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This blog was the first in the nation created by an editorial board to give readers a behind-the-scenes view of the discussion that goes into crafting the newspaper's daily editorials. It includes updates on the work of the editorial staff and debates on general news issues.

Letters to the Editor

We welcome and read all letters from readers. Letters are selected for publication based on their clarity and brevity. They also are chosen to represent a diverse set of views on as many issues as possible.

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Why Mexico's drug war is worth fighting



1:05 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009 | [Permalink](#)
Tod Robberson/Editorial Writer

Our **editorial today** makes the case that, in spite of all the second-guessing and hand-wringing going on in Mexico and the United States about how (or whether) to fight the drug war in Mexico, the response from the drug lords themselves should be evidence enough of why the Mexican government must not give up.



The bound and beaten bodies of two Mexicans were hung execution style from an overpass in northern Mexico yesterday with a note attached to them, "This territory already has an owner." It was apparently from loyalists of Arturo Beltran Leyva, the major drug lord who was killed earlier this month in a raid. His group retaliated by killing the mother and three relatives of a marine who died while participating in the raid.

So the message is clear: Get out of here, Mexican government. This is our territory.

Lots of people will argue that the answer is to legalize drugs, which will get rid of the drug lords. Maybe that could happen over the decades it would take to legalize drugs. But back here on Planet Earth, there are people who will apparently stop at nothing to terrorize a nation into submission. How can anyone rationally argue that the answer is to give up, walk away and just let them have their turf? And American drug consumers who are funding these terrorists: How can you live with yourselves, knowing that this is what your money is going for?

Comments

Posted by **Paul** @ 2:06 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

IMO, Mexico has already failed. At least half of the states are already controlled by the drug cartels. And I have no faith that there are any "good guys" in the picture. Not the police, the cartels, Calderon, or the military. They are all involved in a civil war of shifting alliances, and all of them are bloody, dictatorial, and contemptuous of human life.

One thing I am tired of hearing is how everything that goes wrong in Mexico is America's fault. If the DEMAND for drugs comes from the U.S., it's OUR fault. If the DEMAND for, say, weapons going FROM the U.S. to Mexico creates a problem there, it's still OUR fault. If Americans are a nation of drug addicts, then it should be clear also that Mexicans are getting what they want, a land of near anarchy, laden with violence, corruption, and squalor.

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Posted by **Bob** @ 2:09 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

"How can you live with yourselves, knowing that this is what your money is going for?"

Unearned profits: if it's good for Wall Street, it's good for Mexico. The answer? Legalize it now, take the profit out of drugs and stop the hand-wringing. You op-ed writers won't be on the front lines fighting drug lords, and moreover you won't fund the 'drug war' because you're too busy pandering for lower taxes. That drugs won't be legalized tomorrow is more proof that Big Pharma runs Congress. Vicodin has ruined more lives than Mexican pot ever will.

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Posted by **Hoo Boy** @ 3:04 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

"How can you live with yourselves, knowing that this is what your money is going for?"

Sure, blame it on the 15-year old kids rather than Congress and the U.S. government. How silly.

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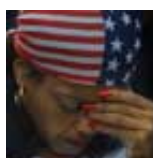
Posted by **CraigT** @ 3:15 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

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"How can you live with yourselves, knowing that this is what your money is going for?"

How can you live with yourself shopping at Walmart knowing everything there is made in a Chinese sweat shop?

How can you enjoy your new roof knowing the laborers were illegal aliens?

How can you eat that fried chicken knowing what the Colonel does to the poor birds?

I know that this is using the 2 wrongs arguments but it was rather a silly premise in the first place.

Your only good argument against legalization is that it will take decades. The solution would then seem to be to speed up the process of legalization. Not to keep trying the failed tactics that brought these animals wealth and power in the first place.

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Posted by **Bill Marvel** @ 3:25 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

So CraigT, since you apparently do not approve of Walmart shoppers and KFC diners, you would also not approve of users of illegal drugs from Mexico? Or is it the other way around: You approve of Walmart and KFC, therefore Mexican drug traffic is okay by you?

Just searching for signs of consistency, here.

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Posted by **rke** @ 5:18 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

And Tod, of course has offers no solution and gives us the same pious, tired "how can users live with themselves" we've been hearing for for forty failed years.

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Posted by **2 Birds 1 Stone** @ 5:33 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

"How can you live with yourselves, knowing that this is what your money is going for?"

Because I like to smoke weed and I think it is awesome when Mexican gangster scumbags kill each other. So it is a good deal of entertainment for me all the way around.

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Posted by **ashes77** @ 5:40 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

I suppose draining money from the US government into the pockets of Texas based corporations probably makes sense to people in Texas.

The idea that your somehow affecting drug consumption is laughable - but I guess you know that.

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Posted by **ashes77** @ 6:10 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

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Posted by **Truth** @ 7:29 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

At the risk of sounding defeatist, even if we legalized pot tomorrow, the drug cartels would find some new opiate or drug to push. The deal is this is not about the politics of legalizing pot, it is about how organized crime has effectively taken over entire states in Mexico. If you want a closer example, look to the Al Capones and John Dillinger's of the 1930's. Mexico is a poor nation where their few wealthy families keep tight control of their money. The vast population of Mexico is young, uneducated and unemployed. That makes for a rapidly shifting social situation. And offering twenty bucks a week to a guy that can't make that in a month the conventional way is going to buy loyalty such as the government has been unable to do. Until the central government is more interested in education, health and survival wages in Mexico we will continue to see the exodus of young men to the north, as well as illegal drugs.

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Posted by **Menso El Rey** @ 8:02 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

Mr Robberson,

Legalizing drugs would significantly lower the cost of drugs, meaning that funding for Mexican, Colombian, Taliban and other drug gangs would dry up.

Moreover, locals could produce drugs, which would mean no need to go to organised crime at all. 70% of the money organised crime earns comes from drugs. The rewards for transporting drugs would drop to zero. Drug lords would lose their biggest source of financing.

The war on drugs failed a long time ago, and there is no reason to continue it.

<http://hubpages.com/hub/endofthewarondrugs>

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Posted by **Against the Mexican Government** @ 9:57 PM Thu, Dec 31, 2009

First of all US is giving a lot of money to the wrong person, Did any of you

know which one of the biggest cartels isn't getting affected, Sinaloa Cartel why do you think they had never been involved in shooting against the police or army, because Calderon has an agreement with Juaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and did you know that 90% of the money that El Chapo gets from drugs comes from Europe. When the army officials kill Arturo Beltran Leyva they said that when they kill him he was with 3 hitmans from the Sinaloa Cartel that a lied, because the Sinaloa Cartel cut their alliances when one of the brothers of Arturo Beltran Leyva was arrested. What I don't like that the Mexican Government say was that now that they had kill Arturo Beltran Leyva alias "El Jefe de Jefes"(The Boss of Bosses)it was more vulnerable the Beltran Leyva Cartel in what way would a cartel that has a lot of family members be vulnerable if you know that he wasn't in control of the cartel he just was in charge of the killing and now it is going to be worse if Édgar Valdéz Villarreal alias "La Barbie"(The Barbie) gets in charge of the killing. I can't wait to see when they announce on TV that the violence in Ciudad Juarez is worse than before. I really like to see when they figure it out that US was responsible for giving money to a drug lord. I would really like to see that the drug lords won this war against the government. That would be awesome.

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Posted by **Greg** @ 2:32 AM Fri, Jan 01, 2010

The picture in Mexico: vast sums of money flow into the hands of drug suppliers who use it to corrupt the legal system. Legitimate business cannot function without a valid working legal system, so the economy cannot develop as it should.

The "war on drugs" increases the money available to the Mexican drug suppliers. Further, we suffer more domestic crime because users have to steal more to pay the inflated prices for drugs.

Our intellectual vacuum allows labeling proponents of change as being in favor of drug abuse. So politicians run from the idea of reform.

Anyone see a way out?

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Posted by **G Prentiss** @ 10:29 AM Fri, Jan 01, 2010

the problem is the money made the only way out is to legalize all drugs give them away for free whatever it takes the cartels will evaporate with no money to fund and they would not have the money to do other crime like hijack oil human trafficking if we legalized drugs and prostitution it would be easier to keep it away from our children which is the main point the safety of our children here is an example 3 kids go get some unregulated heroin do the drugs one has a bad reaction so they drop him off at his house he goes to bed and dies of overdose the kids knew better that they should have dropped him off at the hospital but they didn't. why because they were afraid of the repercussions of the law but they got caught and are doing time 3 lives ruined in a ny minute that's just one in a million examples the worse one is when they raid the wrong address and kill innocent people it happens everyday check out L.E.A.P. cops and judges for legalization

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Posted by **Dman1b** @ 11:37 AM Fri, Jan 01, 2010

Well, this one is less cut and dry. Being a recovered addict myself I know first hand what drugs can do to a life. First off let's realize some obvious truths.

1. Drug users don't care about where their money goes as long as they get drugs. If they had any concern for anything including themselves, they wouldn't be doing drugs.

2. Weed is not the dangerous drug that is making its way over the border or that the cartels are fighting over. It is COCAINE and HEROIN period! Mexican pot is low grade garbage and California, Oregon and Washington have pretty much already taken over the pot trade with their legalization laws and lax enforcement. Not to mention their pot is off the hook, sticky icky, kind buds, you get the picture.

3. If the US government truly wanted to make a difference they could stop this dead in its tracks by taking the foreign aid they give to the corrupt government in Mexico and apply that to funding a serious southern border protection policy. Simply build the wall, post a strong military force there with orders to kill anyone unlawfully crossing like many other countries do to protect their sovereignty. Then you will push the trafficking routes back to the sky and sea which are easier to monitor and enforce. With the cartels not being able to go over the border so easily, they have no need to fight for control. It's every cartel for itself trying to fly or sail it in.

Our government will never do this though, because that doesn't advance their agenda of stripping liberties from the populace. Which just goes to prove that our best interest are the last thing on their mind when they come up with things like healthcare reform, smoking bans, helmet laws, seatbelt laws, banning trans fat or any of the other so-called "protection laws".

And as a side note laws do work. I love the sticky icky kind bud I spoke of earlier, but there is one reason I don't smoke it anymore. It is illegal and I don't want my children to ever see me carted off to jail for even a misdemeanor or to take it up themselves. After all it is still a carcinogen like cigarettes only not as bad. I am for medical marijuana, but under stricter conditions than currently exist in the previously mentioned states.

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Posted by **mrbill** @ 3:25 PM Fri, Jan 01, 2010

you don't let the drug lords raise it. Make it legal and let our farmers raise it here, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas grow things quite fine, tax it, sell it at the liquor store or some other designated store.

Gets rid of gangs and cartels. We have drug problems and we take care of it. Just as we would if it was legal or illegal. Same way.

You don't hear or see gangs running around brewing beer or stealing beer...?
Not any more since Al Capone.

Why is that do you think.

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Posted by **jfruser** @ 9:51 PM Fri, Jan 01, 2010

If we really wanted to stop most drugs from coming in from Mexico, we'd have to control the border to include stopping the illegal alien traffic.

No policritter, journocritter, or anyone else is really serious about the drug problem unless they are also a hawk on the problem of illegal aliens. They either suffer from cognitive dissonance or are dishonest.

Also, we'd have to keep from allowing Mexican truckers from driving their loads into America like they would like to do under NAFTA.

All the above is doable and American companies help foreign gov'ts secure foreign borders, but our rulers in Austin & DC don't want any part of it.

Also, Mexico is a failed state and NONE of the actors (drug cartels, gov't, oligarchs) are good guys.

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Posted by **Steve in Garland** @ 9:22 AM Sat, Jan 02, 2010

Regarding the "legalize it" argument:

In our suite-happy society, what legitimate company is going to market mind-altering substances over the counter? Too much liability! So after legalization, who will sell the stuff? The existing black market apparatus - which translates to high prices, easy availability to minors, and NO tax revenue. And, the cartels still control the traffic.

The only folk who will profit from legalization are the drug lords, gangs, and lawyers.

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Posted by **Bill** @ 9:44 AM Sat, Jan 02, 2010

Okay, if I were the drug czar, I would say, "Okay, here are the five or six popular, illegal drugs. You can get them at the federal drug store for just more than the pharmaceutical cost of producing them. Enough to sustain the overhead, but enough also to discourage a black market in them. But before you go in there you're going to have to read a description of what this drug does to you. And if you're in a mood to play Russian roulette, go ahead and take some crack cocaine, because the probability that you will be seriously affected by this is up around eight, ten percent." So therefore I would give them all the warning that they needed about the toxicity that they were able to accept in indulging this habit, but I would not let the price rise to where Mr. Middleman decides that he's going to sell you that crack cocaine, and in order to get it he's going to fumble around in people's living rooms or steal women's purses or mug people.

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Posted by **Really?** @ 7:55 PM Sat, Jan 02, 2010

@Bill - that plan wouldn't work, because drug addiction doesn't work that way. Even if drugs were available at a low cost, drug addicts would still need more drugs than they could afford, and they would still steal, kill, sell their bodies, etc. to get drug money. (I'm talking about drugs here, not marijuana)

Furthermore, warning people of drugs' toxicity will probably not work either. People already know what drugs do - once a person is addicted, that doesn't matter. The people that would go to a store to buy crack would but it whether or not they knew everything about how dangerous it is.

I think marijuana should be legalized, mainly because it is a drain on law enforcement and it is not even as dangerous as alcohol or cigarettes. The government could tax it and it could be quite lucrative. But that won't really solve the drug problem, since hardcore problems mainly come with addictive drugs like heroin and cocaine.

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Posted by **Pete Guither** @ 8:25 PM Sat, Jan 02, 2010

@Steve in Garland: Have you not heard of Budweiser? Or Dewars, or Bacardi, or any of those other corporations who make millions selling mind-altering substances?

Plenty of legitimate businesses will be happy to step up to pay taxes and follow regulations when drugs are legalized and regulated. And this will take away most of the profits of the cartels.

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Posted by **Bill** @ 10:05 PM Sat, Jan 02, 2010

More people die every year as a result of the war against drugs than die from what we call, generically, overdosing. These fatalities include, perhaps most prominently, drug merchants who compete for commercial territory, but include also people who are robbed and killed by those desperate for money to buy the drug to which they have become addicted.

This is perhaps the moment to note that the pharmaceutical cost of cocaine and heroin is approximately 2 per cent of the street price of those drugs. Since a cocaine addict can spend as much as \$1,000 per week to sustain his habit, he would need to come up with that \$1,000. The approximate fencing cost of stolen goods is 80 per cent, so that to come up with \$1,000 can require stealing \$5,000 worth of jewels, cars, whatever. We can see that at free-market rates, \$20 per week would provide the addict with the cocaine which, in this wartime drug situation, requires of him \$1,000.

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Posted by **Rick** @ 10:55 AM Sun, Jan 03, 2010

Alcohol demonstrably kills many every year, compared to marijuana, is this the major sticking point?? Isn't that the major trafficking drug??

Mexico has always had some of these kinds of problems but now they are greatly magnified. We all know, that country has had it's dirt poor forever. We should try to help them.

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Posted by **Big Bud Goode** @ 11:23 AM Sun, Jan 03, 2010

We do not advocate walking away and let the drug lords have their turf. I am more than sure that major US corporations would provide us our legalized drugs, just like the major distillers took over from the bootleggers in the 1930s. Let's not act or think like children, we have enough problems resulting from that sort of nonsense already.

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Posted by **Og The King of Bashan** @ 11:27 AM Sun, Jan 03, 2010

My green, leafy drug of choice is grown in an Ennis County hothouse by a middle-aged hippie and it never sees a drug lord or a border. Now what is your problem with that? Why should the law care what I chose to smoke when it is all domestic. I support Texas growers, and you would be happier if you did, too.

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Posted by **Og The King of Bashan** @ 11:28 AM Sun, Jan 03, 2010

My green, leafy drug of choice is grown in an Ellis County hothouse by a middle-aged white American hippie and it never sees a drug lord or a border. Now what is your problem with that? Why should the law care what I chose to smoke when it is all domestic. I support Texas growers, and you would be happier if you did, too.

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Posted by **buy american** @ 12:37 PM Sun, Jan 03, 2010

its very nice seeing so many well thought comments on the unjust and ineffective drug war
 america is financially degrading and this is a time for bold action
 we need new industry
 ford made the t model to run on hemp seed oil and hearst made it illegal when it troubled his paper production business
 i think its pretty clear to any person who lives around drug addicts that the drug war is a joke
 and you can forever thank the CIA for crack destroying LA
 personally i wish tijuana would become the tropical amsterdam
 i would like to hear mr robbersons comments on the issues raised here, and hope that this and similar dialogs can continue

you may like
www.leap.cc
www.taxpot.net

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Posted by **Todd** @ 7:57 PM Sun, Jan 03, 2010

Why not just Legalize pot because that's what the Majority of Americans want anyway. Even the lowest national poll done by gallop showed 44% and if you have 44% on a phone poll then you have to know that there will be over 50% behind a closed curtain. Zogby has legalization at 52% and Angus Reid has it at 53%. This crap is crazy and the time to legalize weed has come. We are supposed to be a friggin democracy and Marijuana Prohibition is a smack in the face of it. Put it on the ballot, bring it to a vote.

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Posted by **Sharon Sykes** @ 9:57 PM Sun, Jan 03, 2010

I find it funny that those who are so anti-smoking are so pro-legalizing pot.

Just an observation.

Not surprised at all that Og is a pothead.

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Posted by **Gopal** @ 10:18 PM Sun, Jan 03, 2010

According to a recent Wall Street Journal article, most of the money the Mexican cartels make comes from marijuana. The article also suggests that the Mexican government supports the idea of legalizing marijuana in the US. In addition to this, the advent of the Mexican cartels can be traced to the suppression of Caribbean smuggling routes in the 80's.

It is sophistry to suggest that US drug consumers are at fault for financing the Mexican cartels, when it was the criminalization of drugs, and later the short-sighted mishandling of interdiction efforts that created them in the first place.

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