

The changes to Caribbean basin illicit trafficking as a result of Mexican cartel hegemony.

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Today in the Caribbean basin Mexican cartels exercise hegemony over the illicit trades of the Caribbean basin i.e. illicit drug trafficking, illicit small arms trafficking and human smuggling and trafficking. Pax Mexicana in the 21st century has dramatically changed the nature and strategic aim of Caribbean basin illicit trafficking and the social order of illicit trafficking in the Caribbean basin. The two dominant Mexican organisations in the Caribbean are the Sinaloa Federation and Los Zetas with the Juarez cartel maintaining its operational presence that was established in the Caribbean long before the arrival of the major players today.

The Sinaloa Federation and Los Zetas insist on the production and trafficking of multiple illicit drugs to consumer markets within and outside the Western Hemisphere. The platform drug of choice of the Mexican organisations is methamphetamine produced in laboratories in various locations strategically placed around the world to serve specific markets. Methamphetamine production in Mexico floods the North American market, production in Guatemala and Honduras supplements product flows to North America and production in West and East Africa targets Asia and Europe. Cocaine production platforms under Mexican control were first established in Peru and Bolivia then the move to dominate cocaine production in Colombia followed. Today the Mexican organisations have absorbed the cocaine production laboratories controlled by the FARC and the illicit drug production and trafficking organisations that emerged from the de-mobilised paramilitaries are involved in a violent internecine struggle as one group aligned to the Mexican organisations battle to dominate the other groups. In this scenario the loser is *Bandas Criminales* as there is no longer operational space for this group under Mexican hegemony. The Colombian and Venezuelan dominated trafficking organisations that moved illicit product from source countries to consumer economies directly or via stop-over nations as those of West Africa have all now surrendered to Mexican hegemony. The Mexican organisations now control significant portions of the supply of cocaine available for sale to persons who traffic but have no presence in cocaine production. The trafficker created by the free market for cocaine created by the Colombians in an attempt to evade detection, dismantling and more so the pressure exerted by the Mexicans on those seeking to traffic product into the US has been all but destroyed by Mexican hegemony. Mexican organisations have graphically illustrated that traffickers with no footing in cocaine productions are expendable as they are viewed as possible risks to the integrity of their operations hence a plausible threat to be dealt with in the manner of the Mexican organisations. In the Caribbean today the trafficking organisations must abide by the strategic intent of the Mexican organisations. The main tenet of the strategy is the multiplicity of illicit drugs trafficked and the resultant structures to be erected and maintained to support the production and trafficking of a number of illicit drugs.

In the Caribbean basin the illicit product mix of the Mexican organisations is: methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin and marijuana. The Mexican control of production and trafficking entails the movement of product and precursors necessary to production within the Caribbean. Precursor chemicals for the production of methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin are moved through various ports in the Caribbean and overland via the Mexican supply chain and logistics. Offshore production points outside of Mexico utilise precursors to produce illicit product and semi-processed inputs are moved to offshore production sites for final production in the bid to diversify and maximise strengths and minimise organisational weaknesses. Cocaine base is now moved to production sites where precursors are openly and freely available ensuring low cost, high quality cocaine hydrochloride production. These production sites are located in the Caribbean and Africa. The next stage in this process will be the rearing of the coca shrub outside of South America. Offshore methamphetamine production presently concentrated in Guatemala and Honduras exists to contribute to the flood of product destined for the US and Canadian markets. When it becomes necessary

methamphetamine production will be established in other territories of the Caribbean. Already significant amounts of pre-cursor chemicals necessary to methamphetamine production flow through the Dominican Republic. The strategy of the Mexican organisations for methamphetamine production and distribution calls for the creation of a series of offshore production platforms that exploit weak states, availability of the supply of pre-cursors and proximity to consumer markets or prospective consumer markets. In this scenario the Asian market for methamphetamine is the prize and Africa is the chosen production platform. The Sinaloa Federation dominates the production and trafficking of Mexican produced heroin which raises the question of the evolution of linkages between the Mexican organisations and the producers and traffickers of Afghan heroin which enables the Mexican organisations to place Afghan heroin into markets where they already are present. The presence of the Mexican organisations in Africa, their working relationship with Nigerian trafficking organisations and the operational presence of Nigerian trafficking organisations in the Caribbean ensures the movement of Afghan heroin through the Caribbean.

Mexican hegemony has changed the structure of trafficking of illicit drugs in the Caribbean. The strategic imperatives of Mexican organisations call for the creation of new consumer markets within the Western Hemisphere in both North and South America and the creation of multiple trafficking pipelines to move product to consumer markets of the Western Hemisphere and to markets external of the Western Hemisphere. Today Brazil and Canada are the chosen targets to inundate with a flood of product with trafficking pipelines established to move product to Brazil and Canada. The Caribbean basin is now one of the trafficking centres utilised to move product to the emerging consumer markets of Brazil and Canada. Product is moved overland into Brazil via Guyana and Suriname and from the Caribbean island chain to Canada via multiple island points of departure as the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua have been mobilised as trafficking points to Canada. Brazil is not only a growth center for crack use but also an important trafficking point for illicit drugs moved to Africa, Asia and Europe. The Mexican strategy calls for the development of consumer markets alongside trafficking operations in specific states. This strategy is already having a marked and telling effect on Brazil, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic an effect which will spread across the Caribbean island chain as evidenced by developments in Haiti. The hub of illicit trafficking in the Caribbean island chain is now located in the states of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Mexican organisations continue to flood Puerto Rico with cocaine and heroin which is trafficked to the US and consumed locally feeding a wave of gun violence that has swamped the law enforcement agencies of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has proven to be the weak underside of the US war on drugs enabling a concerted strategic assault by the Mexican organisations characterised by a chronic illicit drug abuse problem with the main drug of choice being heroin, a flood of illicit drugs landed and transhipped from Puerto Rico and a flood of cheap, quality product available on the Puerto Rican drug market feeding a booming retail trade with the attendant gun violence which is combined with illicit gun smuggling and human smuggling. The illicit markets of Puerto Rico is the graphic depiction of the strategy of the Mexican organisations in action and the social costs attached thereof. The state government of Puerto Rico does not have the means to deal with this reality and the US Federal government continues to respond in a manner which points to a strategy of containment at best which is not working. The failure of the present strategy is as a result of the false assumption that underpins its formulation. This false assumption involves an underestimation of the volume and nature of the resources the Mexican organisations are willing to and have invested in the Caribbean island chain.

Trafficking in the Dominican Republic is also showing the changes brought by Mexican dominance as the drug retail market expands along with the smuggling of illicit

small arms. The social impact of the illicit trades in the Dominican Republic has now evolved seen in the prevalence of types of attacks against the person with guns that were uncommon during the heyday of trafficking dominated by the Colombian and Venezuelan trafficking organisations. The difference lies in the methodology of the Mexican organisations. The US engagement with trafficking in the Dominican Republic in an attempt to stem the flow of illicit drugs from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico resulted in the weakening of the Colombian and Venezuelan trafficking organisations as air drops to the Dominican Republic from Venezuela and the movement of product via go-fast boats from Venezuela were the prime targets of interdiction. The Mexican organisations in response lowered the volume of product moved through the Dominican Republic and changed the means of transportation to that of containerised cargo. Why flood the Dominican Republic directly with product when Haiti is a free zone for traffickers. Pax Mexicana. The roles of Guatemala and Honduras in the Mexican division of labour must be understood in order to understand the geo-political strategy of the Mexican organisations for the Caribbean. Guatemala is not only a landing zone for shipments of product from South America, it is an offshore production point and the muster point for human smuggling through Mexico to the US. Mexican organisations based in Guatemala now direct operations in Belize where precursor chemicals, illicit product and smuggled humans are fed into the pipeline leading to Mexico. A nexus has been created in Central America which has globalised the illicit operations present in these states. Honduras is an offshore production point for illicit product with precursors imported via San Pedro Sula, a new trafficking point for product via the containerised cargo of San Pedro Sula and a supply point for Caribbean trafficking pipelines which embrace Jamaica, Haiti, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Bahamas. Illicit drugs and illicit small arms are now moved from Honduras through this pipeline. The Caribbean basin is no longer only globalised but now interconnected via a Mexican constructed and controlled nexus where a multiplicity of illicit products and services are moved and sold. The Caribbean basin is no longer a geographic expression used to traffic illicit products to consumer markets external of the Caribbean. It is now viewed as a market to be dominated by the Mexican organisations towards the creation of Mexican hegemony/Pax Mexicana with a clear geo-political intent and expression of hegemony. The weak, neglected underbelly of the US is now the chosen area where the Mexican organisations intend to build and express their hegemony over sending a clear challenge to US hegemony over the Caribbean at the same time and within the same space in which the People's Republic of China is also very active in.

The role of Venezuela in the Caribbean landscape of Mexican hegemony is strategically crucial. The Mexican organisations have an operational presence in Venezuela as do their Colombian de-mobilised paramilitary allies. The death of Hugo Chavez in March 2013 has changed the terrain of Venezuelan politics and the intensity of the engagement of the Venezuelan state with the international drug traffickers that are based in Venezuela. The endemic corruption of the Venezuelan social order in the absence of Chavez favours the integration of Venezuela into the Mexican Caribbean nexus a seamless integration that will be aided by the blind, self-immolating hostility to the Bolivarian Revolution exhibited by the US. It is strategically necessary for the Mexican organisations to integrate Venezuela into its nexus. The size of the Venezuelan economy, its influence in the Caribbean island chain, the long established illicit trafficking structures in operation in Venezuela and the operational presence in Venezuela of key organised crime groups that are crucial to the international operations of Mexican organisations such as Italian organised crime, Russian organised crime, East European organised crime and Nigerian organised crime. Hegemony over the illicit economy of Venezuela is then necessary to Mexican hegemony over the Caribbean basin and this is a target the Mexican organisations are willing to spend and bleed in order to

attain. The endemic gun violence of Venezuela especially within specific urban and rural areas illustrates the impunity that is endemic within the Venezuelan social order. In both urban and rural areas specific acts of gun violence are linked to gangs and paramilitary organisations involved in the illicit drug trade. The failure of the state to effectively deal with the impunity enjoyed by these drug organisations is the basis of the potent challenge posed by these organisations to the state. The move by the Mexican organisations for hegemony in Venezuela will result in an explosion of violence as recalcitrant drug groups will be silenced along with their allies in the state structures. A purging of the social order of the illicit drug trade will then attack the Venezuelan state at its core and at this point of challenge the corrupt elements of the state will seek a compromise beneficial to both sides. At this point the narco-democracy of Venezuela will be created premised on Pax Mexicana. The fact of the matter is that this challenge for hegemony is presently under way in the Venezuelan states that border with Colombia and the Mexican organisations and its Colombian allies are winning the battle for hegemony. Mexican hegemony will first be declared over the states that border with Colombia then the sweep towards Venezuela's Caribbean coast. The ill-disciplined of the gangs of the urban ranchos will be exposed to a specific brand of Mexican discipline but this is not a pressing strategic necessity at this time.

The move towards the hegemony of the Mexican organisations over the illicit trades of the Caribbean is then a work in progress that is subject to change. One apparent reality in the Caribbean area is the US' sole interest in devoting resources and engaging with the illicit drug trade in areas of the Caribbean where product is trafficked to the US. The investment of resources in Central America, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic is therefore driven by the sole aim of making it unprofitable for trafficking organisations to supply the US market thereby moving their product elsewhere. In this operational scenario the US is always lagging behind the illicit traffickers and much more importantly when faced with trafficking organisations that view markets in Asia and Europe as being prime markets and the US market as an aging market the Caribbean is left to the mercy of the trafficking organisations by the policeman of the war on drugs. In addition in states where the US has engaged with the Mexican organisations the response has been a flood of cheap, quality product, growing social problems with illicit drug addiction and endemic gun violence fed by cheap drugs and gun trafficking. The US has failed to deal with the Mexican response and is even now in the process of cutting the level of resources committed to interdiction. The result is then the call for legalisation of illicit drug trafficking coming from the politicians of states that are the battlegrounds between the US and the Mexican organisations in Central and South America. Streams of multi-lateral agencies regularly plough through the Caribbean states selling solutions to the social ills that flow from the illicit trades. Solutions backed up with grants and loan funding are readily accepted by Caribbean governments but the solutions address problems that do not exist in the Caribbean as the manner in which the problem is visualised and the solution derived from bears no resemblance to what exists in Caribbean reality. The orthodoxy therefore insists that Caribbean realities as endemic gun violence and gangland have nothing to do with the illicit drug trade and the Mexican organisations are in Mexico slaughtering each other. A refusal to deal with graphic reality ensures that when faced with the threat of the Mexican organisations Caribbean elites will and have surrendered in silence.

The most potent example of the changes unleashed by the Mexican organisations is the changes to the nature and structure of Caribbean gangland. The Mexican organisations have applied to the Caribbean a strategic relationship with Caribbean gangs which was unheard of under the rule of the Colombian and Venezuelan trafficking organisations. The Mexican organisations offer Caribbean gangs they have chosen to work with illicit product franchises which enable the gangs to traffick, retail and wholesale illicit drugs in Caribbean, North American, African, European and Asian markets. Mexican gang affiliates in the

Caribbean have entered the retail drug and wholesale drug markets of the Caribbean with telling effect and have now expanded their reach to the US and Canada. Caribbean gangland affiliates of Mexican organisations have now established their own retail and wholesale drug markets in the US and Canada and they are trafficking the product sold on these drug markets from the Caribbean. Transnational Caribbean organisations connected to Mexican organisations are now dominating retail and wholesale drug markets in specific Caribbean states and are trafficking from the Caribbean and wholesaling and retailing illicit product in North America and the UK. These Mexican affiliates have grown in wealth and power in specific Caribbean states as a result of the franchise afforded them by the Mexican organisations in return they are the enforcers and militia of the Mexican organisations. The Caribbean organisations that have prospered in this new scenario are those who were transnational organisations before the arrival of the Mexican organisations, those gangland organisations rooted in the Caribbean Diaspora of North America but with no appreciable and effective Caribbean operational presence and those rooted in the Caribbean subsequently spreading to the US. The prime example of the first organisation listed is the Shower Posse originally from Jamaica subsequently establishing cells in North America and Europe. Under the rule of the Colombian and Venezuelan trafficking organisations the Shower Posse was cast as a supplier of services which was paid for in product which the members of Shower then trafficked to North America and Europe. The evolution of the Shower Posse was then arrested by the restrictions placed by the Colombian and Venezuelan trafficking organisations. With the affiliation to Mexican organisations the Shower Posse now has access to volumes of product that enable it to dominate the Jamaican illicit drug market for imported product at the retail and wholesale levels, to be the gateway for gangs that want to enter the drug market but lack the means thereby exercising discipline over Jamaican gangland and most importantly to form working relationships with other gangland affiliates of the Mexican organisations external of Jamaica such as Caribbean, North American and European gangland. The most profitable operational arm of the Shower Posse is then the international cells that retail and wholesale illicit product on the drug markets of North America and Europe. This profitability intensifies the ability of the Shower Posse to impact the Jamaican social order and it's the product of affiliation of the organisation with the Mexican organisations. When the call to arms comes the Shower Posse will answer.

There are two prime examples of the second type of gangland organisation. These are Zoe Pound and Los Trinitarios both created in the USA. Zoe Pound was formed in the US state of Florida by members of the Haitian Diaspora who sought to get in on the illicit drug trade between Florida and the Caribbean in the late 1970's and the 1980's. Locked out of upwardly mobile growth in the social order of the illicit drug trade by the Venezuelan and Colombian traffickers the members of Zoe Pound sought means to a supply of illicit product that would ensure they were now players in the illicit drug trade of the US. The flood of cocaine that was unleashed on Haiti in the late 1990's and early 21st century drew members of Zoe Pound to Haiti and the replication of Zoe Pound chapters in Haiti. This process of replication would also be repeated in the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Bahamas amongst the Haitian Diaspora of these states. Zoe Pound was creating a trafficking nexus that would grant them affiliation with the Mexican organisations with Mexican dominance of the Haitian drug market in the first decade of the 21st century. Today Zoe Pound dominates the trafficking pipeline of the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands, Haiti and Jamaica. Jamaica has been linked to Haiti with the movement of marijuana raised in Jamaica to Haiti and guns from Haiti to Jamaica. Haiti also supplies illicit small arms to the Dominican Republic. Haiti is then a major trafficking point for illicit drugs, arms and human smuggling. Zoe Pound is then present in Haiti to move illicit product to the US where it is sold at the wholesale and retail levels of drug markets. Zoe Pound is now a Caribbean player and a noted player in US

gangland as a result of its affiliation to Mexican organisations. Association Neta is the example of the third type. Association Neta was formed in the Puerto Rican prison system eventually dominating the Puerto Rican prison system as the premier prison gang of Puerto Rico. Association Neta brought to the US by members of the Puerto Rican Diaspora eventually replicated itself in the US prison system. In its base in Puerto Rico Association Neta now dominates the wholesale and retail arms of the drug market of Puerto Rico as a result of its affiliation with Mexican organisations. Association Neta has purged the retail drug market of Puerto Rico removing its competition and seizing retail points. Today the war over dominance has now engulfed members of Association Neta involved in illicit drugs retailing in Puerto Rico. Association Neta is involved in moving illicit product from Puerto Rico to the North-Eastern states of the US where they control wholesaling and retailing operations posing a challenge to the dominance of Dominicans of the illicit drug wholesale markets of the US north-eastern states. Association Neta has expanded the size of its retail drug operations in the US and for the first time in its US history is a supplier of product to the wholesale market of the US north-eastern states. The Mexican organisations are then intent on creating a new illicit order in the states where they have an operational presence. What they are in fact doing with Caribbean gangland is creating a Caribbean gangland oligarchy that is an operational instrument of the Mexican organisations. An oligarchy that is ruthless, well armed and intent on defending its stake in the Mexican controlled illicit enterprise that has showered them with wealth and power. A gangland oligarchy with a steady supply of illicit small arms and potential recruits intent on proving their fitness to share in the wealth of the organisations dominated by the oligarchy. Get rich or die trying. The political elites of the Caribbean are now approaching the gangland reality by passing anti-gang legislation copied from that of Central America and by giving a social policing role to the military of Caribbean states again copied from the Central American experience. The application of the anti-gang legislation will overfill already chronically overcrowded prisons creating the conditions for the spread and growth of prison gangs which will recruit in the prisons to serve the gangland oligarchy. The military in its social policing cannot address the need for building cases against the leaders of the illicit organisations. Unless the military is there to cleanse the social order of undesirables but this is providing that the military isn't in itself a tool of the Mexican organisations. The other plank of the Mexican strategic order in the Caribbean is the corruption of the military, especially the elite units, of the Caribbean states they are present in. They do this by granting affiliation to members of the military as they do with Caribbean gangland. The moving of Caribbean military out of barracks into social policing is then a boon to Mexican organisations.

REFERENCES

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