January 26, 1989

THE SECURITY COMPONENT OF U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

America faces an important security challenge on its southern border. Mexico, with its 1,933-mile porous frontier with the United States, is second only to the Soviet Union in strategic importance to Washington. This is why George Bush's first post-election meeting with a foreign leader was with Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari in late November 1988.

For almost this entire century, the U.S. has been able to take for granted the security of its southern border. It has required nearly no military resources to protect. This could change. Instability in Mexico, or Mexican cooperation with such U.S. adversaries as the USSR, could force Washington to shift substantial economic and military resources from Western Europe and other regions to this hemisphere, and possibly require the presence of up to half a million U.S. troops to secure the southern border. Recent Mexican presidents have at times pursued policies inimical to U.S. security. These include support of leftist groups in Latin America, weak restrictions on Soviet bloc espionage activities, and ineffective efforts at combatting international narcotics trafficking and migration problems. Future potential U.S. security

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This is the tenth in a series of Heritage studies on Mexico. It was preceded by *Backgrounder* No. 679, "A Review of 150 Years of U.S.-Mexican Relations" (October 31, 1988); *Backgrounder* No. 638, "Evolution of Mexican Foreign Policy" (March 11, 1988); *Backgrounder* No. 611, "Privatization in Mexico: Robust Rhetoric, Anemic Reality" (October 22, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 595, "Keys to Understanding Mexico: The PAN's Growth as a Real Opposition" (July 29, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 588, "Deju Vu of Policy Failure: The New $14 Billion Mexican Debt Bailout" (June 25, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 583, "For Mexico's Ailing Economy, Time Runs Short" (June 4, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 581, "Mexico's Many Faces" (May 19, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 575, "Mexico: The Key Players" (April 4, 1987); and *Backgrounder* No. 573, "Keys to Understanding Mexico: Challenges to the Ruling PRI" (April 7, 1987). Future papers will examine other aspects of Mexican policy and development.

concerns include the possibility for rising domestic political instability in the wake of Mexico's 1988 presidential elections and U.S. access to Mexican oil exports.

Mexico would pose a strategic threat to the U.S., for example, if a hostile or pro-Soviet government were to assume power, or if the country were besieged by leftist insurgents. In such a case, experts estimate that at least 10 million refugees could flee northward into the U.S.[1]

Straining the Relationship. Since World War II, Mexico has been transformed from a rural agricultural country into the world's thirteenth largest economy. Mexico also has begun be increasingly active in international politics. This transformation, however, has been accompanied by a continuing spirit of Mexican "anti-Yanquism" and by an affirmation of specific views that are at odds with the U.S. This is straining the bilateral U.S.-Mexican relationship. If relations do not improve, Mexico likely will continue supporting anti-U.S. causes, specifically in Central America and the Caribbean. As a result, U.S. security interests could be jeopardized.

To protect U.S. security interests and help strengthen U.S.-Mexican ties, the Bush Administration should:

♦ ♦ Schedule an early Bush-Salinas summit.

♦ ♦ Create bilateral task forces to focus on such key security issues as leftist violence in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and immigration.

♦ ♦ Expand U.S-Mexican military cooperation on such matters as border control, narcotics interdiction, and anti-terrorism training.

♦ ♦ Discourage any increase in the number of Soviet bloc consulates in Mexico.

♦ ♦ Continue to support anti-communist forces in Central and South America and encourage Mexico to work for democracy in Nicaragua.

♦ ♦ Attempt to steer Mexico away from its close relations with Cuba.

♦ ♦ Encourage Salinas to continue his predecessor's policy of distancing Mexico from the communist guerrillas (FMLN) in El Salvador and its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR).

♦ ● Seek Mexican assistance in helping bring democracy to Panama.

1 Marian Leighton, "Moscow's Courtship of Mexico," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 660, July 5, 1988, p. 15.

♦♦ Increase U.S.-Mexican cooperation in drug eradication and interdiction programs.

♦♦ Expand the resources available to the U.S. immigration authorities and border patrol.

U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY CONCERNS

Washington's global strategy is based upon a secure southern flank. Mexico, with its population of 83 million, is the most crucial sector of that flank. A stable and positive relationship with the Mexican government means that the U.S. can allocate its security resources elsewhere.

If Mexico were to suffer serious political turmoil or violence, U.S. adversaries within and outside of Mexico could take advantage of it. This would require the U.S. to shift troops to its southern border from other crucial areas of the world. In jeopardy, moreover, could be the major Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean sea lanes through which move 55 percent of the crude oil consumed by the U.S. and 45 percent of U.S. exports and imports. Equally important, these sea lanes would be needed for the resupply of America's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies in the event of a military crisis in Europe.

During a political crisis in Mexico, millions of refugees could flee towards the U.S. Under these conditions or if U.S. adversaries controlled Mexico, the U.S. likely would be faced with serious problems in impeding an increased flow of drugs, an escalation in crime, substantially increased costs for security and for social services, and stepped up Soviet bloc espionage activities.

The Soviet Union's Courtship of Mexico

Mexico's proximity to the U.S. and its traditional policy of demonstrating its independence from the U.S. have made Mexico a target of Soviet interest. Under Moscow's two-track foreign policy strategy for dealing with key non-communist Third World countries, Moscow has political and economic links to Mexico but simultaneously encourages clandestine subversive activity against the Mexican government.[2]

While Moscow has conducted normal diplomatic relation with the Mexican government, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union maintained close relations with the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), founded in 1919. For the Kremlin, one of the functions of the Mexican communists — now largely incorporated into and camouflaged by the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS) and the pro-Moscow Socialist People's Party (PPS) — is to assist the Soviet espionage and propaganda apparatus operating out of Mexico City.

2 Michael G. Wilson, "A Ten-Point Program to Block Soviet Advances in South America," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 658, June 22, 1988.

Training Terrorists. On occasion, however, Moscow has exploited other "targets of opportunity," including violence. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, for example, the Mexican government accused the Soviets of training and assisting factions of the Mexican extreme left engaging in subversive and terrorist activities.[3]

Today, the Mexican Socialist parties play an important policy making and ideological role in the National Democratic Front (FDN), a coalition of left-wing parties led by socialist Cuahtemoc Cardenas Solorzano. He is the son of Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico's president in the 1930s who pushed for the full collectivism of the Mexican economy. The younger Cardenas has accepted many of the PMS's and PPS's key planks. Among them: providing political safe haven to revolutionary Marxist activists from other countries, a moratorium on Mexico's foreign debt repayments, opposing the privatization of state-owned enterprises, reducing oil exports to the U.S., and encouraging a Mexican "class struggle."[4]

In last July's Mexican presidential elections, Cardenas received 31 percent of the vote, seriously challenging the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in a presidential election for the first time since the PRI's establishment as the National Revolutionary Party in 1929. The PRI won with just over 50 percent.

Diplomatic Spies. Moscow has set up in Mexico City one of the world's largest and most active "residencies" of the KGB, the Soviet intelligence and espionage agency. The Mexico City embassy, one of Moscow's largest outside of the Soviet bloc, is believed to house more than 200 Soviet diplomatic personnel. Of these, approximately 40 percent are affiliated with either the KGB or the Soviet military intelligence service (GRU). Assisted by their counterparts in the Cuban Intelligence service (DGI), the KGB has developed a formidable potential for subverting the whole region.[5] Moscow also operates a consulate out of the Mexican port city of Veracruz and has in the past pressed the Mexican government to allow Soviet consulates in cities bordering the U.S. like Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and Tijuana. Such posts would greatly bolster the KGB's intelligence gathering and infiltration of agents into the U.S.

Soviet trade with Mexico has risen from approximately $10 billion a year in the mid-1970s to near $30 billion annually in the mid-1980s. Indeed, in 1975, Mexico signed an agreement with the Soviet-controlled Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), becoming the first Latin American nation to do so. In 1983, the two nations established a Joint Commission for

3 For more information, see Sol W. Sanders, *Mexico: Chaos on Our Doorstep* (London: Madison Books, 1986), pp. 121-122.

4 Daniel James, Mexico-United States Report, "Mexico's Democratic Revolution Begins," July 1988, p. 3.

5 Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Economic Trade and Coordination. Under its auspices, the USSR has agreed to build two textile factories in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, near the U.S. border. In return, Mexico has expressed interest in the joint manufacture of tractors, plans to send workers to the Soviet Union for technical training, and will sell pipes, steel products, and oil drilling equipment to the Soviets to be used in their petroleum industry.[6]

Mexico's Ties to Cuba

Just before leaving office, Mexican president Miguel de la Madrid visited Cuba in early November 1988. This highlights Mexico's role as one of Cuba's closest friends in the Western Hemisphere. During his visit, de la Madrid awarded Fidel Castro the Aztec Eagle Medal, Mexico's highest civilian decoration. Mexico's relations with the Cuban dictator have been cooperative and cordial since the early days of the Cuban Revolution. In 1962, when the Organization of American States (OAS) voted to expel Cuba for supporting subversive activities in the Americas, only Mexico refused to support the measure.[7]

Close ties between Mexico City and Havana seem to have been formalized during Castro's first visit to Mexico in 1979. During meetings with Mexican President Lopez Portillo, the two leaders reached an understanding that their countries would work "to establish closer bilateral relations and work for a new international economic order."[8] Many observers believe that a secret "deal" was made between Castro and Portillo whereby Castro promised to refrain from sponsoring leftist revolutionary action within Mexico in return for a Mexican government pledge to limit cooperation with the U.S.[9]

Mexico's Support for Anti-U.S. Forces in Central America

In the late 1970s, Mexico granted Nicaraguan Sandinista rebels refuge on Mexican territory and provided them with materiel, diplomatic, and moral assistance. In the early days after the revolution, Mexico provided the Sandinista leadership with much-needed oil products, advisors, and technical and financial assistance. Without these, the Sandinistas might not have become the dominant faction in Nicaragua after the overthrow of President Anastasio Somoza's forces by a broad anti-Somoza coalition in 1979.[10]

Buying Time for Managua. Mexico has assumed a leadership role in the Contadora Group of eight Latin American nations seeking to end the fighting in Central America. Contadora policies, which Mexico helped shape, bought

6 United States Department of State, "Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986-87," August 1987, p. 65.

7 James R. Whelan and Franklin A. Jaeckle, *The Soviet Assault on America's Southern Flank* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1988), p. 225.

8 James, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

9 Leighton, *op. cit.*

10 Jorge Salaverry, "Evolution of Mexican Foreign Policy," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 638, March 11, 1988, p. 10.

time in which the Sandinistas built up their Soviet-equipped armed forces and aided the region's communist insurgencies. In 1984, Mexico played a pivotal role in trying to persuade the Central American states to accept a draft Contadora treaty which could have disarmed the region's anti-communist groups, but which imposed no enforceable mechanism to monitor and halt Cuban, Soviet, and other communist bloc aid to the Sandinistas.[11] The result: today's 120,000-man Sandinista military.

On the El Salvador situation, in 1981, Mexico declared support for the Cuban-backed Salvadoran guerrillas known as the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) and its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). This was at a time when the pro-Soviet guerrillas were very close to toppling the Salvadoran government. Today, Mexico City remains a major center for FMLN propaganda, espionage, and fund raising, although the Mexican government formally withdrew its backing of the FMLN in 1984.

Bailing Out Noriega. Regarding Panama, Mexico also raises U.S. security concerns. For over a year, Washington has been seeking ways to force Panamanian military strongman Manuel Antonio Noriega out of power. However, in mid-April 1988, Mexico announced that it would guarantee oil supplies to Noriega's beleaguered regime despite U.S. attempts to put financial pressure on the dictator. Mexico agreed to waive immediate payment on the oil, lower interest rates on the credit lines underpinning the transaction, and postpone indefinitely collection of an overdue $23 million Panamanian oil bill.[12] Mexico has opposed Washington's efforts to ease the removal of Noriega, viewing it as an act of "Yanqui intervention."

Outgoing Mexican President de la Madrid, however, did begin a retreat from his predecessors' enthusiastic espousal of revolutionary and anti-American foreign policy causes in Central America. He not only cooled Mexico's support for the Sandinista regime in Managua, but also patched up diplomatic relations with the governments of President Jose Napoleon Duarte in El Salvador and Vinicio Cerezo in Guatemala. By diminishing the level of Mexico's anti-U.S. rhetoric and reducing Mexican support for revolutionary groups in Central America, the de la Madrid administration hoped to obtain assistance from the U.S. in easing Mexico's $110 billion debt burden. Mexico also has been seeking greater access to U.S. markets for its products.

The War on Narcotics Trafficking

The narcotics trade not only generates crime, corruption, terrorism, and needless death in the U.S. and Mexico, but also threatens many of Latin America's fragile democracies with its links to leftist guerrilla groups and

11 Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
12 David Gardner, "Mexico offers Panama a helping hand," *Financial Times*, April 27, 1988, p. 4.

sponsorship of corruption. And it causes bilateral U.S.-Mexican political tensions.

For Washington, Mexico is the most important country in the war on drugs. The tremendous movement of people, legally and illegally, across the U.S.-Mexican frontier makes successful interdiction programs problematic. Last year, over one-third of the marijuana, heroin, and cocaine entering the U.S. either originated in or was shipped through Mexico. In its 1987 report to Congress on the global narcotics situation, the Department of State declares that: "Mexico continues to be the major single source country for the production, processing and trafficking of heroin and marijuana entering the U.S."[13]

Charges and Countercharges. The Mexican government contends that it is not to blame for America's drug problem. It charges that Washington is unwilling to take the measures to reduce greatly the U.S. domestic demand for illegal drugs. The U.S., however, blames Mexican internal corruption, indifference, and a lack of cooperation in narcotics matters.

The harsh reality is that for segments of the Mexican population, as for much of Latin America, producing drugs is enormously profitable: it earns foreign exchange, it adds to the gross national product, it is labor- rather than capital-intensive, it is produced with low-level technology, and it involves high-level political and military officials who often cannot be brought to trial.

Even so, Mexico has been taking action against drug traffickers. Mexico's Attorney General's office spends approximately half of its budget combatting drug trafficking. Mexico has the largest eradication aviation fleet in the Third World, with 94 aircraft.[14] Yet even though one-quarter of Mexico's 125,000 active soldiers combat drug traffickers, the battle against drugs is hampered by payoffs, intimidation, and apathy. Observes a U.S. Drug Enforcement agent: "corruption has penetrated all levels of the Mexican government. It's lateral, it's horizontal, and it's total."[15]

Immigration As a Possible Threat to U.S. Security

Of the nearly 4 million undocumented aliens living or working in the U.S., approximately 2.5 million are Mexican. Traditionally, Mexican migration northward represented what Mexico City saw as a solution to Mexico's rapid population expansion and growing unemployment rate. Today, by contrast, the Mexican government views it as a mixed blessing. While Mexico benefits from the remittances that Mexican workers in the U.S. send home and from the lessened strain on the Mexican economy, Mexico suffers from the loss of skilled labor. This is prompting Mexico to seek discussions with Washington on the migration problem.

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13 Jon Thomas, *Mexico and Narcotics: A Must-Win Situation* (Tempe: INCAMEX, 1988), pp. 2-3.
14 M. Delal Baer, *Mexico and the United States: Leadership and the Unfinished Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: The Center For Strategic and International Studies, 1988), p. 43.
15 Elaine Shannon "Why We're Facing a World of Noriegas," *The Washington Post*, October 23, 1988, p. C4.

For the U.S., immigration stirs some controversy. The U.S. benefits, of course, from the infusion of skilled, cheap, and industrious labor. Yet some experts complain that illegal immigrants add to the Southwest's rapid population growth, crime, violence, and other problems. Whatever the validity of these arguments, the migration from Mexico has been manageable for the U.S.

This could change.

Flooding the U.S. If unrest in Mexico were to increase dramatically, or if the Sandinistas in Nicaragua were to spread their revolution northward, the fears and uncertainties could spur, it is estimated, over 10 million Mexicans to seek refuge north of the porous U.S.-Mexican border. This would create serious problems for the U.S. Millions of new illegal immigrants could increase the flow of narcotics crossing the Rio Grande; could make it easier for Soviet bloc spies to enter the U.S. and gather intelligence; could provide cover for terrorists entering the U.S.; could overwhelm the ability of American communities near the border to provide housing, health, hygiene and other services; and could add significantly to crime.

Sealing the border would cost the U.S. billions — perhaps tens of billions — of dollars for barriers and sophisticated electronics and would take approximately half of the U.S. Army's divisions or around 500,000 troops.[16]

U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY CONCERNS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Since Mexico's earliest days as a fledgling republic, its foreign policy has been based upon establishing and maintaining its independence from its giant neighbor to the north. What Mexico regards as its past traumas regarding relations with Washington still adversely affect U.S.-Mexican relations today.[17] These, from the perspective widely accepted in Mexico, include the U.S.-Mexico war of 1846-1848, culminating with a U.S. victory that cost Mexico over 50 percent of its territory including what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of California, Colorado, and Utah.

A cordial U.S.-Mexican relationship developed during World War II and lasted through the 1960s. However in 1970, Luis Echeverria Alvarez was elected president. His leftist and "anti-Yanqui" policies antagonized the U.S. over such security-related issues as closer relations with Cuba and Salvador Allende's socialist government in Chile, as well as endorsing the Palestine Liberation Organization. Echeverria's successor, Jose Lopez Portillo, continued these leftist, anti-U.S. policies by supporting communist elements in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

16 Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
17 James, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Miguel de la Madrid, who took office in 1982, partially reversed Mexico's extreme leftward trends and attempted to improve U.S.-Mexican ties. Ronald Reagan and de la Madrid met six times and sought agreement, though often unsuccessfully, on such security related issues as narcotics control, immigration, and political tensions in Central America.[18]

ELEVEN POINTS TO PROMOTE U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY

To protect U.S. security interests and improve U.S.-Mexican bilateral relations, the Bush Administration should:

1) Schedule an early Bush-Salinas summit. The two leaders should focus on drug interdiction, border control, the turmoil in Central America, U.S.-Mexican trade, and Mexico's debt. Above all, Bush must explore means of expanding and improving U.S. ties with the Mexican government. Possibly, Salinas will offer suggestions and opportunities for doing so.

2) Identify leverage by which the U.S. could prod Mexico to cooperate on geopolitical and security matters. While U.S. ability to assist Mexico with its $110 billion debt may be the most obvious lever Washington has to influence the Salinas government, the Bush Administration should not be tempted to use it to gain geopolitical and security concessions. U.S. economic assistance to Mexico should be leveraged solely to prod the Mexican government to introduce free market reforms in the Mexican economy. This alone offers Mexico the way to solve its chronic economic problems. To influence the Salinas government on geopolitical and security matters, the Bush Administration must devise non-economic forms of leverage and suasion.

3) Create bilateral task forces to focus on key security issues. To identify where cooperation can be increased and bilateral security promoted, the U.S. and Mexico should create joint task forces to study policy options. Such task forces, for instance, could address issues like the violence in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and immigration. Bimonthly meetings, meanwhile, should be scheduled between U.S. National Security Council and Pentagon personnel and senior Mexican officials from their Secretariats of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, and Attorney General's Office to discuss security concerns with respect to Mexico and Mexico's concerns with respect to the U.S.

4) Expand U.S.-Mexican military cooperation. The Soviet Union already has demonstrated its willingness to expand military relations with Mexico. A Soviet naval task force, for example, had been scheduled to call at the Mexican port of Veracruz in 1985; it took considerable U.S. pressure to cancel the visit. To counter a possible expansion in Soviet influence within the Mexican armed forces, the U.S. should seek to take advantage of the

18 For more information, see, Esther Wilson Hannon, "A Review of 150 Years of U.S. - Mexican Relations," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 679, October 31, 1988.

Mexican military's determination to modernize. Traditionally, the Mexican armed forces have been very "nationalist" and inward looking, making bilateral military cooperation problematic. Salinas, however, has stated that one of his goals is to build a more modern, better equipped Mexican military. The U.S. could be helpful. Since World War II, the Mexican armed forces have exchanged small numbers of military officers with the U.S. for training and education. Currently, there are 72 Mexican military students studying and training in the U.S. at places such as Ft. Benning, Georgia and the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In the past two years, Mexico also has purchased a limited amount of U.S.-manufactured F-5 fighter jets, C-130 transports, howitzers, and jeeps. Last year, Mexico was allocated $225,000 worth of U.S.-sponsored International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance, a U.S. government grant program that provides technical training and personal contact between U.S. and Latin American military professionals. While the Salinas government likely will be hesitant to accept significant increases in U.S.-Mexican military cooperation, the Bush Administration should make the offer. Washington should propose joint military maneuvers, expanded education and training programs for Mexican military officers, and increased arms sales. At the very least, Washington should seek to expand border patrol, narcotics interdiction, and anti-terrorism training with the Mexican military.

5) Press the Mexican Government to deny Soviet bloc requests for more consulates and trade missions in Mexico. The Mexican government has allowed the Soviet, Cuban, and East European embassies, consulates, and trade missions in Mexico to coordinate and support communist parties and guerrilla activities in the Caribbean Basin. These diplomatic missions also coordinate espionage activities against the U.S.[19] Currently there are dozens of Soviet bloc embassies, consulates, and trade missions in Mexico; by contrast, the U.S. has only nine consulates in Mexico plus its Mexico City embassy. Soviet bloc nations have been seeking permission to open new consulates in Mexican cities bordering the U.S., such as Matamoros and Ciudad Juarez. U.S. pressure so far has convinced the Mexican government to deny these requests. Limiting the number of Eastern bloc consulates and trade missions in Mexico would impede Soviet access to U.S. border areas and hinder clandestine capabilities throughout the Caribbean.

6) Continue to support anti-communist forces in Central America. U.S. backing of the Democratic Resistance (the Contras) in Nicaragua helps block the spread of insurgent activity northward towards Mexico and the U.S. border. What most threatens Mexican and U.S. hemispheric security indeed is the growing turmoil in Central America. For Mexico, this could lead to a massive influx of Central American refugees and to increased leftist political agitation and violence at home. It thus serves Mexico's interests, as those of the U.S., for the gains made by the fledgling democracies in El Salvador,

19 Howard J. Wiarda and Mark Falcoff, *The Communist Challenge in the Caribbean and Central America* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1987), p. 110.

Guatemala, and Honduras to be consolidated and defended against communist aggression. Washington must make it clear to Mexico that the key threat to these governments is Nicaragua and the guerrilla movements which it supports in other Central American countries.

7) Encourage the Salinas government to continue President de la Madrid's policy of distancing Mexico from El Salvador's communist guerrillas. Over the past decade, Mexico has given money to Salvador's Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) and the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), allowed an FDR-FMLN government in exile to operate out of Mexico, and attempted to mediate in behalf of the communist alliance. This backing, however, was muted somewhat by de la Madrid. A general desire by the Salinas government to improve its image in Washington and relations with the U.S. should be incentive to embrace de la Madrid's greater caution in supporting radicals in Central America. The appointment of Fernando Solana, a moderate, as Mexico's new Foreign Secretary may already have set the tone for greater restraint in the region.

8) Attempt to steer Mexico away from its close relations with Cuba. For three decades, Mexico's policy toward Cuba has been cordial, while Washington has sought to isolate the Castro regime. At times, it has appeared that Mexico even has been crafting its foreign policy to satisfy Havana. The U.S. should work with its democratic allies in Latin America to encourage Mexico to rethink relations with Castro. As a start, the U.S. could encourage Mexico and its neighbors to focus more on Cuba's human rights record. The U.S. ambassador to Mexico should meet with Salinas specifically to discuss this issue.

9) Seek Mexican cooperation in bringing democracy to Panama. The U.S. and Mexico could work together to help bring democracy to Panama. The only way Panamanian dictator General Manuel Antonio Noriega can be forced from power, short of military intervention, is for him to be confronted by strong multinational diplomatic and economic pressure. At the very least, the U.S. should encourage the Salinas government to withdraw its economic and rhetorical support from the Noriega regime.

10) Increase U.S.-Mexican cooperation in drug eradication and interdiction. Washington should applaud publicly Mexico's efforts in drug interdiction, while continuing to demonstrate concern over the corruption and violence that permeates Mexico's anti-drug efforts. The U.S. should seek to improve U.S.-Mexican anti-narcotics capabilities by increasing and expanding the financial and technical assistance given to the Mexican government. To combat drug dealers and cultivators effectively, Mexico needs materiel such as helicopters, airplanes, radar equipment, herbicides, and patrol boats. Washington then should ask Mexico for U.S. overflight and hot pursuit rights, expanded port-call privileges for U.S. ships, and streamlined extradition procedures.

11) Expand U.S. immigration and border patrol capabilities. The U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 is designed to stop illegal immigration and penalize those who employ illegal immigrants. This law should be strictly enforced. These efforts also should be combined with an increase in the number of border patrol personnel from about 5,000 currently to 7,500, deployment of greater numbers of patrol aircraft, and an increase in funding for surveillance materiel such as radars and night vision equipment.

CONCLUSION

Mexico will continue to pose an important security challenge to the U.S. The security interests of both nations are increasingly threatened by such problems as the turmoil in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and illegal immigration. The accession of Carlos Salinas de Gortari to Mexico's presidency, however, may provide the Bush Administration with an opportunity to improve bilateral relations and generate agreement on security issues.

Linked by a porous 1,933-mile border, Mexico and the U.S. are separated by distinct political systems, cultures, languages, and wide disparities in wealth and population. These differences, combined with a difficult historical relationship, have strained relations between the two governments. Mexico's misunderstanding of Washington's actions and foreign policy goals in the Americas have led to Mexican mistrust and resentment of the U.S.

Giving Salinas a Chance. To counter this, the Bush Administration must work together with the Salinas government to establish a basis for long-term agreement on regional objectives and security interests. Consensus and coordination on narcotics and migration issues need to be explored. The U.S. also should maintain strong support for elements fighting pro-Soviet insurgencies in the countries neighboring Mexico.

While Mexico probably will continue to pursue anti-U.S. policies if it feels them to be in its best interest, Salinas should be taken up on his expressed willingness to improve and expand U.S.-Mexican relations. Whether he follows through, remains to be seen. Bush should give it a chance.

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INTRODUCTION

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For almost this entire century, the U.S. has been able to take for granted the security of its southern border. It has required nearly no military resources to protect. This could change. Instability in Mexico, or Mexican cooperation with such U.S. adversaries as the USSR, could force Washington to shift substantial economic and military resources from Western Europe and other regions to this hemisphere, and possibly require the presence of up to half a million U.S. troops to secure the southern border. Recent Mexican presidents have at times pursued policies inimical to U.S. security. These include support of leftist groups in Latin America, weak restrictions on Soviet bloc espionage activities, and ineffective efforts at combatting international narcotics trafficking and migration problems. Future potential U.S. security

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- ♦♦ Attempt to steer Mexico away from its close relations with Cuba.

- ♦♦ Encourage Salinas to continue his predecessor's policy of distancing Mexico from the communist guerrillas (FMLN) in El Salvador and its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR).

- ♦♦ Seek Mexican assistance in helping bring democracy to Panama.

1 Marian Leighton, "Moscow's Courtship of Mexico," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 660, July 5, 1988, p. 15.

- Increase U.S.-Mexican cooperation in drug eradication and interdiction programs.

- Expand the resources available to the U.S. immigration authorities and border patrol.

U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY CONCERNS

Washington's global strategy is based upon a secure southern flank. Mexico, with its population of 83 million, is the most crucial sector of that flank. A stable and positive relationship with the Mexican government means that the U.S. can allocate its security resources elsewhere.

If Mexico were to suffer serious political turmoil or violence, U.S. adversaries within and outside of Mexico could take advantage of it. This would require the U.S. to shift troops to its southern border from other crucial areas of the world. In jeopardy, moreover, could be the major Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean sea lanes through which move 55 percent of the crude oil consumed by the U.S. and 45 percent of U.S. exports and imports. Equally important, these sea lanes would be needed for the resupply of America's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies in the event of a military crisis in Europe.

During a political crisis in Mexico, millions of refugees could flee towards the U.S. Under these conditions or if U.S. adversaries controlled Mexico, the U.S. likely would be faced with serious problems in impeding an increased flow of drugs, an escalation in crime, substantially increased costs for security and for social services, and stepped up Soviet bloc espionage activities.

The Soviet Union's Courtship of Mexico

Mexico's proximity to the U.S. and its traditional policy of demonstrating its independence from the U.S. have made Mexico a target of Soviet interest. Under Moscow's two-track foreign policy strategy for dealing with key non-communist Third World countries, Moscow has political and economic links to Mexico but simultaneously encourages clandestine subversive activity against the Mexican government.[2]

While Moscow has conducted normal diplomatic relation with the Mexican government, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union maintained close relations with the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), founded in 1919. For the Kremlin, one of the functions of the Mexican communists — now largely incorporated into and camouflaged by the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS) and the pro-Moscow Socialist People's Party (PPS) — is to assist the Soviet espionage and propaganda apparatus operating out of Mexico City.

2 Michael G. Wilson, "A Ten-Point Program to Block Soviet Advances in South America," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 658, June 22, 1988.

Training Terrorists. On occasion, however, Moscow has exploited other "targets of opportunity," including violence. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, for example, the Mexican government accused the Soviets of training and assisting factions of the Mexican extreme left engaging in subversive and terrorist activities.[3]

Today, the Mexican Socialist parties play an important policy making and ideological role in the National Democratic Front (FDN), a coalition of left-wing parties led by socialist Cuahtemoc Cardenas Solorzano. He is the son of Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico's president in the 1930s who pushed for the full collectivism of the Mexican economy. The younger Cardenas has accepted many of the PMS's and PPS's key planks. Among them: providing political safe haven to revolutionary Marxist activists from other countries, a moratorium on Mexico's foreign debt repayments, opposing the privatization of state-owned enterprises, reducing oil exports to the U.S., and encouraging a Mexican "class struggle."[4]

In last July's Mexican presidential elections, Cardenas received 31 percent of the vote, seriously challenging the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in a presidential election for the first time since the PRI's establishment as the National Revolutionary Party in 1929. The PRI won with just over 50 percent.

Diplomatic Spies. Moscow has set up in Mexico City one of the world's largest and most active "residencies" of the KGB, the Soviet intelligence and espionage agency. The Mexico City embassy, one of Moscow's largest outside of the Soviet bloc, is believed to house more than 200 Soviet diplomatic personnel. Of these, approximately 40 percent are affiliated with either the KGB or the Soviet military intelligence service (GRU). Assisted by their counterparts in the Cuban Intelligence service (DGI), the KGB has developed a formidable potential for subverting the whole region.[5] Moscow also operates a consulate out of the Mexican port city of Veracruz and has in the past pressed the Mexican government to allow Soviet consulates in cities bordering the U.S. like Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and Tijuana. Such posts would greatly bolster the KGB's intelligence gathering and infiltration of agents into the U.S.

Soviet trade with Mexico has risen from approximately $10 billion a year in the mid-1970s to near $30 billion annually in the mid-1980s. Indeed, in 1975, Mexico signed an agreement with the Soviet-controlled Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), becoming the first Latin American nation to do so. In 1983, the two nations established a Joint Commission for

3 For more information, see Sol W. Sanders, *Mexico: Chaos on Our Doorstep* (London: Madison Books, 1986), pp. 121-122.

4 Daniel James, Mexico-United States Report, "Mexico's Democratic Revolution Begins," July 1988, p. 3.

5 Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Economic Trade and Coordination. Under its auspices, the USSR has agreed to build two textile factories in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, near the U.S. border. In return, Mexico has expressed interest in the joint manufacture of tractors, plans to send workers to the Soviet Union for technical training, and will sell pipes, steel products, and oil drilling equipment to the Soviets to be used in their petroleum industry.[6]

Mexico's Ties to Cuba

Just before leaving office, Mexican president Miguel de la Madrid visited Cuba in early November 1988. This highlights Mexico's role as one of Cuba's closest friends in the Western Hemisphere. During his visit, de la Madrid awarded Fidel Castro the Aztec Eagle Medal, Mexico's highest civilian decoration. Mexico's relations with the Cuban dictator have been cooperative and cordial since the early days of the Cuban Revolution. In 1962, when the Organization of American States (OAS) voted to expel Cuba for supporting subversive activities in the Americas, only Mexico refused to support the measure.[7]

Close ties between Mexico City and Havana seem to have been formalized during Castro's first visit to Mexico in 1979. During meetings with Mexican President Lopez Portillo, the two leaders reached an understanding that their countries would work "to establish closer bilateral relations and work for a new international economic order."[8] Many observers believe that a secret "deal" was made between Castro and Portillo whereby Castro promised to refrain from sponsoring leftist revolutionary action within Mexico in return for a Mexican government pledge to limit cooperation with the U.S.[9]

Mexico's Support for Anti-U.S. Forces in Central America

In the late 1970s, Mexico granted Nicaraguan Sandinista rebels refuge on Mexican territory and provided them with materiel, diplomatic, and moral assistance. In the early days after the revolution, Mexico provided the Sandinista leadership with much-needed oil products, advisors, and technical and financial assistance. Without these, the Sandinistas might not have become the dominant faction in Nicaragua after the overthrow of President Anastasio Somoza's forces by a broad anti-Somoza coalition in 1979.[10]

Buying Time for Managua. Mexico has assumed a leadership role in the Contadora Group of eight Latin American nations seeking to end the fighting in Central America. Contadora policies, which Mexico helped shape, bought

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6 United States Department of State, "Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986-87," August 1987, p. 65.

7 James R. Whelan and Franklin A. Jaeckle, *The Soviet Assault on America's Southern Flank* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1988), p. 225.

8 James, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

9 Leighton, *op. cit.*

10 Jorge Salaverry, "Evolution of Mexican Foreign Policy," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 638, March 11, 1988, p. 10.

time in which the Sandinistas built up their Soviet-equipped armed forces and aided the region's communist insurgencies. In 1984, Mexico played a pivotal role in trying to persuade the Central American states to accept a draft Contadora treaty which could have disarmed the region's anti-communist groups, but which imposed no enforceable mechanism to monitor and halt Cuban, Soviet, and other communist bloc aid to the Sandinistas.[11] The result: today's 120,000-man Sandinista military.

On the El Salvador situation, in 1981, Mexico declared support for the Cuban-backed Salvadoran guerrillas known as the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) and its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). This was at a time when the pro-Soviet guerrillas were very close to toppling the Salvadoran government. Today, Mexico City remains a major center for FMLN propaganda, espionage, and fund raising, although the Mexican government formally withdrew its backing of the FMLN in 1984.

Bailing Out Noriega. Regarding Panama, Mexico also raises U.S. security concerns. For over a year, Washington has been seeking ways to force Panamanian military strongman Manuel Antonio Noriega out of power. However, in mid-April 1988, Mexico announced that it would guarantee oil supplies to Noriega's beleaguered regime despite U.S. attempts to put financial pressure on the dictator. Mexico agreed to waive immediate payment on the oil, lower interest rates on the credit lines underpinning the transaction, and postpone indefinitely collection of an overdue $23 million Panamanian oil bill.[12] Mexico has opposed Washington's efforts to ease the removal of Noriega, viewing it as an act of "Yanqui intervention."

Outgoing Mexican President de la Madrid, however, did begin a retreat from his predecessors' enthusiastic espousal of revolutionary and anti-American foreign policy causes in Central America. He not only cooled Mexico's support for the Sandinista regime in Managua, but also patched up diplomatic relations with the governments of President Jose Napoleon Duarte in El Salvador and Vinicio Cerezo in Guatemala. By diminishing the level of Mexico's anti-U.S. rhetoric and reducing Mexican support for revolutionary groups in Central America, the de la Madrid administration hoped to obtain assistance from the U.S. in easing Mexico's $110 billion debt burden. Mexico also has been seeking greater access to U.S. markets for its products.

The War on Narcotics Trafficking

The narcotics trade not only generates crime, corruption, terrorism, and needless death in the U.S. and Mexico, but also threatens many of Latin America's fragile democracies with its links to leftist guerrilla groups and

11 Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

12 David Gardner, "Mexico offers Panama a helping hand," *Financial Times*, April 27, 1988, p. 4.

sponsorship of corruption. And it causes bilateral U.S.-Mexican political tensions.

For Washington, Mexico is the most important country in the war on drugs. The tremendous movement of people, legally and illegally, across the U.S.-Mexican frontier makes successful interdiction programs problematic. Last year, over one-third of the marijuana, heroin, and cocaine entering the U.S. either originated in or was shipped through Mexico. In its 1987 report to Congress on the global narcotics situation, the Department of State declares that: "Mexico continues to be the major single source country for the production, processing and trafficking of heroin and marijuana entering the U.S."[13]

Charges and Countercharges. The Mexican government contends that it is not to blame for America's drug problem. It charges that Washington is unwilling to take the measures to reduce greatly the U.S. domestic demand for illegal drugs. The U.S., however, blames Mexican internal corruption, indifference, and a lack of cooperation in narcotics matters.

The harsh reality is that for segments of the Mexican population, as for much of Latin America, producing drugs is enormously profitable: it earns foreign exchange, it adds to the gross national product, it is labor- rather than capital-intensive, it is produced with low-level technology, and it involves high-level political and military officials who often cannot be brought to trial.

Even so, Mexico has been taking action against drug traffickers. Mexico's Attorney General's office spends approximately half of its budget combatting drug trafficking. Mexico has the largest eradication aviation fleet in the Third World, with 94 aircraft.[14] Yet even though one-quarter of Mexico's 125,000 active soldiers combat drug traffickers, the battle against drugs is hampered by payoffs, intimidation, and apathy. Observes a U.S. Drug Enforcement agent: "corruption has penetrated all levels of the Mexican government. It's lateral, it's horizontal, and it's total."[15]

Immigration As a Possible Threat to U.S. Security

Of the nearly 4 million undocumented aliens living or working in the U.S., approximately 2.5 million are Mexican. Traditionally, Mexican migration northward represented what Mexico City saw as a solution to Mexico's rapid population expansion and growing unemployment rate. Today, by contrast, the Mexican government views it as a mixed blessing. While Mexico benefits from the remittances that Mexican workers in the U.S. send home and from the lessened strain on the Mexican economy, Mexico suffers from the loss of skilled labor. This is prompting Mexico to seek discussions with Washington on the migration problem.

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13 Jon Thomas, *Mexico and Narcotics: A Must-Win Situation* (Tempe: INCAMEX, 1988), pp. 2-3.
14 M. Delal Baer, *Mexico and the United States: Leadership and the Unfinished Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: The Center For Strategic and International Studies, 1988), p. 43.
15 Elaine Shannon "Why We're Facing a World of Noriegas," *The Washington Post*, October 23, 1988, p. C4.

For the U.S., immigration stirs some controversy. The U.S. benefits, of course, from the infusion of skilled, cheap, and industrious labor. Yet some experts complain that illegal immigrants add to the Southwest's rapid population growth, crime, violence, and other problems. Whatever the validity of these arguments, the migration from Mexico has been manageable for the U.S.

This could change.

Flooding the U.S. If unrest in Mexico were to increase dramatically, or if the Sandinistas in Nicaragua were to spread their revolution northward, the fears and uncertainties could spur, it is estimated, over 10 million Mexicans to seek refuge north of the porous U.S.-Mexican border. This would create serious problems for the U.S. Millions of new illegal immigrants could increase the flow of narcotics crossing the Rio Grande; could make it easier for Soviet bloc spies to enter the U.S. and gather intelligence; could provide cover for terrorists entering the U.S.; could overwhelm the ability of American communities near the border to provide housing, health, hygiene and other services; and could add significantly to crime.

Sealing the border would cost the U.S. billions — perhaps tens of billions — of dollars for barriers and sophisticated electronics and would take approximately half of the U.S. Army's divisions or around 500,000 troops.[16]

U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY CONCERNS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Since Mexico's earliest days as a fledgling republic, its foreign policy has been based upon establishing and maintaining its independence from its giant neighbor to the north. What Mexico regards as its past traumas regarding relations with Washington still adversely affect U.S.-Mexican relations today.[17] These, from the perspective widely accepted in Mexico, include the U.S.-Mexico war of 1846-1848, culminating with a U.S. victory that cost Mexico over 50 percent of its territory including what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of California, Colorado, and Utah.

A cordial U.S.-Mexican relationship developed during World War II and lasted through the 1960s. However in 1970, Luis Echeverria Alvarez was elected president. His leftist and "anti-Yanqui" policies antagonized the U.S. over such security-related issues as closer relations with Cuba and Salvador Allende's socialist government in Chile, as well as endorsing the Palestine Liberation Organization. Echeverria's successor, Jose Lopez Portillo, continued these leftist, anti-U.S. policies by supporting communist elements in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

16 Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
17 James, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Miguel de la Madrid, who took office in 1982, partially reversed Mexico's extreme leftward trends and attempted to improve U.S.-Mexican ties. Ronald Reagan and de la Madrid met six times and sought agreement, though often unsuccessfully, on such security related issues as narcotics control, immigration, and political tensions in Central America.[18]

ELEVEN POINTS TO PROMOTE U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY

To protect U.S. security interests and improve U.S.-Mexican bilateral relations, the Bush Administration should:

1) Schedule an early Bush-Salinas summit. The two leaders should focus on drug interdiction, border control, the turmoil in Central America, U.S.-Mexican trade, and Mexico's debt. Above all, Bush must explore means of expanding and improving U.S. ties with the Mexican government. Possibly, Salinas will offer suggestions and opportunities for doing so.

2) Identify leverage by which the U.S. could prod Mexico to cooperate on geopolitical and security matters. While U.S. ability to assist Mexico with its $110 billion debt may be the most obvious lever Washington has to influence the Salinas government, the Bush Administration should not be tempted to use it to gain geopolitical and security concessions. U.S. economic assistance to Mexico should be leveraged solely to prod the Mexican government to introduce free market reforms in the Mexican economy. This alone offers Mexico the way to solve its chronic economic problems. To influence the Salinas government on geopolitical and security matters, the Bush Administration must devise non-economic forms of leverage and suasion.

3) Create bilateral task forces to focus on key security issues. To identify where cooperation can be increased and bilateral security promoted, the U.S. and Mexico should create joint task forces to study policy options. Such task forces, for instance, could address issues like the violence in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and immigration. Bimonthly meetings, meanwhile, should be scheduled between U.S. National Security Council and Pentagon personnel and senior Mexican officials from their Secretariats of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, and Attorney General's Office to discuss security concerns with respect to Mexico and Mexico's concerns with respect to the U.S.

4) Expand U.S.-Mexican military cooperation. The Soviet Union already has demonstrated its willingness to expand military relations with Mexico. A Soviet naval task force, for example, had been scheduled to call at the Mexican port of Veracruz in 1985; it took considerable U.S. pressure to cancel the visit. To counter a possible expansion in Soviet influence within the Mexican armed forces, the U.S. should seek to take advantage of the

18 For more information, see, Esther Wilson Hannon, "A Review of 150 Years of U.S. - Mexican Relations," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 679, October 31, 1988.

Mexican military's determination to modernize. Traditionally, the Mexican armed forces have been very "nationalist" and inward looking, making bilateral military cooperation problematic. Salinas, however, has stated that one of his goals is to build a more modern, better equipped Mexican military. The U.S. could be helpful. Since World War II, the Mexican armed forces have exchanged small numbers of military officers with the U.S. for training and education. Currently, there are 72 Mexican military students studying and training in the U.S. at places such as Ft. Benning, Georgia and the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In the past two years, Mexico also has purchased a limited amount of U.S.-manufactured F-5 fighter jets, C-130 transports, howitzers, and jeeps. Last year, Mexico was allocated $225,000 worth of U.S.-sponsored International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance, a U.S. government grant program that provides technical training and personal contact between U.S. and Latin American military professionals. While the Salinas government likely will be hesitant to accept significant increases in U.S.-Mexican military cooperation, the Bush Administration should make the offer. Washington should propose joint military maneuvers, expanded education and training programs for Mexican military officers, and increased arms sales. At the very least, Washington should seek to expand border patrol, narcotics interdiction, and anti-terrorism training with the Mexican military.

5) Press the Mexican Government to deny Soviet bloc requests for more consulates and trade missions in Mexico. The Mexican government has allowed the Soviet, Cuban, and East European embassies, consulates, and trade missions in Mexico to coordinate and support communist parties and guerrilla activities in the Caribbean Basin. These diplomatic missions also coordinate espionage activities against the U.S.[19] Currently there are dozens of Soviet bloc embassies, consulates, and trade missions in Mexico; by contrast, the U.S. has only nine consulates in Mexico plus its Mexico City embassy. Soviet bloc nations have been seeking permission to open new consulates in Mexican cities bordering the U.S., such as Matamoros and Ciudad Juarez. U.S. pressure so far has convinced the Mexican government to deny these requests. Limiting the number of Eastern bloc consulates and trade missions in Mexico would impede Soviet access to U.S. border areas and hinder clandestine capabilities throughout the Caribbean.

6) Continue to support anti-communist forces in Central America. U.S. backing of the Democratic Resistance (the Contras) in Nicaragua helps block the spread of insurgent activity northward towards Mexico and the U.S. border. What most threatens Mexican and U.S. hemispheric security indeed is the growing turmoil in Central America. For Mexico, this could lead to a massive influx of Central American refugees and to increased leftist political agitation and violence at home. It thus serves Mexico's interests, as those of the U.S., for the gains made by the fledgling democracies in El Salvador,

19 Howard J. Wiarda and Mark Falcoff, *The Communist Challenge in the Caribbean and Central America* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1987), p. 110.

Guatemala, and Honduras to be consolidated and defended against communist aggression. Washington must make it clear to Mexico that the key threat to these governments is Nicaragua and the guerrilla movements which it supports in other Central American countries.

7) Encourage the Salinas government to continue President de la Madrid's policy of distancing Mexico from El Salvador's communist guerrillas. Over the past decade, Mexico has given money to Salvador's Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) and the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), allowed an FDR-FMLN government in exile to operate out of Mexico, and attempted to mediate in behalf of the communist alliance. This backing, however, was muted somewhat by de la Madrid. A general desire by the Salinas government to improve its image in Washington and relations with the U.S. should be incentive to embrace de la Madrid's greater caution in supporting radicals in Central America. The appointment of Fernando Solana, a moderate, as Mexico's new Foreign Secretary may already have set the tone for greater restraint in the region.

8) Attempt to steer Mexico away from its close relations with Cuba. For three decades, Mexico's policy toward Cuba has been cordial, while Washington has sought to isolate the Castro regime. At times, it has appeared that Mexico even has been crafting its foreign policy to satisfy Havana. The U.S. should work with its democratic allies in Latin America to encourage Mexico to rethink relations with Castro. As a start, the U.S. could encourage Mexico and its neighbors to focus more on Cuba's human rights record. The U.S. ambassador to Mexico should meet with Salinas specifically to discuss this issue.

9) Seek Mexican cooperation in bringing democracy to Panama. The U.S. and Mexico could work together to help bring democracy to Panama. The only way Panamanian dictator General Manuel Antonio Noriega can be forced from power, short of military intervention, is for him to be confronted by strong multinational diplomatic and economic pressure. At the very least, the U.S. should encourage the Salinas government to withdraw its economic and rhetorical support from the Noriega regime.

10) Increase U.S.-Mexican cooperation in drug eradication and interdiction. Washington should applaud publicly Mexico's efforts in drug interdiction, while continuing to demonstrate concern over the corruption and violence that permeates Mexico's anti-drug efforts. The U.S. should seek to improve U.S.-Mexican anti-narcotics capabilities by increasing and expanding the financial and technical assistance given to the Mexican government. To combat drug dealers and cultivators effectively, Mexico needs materiel such as helicopters, airplanes, radar equipment, herbicides, and patrol boats. Washington then should ask Mexico for U.S. overflight and hot pursuit rights, expanded port-call privileges for U.S. ships, and streamlined extradition procedures.

11) Expand U.S. immigration and border patrol capabilities. The U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 is designed to stop illegal immigration and penalize those who employ illegal immigrants. This law should be strictly enforced. These efforts also should be combined with an increase in the number of border patrol personnel from about 5,000 currently to 7,500, deployment of greater numbers of patrol aircraft, and an increase in funding for surveillance materiel such as radars and night vision equipment.

CONCLUSION

Mexico will continue to pose an important security challenge to the U.S. The security interests of both nations are increasingly threatened by such problems as the turmoil in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and illegal immigration. The accession of Carlos Salinas de Gortari to Mexico's presidency, however, may provide the Bush Administration with an opportunity to improve bilateral relations and generate agreement on security issues.

Linked by a porous 1,933-mile border, Mexico and the U.S. are separated by distinct political systems, cultures, languages, and wide disparities in wealth and population. These differences, combined with a difficult historical relationship, have strained relations between the two governments. Mexico's misunderstanding of Washington's actions and foreign policy goals in the Americas have led to Mexican mistrust and resentment of the U.S.

Giving Salinas a Chance. To counter this, the Bush Administration must work together with the Salinas government to establish a basis for long-term agreement on regional objectives and security interests. Consensus and coordination on narcotics and migration issues need to be explored. The U.S. also should maintain strong support for elements fighting pro-Soviet insurgencies in the countries neighboring Mexico.

While Mexico probably will continue to pursue anti-U.S. policies if it feels them to be in its best interest, Salinas should be taken up on his expressed willingness to improve and expand U.S.-Mexican relations. Whether he follows through, remains to be seen. Bush should give it a chance.

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THE SECURITY COMPONENT OF U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

America faces an important security challenge on its southern border. Mexico, with its 1,933-mile porous frontier with the United States, is second only to the Soviet Union in strategic importance to Washington. This is why George Bush's first post-election meeting with a foreign leader was with Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari in late November 1988.

For almost this entire century, the U.S. has been able to take for granted the security of its southern border. It has required nearly no military resources to protect. This could change. Instability in Mexico, or Mexican cooperation with such U.S. adversaries as the USSR, could force Washington to shift substantial economic and military resources from Western Europe and other regions to this hemisphere, and possibly require the presence of up to half a million U.S. troops to secure the southern border. Recent Mexican presidents have at times pursued policies inimical to U.S. security. These include support of leftist groups in Latin America, weak restrictions on Soviet bloc espionage activities, and ineffective efforts at combatting international narcotics trafficking and migration problems. Future potential U.S. security

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This is the tenth in a series of Heritage studies on Mexico. It was preceded by *Backgrounder* No. 679, "A Review of 150 Years of U.S.-Mexican Relations" (October 31, 1988); *Backgrounder* No. 638, "Evolution of Mexican Foreign Policy" (March 11, 1988); *Backgrounder* No. 611, "Privatization in Mexico: Robust Rhetoric, Anemic Reality" (October 22, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 595, "Keys to Understanding Mexico: The PAN's Growth as a Real Opposition" (July 29, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 588, "Deju Vu of Policy Failure: The New $14 Billion Mexican Debt Bailout" (June 25, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 583, "For Mexico's Ailing Economy, Time Runs Short" (June 4, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 581, "Mexico's Many Faces" (May 19, 1987); *Backgrounder* No. 575, "Mexico: The Key Players" (April 4, 1987); and *Backgrounder* No. 573, "Keys to Understanding Mexico: Challenges to the Ruling PRI" (April 7, 1987). Future papers will examine other aspects of Mexican policy and development.

concerns include the possibility for rising domestic political instability in the wake of Mexico's 1988 presidential elections and U.S. access to Mexican oil exports.

Mexico would pose a strategic threat to the U.S., for example, if a hostile or pro-Soviet government were to assume power, or if the country were besieged by leftist insurgents. In such a case, experts estimate that at least 10 million refugees could flee northward into the U.S.[1]

Straining the Relationship. Since World War II, Mexico has been transformed from a rural agricultural country into the world's thirteenth largest economy. Mexico also has begun be increasingly active in international politics. This transformation, however, has been accompanied by a continuing spirit of Mexican "anti-Yanquism" and by an affirmation of specific views that are at odds with the U.S. This is straining the bilateral U.S.-Mexican relationship. If relations do not improve, Mexico likely will continue supporting anti-U.S. causes, specifically in Central America and the Caribbean. As a result, U.S. security interests could be jeopardized.

To protect U.S. security interests and help strengthen U.S.-Mexican ties, the Bush Administration should:

- ♦♦ Schedule an early Bush-Salinas summit.

- ♦♦ Create bilateral task forces to focus on such key security issues as leftist violence in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and immigration.

- ♦♦ Expand U.S-Mexican military cooperation on such matters as border control, narcotics interdiction, and anti-terrorism training.

- ♦♦ Discourage any increase in the number of Soviet bloc consulates in Mexico.

- ♦♦ Continue to support anti-communist forces in Central and South America and encourage Mexico to work for democracy in Nicaragua.

- ♦♦ Attempt to steer Mexico away from its close relations with Cuba.

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◆ ● Increase U.S.-Mexican cooperation in drug eradication and interdiction programs.

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U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY CONCERNS

Washington's global strategy is based upon a secure southern flank. Mexico, with its population of 83 million, is the most crucial sector of that flank. A stable and positive relationship with the Mexican government means that the U.S. can allocate its security resources elsewhere.

If Mexico were to suffer serious political turmoil or violence, U.S. adversaries within and outside of Mexico could take advantage of it. This would require the U.S. to shift troops to its southern border from other crucial areas of the world. In jeopardy, moreover, could be the major Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean sea lanes through which move 55 percent of the crude oil consumed by the U.S. and 45 percent of U.S. exports and imports. Equally important, these sea lanes would be needed for the resupply of America's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies in the event of a military crisis in Europe.

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The Soviet Union's Courtship of Mexico

Mexico's proximity to the U.S. and its traditional policy of demonstrating its independence from the U.S. have made Mexico a target of Soviet interest. Under Moscow's two-track foreign policy strategy for dealing with key non-communist Third World countries, Moscow has political and economic links to Mexico but simultaneously encourages clandestine subversive activity against the Mexican government.[2]

While Moscow has conducted normal diplomatic relation with the Mexican government, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union maintained close relations with the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), founded in 1919. For the Kremlin, one of the functions of the Mexican communists — now largely incorporated into and camouflaged by the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS) and the pro-Moscow Socialist People's Party (PPS) — is to assist the Soviet espionage and propaganda apparatus operating out of Mexico City.

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Training Terrorists. On occasion, however, Moscow has exploited other "targets of opportunity," including violence. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, for example, the Mexican government accused the Soviets of training and assisting factions of the Mexican extreme left engaging in subversive and terrorist activities.[3]

Today, the Mexican Socialist parties play an important policy making and ideological role in the National Democratic Front (FDN), a coalition of left-wing parties led by socialist Cuahtemoc Cardenas Solorzano. He is the son of Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico's president in the 1930s who pushed for the full collectivism of the Mexican economy. The younger Cardenas has accepted many of the PMS's and PPS's key planks. Among them: providing political safe haven to revolutionary Marxist activists from other countries, a moratorium on Mexico's foreign debt repayments, opposing the privatization of state-owned enterprises, reducing oil exports to the U.S., and encouraging a Mexican "class struggle."[4]

In last July's Mexican presidential elections, Cardenas received 31 percent of the vote, seriously challenging the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in a presidential election for the first time since the PRI's establishment as the National Revolutionary Party in 1929. The PRI won with just over 50 percent.

Diplomatic Spies. Moscow has set up in Mexico City one of the world's largest and most active "residencies" of the KGB, the Soviet intelligence and espionage agency. The Mexico City embassy, one of Moscow's largest outside of the Soviet bloc, is believed to house more than 200 Soviet diplomatic personnel. Of these, approximately 40 percent are affiliated with either the KGB or the Soviet military intelligence service (GRU). Assisted by their counterparts in the Cuban Intelligence service (DGI), the KGB has developed a formidable potential for subverting the whole region.[5] Moscow also operates a consulate out of the Mexican port city of Veracruz and has in the past pressed the Mexican government to allow Soviet consulates in cities bordering the U.S. like Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and Tijuana. Such posts would greatly bolster the KGB's intelligence gathering and infiltration of agents into the U.S.

Soviet trade with Mexico has risen from approximately $10 billion a year in the mid-1970s to near $30 billion annually in the mid-1980s. Indeed, in 1975, Mexico signed an agreement with the Soviet-controlled Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), becoming the first Latin American nation to do so. In 1983, the two nations established a Joint Commission for

3 For more information, see Sol W. Sanders, *Mexico: Chaos on Our Doorstep* (London: Madison Books, 1986), pp. 121-122.

4 Daniel James, Mexico-United States Report, "Mexico's Democratic Revolution Begins," July 1988, p. 3.

5 Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Economic Trade and Coordination. Under its auspices, the USSR has agreed to build two textile factories in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, near the U.S. border. In return, Mexico has expressed interest in the joint manufacture of tractors, plans to send workers to the Soviet Union for technical training, and will sell pipes, steel products, and oil drilling equipment to the Soviets to be used in their petroleum industry.[6]

Mexico's Ties to Cuba

Just before leaving office, Mexican president Miguel de la Madrid visited Cuba in early November 1988. This highlights Mexico's role as one of Cuba's closest friends in the Western Hemisphere. During his visit, de la Madrid awarded Fidel Castro the Aztec Eagle Medal, Mexico's highest civilian decoration. Mexico's relations with the Cuban dictator have been cooperative and cordial since the early days of the Cuban Revolution. In 1962, when the Organization of American States (OAS) voted to expel Cuba for supporting subversive activities in the Americas, only Mexico refused to support the measure.[7]

Close ties between Mexico City and Havana seem to have been formalized during Castro's first visit to Mexico in 1979. During meetings with Mexican President Lopez Portillo, the two leaders reached an understanding that their countries would work "to establish closer bilateral relations and work for a new international economic order."[8] Many observers believe that a secret "deal" was made between Castro and Portillo whereby Castro promised to refrain from sponsoring leftist revolutionary action within Mexico in return for a Mexican government pledge to limit cooperation with the U.S.[9]

Mexico's Support for Anti-U.S. Forces in Central America

In the late 1970s, Mexico granted Nicaraguan Sandinista rebels refuge on Mexican territory and provided them with materiel, diplomatic, and moral assistance. In the early days after the revolution, Mexico provided the Sandinista leadership with much-needed oil products, advisors, and technical and financial assistance. Without these, the Sandinistas might not have become the dominant faction in Nicaragua after the overthrow of President Anastasio Somoza's forces by a broad anti-Somoza coalition in 1979.[10]

Buying Time for Managua. Mexico has assumed a leadership role in the Contadora Group of eight Latin American nations seeking to end the fighting in Central America. Contadora policies, which Mexico helped shape, bought

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6 United States Department of State, "Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986-87," August 1987, p. 65.

7 James R. Whelan and Franklin A. Jaeckle, *The Soviet Assault on America's Southern Flank* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1988), p. 225.

8 James, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

9 Leighton, *op. cit.*

10 Jorge Salaverry, "Evolution of Mexican Foreign Policy," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 638, March 11, 1988, p. 10.

time in which the Sandinistas built up their Soviet-equipped armed forces and aided the region's communist insurgencies. In 1984, Mexico played a pivotal role in trying to persuade the Central American states to accept a draft Contadora treaty which could have disarmed the region's anti-communist groups, but which imposed no enforceable mechanism to monitor and halt Cuban, Soviet, and other communist bloc aid to the Sandinistas.[11] The result: today's 120,000-man Sandinista military.

On the El Salvador situation, in 1981, Mexico declared support for the Cuban-backed Salvadoran guerrillas known as the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) and its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). This was at a time when the pro-Soviet guerrillas were very close to toppling the Salvadoran government. Today, Mexico City remains a major center for FMLN propaganda, espionage, and fund raising, although the Mexican government formally withdrew its backing of the FMLN in 1984.

Bailing Out Noriega. Regarding Panama, Mexico also raises U.S. security concerns. For over a year, Washington has been seeking ways to force Panamanian military strongman Manuel Antonio Noriega out of power. However, in mid-April 1988, Mexico announced that it would guarantee oil supplies to Noriega's beleaguered regime despite U.S. attempts to put financial pressure on the dictator. Mexico agreed to waive immediate payment on the oil, lower interest rates on the credit lines underpinning the transaction, and postpone indefinitely collection of an overdue $23 million Panamanian oil bill.[12] Mexico has opposed Washington's efforts to ease the removal of Noriega, viewing it as an act of "Yanqui intervention."

Outgoing Mexican President de la Madrid, however, did begin a retreat from his predecessors' enthusiastic espousal of revolutionary and anti-American foreign policy causes in Central America. He not only cooled Mexico's support for the Sandinista regime in Managua, but also patched up diplomatic relations with the governments of President Jose Napoleon Duarte in El Salvador and Vinicio Cerezo in Guatemala. By diminishing the level of Mexico's anti-U.S. rhetoric and reducing Mexican support for revolutionary groups in Central America, the de la Madrid administration hoped to obtain assistance from the U.S. in easing Mexico's $110 billion debt burden. Mexico also has been seeking greater access to U.S. markets for its products.

The War on Narcotics Trafficking

The narcotics trade not only generates crime, corruption, terrorism, and needless death in the U.S. and Mexico, but also threatens many of Latin America's fragile democracies with its links to leftist guerrilla groups and

11 Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

12 David Gardner, "Mexico offers Panama a helping hand," *Financial Times*, April 27, 1988, p. 4.

sponsorship of corruption. And it causes bilateral U.S.-Mexican political tensions.

For Washington, Mexico is the most important country in the war on drugs. The tremendous movement of people, legally and illegally, across the U.S.-Mexican frontier makes successful interdiction programs problematic. Last year, over one-third of the marijuana, heroin, and cocaine entering the U.S. either originated in or was shipped through Mexico. In its 1987 report to Congress on the global narcotics situation, the Department of State declares that: "Mexico continues to be the major single source country for the production, processing and trafficking of heroin and marijuana entering the U.S."[13]

Charges and Countercharges. The Mexican government contends that it is not to blame for America's drug problem. It charges that Washington is unwilling to take the measures to reduce greatly the U.S. domestic demand for illegal drugs. The U.S., however, blames Mexican internal corruption, indifference, and a lack of cooperation in narcotics matters.

The harsh reality is that for segments of the Mexican population, as for much of Latin America, producing drugs is enormously profitable: it earns foreign exchange, it adds to the gross national product, it is labor- rather than capital-intensive, it is produced with low-level technology, and it involves high-level political and military officials who often cannot be brought to trial.

Even so, Mexico has been taking action against drug traffickers. Mexico's Attorney General's office spends approximately half of its budget combatting drug trafficking. Mexico has the largest eradication aviation fleet in the Third World, with 94 aircraft.[14] Yet even though one-quarter of Mexico's 125,000 active soldiers combat drug traffickers, the battle against drugs is hampered by payoffs, intimidation, and apathy. Observes a U.S. Drug Enforcement agent: "corruption has penetrated all levels of the Mexican government. It's lateral, it's horizontal, and it's total."[15]

Immigration As a Possible Threat to U.S. Security

Of the nearly 4 million undocumented aliens living or working in the U.S., approximately 2.5 million are Mexican. Traditionally, Mexican migration northward represented what Mexico City saw as a solution to Mexico's rapid population expansion and growing unemployment rate. Today, by contrast, the Mexican government views it as a mixed blessing. While Mexico benefits from the remittances that Mexican workers in the U.S. send home and from the lessened strain on the Mexican economy, Mexico suffers from the loss of skilled labor. This is prompting Mexico to seek discussions with Washington on the migration problem.

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13 Jon Thomas, *Mexico and Narcotics: A Must-Win Situation* (Tempe: INCAMEX, 1988), pp. 2-3.
14 M. Delal Baer, *Mexico and the United States: Leadership and the Unfinished Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: The Center For Strategic and International Studies, 1988), p. 43.
15 Elaine Shannon "Why We're Facing a World of Noriegas," *The Washington Post*, October 23, 1988, p. C4.

For the U.S., immigration stirs some controversy. The U.S. benefits, of course, from the infusion of skilled, cheap, and industrious labor. Yet some experts complain that illegal immigrants add to the Southwest's rapid population growth, crime, violence, and other problems. Whatever the validity of these arguments, the migration from Mexico has been manageable for the U.S.

This could change.

Flooding the U.S. If unrest in Mexico were to increase dramatically, or if the Sandinistas in Nicaragua were to spread their revolution northward, the fears and uncertainties could spur, it is estimated, over 10 million Mexicans to seek refuge north of the porous U.S.-Mexican border. This would create serious problems for the U.S. Millions of new illegal immigrants could increase the flow of narcotics crossing the Rio Grande; could make it easier for Soviet bloc spies to enter the U.S. and gather intelligence; could provide cover for terrorists entering the U.S.; could overwhelm the ability of American communities near the border to provide housing, health, hygiene and other services; and could add significantly to crime.

Sealing the border would cost the U.S. billions — perhaps tens of billions — of dollars for barriers and sophisticated electronics and would take approximately half of the U.S. Army's divisions or around 500,000 troops.[16]

U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY CONCERNS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Since Mexico's earliest days as a fledgling republic, its foreign policy has been based upon establishing and maintaining its independence from its giant neighbor to the north. What Mexico regards as its past traumas regarding relations with Washington still adversely affect U.S.-Mexican relations today.[17] These, from the perspective widely accepted in Mexico, include the U.S.-Mexico war of 1846-1848, culminating with a U.S. victory that cost Mexico over 50 percent of its territory including what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of California, Colorado, and Utah.

A cordial U.S.-Mexican relationship developed during World War II and lasted through the 1960s. However in 1970, Luis Echeverria Alvarez was elected president. His leftist and "anti-Yanqui" policies antagonized the U.S. over such security-related issues as closer relations with Cuba and Salvador Allende's socialist government in Chile, as well as endorsing the Palestine Liberation Organization. Echeverria's successor, Jose Lopez Portillo, continued these leftist, anti-U.S. policies by supporting communist elements in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

16 Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
17 James, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Miguel de la Madrid, who took office in 1982, partially reversed Mexico's extreme leftward trends and attempted to improve U.S.-Mexican ties. Ronald Reagan and de la Madrid met six times and sought agreement, though often unsuccessfully, on such security related issues as narcotics control, immigration, and political tensions in Central America.[18]

ELEVEN POINTS TO PROMOTE U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY

To protect U.S. security interests and improve U.S.-Mexican bilateral relations, the Bush Administration should:

1) Schedule an early Bush-Salinas summit. The two leaders should focus on drug interdiction, border control, the turmoil in Central America, U.S.-Mexican trade, and Mexico's debt. Above all, Bush must explore means of expanding and improving U.S. ties with the Mexican government. Possibly, Salinas will offer suggestions and opportunities for doing so.

2) Identify leverage by which the U.S. could prod Mexico to cooperate on geopolitical and security matters. While U.S. ability to assist Mexico with its $110 billion debt may be the most obvious lever Washington has to influence the Salinas government, the Bush Administration should not be tempted to use it to gain geopolitical and security concessions. U.S. economic assistance to Mexico should be leveraged solely to prod the Mexican government to introduce free market reforms in the Mexican economy. This alone offers Mexico the way to solve its chronic economic problems. To influence the Salinas government on geopolitical and security matters, the Bush Administration must devise non-economic forms of leverage and suasion.

3) Create bilateral task forces to focus on key security issues. To identify where cooperation can be increased and bilateral security promoted, the U.S. and Mexico should create joint task forces to study policy options. Such task forces, for instance, could address issues like the violence in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and immigration. Bimonthly meetings, meanwhile, should be scheduled between U.S. National Security Council and Pentagon personnel and senior Mexican officials from their Secretariats of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, and Attorney General's Office to discuss security concerns with respect to Mexico and Mexico's concerns with respect to the U.S.

4) Expand U.S.-Mexican military cooperation. The Soviet Union already has demonstrated its willingness to expand military relations with Mexico. A Soviet naval task force, for example, had been scheduled to call at the Mexican port of Veracruz in 1985; it took considerable U.S. pressure to cancel the visit. To counter a possible expansion in Soviet influence within the Mexican armed forces, the U.S. should seek to take advantage of the

18 For more information, see, Esther Wilson Hannon, "A Review of 150 Years of U.S. - Mexican Relations," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 679, October 31, 1988.

Mexican military's determination to modernize. Traditionally, the Mexican armed forces have been very "nationalist" and inward looking, making bilateral military cooperation problematic. Salinas, however, has stated that one of his goals is to build a more modern, better equipped Mexican military. The U.S. could be helpful. Since World War II, the Mexican armed forces have exchanged small numbers of military officers with the U.S. for training and education. Currently, there are 72 Mexican military students studying and training in the U.S. at places such as Ft. Benning, Georgia and the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In the past two years, Mexico also has purchased a limited amount of U.S.-manufactured F-5 fighter jets, C-130 transports, howitzers, and jeeps. Last year, Mexico was allocated $225,000 worth of U.S.-sponsored International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance, a U.S. government grant program that provides technical training and personal contact between U.S. and Latin American military professionals. While the Salinas government likely will be hesitant to accept significant increases in U.S.-Mexican military cooperation, the Bush Administration should make the offer. Washington should propose joint military maneuvers, expanded education and training programs for Mexican military officers, and increased arms sales. At the very least, Washington should seek to expand border patrol, narcotics interdiction, and anti-terrorism training with the Mexican military.

5) Press the Mexican Government to deny Soviet bloc requests for more consulates and trade missions in Mexico. The Mexican government has allowed the Soviet, Cuban, and East European embassies, consulates, and trade missions in Mexico to coordinate and support communist parties and guerrilla activities in the Caribbean Basin. These diplomatic missions also coordinate espionage activities against the U.S.[19] Currently there are dozens of Soviet bloc embassies, consulates, and trade missions in Mexico; by contrast, the U.S. has only nine consulates in Mexico plus its Mexico City embassy. Soviet bloc nations have been seeking permission to open new consulates in Mexican cities bordering the U.S., such as Matamoros and Ciudad Juarez. U.S. pressure so far has convinced the Mexican government to deny these requests. Limiting the number of Eastern bloc consulates and trade missions in Mexico would impede Soviet access to U.S. border areas and hinder clandestine capabilities throughout the Caribbean.

6) Continue to support anti-communist forces in Central America. U.S. backing of the Democratic Resistance (the Contras) in Nicaragua helps block the spread of insurgent activity northward towards Mexico and the U.S. border. What most threatens Mexican and U.S. hemispheric security indeed is the growing turmoil in Central America. For Mexico, this could lead to a massive influx of Central American refugees and to increased leftist political agitation and violence at home. It thus serves Mexico's interests, as those of the U.S., for the gains made by the fledgling democracies in El Salvador,

19 Howard J. Wiarda and Mark Falcoff, *The Communist Challenge in the Caribbean and Central America* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1987), p. 110.

Guatemala, and Honduras to be consolidated and defended against communist aggression. Washington must make it clear to Mexico that the key threat to these governments is Nicaragua and the guerrilla movements which it supports in other Central American countries.

7) Encourage the Salinas government to continue President de la Madrid's policy of distancing Mexico from El Salvador's communist guerrillas. Over the past decade, Mexico has given money to Salvador's Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) and the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), allowed an FDR-FMLN government in exile to operate out of Mexico, and attempted to mediate in behalf of the communist alliance. This backing, however, was muted somewhat by de la Madrid. A general desire by the Salinas government to improve its image in Washington and relations with the U.S. should be incentive to embrace de la Madrid's greater caution in supporting radicals in Central America. The appointment of Fernando Solana, a moderate, as Mexico's new Foreign Secretary may already have set the tone for greater restraint in the region.

8) Attempt to steer Mexico away from its close relations with Cuba. For three decades, Mexico's policy toward Cuba has been cordial, while Washington has sought to isolate the Castro regime. At times, it has appeared that Mexico even has been crafting its foreign policy to satisfy Havana. The U.S. should work with its democratic allies in Latin America to encourage Mexico to rethink relations with Castro. As a start, the U.S. could encourage Mexico and its neighbors to focus more on Cuba's human rights record. The U.S. ambassador to Mexico should meet with Salinas specifically to discuss this issue.

9) Seek Mexican cooperation in bringing democracy to Panama. The U.S. and Mexico could work together to help bring democracy to Panama. The only way Panamanian dictator General Manuel Antonio Noriega can be forced from power, short of military intervention, is for him to be confronted by strong multinational diplomatic and economic pressure. At the very least, the U.S. should encourage the Salinas government to withdraw its economic and rhetorical support from the Noriega regime.

10) Increase U.S.-Mexican cooperation in drug eradication and interdiction. Washington should applaud publicly Mexico's efforts in drug interdiction, while continuing to demonstrate concern over the corruption and violence that permeates Mexico's anti-drug efforts. The U.S. should seek to improve U.S.-Mexican anti-narcotics capabilities by increasing and expanding the financial and technical assistance given to the Mexican government. To combat drug dealers and cultivators effectively, Mexico needs materiel such as helicopters, airplanes, radar equipment, herbicides, and patrol boats. Washington then should ask Mexico for U.S. overflight and hot pursuit rights, expanded port-call privileges for U.S. ships, and streamlined extradition procedures.

11) Expand U.S. immigration and border patrol capabilities. The U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 is designed to stop illegal immigration and penalize those who employ illegal immigrants. This law should be strictly enforced. These efforts also should be combined with an increase in the number of border patrol personnel from about 5,000 currently to 7,500, deployment of greater numbers of patrol aircraft, and an increase in funding for surveillance materiel such as radars and night vision equipment.

CONCLUSION

Mexico will continue to pose an important security challenge to the U.S. The security interests of both nations are increasingly threatened by such problems as the turmoil in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and illegal immigration. The accession of Carlos Salinas de Gortari to Mexico's presidency, however, may provide the Bush Administration with an opportunity to improve bilateral relations and generate agreement on security issues.

Linked by a porous 1,933-mile border, Mexico and the U.S. are separated by distinct political systems, cultures, languages, and wide disparities in wealth and population. These differences, combined with a difficult historical relationship, have strained relations between the two governments. Mexico's misunderstanding of Washington's actions and foreign policy goals in the Americas have led to Mexican mistrust and resentment of the U.S.

Giving Salinas a Chance. To counter this, the Bush Administration must work together with the Salinas government to establish a basis for long-term agreement on regional objectives and security interests. Consensus and coordination on narcotics and migration issues need to be explored. The U.S. also should maintain strong support for elements fighting pro-Soviet insurgencies in the countries neighboring Mexico.

While Mexico probably will continue to pursue anti-U.S. policies if it feels them to be in its best interest, Salinas should be taken up on his expressed willingness to improve and expand U.S.-Mexican relations. Whether he follows through, remains to be seen. Bush should give it a chance.

Michael G. Wilson
Policy Analyst

January 26, 1989

THE SECURITY COMPONENT OF U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

America faces an important security challenge on its southern border. Mexico, with its 1,933-mile porous frontier with the United States, is second only to the Soviet Union in strategic importance to Washington. This is why George Bush's first post-election meeting with a foreign leader was with Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari in late November 1988.

For almost this entire century, the U.S. has been able to take for granted the security of its southern border. It has required nearly no military resources to protect. This could change. Instability in Mexico, or Mexican cooperation with such U.S. adversaries as the USSR, could force Washington to shift substantial economic and military resources from Western Europe and other regions to this hemisphere, and possibly require the presence of up to half a million U.S. troops to secure the southern border. Recent Mexican presidents have at times pursued policies inimical to U.S. security. These include support of leftist groups in Latin America, weak restrictions on Soviet bloc espionage activities, and ineffective efforts at combatting international narcotics trafficking and migration problems. Future potential U.S. security

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concerns include the possibility for rising domestic political instability in the wake of Mexico's 1988 presidential elections and U.S. access to Mexican oil exports.

Mexico would pose a strategic threat to the U.S., for example, if a hostile or pro-Soviet government were to assume power, or if the country were besieged by leftist insurgents. In such a case, experts estimate that at least 10 million refugees could flee northward into the U.S.[1]

Straining the Relationship. Since World War II, Mexico has been transformed from a rural agricultural country into the world's thirteenth largest economy. Mexico also has begun be increasingly active in international politics. This transformation, however, has been accompanied by a continuing spirit of Mexican "anti-Yanquism" and by an affirmation of specific views that are at odds with the U.S. This is straining the bilateral U.S.-Mexican relationship. If relations do not improve, Mexico likely will continue supporting anti-U.S. causes, specifically in Central America and the Caribbean. As a result, U.S. security interests could be jeopardized.

To protect U.S. security interests and help strengthen U.S.-Mexican ties, the Bush Administration should:

- Schedule an early Bush-Salinas summit.

- Create bilateral task forces to focus on such key security issues as leftist violence in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and immigration.

- Expand U.S-Mexican military cooperation on such matters as border control, narcotics interdiction, and anti-terrorism training.

- Discourage any increase in the number of Soviet bloc consulates in Mexico.

- Continue to support anti-communist forces in Central and South America and encourage Mexico to work for democracy in Nicaragua.

- Attempt to steer Mexico away from its close relations with Cuba.

- Encourage Salinas to continue his predecessor's policy of distancing Mexico from the communist guerrillas (FMLN) in El Salvador and its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR).

- Seek Mexican assistance in helping bring democracy to Panama.

1 Marian Leighton, "Moscow's Courtship of Mexico," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 660, July 5, 1988, p. 15.

♦♦ Increase U.S.-Mexican cooperation in drug eradication and interdiction programs.

♦♦ Expand the resources available to the U.S. immigration authorities and border patrol.

U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY CONCERNS

Washington's global strategy is based upon a secure southern flank. Mexico, with its population of 83 million, is the most crucial sector of that flank. A stable and positive relationship with the Mexican government means that the U.S. can allocate its security resources elsewhere.

If Mexico were to suffer serious political turmoil or violence, U.S. adversaries within and outside of Mexico could take advantage of it. This would require the U.S. to shift troops to its southern border from other crucial areas of the world. In jeopardy, moreover, could be the major Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean sea lanes through which move 55 percent of the crude oil consumed by the U.S. and 45 percent of U.S. exports and imports. Equally important, these sea lanes would be needed for the resupply of America's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies in the event of a military crisis in Europe.

During a political crisis in Mexico, millions of refugees could flee towards the U.S. Under these conditions or if U.S. adversaries controlled Mexico, the U.S. likely would be faced with serious problems in impeding an increased flow of drugs, an escalation in crime, substantially increased costs for security and for social services, and stepped up Soviet bloc espionage activities.

The Soviet Union's Courtship of Mexico

Mexico's proximity to the U.S. and its traditional policy of demonstrating its independence from the U.S. have made Mexico a target of Soviet interest. Under Moscow's two-track foreign policy strategy for dealing with key non-communist Third World countries, Moscow has political and economic links to Mexico but simultaneously encourages clandestine subversive activity against the Mexican government.[2]

While Moscow has conducted normal diplomatic relation with the Mexican government, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union maintained close relations with the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), founded in 1919. For the Kremlin, one of the functions of the Mexican communists — now largely incorporated into and camouflaged by the Mexican Socialist Party (PMS) and the pro-Moscow Socialist People's Party (PPS) — is to assist the Soviet espionage and propaganda apparatus operating out of Mexico City.

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2 Michael G. Wilson, "A Ten-Point Program to Block Soviet Advances in South America," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 658, June 22, 1988.

Training Terrorists. On occasion, however, Moscow has exploited other "targets of opportunity," including violence. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, for example, the Mexican government accused the Soviets of training and assisting factions of the Mexican extreme left engaging in subversive and terrorist activities.[3]

Today, the Mexican Socialist parties play an important policy making and ideological role in the National Democratic Front (FDN), a coalition of left-wing parties led by socialist Cuahtemoc Cardenas Solorzano. He is the son of Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico's president in the 1930s who pushed for the full collectivism of the Mexican economy. The younger Cardenas has accepted many of the PMS's and PPS's key planks. Among them: providing political safe haven to revolutionary Marxist activists from other countries, a moratorium on Mexico's foreign debt repayments, opposing the privatization of state-owned enterprises, reducing oil exports to the U.S., and encouraging a Mexican "class struggle."[4]

In last July's Mexican presidential elections, Cardenas received 31 percent of the vote, seriously challenging the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in a presidential election for the first time since the PRI's establishment as the National Revolutionary Party in 1929. The PRI won with just over 50 percent.

Diplomatic Spies. Moscow has set up in Mexico City one of the world's largest and most active "residencies" of the KGB, the Soviet intelligence and espionage agency. The Mexico City embassy, one of Moscow's largest outside of the Soviet bloc, is believed to house more than 200 Soviet diplomatic personnel. Of these, approximately 40 percent are affiliated with either the KGB or the Soviet military intelligence service (GRU). Assisted by their counterparts in the Cuban Intelligence service (DGI), the KGB has developed a formidable potential for subverting the whole region.[5] Moscow also operates a consulate out of the Mexican port city of Veracruz and has in the past pressed the Mexican government to allow Soviet consulates in cities bordering the U.S. like Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, and Tijuana. Such posts would greatly bolster the KGB's intelligence gathering and infiltration of agents into the U.S.

Soviet trade with Mexico has risen from approximately $10 billion a year in the mid-1970s to near $30 billion annually in the mid-1980s. Indeed, in 1975, Mexico signed an agreement with the Soviet-controlled Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), becoming the first Latin American nation to do so. In 1983, the two nations established a Joint Commission for

3 For more information, see Sol W. Sanders, *Mexico: Chaos on Our Doorstep* (London: Madison Books, 1986), pp. 121-122.

4 Daniel James, Mexico-United States Report, "Mexico's Democratic Revolution Begins," July 1988, p. 3.

5 Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Economic Trade and Coordination. Under its auspices, the USSR has agreed to build two textile factories in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, near the U.S. border. In return, Mexico has expressed interest in the joint manufacture of tractors, plans to send workers to the Soviet Union for technical training, and will sell pipes, steel products, and oil drilling equipment to the Soviets to be used in their petroleum industry.[6]

Mexico's Ties to Cuba

Just before leaving office, Mexican president Miguel de la Madrid visited Cuba in early November 1988. This highlights Mexico's role as one of Cuba's closest friends in the Western Hemisphere. During his visit, de la Madrid awarded Fidel Castro the Aztec Eagle Medal, Mexico's highest civilian decoration. Mexico's relations with the Cuban dictator have been cooperative and cordial since the early days of the Cuban Revolution. In 1962, when the Organization of American States (OAS) voted to expel Cuba for supporting subversive activities in the Americas, only Mexico refused to support the measure.[7]

Close ties between Mexico City and Havana seem to have been formalized during Castro's first visit to Mexico in 1979. During meetings with Mexican President Lopez Portillo, the two leaders reached an understanding that their countries would work "to establish closer bilateral relations and work for a new international economic order."[8] Many observers believe that a secret "deal" was made between Castro and Portillo whereby Castro promised to refrain from sponsoring leftist revolutionary action within Mexico in return for a Mexican government pledge to limit cooperation with the U.S.[9]

Mexico's Support for Anti-U.S. Forces in Central America

In the late 1970s, Mexico granted Nicaraguan Sandinista rebels refuge on Mexican territory and provided them with materiel, diplomatic, and moral assistance. In the early days after the revolution, Mexico provided the Sandinista leadership with much-needed oil products, advisors, and technical and financial assistance. Without these, the Sandinistas might not have become the dominant faction in Nicaragua after the overthrow of President Anastasio Somoza's forces by a broad anti-Somoza coalition in 1979.[10]

Buying Time for Managua. Mexico has assumed a leadership role in the Contadora Group of eight Latin American nations seeking to end the fighting in Central America. Contadora policies, which Mexico helped shape, bought

6 United States Department of State, "Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986-87," August 1987, p. 65.

7 James R. Whelan and Franklin A. Jaeckle, *The Soviet Assault on America's Southern Flank* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1988), p. 225.

8 James, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

9 Leighton, *op. cit.*

10 Jorge Salaverry, "Evolution of Mexican Foreign Policy," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 638, March 11, 1988, p. 10.

time in which the Sandinistas built up their Soviet-equipped armed forces and aided the region's communist insurgencies. In 1984, Mexico played a pivotal role in trying to persuade the Central American states to accept a draft Contadora treaty which could have disarmed the region's anti-communist groups, but which imposed no enforceable mechanism to monitor and halt Cuban, Soviet, and other communist bloc aid to the Sandinistas.[11] The result: today's 120,000-man Sandinista military.

On the El Salvador situation, in 1981, Mexico declared support for the Cuban-backed Salvadoran guerrillas known as the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) and its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). This was at a time when the pro-Soviet guerrillas were very close to toppling the Salvadoran government. Today, Mexico City remains a major center for FMLN propaganda, espionage, and fund raising, although the Mexican government formally withdrew its backing of the FMLN in 1984.

Bailing Out Noriega. Regarding Panama, Mexico also raises U.S. security concerns. For over a year, Washington has been seeking ways to force Panamanian military strongman Manuel Antonio Noriega out of power. However, in mid-April 1988, Mexico announced that it would guarantee oil supplies to Noriega's beleaguered regime despite U.S. attempts to put financial pressure on the dictator. Mexico agreed to waive immediate payment on the oil, lower interest rates on the credit lines underpinning the transaction, and postpone indefinitely collection of an overdue $23 million Panamanian oil bill.[12] Mexico has opposed Washington's efforts to ease the removal of Noriega, viewing it as an act of "Yanqui intervention."

Outgoing Mexican President de la Madrid, however, did begin a retreat from his predecessors' enthusiastic espousal of revolutionary and anti-American foreign policy causes in Central America. He not only cooled Mexico's support for the Sandinista regime in Managua, but also patched up diplomatic relations with the governments of President Jose Napoleon Duarte in El Salvador and Vinicio Cerezo in Guatemala. By diminishing the level of Mexico's anti-U.S. rhetoric and reducing Mexican support for revolutionary groups in Central America, the de la Madrid administration hoped to obtain assistance from the U.S. in easing Mexico's $110 billion debt burden. Mexico also has been seeking greater access to U.S. markets for its products.

The War on Narcotics Trafficking

The narcotics trade not only generates crime, corruption, terrorism, and needless death in the U.S. and Mexico, but also threatens many of Latin America's fragile democracies with its links to leftist guerrilla groups and

11 Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

12 David Gardner, "Mexico offers Panama a helping hand," *Financial Times*, April 27, 1988, p. 4.

sponsorship of corruption. And it causes bilateral U.S.-Mexican political tensions.

For Washington, Mexico is the most important country in the war on drugs. The tremendous movement of people, legally and illegally, across the U.S.-Mexican frontier makes successful interdiction programs problematic. Last year, over one-third of the marijuana, heroin, and cocaine entering the U.S. either originated in or was shipped through Mexico. In its 1987 report to Congress on the global narcotics situation, the Department of State declares that: "Mexico continues to be the major single source country for the production, processing and trafficking of heroin and marijuana entering the U.S."[13]

Charges and Countercharges. The Mexican government contends that it is not to blame for America's drug problem. It charges that Washington is unwilling to take the measures to reduce greatly the U.S. domestic demand for illegal drugs. The U.S., however, blames Mexican internal corruption, indifference, and a lack of cooperation in narcotics matters.

The harsh reality is that for segments of the Mexican population, as for much of Latin America, producing drugs is enormously profitable: it earns foreign exchange, it adds to the gross national product, it is labor- rather than capital-intensive, it is produced with low-level technology, and it involves high-level political and military officials who often cannot be brought to trial.

Even so, Mexico has been taking action against drug traffickers. Mexico's Attorney General's office spends approximately half of its budget combatting drug trafficking. Mexico has the largest eradication aviation fleet in the Third World, with 94 aircraft.[14] Yet even though one-quarter of Mexico's 125,000 active soldiers combat drug traffickers, the battle against drugs is hampered by payoffs, intimidation, and apathy. Observes a U.S. Drug Enforcement agent: "corruption has penetrated all levels of the Mexican government. It's lateral, it's horizontal, and it's total."[15]

Immigration As a Possible Threat to U.S. Security

Of the nearly 4 million undocumented aliens living or working in the U.S., approximately 2.5 million are Mexican. Traditionally, Mexican migration northward represented what Mexico City saw as a solution to Mexico's rapid population expansion and growing unemployment rate. Today, by contrast, the Mexican government views it as a mixed blessing. While Mexico benefits from the remittances that Mexican workers in the U.S. send home and from the lessened strain on the Mexican economy, Mexico suffers from the loss of skilled labor. This is prompting Mexico to seek discussions with Washington on the migration problem.

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13 Jon Thomas, *Mexico and Narcotics: A Must-Win Situation* (Tempe: INCAMEX, 1988), pp. 2-3.
14 M. Delal Baer, *Mexico and the United States: Leadership and the Unfinished Agenda* (Washington, D.C.: The Center For Strategic and International Studies, 1988), p. 43.
15 Elaine Shannon "Why We're Facing a World of Noriegas," *The Washington Post*, October 23, 1988, p. C4.

For the U.S., immigration stirs some controversy. The U.S. benefits, of course, from the infusion of skilled, cheap, and industrious labor. Yet some experts complain that illegal immigrants add to the Southwest's rapid population growth, crime, violence, and other problems. Whatever the validity of these arguments, the migration from Mexico has been manageable for the U.S.

This could change.

Flooding the U.S. If unrest in Mexico were to increase dramatically, or if the Sandinistas in Nicaragua were to spread their revolution northward, the fears and uncertainties could spur, it is estimated, over 10 million Mexicans to seek refuge north of the porous U.S.-Mexican border. This would create serious problems for the U.S. Millions of new illegal immigrants could increase the flow of narcotics crossing the Rio Grande; could make it easier for Soviet bloc spies to enter the U.S. and gather intelligence; could provide cover for terrorists entering the U.S.; could overwhelm the ability of American communities near the border to provide housing, health, hygiene and other services; and could add significantly to crime.

Sealing the border would cost the U.S. billions — perhaps tens of billions — of dollars for barriers and sophisticated electronics and would take approximately half of the U.S. Army's divisions or around 500,000 troops.[16]

U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY CONCERNS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Since Mexico's earliest days as a fledgling republic, its foreign policy has been based upon establishing and maintaining its independence from its giant neighbor to the north. What Mexico regards as its past traumas regarding relations with Washington still adversely affect U.S.-Mexican relations today.[17] These, from the perspective widely accepted in Mexico, include the U.S.-Mexico war of 1846-1848, culminating with a U.S. victory that cost Mexico over 50 percent of its territory including what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of California, Colorado, and Utah.

A cordial U.S.-Mexican relationship developed during World War II and lasted through the 1960s. However in 1970, Luis Echeverria Alvarez was elected president. His leftist and "anti-Yanqui" policies antagonized the U.S. over such security-related issues as closer relations with Cuba and Salvador Allende's socialist government in Chile, as well as endorsing the Palestine Liberation Organization. Echeverria's successor, Jose Lopez Portillo, continued these leftist, anti-U.S. policies by supporting communist elements in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

16 Leighton, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
17 James, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Miguel de la Madrid, who took office in 1982, partially reversed Mexico's extreme leftward trends and attempted to improve U.S.-Mexican ties. Ronald Reagan and de la Madrid met six times and sought agreement, though often unsuccessfully, on such security related issues as narcotics control, immigration, and political tensions in Central America.[18]

ELEVEN POINTS TO PROMOTE U.S.-MEXICAN SECURITY

To protect U.S. security interests and improve U.S.-Mexican bilateral relations, the Bush Administration should:

1) Schedule an early Bush-Salinas summit. The two leaders should focus on drug interdiction, border control, the turmoil in Central America, U.S.-Mexican trade, and Mexico's debt. Above all, Bush must explore means of expanding and improving U.S. ties with the Mexican government. Possibly, Salinas will offer suggestions and opportunities for doing so.

2) Identify leverage by which the U.S. could prod Mexico to cooperate on geopolitical and security matters. While U.S. ability to assist Mexico with its $110 billion debt may be the most obvious lever Washington has to influence the Salinas government, the Bush Administration should not be tempted to use it to gain geopolitical and security concessions. U.S. economic assistance to Mexico should be leveraged solely to prod the Mexican government to introduce free market reforms in the Mexican economy. This alone offers Mexico the way to solve its chronic economic problems. To influence the Salinas government on geopolitical and security matters, the Bush Administration must devise non-economic forms of leverage and suasion.

3) Create bilateral task forces to focus on key security issues. To identify where cooperation can be increased and bilateral security promoted, the U.S. and Mexico should create joint task forces to study policy options. Such task forces, for instance, could address issues like the violence in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and immigration. Bimonthly meetings, meanwhile, should be scheduled between U.S. National Security Council and Pentagon personnel and senior Mexican officials from their Secretariats of Foreign Affairs, National Defense, and Attorney General's Office to discuss security concerns with respect to Mexico and Mexico's concerns with respect to the U.S.

4) Expand U.S.-Mexican military cooperation. The Soviet Union already has demonstrated its willingness to expand military relations with Mexico. A Soviet naval task force, for example, had been scheduled to call at the Mexican port of Veracruz in 1985; it took considerable U.S. pressure to cancel the visit. To counter a possible expansion in Soviet influence within the Mexican armed forces, the U.S. should seek to take advantage of the

18 For more information, see, Esther Wilson Hannon, "A Review of 150 Years of U.S. - Mexican Relations," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 679, October 31, 1988.

Mexican military's determination to modernize. Traditionally, the Mexican armed forces have been very "nationalist" and inward looking, making bilateral military cooperation problematic. Salinas, however, has stated that one of his goals is to build a more modern, better equipped Mexican military. The U.S. could be helpful. Since World War II, the Mexican armed forces have exchanged small numbers of military officers with the U.S. for training and education. Currently, there are 72 Mexican military students studying and training in the U.S. at places such as Ft. Benning, Georgia and the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In the past two years, Mexico also has purchased a limited amount of U.S.-manufactured F-5 fighter jets, C-130 transports, howitzers, and jeeps. Last year, Mexico was allocated $225,000 worth of U.S.-sponsored International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance, a U.S. government grant program that provides technical training and personal contact between U.S. and Latin American military professionals. While the Salinas government likely will be hesitant to accept significant increases in U.S.-Mexican military cooperation, the Bush Administration should make the offer. Washington should propose joint military maneuvers, expanded education and training programs for Mexican military officers, and increased arms sales. At the very least, Washington should seek to expand border patrol, narcotics interdiction, and anti-terrorism training with the Mexican military.

5) Press the Mexican Government to deny Soviet bloc requests for more consulates and trade missions in Mexico. The Mexican government has allowed the Soviet, Cuban, and East European embassies, consulates, and trade missions in Mexico to coordinate and support communist parties and guerrilla activities in the Caribbean Basin. These diplomatic missions also coordinate espionage activities against the U.S.[19] Currently there are dozens of Soviet bloc embassies, consulates, and trade missions in Mexico; by contrast, the U.S. has only nine consulates in Mexico plus its Mexico City embassy. Soviet bloc nations have been seeking permission to open new consulates in Mexican cities bordering the U.S., such as Matamoros and Ciudad Juarez. U.S. pressure so far has convinced the Mexican government to deny these requests. Limiting the number of Eastern bloc consulates and trade missions in Mexico would impede Soviet access to U.S. border areas and hinder clandestine capabilities throughout the Caribbean.

6) Continue to support anti-communist forces in Central America. U.S. backing of the Democratic Resistance (the Contras) in Nicaragua helps block the spread of insurgent activity northward towards Mexico and the U.S. border. What most threatens Mexican and U.S. hemispheric security indeed is the growing turmoil in Central America. For Mexico, this could lead to a massive influx of Central American refugees and to increased leftist political agitation and violence at home. It thus serves Mexico's interests, as those of the U.S., for the gains made by the fledgling democracies in El Salvador,

19 Howard J. Wiarda and Mark Falcoff, *The Communist Challenge in the Caribbean and Central America* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1987), p. 110.

Guatemala, and Honduras to be consolidated and defended against communist aggression. Washington must make it clear to Mexico that the key threat to these governments is Nicaragua and the guerrilla movements which it supports in other Central American countries.

7) Encourage the Salinas government to continue President de la Madrid's policy of distancing Mexico from El Salvador's communist guerrillas. Over the past decade, Mexico has given money to Salvador's Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) and the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), allowed an FDR-FMLN government in exile to operate out of Mexico, and attempted to mediate in behalf of the communist alliance. This backing, however, was muted somewhat by de la Madrid. A general desire by the Salinas government to improve its image in Washington and relations with the U.S. should be incentive to embrace de la Madrid's greater caution in supporting radicals in Central America. The appointment of Fernando Solana, a moderate, as Mexico's new Foreign Secretary may already have set the tone for greater restraint in the region.

8) Attempt to steer Mexico away from its close relations with Cuba. For three decades, Mexico's policy toward Cuba has been cordial, while Washington has sought to isolate the Castro regime. At times, it has appeared that Mexico even has been crafting its foreign policy to satisfy Havana. The U.S. should work with its democratic allies in Latin America to encourage Mexico to rethink relations with Castro. As a start, the U.S. could encourage Mexico and its neighbors to focus more on Cuba's human rights record. The U.S. ambassador to Mexico should meet with Salinas specifically to discuss this issue.

9) Seek Mexican cooperation in bringing democracy to Panama. The U.S. and Mexico could work together to help bring democracy to Panama. The only way Panamanian dictator General Manuel Antonio Noriega can be forced from power, short of military intervention, is for him to be confronted by strong multinational diplomatic and economic pressure. At the very least, the U.S. should encourage the Salinas government to withdraw its economic and rhetorical support from the Noriega regime.

10) Increase U.S.-Mexican cooperation in drug eradication and interdiction. Washington should applaud publicly Mexico's efforts in drug interdiction, while continuing to demonstrate concern over the corruption and violence that permeates Mexico's anti-drug efforts. The U.S. should seek to improve U.S.-Mexican anti-narcotics capabilities by increasing and expanding the financial and technical assistance given to the Mexican government. To combat drug dealers and cultivators effectively, Mexico needs materiel such as helicopters, airplanes, radar equipment, herbicides, and patrol boats. Washington then should ask Mexico for U.S. overflight and hot pursuit rights, expanded port-call privileges for U.S. ships, and streamlined extradition procedures.

11) Expand U.S. immigration and border patrol capabilities. The U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 is designed to stop illegal immigration and penalize those who employ illegal immigrants. This law should be strictly enforced. These efforts also should be combined with an increase in the number of border patrol personnel from about 5,000 currently to 7,500, deployment of greater numbers of patrol aircraft, and an increase in funding for surveillance materiel such as radars and night vision equipment.

CONCLUSION

Mexico will continue to pose an important security challenge to the U.S. The security interests of both nations are increasingly threatened by such problems as the turmoil in Central America, narcotics trafficking, and illegal immigration. The accession of Carlos Salinas de Gortari to Mexico's presidency, however, may provide the Bush Administration with an opportunity to improve bilateral relations and generate agreement on security issues.

Linked by a porous 1,933-mile border, Mexico and the U.S. are separated by distinct political systems, cultures, languages, and wide disparities in wealth and population. These differences, combined with a difficult historical relationship, have strained relations between the two governments. Mexico's misunderstanding of Washington's actions and foreign policy goals in the Americas have led to Mexican mistrust and resentment of the U.S.

Giving Salinas a Chance. To counter this, the Bush Administration must work together with the Salinas government to establish a basis for long-term agreement on regional objectives and security interests. Consensus and coordination on narcotics and migration issues need to be explored. The U.S. also should maintain strong support for elements fighting pro-Soviet insurgencies in the countries neighboring Mexico.

While Mexico probably will continue to pursue anti-U.S. policies if it feels them to be in its best interest, Salinas should be taken up on his expressed willingness to improve and expand U.S.-Mexican relations. Whether he follows through, remains to be seen. Bush should give it a chance.

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