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By Ramón César González Ortiz  
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## Counterinsurgency, neoliberalism and narco-paramilitarism in Mexico



Sources: Rebellion

### Introduction

The strengthening and consolidation of drug trafficking in Mexico, since the sixties, seventies and eighties, and to date, is closely linked to the counterinsurgency promoted by the United States in much of Latin America, through its National Security Doctrine, to combat armed social movements. [1]

Since, the real purpose of the US national security doctrine has been to privilege and protect the big monopoly capitals of your country. And from there, the United States has pressured Mexico since the Ronald Reagan administration, so that our country militarizes the alleged "war on drugs."

Pressures that would pay off, once Mexican soldiers were sent to Fort Worth, Texas, where they received training in the fight against narcotics; doctrine of unconventional warfare, which includes military and paramilitary activities, guerrilla warfare, covert fighting, and clandestine operations. All of which would normally be done by native or outsourced forces, but supported by external forces.

And, after this training, a training was imported to our country, which has focused on five key missions: "Unconventional war; U.S. domestic defense, but abroad; and direct actions such as; recognition and counterterrorism."

A framework from which, the Mexican State, in the framework of the dirty war[2], would use this training to promote the formation of elite paramilitary groups where drug traffickers would be included, and these groups would be integrated into the different police forces and the Army itself.

This is the case in Mexico, especially after the disappearance of the Federal Directorate of Security and the Special Brigade.

This is because, in the eighties and after the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, counterinsurgency strategies around the world would be modified, to resort since then to paramilitarism and narco-paramilitarism as a form of combat.

Logic according to which, in Mexico, priority would no longer be given to clandestine groups of repression such as the White Brigade, to give rise to groups of paramilitaries and narco-paramilitaries.

Regarding these events, General Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro[3], who was operational head of the counterinsurgency struggle for thirty years, would point out that: "The taxes of

the narcos created fortunes ... and another part of the money... it was intended for the fight against subversive movements."

But even more, Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, in the context of the rise of drug trafficking groups during the Calderón government, would appear as a supposed "negotiator" to reduce the rates of violence in the places that were politically most profitable for the National Action Party. And, his assignments would lead him to relate at least to "Los Zetas, Sinaloa Cartel, La Familia Michoacana, the Beltrán Leyva brothers and the Juárez Cartel."

Then, hand in hand with repression, in addition to Acosta Chaparro, characters would emerge that would shape the current narco-paramilitarism, an example of which is *Arturo Moreno Espinoza*, who offered protection to drug traffickers in Sinaloa where he was head of the Judicial Police in 1988, and from there, he would dedicate himself with special emphasis to the drug trafficking business.

A similar case would be that of *Juan Huerta Trejo*, who would be known as **Comandante Lucas** or *Lieutenant Lucas*[4], and was a former military man who would work for *El Güero Palma*, as a hitman and drug trafficker.

Examples that, among many other cases, will give an account of the way in which some members of the Special Brigade or the Federal Directorate of Security, when they became drug traffickers, would actually give continuity to the acts to which they were accustomed to carry out and that would lead to the current narco-paramilitarism.

Situation within which, in addition, those who exterminated the guerrillas of the seventies and eighties would become commanders and instructors of new repressive groups.

Accordingly, some members of the Special Brigade would go on to form anti-terrorist groups in the country's judicial police. Meanwhile, in Mexico City, they would pass to the Jaguar Group and the Special Deterrence Group Jaguares and Grupo Zorros [5].

## **Neoliberalism and the Growth of Drug Trafficking in Mexico**

Consistent with the above, between 1985 and 1996, dozens of witnesses would reveal that Mexican government officials collaborated with the CIA to dismantle leftist movements in the region, relying on drug traffickers *from the Guadalajara cartel*, who were allowed to traffic drugs, as payment for aid to U.S. international policy.

Thus, there would be the strengthening of a first generation of drug traffickers, after they supported the counterinsurgency in Nicaragua economically and logistically. Who, in addition, would also lay the foundations of violent organized crime both in Mexico and in Central America and Colombia.

And from there, within the same logic, there will be a greater growth of drug trafficking in Mexico, but this time, in close relationship with the advance of neoliberalism in Latin America, since the latter was established in most of our countries by military means from the Pentagon.

Particularly illustrative is the case of Chile, given that the bombing of La Moneda, promoted by the United States, would transform Chilean social and power structures. To displace the developmentalist bourgeoisie and its political representation and from there give way to militarized neoliberalism.

After which, privatization, deregulation, flexibilization and decentralization in Chile would be encouraged, as well as transnational capital and speculative financial sectors[6].

And, according to such a scenario of militarization and implementation of neoliberalism, in Mexico, at the end of the 1980s, there would also be the rise of a technocratic elite that would implement a series of political and economic reforms that marked the country's entry into neoliberalism[7].

Accordingly, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, as president of Mexico (1988-1994), after a wave of privatizations would give way to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The same thing that would become years of counterinsurgency against the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLAN), as it is one of the most important critics of NAFTA.

Counterinsurgency that would be in charge of the Special Forces Airmobile Groups (Gafes), elite groups that will have among their ranks military trained abroad (United States (USA), Israel, France, Guatemala, Chile, etc.).

Gafes that, in addition, in 2007, would shape a group of hitmen linked to both drug trafficking, kidnapping and human trafficking, the Zetas. This, after the alleged desertion of 1 thousand 382 elements of a total of 5 thousand 500 Gafes[8].

And, within such a counterinsurgency context, between 1993 and 1994, there would be a series of murders, such as that of Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo, that of Luis Donaldo Colosio, that of Adolfo Ruiz Massieu and Paco Stanley.

All hand in hand with a political reaction in several regions of the country, especially in the north, where the dominant party, which was the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), would lose states such as Baja California and Chihuahua, which are characterized by having the main border cities such as Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez.

But, in addition to losing the PRI these states, it would also lose the government of important municipalities such as Monterrey, Aguascalientes, Guadalajara and, later, the states belonging to those cities such as: Nuevo León, Aguascalientes and Jalisco.

Scenario to which, it would be added that, also in 1994, there were a series of murders or imprisonments, of those who at that time were the most important drug traffickers, such as the Arellano Felix brothers, Amado Carrillo Fuentes and Juan García Ábrego.

All of which would result in that, in our country, there were not only changes in national geopolitics, but also in the games of power and political and business chiefdoms. That would lead to the fact that, by the end of the nineties, when the PRI massively loses several spaces of the national territory and there are opposition leaders, both from the right and the left, new structures of drug traffickers were consolidated that would shape narco-paramilitarism.

Narco-paramilitarism that, within neoliberalism, will respond to a logic of dispossession, extractivism and adoption of neoliberal reforms, which have become the privatization of

strategic national sectors, as well as have opened the possibility for vast peasant areas to be expropriated under legal protection. This has involved both the dispossession of multiple areas, natural and human resources, as well as threats to collective and community organization[9].

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#### Notes:

[1] In Latin America, since the founding in 1948 of the OAS in Colombia and the assassination of Eliécer Gaitán, an unstoppable succession of coups d'état was orchestrated to any developing nationalist project promoted by democratically elected governments, emblematically represented by the Guatemala of Jacobo Arbenz (1954) and the Brazil of Joao Goulart (1964) by the "illusory magic" of an agrarian reform; Venezuela, Cuba, Paraguay, Bolivia, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Argentina, coups of the Holy Trinity: oligarchies, armies and Church, coordinated by Washington. The same one that led the coups of the 60s and the dirty wars in the 70s in Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina, which taking advantage of Stroessner's expertise in Paraguay, formed Operation Condor. The machinery of death against the Latin American peoples.

The Day. *The left and a debate in the face of historical reality.* By: Tatiana Coll. Saturday, June 18, 2022

[2] In Mexico, since the 60s, a devastating process of dirty war sustained by "legal" governments was configured, which lasted until the 80s. Some examples: murder of rubén Jaramillo's entire family and countless peasants; brutal repression against all social

movements that escalated on October 2, 68 and June 10, 71 at the level of genocides; takes by the Army of universities and normals; Led as a response to the closure of the democratic road, to the configuration of armed movements: from Arturo Gámiz, Lucio Cabañas, Genaro Vázquez, peasant fighters, to the consequent incorporation of students in various guerrillas.

The Day. *The left and a debate in the face of historical reality*. By: Tatiana Coll. Saturday, June 18, 2022

[3] Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, murdered in Mexico City in 2012. Acosta participated in the Dirty War and is considered responsible for the forced disappearance of hundreds of social fighters; endorsed more than one thousand 500 arrests in Guerrero, which were made in controversial circumstances and resulted in at least 200 executions that he himself carried out at the Military Air Base of Pie de la Cuesta, and the bodies were thrown into the sea from planes of the 301st squadron; he persecuted and murdered peasants related to the Guerrero guerrillas, and arrested and tortured the relatives of Lucio Cabañas.

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[4] He would die when the plane in which he was traveling with drug trafficker *Héctor Guardada*, (a) *El Güero Palma* crashed in 1995.

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[5] The latter still exists despite having carried out several massacres, one of them after a riot in a prison in Tepic, Nayarit, in 1988, where thirty-six inmates were murdered when they had already surrendered; and another in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Mexico



City, where six young people were arrested and disappeared, who a few days later were found murdered.

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[6] The Day. *The coup d'état in Chile: the first project of militarized neoliberalism*. By: Marcos Roitman Rosenmann. Sunday, September 15, 2019.

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[8] The paramilitary cut of drug traffickers (especially Los Zetas, Sinaloan traffickers, those from the Gulf, those of Jalisco New Generation) would be exacerbated by the increasing militarization of multiple public spaces within the framework of the "war on drugs" – specifically the use for public security tasks of the armed forces under the alibi of national security.

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**Ramón César González Ortiz, graduated in Sociology and master in Political Studies from the UNAM.**

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