value Analysis and the Intelligence Estimate are produced.

The Detect function is conducted during the execution of the operations order and allows for complementing the initial Target Value Analysis. The Detect function also determines accurate, identifiable, and timely requirements for collection systems.²⁴ The Deliver function objective is to attack targets. This function executes the target attack guidance and supports the commander’s battle plan once the target has been located and identified.²⁵ Finally, during the Assess function the commander and staffers evaluate the results of mission execution and compare the results with the commander’s guidance. The commander’s guidance needs to be achieved. If not, the Decide and Detect steps must continue until achieving the commander’s guidance.

After analyzing the D3A methodology Jimmy Gomez wrote “it looks like a great planning tool”²⁶ in an article in *The Small Wars Journal*. D3A also looks more suitable to attack deliberate targets as enemy facilities, warehouses, depots, barracks, etc. For maneuver leaders such as Special Forces commanders, the US Armed Forces developed the Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze and, Disseminate (F3EAD) methodology. This method is said to be consistent with

D3A and is not intended to replace it. The F3EAD method is described as “an example of tactics, techniques, and procedures that work best at the battalion/tactical level for leaders to understand their operational environment and visualize the effects they want to achieve.”²⁷ F3EAD is the method to engage HVIs. In this role, F3EAD consist in several Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) efforts to find the exact location of an HVI especially when the HVI is hidden among the civilian population. F3EAD is a process within a process. To clarify, F3EAD runs within D3A and it can begin conducted during any step of the D3A method.

In addition, the United States Armed Forces developed the Find, Fix, Track, Target, Engage, and Assess (F2T2EA) methodology for dynamic targeting at the joint level.²⁸ This different process is also embedded in the D3A methodology. Dynamic targeting is required due to either the difficulty of locating accurately all targets or the difficulty of identifying them in time to be included in the deliberate targeting process. “Dynamic targeting is primarily designed to attack Time Sensitive Targets (TST) and High Pay-Off Targets (HPT).”²⁹ During F2T2EA some functions are accomplished simultaneously and overlapped to speed the process. However, this is only theory. I looked for the particular point of view of an officer from the US Army, an officer from the US Marine Corps, an agent from the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), a United Kingdom Royal Marines (UKRM) officer, and an Australian Defense Forces (ADF) officer to have a different perspective from the point of view of different militaries and from law enforcement. These interviews were conducted face to face and were two hours long. The format was a series of direct questions regarding targeting methodologies, personal experiences and about their personal point of views concerning the drug trafficking issue between México and The United States of America.

First, on February 23, 2015, I interviewed a US Army Special Forces Colonel about his experiences targeting HVIs and terrorist/insurgent organizations and compared them with the Mexican war on drugs. For him, the main challenge for MEXMAR and MAF is how to incorporate military doctrine into police procedures. To achieve this, he mentioned, Mexico will likely require a new set of laws, at the end amending the Mexican Constitution would be required. An example was mentioned during our conversation: the Patriotic Act passed in the United States after the September 9, 2011 (9/11) terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. In this document he mentioned that the US government increased the extrajudiciary powers of the law enforcement and intelligence agencies to prevent attacks by terrorist organizations and other threats on the US soil. However, an important consideration must govern this effort: protect civil and human rights of the citizens. In the United States there is a great debate about if the National Security Agency (NSA) is violating the Expectation of Privacy of the American citizens. Using necessarily aggressive and intrusive methods for gathering information to produce intelligence has been proven to be effective. Since the 9/11 attacks, no major success has been achieved by terrorist organizations within the US territory. On the contrary, many plots to conduct these kinds of attacks have been dismantled, mainly because of an efficient intelligence system.

All of these highlight the importance of the intelligence systems/agencies. In the case of MEXMAR, they are closely supported by the Naval Intelligence Unit (NIU). The role of the NIU is becoming vital to identify nodes in drug cartels networks, but it is even more relevant to determine which of these nodes are the most important. These most important nodes (Communications, finance system, point of entrance of precursors, etc.) are known as hubs. According to him, attacking the hubs will produce the most damage to drug cartel networks.

Here, he mentioned that according to his personal experience in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Intelligence Fusion Cells (IFC) were a key element in the entire intelligence effort. In the MEXMAR case, Intelligence Fusion Cells would gather all the information collected by all intelligence systems involved in the counter-drug effort (Navy, Army, Federal Police and the Center of Intelligence and National Security) conducting the Find and Fix functions of the F3EAD method, making a target actionable. These IFC are currently under development into the Mexican Navy (MN) organization.

Comparing MEXMAR war on drugs with the US war on Terror, it is clear that capturing/killing the top leader of a criminal/terrorist organization is probably the right punishment for this individual but it is necessary to assess the real effect of this in the overall criminal organization. For instance, did the killing of Osama Bin Laden really affect the Al Qaeda network? Was he the key hub in the organization? Does it cause a collapsing cascade effect into the organization? Today, Al Qaeda is still operative and being a threat to the US. It seems that the killing of Osama Bin Laden was the right punishment for him, but not a decisive action against the overall Al Qaeda network. Assessing this makes clear that a hub (key node) not necessarily has to be an individual, it could be the finance system, the money laundry system or the communications system. On the contrary, the application of lethal force to an HVI, if successful, eliminates the most valuable source of information for further attacks against the overall network, through the Exploit, Analyze and, Disseminate functions of the F3EAD methodology. Therefore, the killing option may be the least desirable effect to be achieved.

After analyzing and comparing the Mexican and US circumstances, it is clear that until now, the MEXMAR counter-drug campaign strategy of removing the drug cartels' top leaders has not been wargamed against the most likely and most dangerous drug cartels' courses of action.

Sometimes capturing/killing the top leader produces a counterproductive and unpredicted star fish effect, splitting one organization into two different ones.

On February 20, 2015, I interviewed a USMC Major about his experience applying or following the Targeting Process. He confirmed that the USMC is following the same Targeting methodology as the US Army (D3A and F3EAD). He also mentioned that both procedures had been very successful in all three levels of war: tactical, operational and strategic. He also mentioned the way different types of intelligence -Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Image Intelligence (IMINT), Signal Intelligence (SIGINT), etc. - are used to confirm the presence of a High Pay-Off (HPO) target or a HVI. As well, he mentioned that USMC is permitted to hit a HVI or a HPO target without wearing uniforms and using nonmilitary vehicles (civilian clothes and civilian cars). In addition, he mentioned that Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) are used to lethally target HVIs. In the MEXMAR case, both of these options are forbidden by Mexican laws. MEXMAR at the very beginning of their tour of duty supporting law enforcement agencies did exactly the same as the USMC Major described: They hit (lethally and non-lethally) several HVIs using covert techniques: wearing civilian clothes and using civilian vehicles. Nowadays, they are facing problems due to the employment of these methods. Currently, very skilled lawyers defending drug cartel leaders are using these methods against MEXMAR. They are trying to prove violations of due process, legally speaking.

The USMC Major talked about how the attacking the network approach is conducted. It was clear that for valued-based organizations as terrorist, insurgent or religious groups, attacking the network is important, but what causes the most damage to these organizations is to kill or capture the leader, because generally speaking leaders of these organizations are charismatic and difficult to replace.

As well, he elaborated in how the networks are integrated (nodes and hubs) and that sometimes it is very important to be patient and instead of targeting the top leader(s) or the hubs immediately after they are Fixed, it is convenient to wait until the right moment. This refers me to the US Armed Forces doctrinal definition that states: “D3A methodology facilitates the attack of the right target, with the right asset at the right time.”³⁰ In the past, MEXMAR prematurely attacked the communications network of the drug cartels in the northeastern part of Mexico. There, many antennae of the Zetas’ cartel communication network were located and knocked down right away. MEXMAR learned that if they just had waited and intervened in these networks, they would have achieved better and probably more decisive and effective damage to the overall Zetas Cartel network. From this interview it can be inferred first, that military tactical procedures and methods permitted to US Armed Forces in a combat situation could be just partially applied by MEXMAR targeting drug cartel networks and leaders and second, decapitation is more useful against a valued-based organization.

Finally, on February 23 and 25, 2015, I interviewed a US FBI agent about his experience targeting HVI and DTOs. He provided his perception from the law enforcement perspective. In this regard it was mentioned in our conversation that currently many Mexican Marines are facing legal problems because drug cartel lawyers are using the law against them. The lawyers are arguing in many cases MEXMAR did not follow the due legal process. To mention some examples: First, they are arguing MEXMAR did not read their clients’ legal rights immediately after the arrest; second, that MEXMAR interrogated their clients using coercion and torture; third, that the evidence was not handled adequately; and finally, that MEXMAR kept their clients with them more than 24 hours before handling them over into Police custody. In short,

MEXMAR is facing now legal issues mainly because they were not sufficiently trained in law enforcement techniques and procedures.

It is understood that armed forces and law enforcements agencies must respect the law. In the MEXMAR case, they were ordered to support law enforcement agencies fighting against drug cartels and DTOs and they obeyed that order as they were expected to do. The issue was that MEXMAR, as part of the armed forces, were trained to fight a war, a war against a foreign enemy. In fact, they were unprepared to fight this type of war, not because of a lack of skills nor a lack of will, but because they were sent to do police work with military training. They were trained to follow and respect the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), but never trained for instance, about how to correctly complete the Chain of Custody in a counter drugs operation. The consequences are now reaching the surface. In this case, being good in killing people and breaking things was not the right way to face this war.

It was also mentioned in our conversation that there are several legal tools available to FBI agents to conduct targeting operations against DTOs and HVIs. He mentioned how FBI, according to US Title 3, is allowed to wiretap persons of interest's telephone conversations. However, there are some restrictions to guarantee US citizens' Expectation of Privacy. He pointed out that wiretap operations have a restricted time frame, generally 30, 60, or 90 days, but if it is required it is possible to request a time extension.

Another interesting topic was Interrogation procedures. He mentioned that, in the moment of the arrest of a suspect, his or her legal rights are read to him or her, but after reading the detainee's legal rights, there is always a final question: After I read your rights, do you want to talk to me? If the suspect's answer is no, no more questions are asked, but if the suspect agrees, all the information he or she provides is considered completely legal. In addition, during formal

interrogations FBI agents are allowed to exercise some pressure on a suspect during the sessions. He mentioned this is considered legal and it is only considered an interrogation technique.

He also discussed about the legal differences between American and Mexican laws. Here, I would like to mention that I am not an expert in either American or Mexican laws and therefore, I only expressed my limited personal point of view when comparing both. There are some similarities between Mexican and American laws, generally speaking. The main differences are the procedures emanating from the laws and how the laws support the performance of the law enforcement agents. To avoid confusing the reader, I consider it proper to mention I am not trying to say that US law is protecting or allowing US law enforcement agents to perform without restrictions or violating the law. I am saying that for instance, the concept of Flexible Laws that agent K.C. mentioned in our conversation is really useful. Flexible Laws means that FBI agents have the chance of not following strictly the law. For example, not following the due legal process, if they have reasonable motives to do so. Obviously they have to prove later to an attorney/judge how their decision making process was to determine they had reasonable motives to skip one or more steps of the due legal process.

Another quite interesting concept is what it is known as Exigent Circumstances. When I mentioned some of the constraints and restraints that the MEXMAR have according to Mexican Laws, I described how at the very beginning of MEXMAR involvement in the war on drugs they were very successful in capturing/killing HVI. This success was greatly achieved because MEXMAR conducted undercover operations. Mexican Marines were wearing civilian clothes and approaching targets aboard civilian vehicles, allowing them to reach their objectives without notice. These undercover operations have proven to be very effective. What they did not expect was that these methods would be considered illegal under Mexican laws. In this case, Exigent

Circumstances is a tool employed by US FBI agents to avoid, for example being detected by the delinquents in their way to an objective/target. Using the same context of the MEXMAR undercover operations mentioned above, if the US FBI agents determine if they wear uniforms or any FBI distinctive, the operation will not be successful (exigent circumstance), they might request authorization to conduct the operation wearing civilian clothes without any FBI distinction on their cars or clothes (Flexible Law).

International Military Targeting Methodologies

In this segment I gathered information about doctrine and perspectives from the United Kingdom, Australia, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). I reviewed doctrinal publications regarding targeting process from these countries and organization. In addition, I interviewed a member of the United Kingdom Royal Marines and a member of the Australian Army to have their personal and deep approach to the targeting doctrines and procedures in these countries and multinational organizations a the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

United Kingdom Armed Forces Targeting Methodology

According to the British Armed Forces doctrine, “Target is an area, structure, object, person, force, organization, mindset, thought process, attitude or behavioral pattern which can be influenced or changed by the application of a capability.”³¹ Interestingly, this definition includes intangible aspects not mentioned in the US Army doctrinal definition. This different and more complete understanding of a target includes the mindset, thought process and behavior of an individual or group of individuals. Here, the “gaining minds and hearts of the enemy” concept (non-kinetic operations) broaden the spectrum in which the armed forces have to conduct their

targeting process. LtCol Giulio Di Marzio (Italian Army) mentioned “when we use the word targeting, we principally are referring to all those kinetic actions taken to hit or strike a specific critical point or more properly speaking, a well-defined target itself.”³² This statement unveiled the misperception we have about targeting, relating this process with an effective, destructive and lethal combination of power and strength.³³ British doctrine also remarks that there is neither a fix solution nor a universal answer for the targeting process.³⁴ For them targeting “is the process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching the appropriate response to them, taking into account operational requirements and capabilities.”³⁵ In British targeting methodology “Most activity will be coordinated at component level using the four stages tactical targeting process of: Decide, Detect, Deliver, Assess (D3A).”³⁶ And “subordinate units and headquarters may use a further mechanism known as: Find, Fix, Finish, Exploit, Analyze (F3EA).”³⁷ This is practically the same approach followed by the US Army. Additionally, for NATO led operations the British Army applies the F2T2EA targeting method.

To have a deeper perspective about the British Armed Forces approach to the Targeting process, I interviewed an United Kingdom Royal Marines (UKRM) Major who gave me his “from inside” perspective and advice.

In his perspective, there are two ways to fight drug cartels: First, high tempo: keep hitting drug cartel networks. In this approach MAF and law enforcement agencies need to keep the pressure at different geographical areas over the drug cartels. Second, law enforcement type operations conducted by the military hitting drug cartel command and control structure. He explained to me that in Iraq between 2004 and 2007 when Al Qaeda became a real problem, the UK and the US identified Al Qaeda as a flat, not hierarchical network with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as the leader, but having autonomous cells that had the freedom of choosing their own

targets, that made their network very difficult to affect using conventional targeting means. That means that if the Coalition Forces killed or captured a couple of the leaders, Al Qaeda could replace them very quickly. Then, Coalition Forces were focused only in one particular geographical area, meanwhile a lot of problems were going on everywhere. General McChrystal realized that and since then, Coalition Forces used small teams of Special Forces, geographically dispersed and developed the F3EAD targeting process. Coalition forces were really interested at the start in the top leaders, key planners, (operational, strategic planners), but with the F3EAD process they focused in hitting the network. He also mentioned that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Al Qaeda leader in Iraq, was always a target and therefore, when they had specific intelligence about al-Zarqawi location they always acted on it. But, al-Zarqawi was not anymore the main objective. The primary focus was not decapitation, the primary focus was attacking the organization at the bottom level, quickly and in a number of areas at the same time. He mentioned that when they hit compounds to kill or capture an individual they had to exploit what was found there. If the Coalition forces captured the individual, they had to interrogate him and to look at his phone, laptop, documents, CD-ROMs, hard drives, thumb drives, etc. He also mentioned they became so good in that, that they were able to do the exploitation function on target and through the exploitation and the analysis of the information gathered by reviewing phone records and e-mails, another name eventually popped out. Then, through technical means they were able to find where this new individual was, it even could be two or three streets away from the first objective and then the same team just reloaded their weapons and then hit the second objective. In Iraq, the tempo was really fast and in the peak of this innovation they conducted 300 missions a month.

In the MEXMAR case that means that they might start hitting at the low level, hitting messengers and gunmen. The purpose is that if MEXMAR hit enough of these messengers and gunmen at the low and mid-level, the name of the local leader would eventually pop out and if MEXMAR hit enough number of these local leaders at the low and mid-level, eventually MEXMAR would capture the regional leader and so on.

The desired effect is to discover the network. In hitting the low and middle level, the network slowly will light up. The UK and US Special Operations Forces (SOF) were so successful with this method in Iraq that they tried to replicate the model in Afghanistan, but there they achieved just limited success because the tribal dynamics were different, the war in Afghanistan was mainly rural. They struggled in the early days with maintaining the same tempo, but they did not get the same results. They used the same process, but the Find and Fix functions (target development) took longer. They learned they needed to be more patient in Afghanistan. It definitely was not the same industrial level of kill/capture that was happening in Iraq.

For him, the case of México is very military heavy. He said we know who the drug cartels leaders are, but MEXMAR cannot get them because their awareness about phone interception is very good and they do not speak on the phone very much and they are constantly on the move, maybe staying in one safe house only one night and then moving to another safe house the other night. In summary, they are very difficult to Find and Fix, because their electronic footprint, their electronic signature is almost none. His concept is to keep the leaders on the target list as HVIs, but to dismantle his network from the bottom up first. This approach is very resource heavy in manpower and intelligence. A big machine is required to generate the tempo across so huge a

geographical scale and generally, is better done by better trained and specialized forces.

Conventional infantry maybe are not just capable as SOF are.

His second approach is using the same process, but rather than doing target development do intelligence development. This will require a longer period of time on the Find and Fix functions. This second approach, will require for example, identify an individual at the low level (hitmen, informant or courier) and then, instead of hitting him right away, just observe him through electronic surveillance, through foot surveillance, developing his patron of life, observing who he meet with, observing how often he meet with the same individual, routine places where he goes, etc. Basically observe his life and daily activities. Through those means, is possible to start identifying the network around him. Is a more law enforcement approach and it does not work in all environments.

I asked him about the legal constraints UKRM have and how they managed them. He answered that question with another question: What protects MEXMAR from being charged with murder if during combat they accidentally kill civilians? He mentioned that in the British experience, there are a number of cases through history where using military and specially SOF to conduct Counter Terrorism (CT) operations had legal repercussions. First, it is good to remark that the UK classify terrorism as a criminal activity and thus, a law enforcement task. He also mentioned some examples of operations against the Irish Republican Army (IRA). He mentioned that through emergency powers the United Kingdom (UK) government used the military to combat the threat of the IRA. Basically, the British government declare a state of emergency which allowed the government to legally use military force alongside the police, in order to counter the threat, because the IRA threat exceeded the capacities of the police. As a consequence of the involvement of the military in the fight against the IRA there had been a

number of issues, a number of legal cases when using SOF to shoot and kill terrorists. He recalled that there was an incident in Northern Ireland in 1970s where intelligence suggested that the IRA would be attacking a police station, using a digger to break down the wall of the police station and then detonate a bomb inside and finally they would use weapons to kill the surviving policemen. Following that intelligence, a UK Special Forces team waited outside of the police station in darkness for the IRA team to arrive and when they did arrive the UK SOF essentially ambushed the IRA. They did not wait for the IRA to do something first, they did not issue a challenge, they did not give them the opportunity to surrender, they just ambushed and destroyed the vehicle where the IRA members were traveling and killed them all.

There was another case in the island of Gibraltar and again, there was intelligence suggesting that an IRA team were going to target a British military band playing in the center of the island. Therefore, UK SOF deployed an undercover team. They tracked three IRA operators coming to Gibraltar. The intention was to arrest all three and the Special Forces team moved into do that. When they approached the IRA operators, one of them moved a hand into his pocket. The SOF believed that he was trying to reach a weapon or the trigger for a bomb. Thus, they shot him. The other two IRA operators did nothing and ran and they were shot and killed. At the end UK SOF killed the three. The members of the SOF team were put on trial for murder and were found guilty. The point here is, that military people and particularly SOF, with a very aggressive mindset were doing police work without the proper training.

He explained how UKRM conduct undercover operations. In the UK if the military were to conduct a CT operation on UK soil, that would be in support of or under the command of the civilian authority. On the contrary, if this is a situation like a high jacked airplane or some sort of situation like a gunman running around the city killing people, then the first responders will be

the armed police. Only if the threat is too dangerous to the police to deal with, then they would request assistance from the military and in some point the command of that operation will switch from a police officer to a military officer for the period it takes to neutralize or deal with the threat. Within that scenario the military personnel would be given authorization to use lethal force. But military actions will be heavily scrutinized; they could not employ their weapons systems in the same way than they could in a war zone as Iraq or Afghanistan. If they pulled the trigger on their weapons they have to be accountable for why they did it. The individual has to justify if his life was threatened or if it was his genuine belief that that gunman would kill an innocent. If it was the case, then they are covered by the law. In terms of the use of military power in a domestic sense, this will be only when the situation exceeded the capacity of the police. If the situation is handed by into the military, they are given the legal authority to use the minimal lethal force necessary to deal with the situation. In such cases they may be dressing as policemen or wearing black type military clothes. He pointed out that in the domestic sphere, the police will do the exploitation function of the F3EAD process but they still need warrants to enter someone's house. Even outside of the UK they still have to follow UK law, which essentially is that the military have to prove the reasons why they are entering someone's house or compound without announcing it. They have to prove that it was mission essential (exigent circumstances) and in by doing that they were reducing the threat from an individual or terrorist group. In summary, British troops need to respect local laws and UK laws and their Rules of Engagement (ROE) derived from the UK laws.

Regarding, Site Exploitation (SITEX) he pointed out that everybody in a UK SOF team is given the basic level of training, for example to use the black box that is plugged into a cell phone to exploit it. Each operator is trained to take DNA swabs from dead bodies to confirm they

killed the right target. Everybody is trained to a basic degree in how to maintain the forensic integrity of the evidence. The problem is that if you want one Special Forces operator to be an expert in forensic evidence handling, he needs to give up one of his other specialties because he have too many skills to maintain. It would be better to take an expert (police) with your team. They have a different mindset. Their mindset is not shoot to kill, it is to try to capture the individual first and once the individual is captured, they deal with the evidence like a policeman works. Finally, he mentioned that F3EAD is widely used now, but advised that in the MEXMAR case they need to be more patient now. He mentioned that long term intelligence development is key for law enforcement-type operations

Australian Defense Forces Targeting Methodology

The Australian Army has its own targeting doctrine. Australian doctrine defines a target as “an object of a particular action, for example a geographic area, a complex, an installation, a force, equipment, an individual, a group or a system, planned for capture, exploitation, neutralization or destruction by military forces.”³⁸ For the Australian Defense Forces (ADF) targeting “is a process that supports the planning and conduct of operations by identifying the desired effects to be achieved within the battlespace that support the mission, objectives and end-state.”³⁹ As with the British Army the ADF are using the F2T2EA method for dynamic targeting.

To reaffirm my knowledge about the ADF approach to the Targeting process I interviewed an officer of the ADF to get his perspective. He shared with me his experiences from his recent tours to Afghanistan. He told me that there they faced a networked enemy, hiding amongst the local population and having safe havens in Iran and in Pakistan. He mentioned that in Afghanistan the Taliban were divided in two main activities: insurgency and drug trafficking.

Australian Armed Forces employed the F3EAD targeting process to kill or capture Taliban members, regardless if they were either part of the insurgent group or the drug trafficking group because the Australians knew both groups were interconnected in some point, integrating both groups in a single network. In that way, when they captured a member of the Taliban they were allowed to keep him with them for seven days in order to conduct interrogations to feed the Exploitation, Analyze and Disseminate functions of the targeting process. If the prisoner was a HVI and member of the insurgent group, he was turned in to the United States Forces in Kabul for further interrogation. In case the prisoner was a member of the drug trafficking group of the Taliban the Australians kept him with them for seven days and after that they turned him in to the United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and after that the DEA turned him to the Afghan Drug Police (ADP).

Interestingly, he brought to our conversation the topic of Information Operations (IO) as a non-kinetic option against drug cartels. He mentioned that IO were very successful in Afghanistan in 2001 against Taliban forces. He suggested that in order to weaken drug cartels network IO could be a more efficient approach. He also mentioned that a strong education campaign would keep the youth away from joining DTO's. In addition, he stated that strengthen the efforts to seize the illegal profits obtained from drug trafficking. The desired final outcome of these IOs is to weaken the network by reducing the number of young people joining the DTOs attracted by the high profits and providing them with other options to work legally. Finally, he advised to look the drug cartels problematic in Mexico through the Systems Theory approach. He described drug cartels, using Systems Theory, as complex and adaptive systems. The main goal of this approach will be to disrupt, or better said, to create chaos within these complex systems. Creating chaos within the drug cartels network is the intended result of changing the

strategy in fighting drug cartels in Mexico. Creating chaos within the network will cause it to collapse.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization Targeting Methodology

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization military doctrine states that a target is “a selected geographic area, object, capability, person, or organization (including their will, understanding, and behavior) which can be influenced as part of the military contribution to a political end-state.”⁴⁰ Here again the intangible factors of will, understanding and behavior are present. NATO doctrine also define targeting as “the process of determining the effects necessary to achieve the commander’s objectives, identifying the actions necessary to create the desired effects based on means available, selecting and prioritizing targets, and the synchronization of fires with other military capabilities and then assessing their cumulative effectiveness and taking remedial action if necessary.”⁴¹ Allied Joint doctrine published by the North Atlantic Treaty organization for Joint Targeting, is based in the F2T2EA method

Analysis of Results

The current strategy followed by MEXMAR against drug cartels and DTOs is based mainly on decapitation. Saying that, it is not intended to affirm that nothing else is being done. Definitely MEXMAR are attacking the network as well, following the money, tracing the network links, conducting ISR, attacking the communications network, etc. But after more than ten years of involvement of the MAF in the anti-drug campaign launched by the Mexican government since 2006, this strategy is not achieving the desired end state envisioned by the Mexican Presidency. The desired end state is: First, seeing drug cartels weakened enough to be

handled by local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. Second, a significant abatement of violence ratings nationwide, and third the amount of drugs smuggled into the United States significantly reduced.

Drug cartels in Mexico are still strong organizations. The Sinaloa Cartel remains the largest and the most powerful; Zetas Cartel is the most violent and the most dispersed, having a strong presence in 22 of 32 Mexican States; The Gulf Cartel is embroiled in a bloody war against Zetas Cartel, but still maintain control of the northeastern part of Mexico; La Familia and the Templar Knights Cartels are in control of the central-western region dominating the methamphetamine production and trafficking into the United States.

From 2006 to 2011 there were 45, 514 homicides in Mexico, 27 homicides per day.⁴² Since 2012 and during the first eleven months of the current federal administration, the number of drug related homicides is estimated to be 19,016, 57 homicides per day.⁴³ Using this trend, the projection of number of homicides for 2018, when the current administration will end, is 124,975 homicides,⁴⁴ representing an increment of almost 50% compared with the previous six year-term administration.

It is clear that a different approach is required to achieve the desired end state. A written doctrine about targeting methodology and targeting process is also required to achieve this purpose. This doctrine should standardize targeting procedures and methods at all levels. Doctrine should clarify the limits between military and law enforcement-type operations. In addition, doctrine should consider, in a realistic way, the limitations and capabilities of MEXMAR and MN.

Similarities and Differences among International and Mexico's Targeting Methodologies

Despite the fact that MEXMAR does not have a written doctrine regarding targeting methodology and targeting process, I would definitely affirm that MEXMAR, especially SOF are following the Fix, Find, Finish, Exploit, Analyze and Disseminate model at the tactical level.

Maintaining high tempo during their operations

On February 17, 2014 in Culiacan, Sinaloa in the northeast of Mexico at 03:00 a.m. Mexican Marines captured Mario Hidalgo Argüello a.k.a. "El Nariz" ("The Nose") personal assistant of Joaquin Archibaldo Guzman Loera a.k.a. "El Chapo" ("The Shorty") leader of the Sinaloa Cartel and the most wanted fugitive on the world.⁴⁵ By 06:00 a.m. on the same day, an elite team of MEXMAR Special Forces raided a residence in Culiacan looking for the world's most wanted man. They almost captured Guzman Loera, but "El Chapo" was able to escape using a tunnels system built underground in Culiacan, that allowed him to escape that day. Later on, with information collected from Hidalgo Argüello, MEXMAR captured Manuel Lopez Osorio a.k.a. "El Picudo" ("The Weevil") on February 18. Osorio Lopez declared he helped Guzman Loera to escape the day before and indicated that "El Chapo" was hidden in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, about 140 miles north from Culiacan. Next day, on February 19 exploiting intelligence obtained from Lopez Osorio's and Hidalgo Arguello's cell phones MEXMAR captured Kevin Alfonso and Karim Elias Gil Acosta: both were in charge of the Sinaloa Cartel's communications network. That, became the key issue for the success of Operation Gargoyle. With the information collected from the Gil Acosta brothers, it was possible to identify Guzman Loera's cell phone number. Three days after, on February 22, 2014 at 04:50 a.m. a MEXMAR Special Forces team raided an apartment building in Mazatlán, Sinaloa. There, in apartment 401 Joaquin Archibaldo

Guzman Loera a.k.a. “The Shorty” was finally recaptured. It took MEXMAR only five days after the first raid to achieve the capture of the most wanted man on the world.

How was this possible? It was possible using the F3EAD methodology. This passage positively confirms the efficiency of the F3EAD targeting process in the capture of HVIs in the war on drugs in Mexico, emphasizing the importance of the Exploit, Assess, and Disseminate functions of the process. It worth to mentioning that this remarkable success of the MEXMAR would not be possible without the cooperation of the United States government through the Merida Initiative.⁴⁶ The Merida initiative strengthened the exchange of information, training and equipment between Mexico and the Unites States to face the common problem represented by the drug cartels.

All the targeting methodologies mentioned in this paper have been tested to their limits in several wars and campaigns such as Iraq and Afghanistan. This is basically the great difference with the MEXMAR case. They are not fighting a war. They are not fighting an insurgency. They are applying military force, capabilities and methods against organized crime groups. Are they trying to accomplish their mission correctly? Are there differences between the military targeting process and law enforcement agencies procedures? According to the expert from the FBI interviewed for this paper there are not such a thing as a targeting method for law enforcement agencies.

The Challenge for México/MEXMAR

The challenge for Mexico/MEXMAR is to apply targeting methodology, to the correct target, at the right time. The initial step will be to produce MEXMAR’s targeting doctrine in order to standardize efforts at all levels. This new doctrine should be based on the MEXMAR capabilities

and unique necessities. Second step will be to determine the right target. Are the drug cartels leaders the right one? Is it the money laundry network? Are the youth the right objective? Third, a mindset shift is required to face drug cartels, shifting from Military war-type to Law Enforcement police-type operations where intelligence efforts take a preponderant role.

I propose to keep following the F3EAD methodology for targeting drug cartel leaders and other HVIs. But for winning the war on drugs, the recommended strategy is to focus mainly on the network: First, to target upper middle-tier operatives of the drug cartels and DTOs, this means attack their Command and Control structure. Second, conducting non-kinetic operations such as Information Operations (IO) to target the mind and hearts of the youth to make them to leave the DTOs and to keep nonmembers away from joining the organized crime groups.

Evidently, targeting top leaders and other HVI need to be an essential task in this strategy, but decapitation will not be the core of this new approach. The challenge is to apply a divide and conquer strategy. As initially mentioned, decapitation is not generating neither drug cartels collapsing, reduction of violence ratings nor diminishing the amount of drugs being smuggling into the United States. On the contrary, it is generating more violence and creating new drug cartels and DTOs.

Finally, as General Salvador Cienfuegos-Zepeda, ministry of the Mexican Army stated “it is necessary to build the protocols for the participation of the Army and the Navy in internal security missions.”⁴⁷ Mexican laws need to be modified in order to support MEF while conducting internal security missions. Some additions to current laws might be considered, concepts as Flexible Laws and Exigent Circumstances will improve the efficiency of the Army and MEXMAR.

What Needs to Be Done

First, and key is the elaboration of written targeting doctrine. Although, MEXMAR is following C3A and F3EAD methods, there is not written doctrine available at any level. MEXMAR and the Naval Intelligence Unit have been increasingly trained by US Armed Forces since 2008 when the Merida initiative was announced. MEXMAR operations are supported by the Naval Intelligence Unit. Both entities have reached an outstanding level of performance achieving the capture of some of the top drug cartel leaders in Mexico. However, no doctrine regarding the targeting process has been produced since then. Doctrine, by the Mexican Navy's accepted definition needs to be written, widespread, and accepted. In this case targeting doctrine has been widespread and accepted but has not been written yet. When targeting doctrine is finally written, it will allow not only Special Operation Forces but also regular units to train and excel in this particular field of the military expertise.

When Targeting doctrine is written, approved, and issued it will generate structural changes into the organization of SOF and regular units. The addition of High-Value Target Teams (HVTT) to the organization of these units and the fusion of Intelligence with operational capabilities⁴⁸ will be necessary. This concept that includes an inter-agency approach had proven to be effective for the US Armed Forces during the Iraq war from 2004 to 2008.⁴⁹ In our case, a close collaboration among intelligence entities as the Center of Information and National Security (CISEN), The Naval Intelligence Unit and MEXMAR operational forces need to be achieved. As in the US Armed Forces case, inter-agency HVTT would lead to better and faster results in the war on drugs.

Undoubtedly, after the issue of new doctrine and new organizations are created, training will be required. MEXMAR are conducting all the functions of the D3A and F3EAD targeting processes but it is not clear who is assigned to perform each function of the process. The communication channels between intelligence personnel and operational forces need to be improved to say the least. SITEX teams need to be trained, equipped and imbedded within SOF and regular forces. Education regarding information gathering need to be included in the annual training program of all MEXMAR units. In the same way, interrogation teams need to be created and trained. Overall, a significant training effort in Targeting process need to be conducted along the MEXMAR units.

MEXMAR strength by 2014 was 16,954 marines. To effectively target the drug cartels networks in different geographical areas at the same time, an increase of personnel will be required. No less than 25,000 marines are required to face the new approach against drug cartels and to be able to perform training, operations, and daily activities in their Areas of Responsibility (AOR). However, increasing the number of personnel will have logistical implications.

A new logistical perspective will be required to achieve success conducting the targeting process. Starting with new and sophisticated information gathering equipment and ending with a specific budget for paying informants. Obviously, the logistic aspect of this approach is much more than just equipment and money. It would be necessary to determinate with the highest priority, what MEXMAR require to face this new approach? This is not only regarding equipment but also training. The acquisition of what would be declared as a necessity need to be considered in the distribution of the budget allocated to MEXMAR. In previous years this had been a common omission and the allocation of extraordinary budget had been very difficult. Distribution, would be the most difficult. With the allocation of extraordinary budget being an

issue, the most likely situation will be MEXMAR will have only a limited amount of money to acquire what was declared as a necessity. This, will translate into limited quantities of equipment and training packages. The next challenge will be determine what units need to be equipped first. In other words the most difficult part will be the distribution of these items.

Finally, as previously discussed, the main constraint for the MEXMAR in the conduct of the targeting process is that some restrictive considerations need to be taken into account. First, MEXMAR are not facing either terrorist or insurgent organizations, they are conducting law enforcement-type operations against organized crime organizations. Second, the current political guidance privileges information gathering and intelligence production. Therefore, limiting the use of lethal actions and lethal force as the first option to targeting a HVI or group of people, creating the necessity of a mindset change to face this new approach. Third, the lack of written doctrine cause uncertainty and disorientation in MEXMAR commandants and troops.

The final thought is, that when all MEXMAR members understand and apply correctly the targeting process functions allowing HVTT to target the right target, with the right asset at the right time, the commander's desired end state will be achieved. In this case, it is drug cartels weakened enough to be handled by local, state and federal police, the abatement of the violence ratings and a significant reduction of the amount of drugs entering into the United States illegally.

Conclusion

Targeting drug cartel top leaders has been the strategy of the MEXMAR since 2006. Since then, MEXMAR has been successful in killing or capture drug cartels and DTOs top leaders in Mexico, but these extraordinary successes at the tactical level are not having the same

extraordinary effect at the strategic level. For instance, MEXMAR killed Hector Beltran Leyva leader of the Beltran Leyva Cartel on December 16, 2009 but the cartel is still operational and smuggling drugs into the United States; MEXMAR also killed, Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano leader of the Zetas Cartel on October 7, 2012, and captured Miguel Angel Treviño Morales on July 15, 2013, who replaced Lazcano Lazcano as the Zetas Cartel leader. Zetas cartel is still operating in 22 Mexican states and in more than 43 countries worldwide. In total, from 2007 to 2012 MEXMAR captured 3,857 drug cartel members.⁵⁰ Seventeen of them were top level leaders, but this did not translate into the collapse of the criminal organizations. Once again, a tactical success but a strategic failure.

Decapitation is not achieving the goal of making drug cartels weak enough to be handled by local, state and federal police. On September 26, 2014, forty three male students from the Raúl Isidro Burgos Rural Teachers' College of Ayotzinapa, went missing in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. According to official reports, they seized several buses and traveled to Iguala that day to hold a protest at a conference led by the city mayor's wife. During the journey local police intercepted them and a confrontation ensued. What happened during and after the clash remain unclear, but the official investigation concluded that once the students were in custody, they were handed over by the local police to the local Guerreros Unidos Cartel ("United Warriors") and presumably killed. Still there are some States in Mexico where the local and state police are protecting and working for the drug cartels.

It seems obvious that something is not being done correctly. It seems that MEXMAR is not targeting in the right way. It seems obvious they are targeting the wrong target, with the right asset, at the right time. This is generating an unexpected output: the ratings of violence nationwide have increased exponentially. Capturing or killing drug cartel leaders is generating

internal disputes within drug cartels and DTOs. When MEXMAR killed Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano leader of the Zetas cartel in the northern Mexican state of Coahuila, Ivan Velazquez Caballero a.k.a “El Taliban” (“The Taliban”) and Miguel Angel Treviño Morales a.k.a. “Z-40” started a dispute over the supreme leadership of the cartel, causing a series of massacres and shootings in northern Mexico. Additionally, despite the fact that decapitation has been effective at the tactical level, the amount of drugs smuggled into the United States has not been reduced. According to CNN reporter Ashley Fantz, the total profits of illicit drug trafficking from Mexico to the US is estimated from \$13.6 billion to \$49.4 billion annually.

MEXMAR has not realize that the decapitation strategy followed until now has not produced the desired end state, partially because they did not war gamed their actions against drug cartels’ most likely and most dangerous courses of actions (COA) Therefore, a shift in the strategy against drug cartels and DTOs in Mexico is required to achieve the envisioned end state. The challenge is to hit the correct target, with the right asset, at the right time.

The initial step will be to write MEXMAR’s targeting doctrine in order to standardize efforts at all levels. Second step will be to determine the network as the right target. Targeting upper middle-tier operatives of the drug cartels and DTOs, targeting their Command and Control structure and through non-kinetic operations such as IOs, target the mind and hearts of the youth to make them to leave drug cartels and DTOs and to keep nonmembers away from joining the organized crime groups. Third, a mindset shift is required to face drug cartels, shifting from Military war-type to Law Enforcement police-type operations where intelligence efforts take the leading role. Fourth, an organizational change considering including HVTT in MEXMAR organization will be required. Finally, Mexican laws need to be modified in order to support MEF while conducting internal security missions.

Countering drug cartels is currently the main challenge not only for MEXMAR but also for all the branches of the MAF. After almost eight years supporting law enforcement agencies fighting drug cartels and DTOs, victory still remains uncertain. Tactical successes provide temporary relief and satisfaction but the strategic goals are still unachieved. This is a decisive moment in our time. History will tell how MEXMAR confronted the drug cartels and DTOs threat and, if we succeeded or failed in our mission. Shifting now from decapitation to attacking the network strategy will cause the collapse of the criminal organizations. This is the time to complete our task in order to free the youth from drugs. This is the time to change young people's future, now.

Endnotes

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