



Austin from a Different Perspective

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Austin from a Different Perspective: Mexican Drug Cartel Influence in Austin, Texas

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A Different Viewpoint

Austin, Texas, known for the foothills of the Texas hill country, the University of Texas, live music and night life, and in recent years, tech savvy entrepreneurs, start-ups and tech expansions; some deeming Austin as the silicon valley of the south. It is home to many major corporations and, although enduring its share of suffering during the recent recession and economic downturn, the Austin area's technical industry not only survived, but there are good signs that the future of the industry in Austin looks very bright. The Austin area is consistently ranked high as one of America's top cities to reside. As seen from the U.S. Census perspective, the Austin area makes up what is known as the Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area consisting of approximately 1.7 million people, a 37% increase from the 2000 census. Austin has a very vibrant economy, large student population and a transportation infrastructure that rivals any large metropolitan area, (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Austin has emerged from a small city focused on college life and state government to a large metropolis with major international influence.

What separates Austin from other cities is not simple demographics, geography, or even economic indicators. What separates Austin is the fullness of its diverse culture: favorable landscapes, natural beauty, a mild climate, and a bustling assortment of independently minded people thriving on diversity. The level of diversity is illustrated in not only the attraction of artists, musicians, and film enthusiasts, but in the attraction of big business, professional sports, and one recent notable addition, the creation of the Austin Formula One race track,

putting Austin in the company of cities such as Monte Carlo, Singapore, Sao Paulo, and Istanbul. Residing beneath the charm and attraction of Austin however, is an underworld that many never see. It is one that in recent years has firmly embedded itself in the make-up of the city. This underworld is that of major Mexican drug trafficking organizations that we have come to know as the cartels. There is definitely a different side to Austin, Texas.

Along with the exceptional growth and associated demographics, it is also important to note the geographical location of the area. Austin sits approximately four hours from the busiest point of entry of drug importation than, arguably, any other point along the southwest border - Laredo - as well as only four hours from the points of entry of Eagle Pass and Del Rio. These are important entry points for methamphetamine and marijuana for the San Antonio and Austin areas. The Austin area, therefore, is demographically, geographically and strategically situated to be one of the prime locations along the southwest border to play host to command and control cells of the Mexican drug cartels.

Although Austin has always played a role in international drug trafficking, it has emerged as a major player in the game in recent years. The effects of drug trafficking, distribution, and the subsequent abuse cannot be stated enough in the Austin area. Consequent to this emergence, law enforcement and other civic authorities have identified these threats and have proactively responded.

As with any large metropolitan area, especially

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one that has experienced the drastic growth that Austin has seen, the area has its share of crime including drug trafficking. What is unsettling, however, is the role Austin now plays in the globally scoped, highly compartmentalized, and unusually disciplined underworld of the Mexican drug cartels. Mexican drug cartel leaders operate from a shroud of secrecy - and to some degree security - in Mexico, while leveraging generational and familial ties in cities across the United States to carry out orders and conduct business on behalf of these Mexico-based bosses.

Mexican superiors order tasks that are generally carried out by very compartmentalized and distinct cells that operate anonymously from one another. Responsibilities include receiving drug loads, driving loads, storing, stockpiling, selling, and ultimately carrying out the day-to-day duties to sustain the organization. The tasks are accomplished anonymously in a very compartmentalized manner so the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing necessarily. This is done for obvious reasons of insulating cell heads and mitigating risks to the organization. As the Mexican cartels have evolved into the behemoth they are today, their capabilities within the United States of chameleon-type meandering lifestyles and disciplined operations have far exceeded other criminal organizations of the past in terms of effectiveness and longevity.

What has made Austin, and other similar cities, a haven for these Mexican cells and cell heads? There are numerous factors outside the purview of Austin that all have significant influence on what Austin has become in terms of importance to the Mexican cartels. One must consider the sheer enormity and openness of the southwest border, the true significance of Mexico's evolved role in the worldwide drug trade, as well as what factors led to the Mexican trafficker's meteoric rise to power. Although seemingly disassociated with day-to-day life in Austin, Texas, the factors that have led to the prominence of the Mexican cartels congruently affect the role that cities across the U.S. began to play in the domestic drug trade.

The gradual shift from dominance of the Colombian traffickers to the Mexican organizations controlling wholesale distribution outlets in U.S. cities leads to many challenges and policy implica-

tions for the United States on a national scale. On the other hand, these same challenges and implications exist on the local front for the city of Austin. As an analogy, compare the implications of the illegal immigration issue to the issue of the Mexican drug cartel influence in American cities. As far as these affected U.S. cities and states are concerned, these implications are more personal, close to home, and in many cases insurmountable in the pursuit of maintaining a rule of law. As such, these challenges that face America as a nation are many times multiplied when faced on a local level.

The Significance of Mexico

Worldwide Drug Trade. Consider the significance of the portion of the U.S. - Mexico border that directly impacts Austin, Texas. The permeable border that separates Mexico and the United States spans almost 2,000 miles from Brownsville, Texas to San Diego, California. The state of Texas comprises some 60% or 1,200 of those miles. Compare these to the piece of the border that directly impacts Austin, which runs from Brownsville, Texas past Del Rio, Texas revealing that Austin is impacted by approximately 600 miles or 30% of the southwest border. These effects are seen due to where Austin sits geographically and logistically, and the web of highways leading to and from the border cities that serve as gateways for the flood of illicit contraband into and out of Mexico through Austin.

The southwest border of the United States and principally Texas is the primary arrival zone for most of the illicit drugs smuggled into the United States, as well as the chief staging area for the consequent distribution throughout the country. Cities such as Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, and Austin are favored by Mexican kingpins due to their second tier status of being one-step removed from the border. In these cities illicit drugs are shipped and stored until further movement to other markets around the U.S. This is not unlike legitimate industry utilizing distribution hubs for goods to be sold around the country.

Most Powerful Criminal Organization in the World.

The question is posed frequently in law enforcement circles; are the Mexican cartels the most powerful criminal organizations in the world? According to the National Drug Intelligence Center's *2009 National Drug Threat Assessment*, the Mexican drug trafficking organizations represent the "greatest organized crime threat to the United States,"... Mexican and Colombian drug trafficking organizations generate, remove and launder between \$18 billion and \$39 billion in wholesale drug proceeds in the United States annually, most of which is smuggled into Mexico (National Drug Intelligence Center, 2009). Examining this objectively, simply consider the following;

- Approximately 93% of the U.S cocaine supply transits Mexico,
- Approximately 80% of all methamphetamine in the United States is manufactured in Mexico,
- Afghanistan produced more opium than any other country; Mexico ranked 2nd with increases in opium production; 2010 was a record-breaking year for heroin seizures along the southwest border including Texas,
- Anywhere from \$18 billion to \$39 billion in U.S. currency is smuggled out of the U.S. and into the hands of these cartels,
- Most of the U.S. market for illicit drugs is controlled entirely by these Mexican drug trafficking organizations – from entry into the U.S. to final distribution. It is estimated there is cartel activity in approximately 230 U.S. cities, (DEA Public Affairs, May, 2011).

The structure of these organizations is dynamic and fluid, particularly with the ongoing violence in Mexico. DEA, however, recognizes seven major cartels or trafficking organizations in Mexico. The Mexican organizations have evolved to such prominence and power and continue to regenerate due to many aspects including the vast smuggling routes and distribution outlets that have been perfected over time. Additionally, they excel at smuggling and transportation, whereby virtually every

available method has been seen of secreting and transporting drugs from inside Mexico to points beyond domestically. They have used sophisticated underground tunnels, false compartments and natural voids in automobiles, as well as sophisticated transit methods in tractor trailers.

Advanced communications technology also plays a role in their strength when one considers the myriad of ways in which one can communicate today; from simple two-way radios to Skype, to various forms of social media, to underground Internet capabilities. Couple advanced technology with the very disciplined nature and compartmentalization of their U.S. operations, and one is faced with a very formidable opponent. Moreover, intimidation tactics that continue to plague the interior of Mexico also has effects within the U.S. These tactics are used effectively to recruit and sustain personnel, as other members are coerced into the trade where in past eras one could simply walk away. The Mexican cartels have shown no reluctance to threaten and kill family members and friends in Mexico and the United States if a cartel associate attempts to leave. Moreover, individuals are extremely reluctant to provide information to authorities where these traffickers are concerned. Lastly, the sheer amount of bulk currency being funneled into Mexico to the tune of about \$18-\$39 billion, lends itself to the continual regeneration of these illicit organizations. The significance of Mexico to the worldwide illicit drug trade cannot be overstated. In fact without Mexico's cartels, the state of drug trafficking in the United States would be unrecognizable in today's world.

The Rise of The Mexican Cartels

The reasons for the rise to power of the cartels are many, but have as a foundation three primary pillars. In fact, when examining the history of the last century specific to the drug trade, the shift to Mexico as a central focus from Colombia actually makes sense. First, the restructuring of the Colombian cartels from the late 1980's and into the 2000's; second, the knowledge the Mexican traffickers have of the United States, the border, and long established smuggling routes; and third, the change in the political climate with the defeat of

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the longstanding PRI political party in 2000.

Colombian Cartels.

The Colombian cartels dominated the worldwide wholesale markets for cocaine up until the 1980's to the early 1990's. During these times Colombian organizations controlled not only most of the production, but virtually all of the cocaine smuggling and wholesale distribution in large and mid-sized U.S. cities. During the 1980's and into the mid 1990's it was not uncommon to find Colombian organizations operating their networks in Texas cities such as Houston and Dallas. This all changed with the Mexican organization's willingness and ability to establish their own transportation and distribution networks all over the U.S. With the downfall of the former Medellin Cartel and the disintegration of the Cali Cartel, the Colombian organizations restructured and formed alliances with the Mexican traffickers. Once started, these same Mexican organizations essentially took over the cocaine trade in America - start to finish - with the desired smuggling route being Mexico in lieu of the once favored Caribbean corridor. Former DEA Administrator Robert Bonner observed that at first the Mexicans acted primarily as transporters, but quickly led to the Mexicans creating autonomous networks throughout the U.S., (Bonner, 2010). He added, "They are headquartered in Mexico, but they have distribution arms in over 200 cities throughout the United States..." (Bonner, 2010, p. 37).

The ground gained against the Colombian organizations of the 1980's and early 1990's actually had an effect of boosting the fledgling Mexican cocaine effort. In his journal article concerning the Colombian and Mexican cocaine transition, Gootenberg suggests that successes made in shutting down Colombian cocaine trafficking in Florida actually provided a powerful blowback enhancement to the newly created Mexican kingpins. He suggests the blowback was a prologue to today's showdown in Mexico, (2010).

Knowledge of the United States and Established Routes.

Mexican traffickers have long smuggled contraband into the United States through historical

routes, and many Mexican citizens have great knowledge of the United States due to the legal and illegal migration to America. As such, through generational and familial ties, many Mexican citizens, including traffickers, know and share in U.S. cultures, traditions, and means, thereby easily wafting through day-to-day life in America. Couple all these factors together and one sees the existence of an illicit distribution network that the Colombian traffickers could never replicate. As such, the Colombians succumbed to the knowledge and abilities of the Mexican traffickers and took the role of supplier. Observed in the journal article, U.S. – Mexico Relations: What's Next?, Shannon O'Neil suggests, "crime-related violence in Mexico is not new. Mexico has always been a supplier of illegal markets in the United States, from alcohol in the prohibition era, heroin during World War II, marijuana throughout the 1960s, and in recent decades, a variety of drugs including cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamines" (O'Neil, 2010, p. 69).

Emergence of Democracy – Loss of the PRI.

The emergence of democracy and the integration of a middle class played a large part in the development of the cartels. In the journal article, The Real War in Mexico, O'Neil opines that the reversal from the one-party system dominated by the PRI for seventy years facilitated a more democratic system that, in effect, upset the balance of power within the underworld of the Mexican drug traffickers, (O'Neil, 2010). This political swing facilitated the development of the cartels as we know them today by allowing access to markets and smuggling routes once closed under the longstanding one party system that dominated Mexico for over seventy years. Bonner concludes, "A major turning point came in 2000, when the PRI lost power and Vicente Fox of the National Action Party, or PAN, became president. The end of the one-party rule was profoundly important for Mexico's evolution toward true democracy, and it signaled a new era for the drug cartels" (Bonner, 2010).

Cartel Influence in Austin, Texas

Michael Lauderdale, Ph.D., a Centennial Professor of Criminal Justice within the School of Social Work at the University of Texas, suggests the influence and manipulation of characteristics comprising the U.S. – Mexico border are more of a zone which actually spans a distance of 200 miles either way; stretching from Monterrey to the south, and into Austin to the north. Lauderdale concludes that within the international border zone, “Events travel fast. What happens in Monterrey soon has consequences for Houston, San Antonio and Austin!” (M. Lauderdale, personal communication, email, June 19, 2011). This is particularly true today in light of technology and communication advances.

The greater Austin area has been singled out in recent years as being a haven for the Mexican drug cartels utilizing the area as a command and control center for the distribution and transit of illicit drugs and U.S. currency. Law enforcement agencies report an increasing stream of arrests in the area for drug trafficking involving Mexican based trafficking organizations. The drug threat facing the greater Austin area is clear and distinct; (1) the importation and distribution of heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine by cells of the Mexican cartels, utilizing the city of Austin and surrounding areas as a base of operations for transshipment and distribution; and (2) the potential for increased drug abuse and violence resulting from this, all impacting severely on the quality of life in Austin.

Moreover, Austin proper is not alone in experiencing the overwhelming effects these traffickers bring. Authorities in the surrounding counties of Austin attest that although their areas may not always be used directly for command and control, they, in fact, receive the fall-out or residual effects from the conduct of these traffickers and the consequent distribution groups that are spawned accordingly. The fall-out comes in the form of drug stash house operations, increased drug sales, and a consequent increase in drug use resulting in a significant decrease in the quality of life, as well as an increased negative impact on already limited enforcement resources.

Logistics and Demographics.

As noted, by U.S. Bureau of Census definition, Travis County and the greater Austin area are considered a standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The geographical area of most MSA's extend well beyond the central city/county as does the Austin MSA. The Austin MSA comprises a population of approximately 1.7 million and includes the counties of Travis, Hays, Bastrop, Williamson, and to some extent Burnet. The Austin MSA ranks 35th among the 366 MSA's designated by the Office of Management and Budget, and only seven MSA's nationwide had a larger percentage increase in population growth since the 2000 census, (U.S. Census, 2010).

Complementing the demographics of the area is the geographic location and the transportation infrastructure that exists. The area is served by a world-class interstate highway system connecting Austin to close proximity of the large metropolitan areas of San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas, as well as a large international airport. These factors facilitate the fact that Austin is in a position to host not only legitimate business ventures, but also the underworld of organized crime and drug trafficking organizations.

What is interesting to note is that the Austin area has been poised to serve as a mooring point for contraband originated from or destined for each of the major points of entry within the aforementioned 30% of the entire southwest border. These servicing points of entry along the border towns of Texas-Mexico are; Brownsville-Matamoros, McAllen-Reynosa, Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, Eagle Pass-Piedras Negras, and Del Rio-Acuna.

Familial Ties with Mexican Traffickers. The proliferation of Mexican drug cartel influence into the heartland of America has been predicated on factors previously mentioned. One factor, however, cannot be overstated which is one of familial influence. As is the case in any endeavor, personal references play a paramount role in whom we hire and whom we choose to associate with. The Mexican drug traffickers are no different.

Over the last thirty or so years, the Mexican

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population migration spread from the traditional Southwest border cities into interior American cities. This occurred due in large part to legitimate job searches and migrant farm pursuits of the Mexican citizens. Unfortunately, the forces that were making the cartels powerful in Mexico were also pressuring for outlets in an effort to finalize their closed-end smuggling and distribution network. What the Mexico-based traffickers desired was to have on the other end, a trusted family member—even if an extended one- to “set-up shop” and “close the loop” on their distribution network.

The trusted family member would have contact with the Mexican bosses and would recruit his own network domestically. Although the organizational structure of the Mexican trafficking organizations operating from within Mexico tends to be almost vertical, the structure domestically has a tendency to simulate a pyramid structure or multi-level marketing strategy. The Mexican-based leaders, by using this approach, are insulated from exposure due to the very nature of the strategy. No other criminal organization has utilized this structure or generational and familial connections to spread their cause as effectively as the Mexican traffickers have during the prolific propagation of the cartels.

Successful Law Enforcement Ventures. As many other major U.S. cities have, Austin has always played a role in international drug trafficking due to geography, demographics, and familial connections. In recent years, however, due to the promulgation of the Mexican drug cartels into the interior of the U.S., Austin has received a large portion of this spread. With that being said, law enforcement and civic authorities have responded accordingly and timely in challenge to the clear threat posed by these criminal elements.

Austin area law enforcement authorities have recognized this clear threat and in 2008 requested the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to designate the Austin area as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The designation of the area as a HIDTA allows additional potential resources, as well as creating a level playing field for information sharing among all levels of law enforcement. In March of 2010 ONDCP approved the petition and the Austin area

was designated a HIDTA. The designation spawned a coordinated coalition whereby multiple federal, state and local agencies combine resources day-to-day in an effort to thwart and contain the drug trafficking threat in Austin that these cartels have produced.

Over the last several years DEA has coordinated nationwide enforcement operations targeting domestic surrogates of the Mexican cartels. Of the four most prominent and successful of these nationwide efforts since 2008, the city of Austin has played a large role in two of them, Project Coronado and Project Deliverance. These two enforcement projects showcase the concerted efforts by federal, state, and local law enforcement resulting in significant blows to the infrastructure of cartel cells operating in the Austin area.

Since 2008, DEA Austin along with local authorities publicly announced the culmination of four major enforcement operations targeting factions of Mexican cartels; as noted, two of these operations were a part of a coordinated, large-scale, nationwide attack;

Project Coronado: October 2009. Austin law enforcement participated in the nationwide coordinated Operation Coronado that arrested over 1,100 persons nationwide with several members of the La Familia Michoacán cartel operating in the Austin area. Coronado involved 35 cities and proved to hit the La Familia organization hard with the total seizures of approximately one ton of illicit drugs.

Operation Kumbaya: February 2010. Austin law enforcement culminated a long-term investigation with the arrests of eighteen persons operating a local distribution hub responsible for the sales of hundreds of kilograms of cocaine annually in Austin and Houston, Texas. The local cell was linked to a faction of the Gulf Cartel in Mexico.

Project Deliverance: June 2010. Project Deliverance was a coordinated nationwide effort that targeted the transportation infrastructure of Mexican drug trafficking organizations in the United States, especially along the southwest border.

Austin law enforcement targeted a transportation cell using the Austin area to transit drugs from Mexico to the east coast of the United States on behalf of the La Familia cartel. The nationwide project as a whole netted over 2,000 arrests and led to the seizure of tons of illicit drugs. DEA Administrator Michelle Leonhart applauded the nationwide effort by commenting, "Project Deliverance inflicted a debilitating blow to the network of shadow facilitators and transportation cells controlled by the major Mexican drug cartels. Deliverance continues a deliberate and strategic effort to cut off and shut down the supply of drugs entering our country, and the flow of drug profits and guns to Mexico. The stakes are extraordinarily high, and this massive operation is a milestone in our tireless assault on these violent drug cartels" (Leonhart, 2010).

Operation Blue Ice: February 2011. The culmination of Operation Blue Ice illustrated how factions of the Gulf Cartel were utilizing local members of the Texas Syndicate prison gang to not only distribute methamphetamine locally in the Austin area, but also transport drug loads from border cities to other cities around the U.S.

These achievements represent only publicly identified outcomes. The intelligence sharing among Austin area drug law enforcement is strong and distinct. There are no issues with connecting the dots concerning drug trafficking intelligence in the Austin area. The aforementioned success stories are a tribute to the professionalism of law enforcement in the area.

Challenges and Implications

The challenges the cartels pose to U.S. law enforcement are obvious and many. The challenges and implications to other aspects of U.S. - Mexico relations are not so transparent, but possibly more pertinent than a military or law enforcement response. Four implications rise to the top when discussing cartel influence and the corresponding effects on the social fabric of Austin as well as law enforcement; technology, the need for strong local law enforcement coalitions, an alliance with Mexico politically and economically, and a strong rule of law exerted by law enforcement. Simply put,

what affects the United States as a whole, congruently affects our individual cities. The United States cannot face one challenge without Austin facing the identical challenge, or some derivative thereof. The same is true the other way around.

Technology. Although drug law enforcement boils down to fundamentals, technological issues and advances may in fact have a great effect on the way law enforcement conducts business. Technological advances are occurring at record levels. One just needs to look at the advancement of cellular telephone technology in the last decade. We have progressed from simple cellular technology, to push-to-talk technology, to now where many users never speak, simply texting their coded message. Couple that with encryption technology, email, the underworld internet, Skype communications, Wi-Fi advances, and it is definite that technological advances are a major challenge. Keeping up with these advances, as well as modifying departmental regulations and policies, are paramount in using technology to the benefit of law enforcement and to the detriment of the drug traffickers.

Local Scope. Aggressive Intelligence Sharing and Investigations. As noted in earlier discussion, Austin area law enforcement enjoys coordination and cooperation not seen in every domestic locale. Embedded turf battles and parochial cultures many times cloud the view of investigative agencies and for the most part lends them less effective. The previously mentioned creation of the HIDTA coalition allows for a platform of law enforcement entities in Austin to set aside differences and focus on investigative goals and objectives. Currently, the HIDTA partnership in Austin is managed by DEA and consists of four federal agencies, the Texas DPS, and numerous additional local agencies, all working in daily concert with one another targeting criminal organizations in Austin. Collaboration among all levels of law enforcement has always been important to successful investigations and ventures; however, it is a challenge that is paramount in today's age of globalization and technology. The implications of true coordination and information sharing among

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all levels of law enforcement will immediately reap benefits, and the results will be seen for years to come.

National Scope - Alliance With Mexico. Not only is it in the best interest of the U.S. to help Mexico in their showdown with the cartels, it is also in the best interest to support their democracy and growing middle class. Furthering the development of a democracy not only facilitates a rule of law, but enables economic and political structures to flourish. Strive toward dealing with the cartels as more of a crime problem to be contained, making it our objective to help Mexico make the cartel issue a “manageable crime and drug problem, allowing basic public security and safety in the streets. This will require an approach that recognizes and combats the economic and social factors behind the violence” (O’Neil, 2010). This can be done when Mexico’s struggles become the struggles of the United States. President Obama said on March 31, 2011, “The battle President Calderon is fighting inside of Mexico is not just his battle: it’s also ours. We have to take responsibility, just as he’s taking responsibility... And the United States will support him in any way we can in order to help him achieve his goals, because his goals are our goals as well...”, (B. Obama, speech delivered on March 31, 2011).

Culture and Rule of Law: Trend or Anomaly? In contrast to the violence targeted at law enforcement in Mexico by the traffickers, U.S. law enforcement officers experience a much more secure environment. The Mexican traffickers themselves argue that unlike the day of the Colombian cartels directly taking on the government, most law enforcement casualties in Mexico are collateral damage, not necessarily targets of assassination. Domestically, the year 2011 is shaping up to be the deadliest year ever for American law enforcement, particularly at the hands of firearms. The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial declares that 2011 thus far is the deadliest year for law enforcement; refer to the chart below, (National Law Enforcement Memorial, 2011). The figures depict a disturbing 38% increase over 2010 at this point in time in the number of law enforcement officers

killed in the line of duty by gunfire.

Law Enforcement Officer Fatalities Preliminary 2011 Numbers July 1, 2011

	2011	2010	% Change
Total Fatalities	93	86	+08%
Gunfire	40	29	+38%
Traffic Incidents	31	43	-28%
Other Causes	22	14	+57%

Please note: These numbers reflect total officer fatalities comparing July 1, 2011 to July 1, 2010.

Why is this important to note in context to the cartel influence in Austin and rule of law? Is law enforcement in general experiencing an uptick in violence directed at them? One can argue this is the case as evidenced by the aforementioned. Additionally, consider that assaults against Border Patrol agents increased 46% since 2006; consider the ruthless May 2011 unprovoked attack on Bexar County, Texas Deputy Kenneth Vann who was ambushed and killed while sitting in a marked patrol car while on duty.

It is rare to see such brazen attacks directed at American law enforcement, and in fact one can argue that we have not experienced such brutal targeted attacks since 1985, as we recall DEA Special Agent Enrique Camarena who was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by Mexican traffickers while on official assignment in Mexico. This act alone turned the tables on the way in which U.S. law enforcement began to look at what Mexico’s role was, and would become in the worldwide drug trade, and its impact on America (Bonner, 2010).

The conclusion here is not to suggest that blatant attacks on law enforcement officers, or the increase in law enforcement deaths by firearms, are a by-product of the cartel wars in Mexico. It can be surmised, however that the same culture of lawless attitudes that exists in Mexico is permeating the attitudes and behavior of the criminal element domestically, and, in turn, the attitudes and behaviors of all of society of this generation. Law enforcement officers at every level – from the

patrol officer working a beat to the federal agent or detective working white-collar crime – can attest that attitudes toward authority have changed in the last decade or so. There appears to exist an increasing lack of deference when dealing with certain sections of the populace that the general public rarely, if ever sees. This deference is a definite culture swing and a challenge that law enforcement must acknowledge and address.

For many years law enforcement officers carried with them an air of confidence and invincibility, a feeling that the badge was a shield, protecting them from being a target of the evil of the criminal element as a whole. The Camarena incident completely changed that mindset - at least for awhile. Former DEA Administrator Bonner suggests that not only did this act alone change the way the U.S. perceived the Mexican traffickers; it created a platform for the United States to illustrate America's solidarity concerning brutality against one of its own. The Mexican traffickers were met with swift and decisive action by U.S. authorities, (Bonner, 2010).

Concluding Remarks

It is obvious the Austin area has seen remarkable changes in population growth, demographic swings, and a sheer increase in the quality of living due to technological advances and a favorable business and educational environment. Although these positive factors all point to Austin's desirability for family life, business expansion and educational pursuits, Austin is not immune from the plague that has permeated America for the last two decades; the expansion of the Mexican drug cartels within the U.S. The many forces that changed the international drug trade on a global scale were also at work changing Austin. What is encouraging to note is that the same foresight and culture that has made the city of Austin such a vibrant, progressive community, also have enacted a civic structure to proactively address the expansion of Mexico's underworld in Austin.

Austin, Texas is not alone in being used by Mexican drug traffickers to facilitate their illicit business. The various factors that made this possible are in fact the same that have assisted hundreds of other cities to become the same thing: a haven

for traffickers to operate on behalf of the Mexican cartels. Although aggressive law enforcement exists throughout the U.S., the cooperation among all levels of Austin area law enforcement is superb and achievements speak for themselves. Not only does first class law enforcement exist, the rule of law is supported by very active coalitions consisting of educators, business and community leaders, as well as politicians. These entities strive to support every aspect of making the quality of life in Austin one to be admired and envied. The rule of law that Americans have come to cherish cannot exist without the collaborations among all facets of the community. Austin, Texas illustrates this collaboration as well as any other city in America.

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