

CISPES Education Night: Border Militarization in Meso-America

Discussion Guide

To get our chapter members and volunteers ready to undertake our new grassroots campaign against regional border militarization and, specifically, to stop Congress from mandating that Central American nations “secure their borders” as a pre-condition to receiving US aid, the National Office has prepared a set of readings and discussion questions for your chapter to use.

The goals of the Ed Night are to:

- 1) Ensure that CISPES chapter volunteers and activists have a strong understanding of the **policies, political & ideological motives and financial interests** driving the militarization of borders among the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, as well as their **grave consequences**
- 2) Develop our understanding of the complex and evolving relationship between **borders and the expansion of neoliberalism**, especially in the context of the Alliance for Prosperity;
- 3) Explore theoretical and political frameworks that can **promote resistance and alternatives** to border militarization
- 4) Give chapter members and volunteers an opportunity to **practice talking to other people about the campaign**
- 5) Build camaraderie and **have fun!**

Contents (10 pages total):

- 1) Article: “Deportation, Detention and Abuse at the Guatemala Border” by Laura Carlsen (Counter Punch)
- 2) Article: “A Right to Stay Home, A Right to Move, A Right to the World” by Joseph Nevins (NACLA)
- 3) Excerpts from the Washington Office on Latin America’s Report “Increased Enforcement at Mexico’s Southern Border”
- 4) Congressional document: 2016 conditions on Central America funding
- 5) “Border, Inc.”: documentary short film (12 minutes): <https://goo.gl/PyrNth>

Suggested Facilitation Guide (assuming you have around 1.5 hours)

- 1) Have everyone introduce themselves & get to know each other 😊 (5 minutes)
- 2) Do an **initial go-around** to give everyone the chance to share something that struck them about the readings and/or video (10 minutes)
- 3) Use the **discussion questions** below plus any of your own and/or topics that came up in hearing people’s initial impressions to guide people through a discussion (45 minutes or so)
- 4) **Exercise:** Practice talking to people about the campaign! (see guide below) (20 minutes)
- 5) **Conclusions:** Flag any **next steps** (e.g. someone is going to find out more information about something that came up in the discussion, sign people up to table, etc.) (5 minutes)

Suggested discussion questions:

- 1) Who are the people and institutions driving border militarization forward? What are their stated motivations? What are their unstated motivations? *Follow-up questions:*
 - What ideas, concepts and frameworks do border militarization proponents exploit to drive their agenda (e.g. racism, xenophobia, etc.)?
 - Who benefits from border militarization? How so?

- 2) One of the four pillars of the Alliance for Prosperity regional development plan is to “Stimulate the Productive Sector to Create Economic Opportunities.” As the plan states, “Successful integration of value chains means that the region’s companies must be able to **move their goods across borders** reliably, quickly and at low cost within a regulatory framework that guarantees efficient border checks, including customs, migration, health and safety controls.” What’s the relationship between the business side of border management and the immigration enforcement regime that’s increasingly taking hold? Why are these two directions taking shape concurrently? Do we see this pattern anywhere else in the US and/or globally?

- 3) Thinking about the “Right to Remain,” “the Right to Move” and the “Right to the World” frameworks that Joseph Nevins puts forward and taking each one individually:
 - What other “rights” does this come into conflict with? What concepts or presumptions?
 - Have we heard this demand articulated by other social movements (past or present)?
 - How might we understand other movements’ in the US today’s demands in light of this framework? Are there other struggles where it applies or could be helpful?

- 4) What opportunities and challenges does this work present to us given the current political and social context in the US, from challenges to police terror against black communities to Trump’s stoking of blatant racism and xenophobia and the terrifying resonance this is finding with a significant (and largely white) audience? How can CISPEs carry out this campaign in such a way as to challenge and resist racism and xenophobia?

Sample Exercise: Practice talking about the issues and CISPEs’ campaign to end the US mandate for regional border militarization

- a. Introduce the activity: Our goal is to practice synthesizing all of this information into a short summary that we can use to organize people to join us in taking action
- b. Introduce the main outline of a rap (1. What’s the problem? 2. What’s the solution? 3. What can you do about it?)
- c. Give everyone about 5 minutes to sketch out a sample rap they could use if they were asking people to sign a postcard to Congress to end US support for border militarization.
- d. Pair people up for a short role play! Pretend you’re tabling someone at a Latin America-themed film screening and asking them to sign a postcard. Then switch and let the other person try.
- e. Short round of feedback & reflections – how did it go? Anything more we need in order to do this for real?

Deportation, Detention and Abuse on the Guatemala Border

by Laura Carlsen in Counter Punch. September 10, 2015

Mexico's southern border has become the line of contention of the most powerful country in the world. The victims of this extraterritorial policy are Central American migrants who cross every day, seeking to save their lives and their families from the violence and hunger plaguing their countries.

For years, and especially in the past year, the U.S. government has claimed the southern border of Mexico as a strategic area for its national security. The formation of a regional trading bloc with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) began a policy of intervention—incorrectly called integration—in Mexico that [was explicitly extended](#) to the area of security with the Security and Prosperity Partnership in 2005, and culminated in Merida Initiative in 2008.

Presented by George W. Bush as a plan of “Counterterrorism, Counternarcotics and Border Security,” the Merida Initiative, or Plan Mexico, introduced a new framework for U.S.-Mexico relations, militarized and securitized and led by the Pentagon.

The government of Barack Obama, far from reconsidering the ultra-violent impacts of the drug war strategy in Mexico, inherited the Bush plan and immediately decided to go further with it. The Obama administration extended the original three-year, multibillion-dollar Bush version “indefinitely”. It also extended the drug war in the countries of Central America, first with the Regional Security Initiative for Central America (CARSI), and now with the Partnership for Prosperity.

Mexico's southern border was [included in the plan](#) from the outset. The original Bush Plan Mexico targeted “flows of illicit goods and persons” and lists migrant monitoring, bio-data collection, and border control expenditures, all of which have been appropriated and expanded under the Obama versions. Since the child migrant crisis of summer of 2014 and the announcement by the Peña Nieto government of Plan Frontera Sur (Southern Border), these programs began to receive more attention, and human and financial resources from both governments.

According to researchers and human rights defenders working at the southern border, the results are a tragedy for migrants. Salvador Lacruz, of the Fray Matias de Córdova Center for Human Rights in Tapachula, says that through this process of “externalization of borders” by the United States, the northern neighbor “moved its border and turned Mexico into a vertical border where border control is exercised throughout.”

Now, what has migrated— but from north to south not south to north— is the repressive model of border control. After years of witnessing the results of the infamous wall and the militarization of the northern border that has killed thousands of Mexican and Central American migrants, the U.S. model has been transferred further south—to Mexico's border with Guatemala, with the active support of the Mexican government despite the obvious implications for national sovereignty.

The crackdown affects the states of Tabasco, Campeche and Chiapas, but above all Chiapas that has a border of 700 km with Guatemala.

Deportations Move South

After the crisis of unaccompanied children in the United States in the summer of 2014, the U.S. government pressured President Peña Nieto to stop Central American migrants in Mexico, well before they reached the U.S. border. The U.S. government sent resources, training for security forces and equipment to promote the conversion of the southern border into a trap for humans.

In Mexico, Peña Nieto announced the plan as if it were his idea in July 2014 as the Southern Border Plan. Previous administrations had begun the process of militarizing the southern border under other names, but today's draconian measures are unprecedented. The Mexican government has sent, in addition to the army, federal, state, municipal and migration police, and some 300 (or more) members of the Gendarmerie, a new force of military police with the mission of protecting strategic economic interests.

Official figures reveal that Mexico now surpasses the United States in the deportation of Central American migrants. [Deportations by the Mexican government rose](#) more than 35% in 2014, to 107,199. So far in 2015, the Fray Matías Center reports that every month this year there have been levels of deportations at least 50% higher than the corresponding month of 2014.

An [excellent study](#) by the Human Rights Institute of Georgetown Law that focuses precisely on the conditions for migrant children, which was the pretext for this phase of militarization of the border, concludes that children and their families face long periods in detention centers that look like prisons and lack decent living conditions. In addition, there are no adequate processes for assessing asylum and refugee cases, and no procedures required by law are made to determine the best interests of children who come fleeing their countries. Nor do they take into account the goal of family reunification with parents living in the United States or Mexico.

The centers report that young people and adults are returned to situations that threaten their lives—the same situations that forced them to leave their countries.

Lacruz says that unlike the northern border where efforts are concentrated at the boundary line, U.S.-Mexico operations in southern Mexico reach far inland. The two governments are implementing a plan, partly funded by the Merida Initiative, to establish a series of checkpoints that extends up to 100 miles from the border.

This strategy promotes military / police occupation of the entire border area—an area rich in mining, agriculture, oil and water resources.

“We believe that they decided to implement this model to curb social protest, because here in Chiapas and Tabasco and Veracruz, they are planning many mega mining, oil exploration, wind turbine construction, and other projects,” says Lacruz.

“The planned megaprojects mainly affect indigenous peoples,” he says. “And they know there will be conflicts, that these people fight for their rights.”

He added that the Alliance for Prosperity proposed by the U.S. government and the Inter-American Development Bank for the “northern triangle” countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador would extend militarization even more, but not to control smuggling. “They need the army to control the population,” he explains.

Human rights organizations as the *Fray Matias de Cordova* face enormous obstacles in addressing the accumulation of serious violations on the southern border. Out of 94,000 detainees in 2014, the center had contact with only about 400.

The rest, the vast majority, are women, men and children left to their fate, a destiny marked by a system that has defined them as human castoffs. It doesn't matter what they have gone through or what they will have to go through just trying to survive. And this is the response of the governments of Obama and Peña Nieto to the “humanitarian crisis” of defenseless children last year.

Laura Carlsen is Director of the CIP Americas Program in Mexico City www.cipamericas.org.

A Right to Stay Home, A Right to Move, A Right to the World

Only by granting the world's poor a right to a just share of the earth's resources and a right to traverse global space will we begin to repair the historical injustices that drive migration.

Joseph Nevins 01/05/2016



The border fence looking from San Diego into Tijuana (Photo by Mizue Aizeki)

This article is the second in a four-part NACLA series on migration in the Americas. (Read the other installments [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

A May 2015 [article](#) in *The Guardian* suggested that the coming months would see large numbers of unauthorized migrants, many of them unaccompanied minors from Central America, crossing the U.S.-Mexico boundary. Already in south Texas, the epicenter of the [exaggerated](#) migrant “[surge](#)” of the summer of 2014, the signs of a numbers increase were visible. “Every day we’re getting more women and children than the day before,” a Border Patrol agent reported, referring to apprehended migrants. Minutes earlier, the journalist had seen a Border Patrol van carrying 13 women and children from Guatemala and Honduras who had turned themselves in to authorities.

While the number of Central American migrants did not reach the feared heights this past summer, there has been a marked increase, particularly of children, over the last few months. As the *New York Times* [reported](#) from Mission, Texas in late November, “Once again, smugglers are bringing hundreds of women and children each day to the Mexican banks of the river and sending them across in rafts.” It is a development, explained the *Times*’ Julia Preston—a reporter with a [penchant](#) for channeling official Washington’s worldview—made all the more worrisome “as Americans’ concerns about border security are heightened after the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris raised fears that terrorists would try to sneak into the United States.”

Such “concerns” notwithstanding, the migrants, as suggested by the title of Juan Gonzalez’s eponymous [book](#), are first and foremost the “harvest of empire.” People from Honduras and Guatemala—in addition to El Salvador—emigrate for varied reasons. Chief among them are the ravages of everyday life that Washington’s

“foreign policy” apparatus—in its military, commercial, and diplomatic guises—and U.S.-based multinational corporations have [helped to produce](#) over time in those countries, and that help make life there [untenable](#) for many.

Instead of recognizing the need to reap what it has helped to sow, however, the U.S. government has increased the apparatus of immigrant policing and exclusion along, beyond, and within the country’s perimeter. In other words, having undermined the [“right to stay home”](#) for many—the right to a homeland in which a life of basic wellbeing is viable—Washington denies those it has effectively compelled to leave, the right to go somewhere thought to provide greater social and biophysical security.

Many migrants, of course, proceed northward nonetheless—often taking evermore costly, [tortuous](#), and often [deadly](#) journeys to reach the United States, the desired destination of most. If they succeed, they must lead semi-clandestine lives and endure the indignities that their “illegal” status facilitates and requires—from poverty wages, to constant threat of arrest, to divided families. Or they ask for asylum upon arriving, and risk long periods of [detention](#), eventual [rejection](#), and deportation back to the countries from which they have fled, frequently under duress—with sometimes [fatal consequences](#).

For these reasons and others, such as basic decency, the ability to move and to freely traverse international boundaries should be a fundamental human right. Establishing this right, in the Americas and beyond, should also be central to an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and anti-racist politics.

The case for a right to move is particularly compelling in relation to Caribbean Basin countries, those located in what many have referred to as “America’s backyard.” The term “backyard,” George Black (a former NACLA editor) explains in *The Good Neighbor: How the United States Wrote the History of Central America and the Caribbean* (1988), characterizes a place where “one can act without inhibitions” and “where the garbage is dumped.” Moreover, it is “an area for play, experimentation, and control, a place where the owner makes his own laws, a laboratory for ideas that will be tried out later on the broader world beyond its walls.”

While U.S. relations with countries in its “backyard” are, and have been, variously fraught, few countries in the region are as emblematic of Black’s characterization as Honduras.

Long a site of U.S. multinational corporate activity and Washington’s imperial machinations, Honduras likely served as the inspiration for the writer O. Henry’s mythical country, the Republic of Anchuria, for which he coined the moniker “Banana Republic” in 1904.

U.S.-based banana interests began setting up shop on Honduras’s northern coast in the late 1890s. They “built railroads, established their own banking systems, and bribed government officials at a dizzying pace,” writes historian Walter LaFeber in *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (1983). As a result, the country’s Caribbean coast “became a foreign-controlled enclave that systematically swung the whole of Honduras into a one-crop economy whose wealth was carried off to New Orleans, New York, and later Boston.”

A 1907 revolution overthrew the country’s president, Manuel Bonilla. In response, Sam (the Banana Man) Zemurray, the most infamous among U.S. fruit titans, allied himself with the deposed leader and a U.S. American mercenary named Lee Christmas. Together with a military force assembled in New Orleans, they toppled the new Honduran government. Washington’s consul appointed an acting president, and Christmas became commander-in-chief of the country’s army and, not long afterwards, the new U.S. consul.

Subsequently, Bonilla re-assumed the presidency and continued the provision of favorable concessions to foreign banana companies. By 1914, they owned almost one million acres of Honduras’s best land, holdings that grew through the 1920s to such an extent that, asserts LaFeber, Honduran peasants “had no hope of access

to their nation's good soil." Over a few decades, U.S. interests also came to dominate the country's banking and mining sectors.

Central to this domination was the Honduran military. By the mid-1960s, according to LaFeber, it had become the country's "most developed political institution," an institution that Washington had played a key role in shaping as part of a mutually beneficial May 1954 agreement that promised U.S. military assistance. Honduras in turn pledged "to facilitate the production and transfer" to the United States of its "raw material and semi-processed materials" required to address any deficiencies in the U.S. resource supply.

The pact facilitated Washington's use of Honduras as a staging ground for interventions elsewhere—most notably in the overthrow of the progressive Arbenz government in Guatemala one month after its signing, and in the campaign of terror aimed at destabilizing Nicaragua's Sandinista government during the 1980s. At the same time, Honduras became a favored site for export processing factories. What many came to call during the Reagan era the "[U.S.S. Honduras](#)" remained a country scarred by military-dominated governments, systematic human rights abuses, and pervasive poverty.

Yet there were also liberalizing tendencies in the succession of governments. These openings coupled with strong grassroots organizing—particularly by workers and peasants—culminated in a rare ray of hope in the form of the election of liberal reformist Manuel Zelaya in 2006. His progressive measures, however, incurred the ire of the country's oligarchy, leading to his [U.S.-backed](#) overthrow by a military coup in June 2009.

Since that time, [writes](#) historian Dana Frank, "a series of corrupt administrations has unleashed open criminal control of Honduras, from top to bottom of the government." Organized crime, drug traffickers, and the country's police are virtually one and the same. Impunity reigns in a country with [frequent](#) politically-motivated killings, and that today has arguably the [highest](#) murder rate in the world, one in which violent gangs plague urban neighborhoods throughout the country. Meanwhile, post-coup governments have imposed an increasingly neoliberalized capitalism that makes life unworkable for many.

Out of this context the so-called surge—at least its Honduran component—emerged.

A key measure in the U.S. government's response has been to "thicken" the U.S.-Mexico boundary, by enrolling Mexico in its regime of exclusion. While Mexico has long cooperated in Washington's efforts to prevent unauthorized migrants from reaching U.S. territory, the collaboration has reached [new levels](#) over the last year. As Daniel Ojalvo, a worker at a migrant shelter in the Mexican state of Oaxaca [explains](#), "The U.S. border starts at Guatemala now."

The United States has pushed its control efforts far southward by pressuring Mexican authorities to strengthen the policing of the web of train lines called [La Bestia](#) (the Beast), freight trains on top of which Central Americans—often hundreds at a time—would ride to the Mexico-U.S. borderlands. It is a highly dangerous mode of transport, because of gang, and sometimes police or military, attacks on migrants, but also because people fall off and are run over by the train. Untold numbers have died in this manner, and many more have lost limbs.

A year after last summer's surge, train transport is now [available to very few](#). A combination of efforts by Mexican authorities and train company private security and the installation of [infrastructure](#) and deliberate speeding up of trains to make it more difficult for migrants to hop on, has radically reduced the number of riders. Yet many still head northward, taking even more dangerous routes than before.

From a liberal human rights perspective, such an outcome should be unacceptable. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([UDHR](#)), adopted by the United Nations in 1948 as "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations," asserts the right of all "to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (Article [14, 1](#)). It also enshrines the right of exit from a country (Article [13, 2](#)), but says nothing

about a right of entry—except into one’s own country—as the document’s framers had no intention of challenging the ability of nation-states to regulate movement from without.

The effect is to deny many their most basic human rights. In a world of pervasive poverty, unprecedented inequality, and widespread instability and insecurity, the power to move across national boundaries is tied to the ability to realize those rights. They include a right to life, a right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one’s family, and a right to work under just conditions—all of which are contained in the UDHR.

National territorial boundaries thus often have life and death implications. The global poor and disadvantaged, in their great majority those historically constructed as people of color, are typically forced to subsist where there are insufficient resources. Or, in order to overcome their deprivation and insecurity, they are compelled to try to leverage authorized access to the national spaces of privilege—the odds of success of which are extremely small—or risk their lives trying to overcome boundary controls put into place by countries that reject them—at least officially.

This is what many deem “global apartheid” given that all nation-states, especially relatively wealthy ones, regulate mobility and residence on the basis of, among other factors, geographic origins and ancestry—foundations of supposed racial distinctions. On a similar basis, Apartheid South Africa sought to limit black mobility and to ensure a sufficient supply of black labor in nominally white areas, while denying those workers political rights and making their presence conditional and reversible.

Eliminating the restrictions over mobility and residence will not put an end to social, economic, and political disparities, just as the end of Apartheid in South Africa did not terminate the country’s profound inequities. But, again as in South Africa, the demise of such restrictions will enhance the space to struggle for greater levels of social and economic justice—in this case across national boundaries. This is especially important for countries that have intense and unjust ties between them, such as Honduras and the United States. To deny these ties is to produce more suffering and, often, [premature death](#).

Historical injustices coupled with the rapacious consumption and dispossession associated with colonizing and imperialist powers is why so many in Honduras and elsewhere across the world today do not enjoy a right to stay—in places of origin rendered inviable. Remediating this requires, among other things, a right to move (i.e. migrate), but more expansively, it necessitates what we might consider “a right to the world.”

A right to the world complements a “[right to the city](#)”—the right to radically remake places and those who inhabit them in ways that are inclusive and socially and environmentally just and sustainable—that many on the political left [champion](#). A right to the world envisions more than a right for those who already inhabit a place, however. It also seeks a right to a just share of the earth’s resources and to a sustainable “home,” and a right to traverse global space, especially for the globally disadvantaged.

Only by realizing such a right to the world for all can we put an end to the seemingly endless migration-related “crises” that occur within and along the territorial boundaries of the United States, as well as the various forms of violence and injustice in Washington’s backyard and beyond that underlie them.

Joseph Nevins teaches geography at Vassar College. Among his books are Dying to Live: A Story of U.S. Immigration in an Age of Global Apartheid (City Lights Books, 2008), and Operation Gatekeeper and Beyond: The War on “Illegals” and the Remaking of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary (Routledge, 2010).

Washington Office of Latin America (WOLA) Report: Increased Enforcement at Mexico's Southern Border

By Adam Isacson, Senior Associate for Regional Security; Maureen Meyer, Senior Associate for Mexico and Migrant Rights; and Hannah Smith, Program Assistant

Note: This report (published in Nov 2015) is an update to an earlier report published in June 2014. Read the full report here <http://www.wola.org/node/5462> and the original report here: http://www.wola.org/publications/mexicos_other_border

Key Findings:

- **Far from deterring migrants from making the journey north, the most notable effect of Mexico's migration crackdown has been changes in how migrants are traveling.** With decreased possibilities of boarding the train in Chiapas, migrants and smugglers are now relying on different and dangerous routes and modes of transportation, including by foot, vehicle, and boat. These routes expose migrants to new vulnerabilities while simultaneously isolating them from the network of shelters established along traditional routes.
- **Raids and operations to prevent migrants from riding atop cargo trains, known collectively as La Bestia, have been the most visible and aggressive enforcement efforts under the Southern Border Program.** Migration authorities have blocked migrants from boarding trains, pulled migrants off of trains, and raided establishments that migrants are known to frequent, detaining thousands. The train operations have prompted concerns about excessive use-of-force and other abuses by the authorities involved.
- **U.S. assistance to help Mexico secure its southern border region has increased, though there is limited transparency regarding dollar values, recipient units, equipment, and training.** Additionally, some of the U.S.-donated equipment at Mexico's southern border has seen little use and was reported to be ill-suited for the terrain in this region. For example, U.S.-donated observation towers serve little purpose at the densely forested Mexico-Guatemala border. U.S.-donated biometric data equipment was also observed to be in disuse or only used sporadically.
- **The Southern Border Program brought an increase in mobile checkpoints, and new customs facilities have opened since its launch. Beyond these, there has been little change in the number of roadside checkpoints present on main highways in Chiapas.** We observed no new checkpoints on the Pacific coast between Tapachula and Arriaga. The most notable difference is the INM's use of volantas, or mobile checkpoints, which frequently change geographic position, ensnaring unaware migrants and smugglers. The large multi-agency customs checkpoints (Centros de Atención Integral de Transito Fronterizo, CAITFs) are not a product of the Southern Border Program but have become a key component of the region's border security strategy. Three of these facilities in Huixtla, La Trinitaria, and Playas de Catazajá, Chiapas are already in operation; construction is underway on an additional center in Chiapas and one in Tabasco.
- **Between July 2014 and June 2015, the Mexican government's apprehensions of Central American migrants increased by 71 percent over the same period in the previous year, before the July 2014 launch of its Southern Border Program.** The Southern Border Program modestly increased the presence of immigration agents and security forces, including from Mexico's National Migration Institute (Instituto Nacional de Migración, INM), Federal Police, and Gendarmería, a new division of the Federal Police. On the train lines, companies have begun to employ more private security personnel to monitor the cars and tracks.
- **Increased apprehension and rapid deportation of migrants has not coincided with increased capacity to screen migrants for protection concerns.** Rather than viewing this heavy movement of people as a refugee and protection crisis, the Mexican government sees this as an issue of managing large flows of people. Mexican law recognizes a broad definition of "refugee" under which a significant number of Central Americans fleeing violence could qualify; however, few request protection and few receive it. Mexico only granted refugee status in

approximately 21 percent of requests in 2014 and during the first seven months of 2015. The lack of awareness or understanding of the right to solicit asylum, the prolonged stay in grim detention center conditions while asylum requests are processed, lack of legal representation, and the shortage of protection officers authorized to make determinations are among the reasons why so few refugees are recognized in Mexico.

- **Mexico's stepped-up migrant apprehensions reduced the sense of urgency in the United States to support addressing the "root causes" of Central American migration, namely the high levels of violence and poverty, and the lack of opportunity.** With fewer migrants arriving at the U.S. border, legislators have delayed or scaled back badly needed reforms or assistance. Whereas Mexico apprehended 67 percent more unaccompanied children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras from October 2014 to September 2015 compared to the same period in the previous year, U.S. authorities apprehended 45 percent fewer over this period.

Other excerpts

[A graphic from the report (right) shows how the number of people apprehended in Mexico from the "Northern Triangle" has increased dramatically since the Southern Border Plan was implemented]

In Guatemala

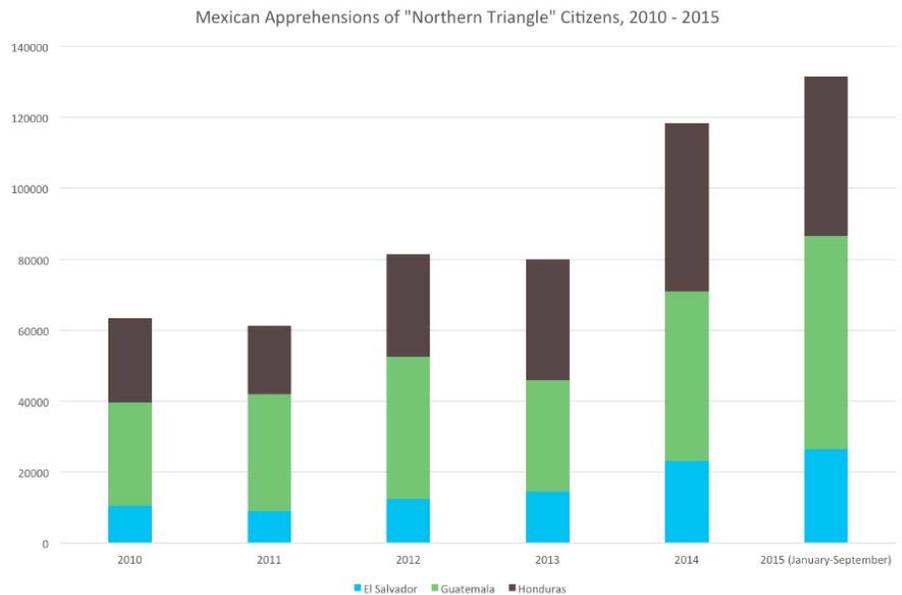
On the Guatemalan side of the border, the main focus of U.S. assistance has been the founding and development, since mid-2013, of two "Interagency Task Forces" (formerly known as "Joint Task Forces") combining personnel from Guatemala's Army, police, and prosecutors. Interagency Task Force Tecún Umán operates near the Chiapas border, especially in the most densely populated area where the coastal highway passes from Quezaltenango, Guatemala's second-largest city, through the border city of Tecún Umán and on to Tapachula, Chiapas. The Task Force's principal activities are checkpoints, patrols, and periodic operations against organized crime groups engaged in drug trafficking, human trafficking, and extortion. A second unit, Interagency Task Force Chortí, began operating near the Guatemala-Honduras border in the second half of 2014.

Both units operate from facilities constructed with U.S. Defense Department counter-drug funds, and use U.S.-donated vehicles and communications equipment. U.S. assistance to the two Guatemalan border task forces has totaled about US\$17 million.

[Note: According to a Rand Corporation report there is a third interagency task force called Xinca which operates along the Guatemala, El Salvador border, and three more planned, one on the Belize border and two more on the Mexican border. We can expect more of this in other parts of the region including in El Salvador.]

Last but not least, a 12 minute film called "Border Inc." by Brave New Films that shows the financial profits being made through border militarization.

Watch it here: <https://goo.gl/PyrNth>



BONUS document: Curious what the Congressional bill approving \$750 million for Central America actually says? Here it is:

[Text of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016.]

SEC. 7045. (a) UNITED STATES ENGAGEMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA.—

(1) FUNDING.—Subject to the requirements of this subsection, of the funds appropriated under titles III and IV of this Act, up to \$750,000,000 may be made available for assistance for countries in Central America to implement the United States Strategy for Engagement in Central America (the Strategy) in support of the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle of Central America (the Plan): *Provided*, That the Secretary of State and Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) shall prioritize such assistance to address the key factors in such countries contributing to the migration of unaccompanied, undocumented minors to the United States: *Provided further*, That such funds shall be made available to the maximum extent practicable on a cost-matching basis.

(2) PRE-OBLIGATION REQUIREMENTS.—Prior to the obligation of funds made available pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary of State shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations a multi-year spend plan specifying the proposed uses of such funds in each country and the objectives, indicators to measure progress, and a timeline to implement the Strategy, and the amounts made available from prior Acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs to support such Strategy: *Provided*, That such spend plan shall also include a description of how such assistance will differ from, complement, and leverage funds allocated by each government and other donors, including international financial institutions.

(3) ASSISTANCE FOR THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS OF EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND HONDURAS.—Of the funds made available pursuant to paragraph (1) that are available for assistance for each of the central governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, the following amounts shall be withheld from obligation and may only be made available as follows:

(A) 25 percent may only be obligated after the Secretary of State certifies and reports to the appropriate congressional committees that such government is taking effective steps to—

- (i) inform its citizens of the dangers of the journey to the southwest border of the United States;**
- (ii) combat human smuggling and trafficking;**
- (iii) improve border security; and**
- (iv) cooperate with United States Government agencies and other governments in the region to facilitate the return, repatriation, and reintegration of illegal migrants arriving at the southwest border of the United States who do not qualify as refugees, consistent with international law.**

(B) An additional 50 percent may only be obligated after the Secretary of State certifies and reports to the appropriate congressional committees that such government is taking effective steps to—

- (i) establish an autonomous, publicly accountable entity to provide oversight of the Plan;
- (ii) combat corruption, including investigating and prosecuting government officials credibly alleged to be corrupt;
- (iii) implement reforms, policies, and programs to improve transparency and strengthen public institutions, including increasing the capacity and independence of the judiciary and the Office of the Attorney General;
- (iv) establish and implement a policy that local communities, civil society organizations (including indigenous and other marginalized groups), and local governments are consulted in the design, and participate in the implementation and evaluation of, activities of the Plan that affect such communities, organizations, and governments;

- (v) counter the activities of criminal gangs, drug traffickers, and organized crime;
- (vi) investigate and prosecute in the civilian justice system members of military and police forces who are credibly alleged to have violated human rights, and ensure that the military and police are cooperating in such cases;
- (vii) cooperate with commissions against impunity, as appropriate, and with regional human rights entities;
- (viii) support programs to reduce poverty, create jobs, and promote equitable economic growth in areas contributing to large numbers of migrants;
- (ix) establish and implement a plan to create a professional, accountable civilian police force and curtail the role of the military in internal policing;
- (x) protect the right of political opposition parties, journalists, trade unionists, human rights defenders, and other civil society activists to operate without interference;
- (xi) increase government revenues, including by implementing tax reforms and strengthening customs agencies; and
- (xii) resolve commercial disputes, including the confiscation of real property, between United States entities and such government.