

Blood Trade: Memphis and the Mexican Drug War

A criminal from the streets of Memphis. One of the biggest drug cartels in Mexico. The corruption, cash, and demand for drugs that fuels an illegal, deadly trade -- and the consequences, for Mexicans and Americans alike.

The Cartel Next Door



Boys walk by an armed official in Celaya in the Mexican state of Guanajuato, near the place where two grenades were hurled at a police outpost in November 2009. No one was hurt. Celaya is much more dangerous than Queretaro, which has a reputation for safety and is only 25 minutes away by car. Some say the difference is that drug cartels have agreed to keep Queretaro safe.

Image by Alan Spearman, The Commercial Appeal.

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DANIEL CONNOLLY

The money that drug users spend in your community may be helping Mexican cartels pay their employees, bribe officials, buy weapons, and hire people to torture and kill rivals.

If you live in the United States, you can help shed light on the problem by exploring the impact of the trans-border drug trade where you live. If you don't live in the U.S., you may still be able to apply the concepts.

It makes sense to focus on Mexican trafficking organizations because their influence extends throughout the United States and beyond, and because they are causing tremendous bloodshed in Mexico. An estimated 35,000 people have died in Mexico's drug violence since President Felipe Calderon launched a crackdown in 2006, according to Associated Press reports.

I spent about 15 months part time researching international drug trafficking for the (Memphis) *Commercial Appeal* while I continued to cover the county government beat. I focused on Craig Petties, a man from Memphis who was accused of working as a high-level broker for Mexico's Beltran Leyva cartel to ship hundreds of kilograms of cocaine and more than a ton of marijuana to Tennessee and other states. Prosecutors accused him of making cell phone calls from Mexico to arrange drug shipments and to order killings in Memphis.

Mexican authorities caught him in the city of Queretaro in January 2008 and deported him to the United States. The government revealed in February of this year that Petties had secretly pleaded guilty in December 2009 to various charges, including conspiracy, drug trafficking and participation in four murders.

<http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/mexico-drug-cartel-felipe-calderon-beltran-leyva-trafficking>

Name:

Due: *Wednesday, February 27th* (NO late submissions)

On Wednesday, February 27th, you will get an opportunity to hear from Daniel Connolly, a journalist based in Memphis who researched international drug trafficking with a focus on Mexico and the US. Please answer the following questions:

1. What is a journalist? Please look up the definition and explain in your own words:

2. Please define the following terms (as it relates to drugs):

trafficking: _____

cartel: _____

trade: _____

rivals: _____

corruption: _____

3. Who is Craig Petties and what is his relationship to Mexico and the city of Memphis?

4. Please come up with at least 1 question that you would like to ask Mr. Connolly during his visit, regarding his work as a journalist, or about a career in journalism.

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