

# **USDVR -- United States Committee on Drug Violence Response**

Topic A: Addressing the murder of Lieutenant General Jonathan P. Braga by the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación.

Topic B: Mitigating the repercussions of the drug trafficking crisis on American soil.

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# Letter From the Chair

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the United States Emergency Drug Response Committee! We are Valeria Paz and Frida Valcheron and are honored to serve as your chairs for EMUN 2026. Our committee is dedicated to fostering dialogue and cooperation among the nations of Mexico and the United States, with the mission of strengthening democracy, promoting human rights, advancing sustainable development and ensuring peace and security throughout the regions.

As your chairs, we want to emphasize the importance of your voices. The strength of this committee lies in the diverse perspectives and experiences that each delegate brings to the table. We encourage you to engage fully in our sessions by sharing opinions, asking questions, and offering insights. By approaching each discussion with respect and an open mind, we will be addressing one of the most pressing, deadly, issues facing the Americas today: the repercussions of drug-related violence and trafficking

This cabinet might be wildly different from any MUN experiences you have had before. The essence of the cabinet relies on one fundamental principle; the directives passed by this cabinet have direct consequences for the Mexican cabinet and vice versa. This means you will have to work through problems critically, as all actions will trigger a direct response from the other cabinet in real time. If the rules of the cabinet are not clear to you just yet, do not worry. The detailed dynamics of our Joint Crisis Committee will be fully explained later in this background guide, and any questions can be asked via email. We are truly excited to begin this journey with you and cannot wait to see the thoughtful and innovative solutions you will bring to the committee.

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# Committee Overview

The Emergency Congressional Committee of the United States has been established to address the urgent and escalating crisis of drug violence linked to Mexican drug cartels after the death of Lieutenant General Jonathan P. Braga. This cabinet serves as a high-stakes, rapidly evolving stage for imminent legislative action that effectively combats drug trafficking, cartel-related violence, and associated national security threats caused by these within the United States.

This cabinet is part of the Joint Crisis Committee (JCC). This means, the simulation features a dynamic interaction with a separate Mexican Emergency Committee representing Mexico's government. They will be responding to all actions taken by this committee through their own directives. This linkage means that every strategy or diplomatic move undertaken by the U.S. committee directly influences the course of debate, policy proposals, and actions of the Mexican cabinet, and vice versa. This cooperation simulates the complexity of real diplomatic and cross-border security dependence where decisions are mutually impactful and must represent both sides of the conflict. Delegates may not directly communicate with others from the opposing cabinet without official directives mandating this. All communication should be through directives, which will be read to the opposing cabinet by a member of EMUN staff in order to guarantee an organized, fair debate.

Delegates will be challenged to negotiate, collaborate, and sometimes confront opposing priorities and interests, not just within their cabinet. The committee must balance internal political pressures with the need for international cooperation to form effective resolutions that address shared security, humanitarian, and law enforcement concerns stemming from the drug crisis.



# Topic A: Addressing the murder of Lieutenant General Jonathan P. Braga by the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación.

## **Background of the Topic**

Mexican drug cartels have caused significant devastation on American soil. The most prominent of these, The Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) and the Sinaloa Cartel, have contributed to the opioid crisis through extensive drug trafficking and violent operations. The CJNG, led by Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes ("El Mencho"), originated as an armed faction of the Sinaloa Cartel but became independent around 2014. It is notorious for brutal tactics, forced recruitment, territorial expansion, and its global dominance in the production and smuggling of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs. The cartel operates in major U.S. cities through a wide array of distribution routes, fueling the opioid crisis and causing violence in American communities. Its control over key trafficking routes, including ports of entry, challenge U.S. border security.

Cartels operate as complex hierarchical networks which makes the process of bringing these to justice that much harder. Leaders rarely engage in direct, visible crimes, instead relying on trusted lieutenants, enforcers, and lower-level hitmen to conduct missions regarding murder, money laundering, and extortion. This structure protects top leaders from exposure and limits the ability of law enforcement to locate or identify them directly. Furthermore, cartels have extensive corruption networks that infiltrate political, judicial, and law enforcement institutions, enabling them to receive advance warnings of investigations or raids, and manipulate legal outcomes. Their international operations across multiple countries and regions including China, Australia, Colombia, and Peru further complicate jurisdictional efforts and coordination among authorities.

Recently, cartel violence has become much more militarized, as these groups acquire and build bombs, drones, and military equipment. Cartels like CJNG have increasingly adopted tactics, weaponry, and organizational structures resembling military forces. They employ sophisticated firearms, including

assault rifles, sniper rifles, and even armored vehicles and drones for surveillance and attacks. Cartels organize into paramilitary groups with specialized roles such as reconnaissance, tactical assault teams, and logistics units, often recruiting former military personnel from countries like Colombia, Mexico, and Guatemala for their expertise. CJNG has begun using military-grade explosives and even homemade Molotov cocktails made from PVC tubes, plastic bottles, or reversed engineered with 3D printed parts. The adoption of high-grade weapons and coordinated attacks on security forces and rival groups has escalated the intensity and lethality of conflicts, especially in rural areas. This militarization amplifies violence and challenges law enforcement and military responses, increasing instability and civilian harm in affected regions.

The United States and Mexico are actively engaged in combating the severe threat posed by drug cartels through coordinated, multifaceted approaches. The U.S. has prioritized dismantling the infrastructure of drug trafficking through initiatives such as the DEA's Project Portero, which targets critical smuggling routes. This operation arises from an urgent need to disrupt the flow of narcotics like fentanyl and methamphetamine into American cities. Additionally, the project emphasizes intelligence sharing and joint training, reflecting a pragmatic approach to interagency cooperation. Meanwhile, the U.S. government's designation of cartels as foreign terrorist organizations highlights the gravity of the threat and opens doors for far more aggressive and militarized anti-cartel operations. Recently, the denomination of cartels as terrorist organizations has helped dismantle financial networks allegedly tied to organized crime like the recognized Mexican bank CI Banco, Intercam, and Vigor.

On the other side of the border, Mexico punishes cartel-related crimes through intensified policing and military deployment in affected regions. The Mexican government carefully balances direct action against cartels with respect for national sovereignty, often clarifying positions about cooperative engagements with U.S. agencies. The seizure of firearms and high-profile arrests show a commitment to fighting cartel power, despite the immense challenges posed by widespread corruption allegations within the government. Moreover, collaboration between intelligence services enhances efforts to track and apprehend cartel leaders. According to a Reuters investigation, the CIA has taken part in covert operations to catch Mexico's greatest criminals. The intertwined efforts of both countries reveal a complex, strenuous battle against highly adaptable opponents.

The Trump administration has adopted a notably aggressive stance towards drug trafficking and cartels, signaling a fundamental shift toward treating these criminal organizations as military organizations rather than conventional criminals. Early in 2025, President Trump formally designated Mexican drug cartels as foreign terrorists, a classification that elevates their threat level to that of groups like al-Qaeda or ISIS. This decision reflects a strategic intent to possibly employ extraordinary wartime efforts to confront cartels, efforts that may include military force when necessary. These include targeted strikes against suspected cartel operatives designated as "unlawful combatants." An example of these strategies was clearly showcased on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025, when the United States conducted a strike on a Venezuelan boat allegedly carrying narcotics. Such measures express a new level of determination by the Trump administration to stop the drug trade, with a slight disregard for peaceful negotiation strategies.

## Current Situation

In the early hours of March 19th, 2025, a joint U.S.–Mexico counter-narcotics operation in the Mexican state of Michoacán ended in tragedy when Lieutenant General Jonathan Braga, a senior U.S. military advisor overseeing cross-border intelligence coordination, was killed in an ambush allegedly carried out by the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG). Initial reports suggest that the attack was not a targeted assassination but a result of poor communication and conflicting jurisdiction between Mexican and U.S. forces. However, the death of such a high-ranking U.S. officer has triggered a severe diplomatic and security crisis.

In Washington, outrage has erupted across political lines. U.S. officials have demanded full cooperation from Mexico in the investigation and immediate extradition of those responsible. Now, because cartels have been authorized as terrorist organizations, the US military is authorized to use full American power against those across the border. The White House has suspended all joint security operations pending review, while reinforcing troop presence along the southern border.

The United States now finds itself in the balance of an intense standoff. President Donald Trump's administration must balance the obligation to control the CJNG, with the need to respect international sovereignty and diplomacy among crumbling US-Mexico relations.

## Context of the Problem Worldwide

The violence by Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) deeply impacts both regional stability in Mexico and broader international security. The escalation of violent clashes in key states such as Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guanajuato, where CJNG seeks to control drug trafficking routes, extortion networks, and illegal economies has caused violence to spill over the border, fueling the US opioid crisis through the trafficking of fentanyl and other narcotics. Additionally, CJNG's violent campaigns threaten diplomatic stability since they undermine current law enforcement, encouraging corruption and eroding Mexican institutions. This corruption slows and mitigates joint security efforts, making cooperation difficult and sometimes futile.

Beyond fueling the opioid crisis, cartel violence creates chaos within the US' southern border. The cartel engages in direct violent confrontations and intimidation tactics near the US- Mexico border, increasing threats to law enforcement and border communities with shootouts and extortion. These violent tactics intensify the already strained migration and trade dynamics with the southern neighbor. CJNG's expansion into U.S. cities involves collaborations with domestic gangs, fostering increased violent crime including homicides, kidnappings, robbery, and drug trafficking. Additionally, CJNG exploits the flow of weapons primarily trafficked from U.S. gun shops, intensifying violent confrontations in Mexico and spilling over through firearms trafficking into U.S. criminal networks. Also, CJNG's disruption of communities contributes to migration pressures for major US cities as people flee cartel violence. Mexican cartels have also been known to collaborate with Australian, Chinese, Colombian, and Venezuelan gangs, creating an intertwined, international crime web. One major aspect of collaboration is with Chinese criminal networks. Mexican cartels like the Sinaloa Cartel use Chinese money laundering brokers to convert bulk cash from drug sales into cryptocurrency. These brokers then launder the funds globally, bypassing law enforcement in the process. Moreover, cartels rely on Chinese suppliers for chemicals essential and raw material to producing fentanyl and methamphetamines.

## Questions To Consider

- How can the US cabinet ensure the safety of US officials during international missions while simultaneously respecting the sovereignty of the country being aided?
- To what extent can cartel violence directly affect US citizens before more decisive action is taken against them?
- How can the US cabinet secure borders efficiently without isolating the country from the global markets?
- What, if any, military measures would the US be willing to take to stop cartel violence?
- What strategies could be used to assert dominance over cartels without violating international law?

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## Topic B: Mitigating the repercussions of the drug trafficking crisis on American soil.

### Background of the Topic

The opioid crisis in the United States began far before Mexican Cartels fabricated and distributed synthetic drugs. Notably, it began in the mid 1990's with a major increase in the prescribing of opioid painkillers like Purdue Pharma's OxyContin. The medical community began to push an aggressive treatment of pain, and patients were usually misled about the addictiveness of the drugs. Both of these factors led to widespread use and addiction to prescription opioids like codeine, Percocet, hydrocodone, oxycodone, and oxymorphone.

Around 2011, as awareness of the death caused by overdose of these substances grew and regulations on

prescriptions tightened, many individuals addicted to prescription opioids switched to heroin, an illegal and cheaper opioid made of natural morphine taken out of opium poppy plants. Soon after, synthetic opioids like fentanyl dramatically changed the landscape due to their high potency, lower cost, and ease of smuggling compared to heroin. However, the most notable difference between fentanyl and heroin is the dosage required to overdose. While 10-12mg of heroin are fatal, only 1-2 mg of fentanyl are lethal. Overdose deaths linked to fentanyl skyrocketed, vastly outpacing those caused by heroin or prescription opioids. By 2021, fentanyl was responsible for the highest death rates in opioid overdoses.

This opioid epidemic has resulted in enormous social problems, including rising homelessness and death. Addiction to opioids often leads to job loss, family disruption, mental and physical health decline, which can end in homelessness. High overdose fatalities strain emergency services, disrupt communities, and significantly reduce life expectancy in affected populations. The crisis has profoundly affected public health and social stability in many US regions, as well as fueling the homelessness crisis in major cities.

Mexican cartels have contributed substantially to this crisis by supplying fentanyl and chemicals to local gangs. As fentanyl is relatively easy and cheap to produce, cartels manufacture or source it, often in collaboration with overseas chemical suppliers, and traffic it into the US through rumored underground tunnels, boats, cars, and even inside people. These cartels exploit the high demand within the US for opioids resulting from addiction to prescription drugs and heroin. Their involvement ensures a steady supply of synthetic opioids that fuels overdose deaths.

## Current Situation

Recently, the US government has intensified its efforts to combat the opioid crisis. One of the key initiatives is the Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) program led by the CDC, which funds 90 health departments to collect real-time data on overdoses. This increased surveillance allows for targeted, data-backed interventions that improve the timeliness and effectiveness of local response efforts. Additionally, law enforcement efforts to disrupt fentanyl trafficking have been enhanced with an aggressive approach to border security. Strategies particularly target chemical imports linked to Mexican cartels. These actions are critical to limiting the availability of synthetic opioids within U.S. communities. Moreover, workforce and community support initiatives have expanded through Department of Labor grants that facilitate recovery-friendly workplaces and assist dislocated workers affected by opioid addiction. Public awareness campaigns educate both healthcare providers and the public about safer opioid prescribing and risks associated with misuse of these.

## Context of the Problem Worldwide

The opioid epidemic in the US has influenced international drug policy and security agendas. The U.S. government's efforts to curb opioid trafficking have included leveraging international cooperation and aid, such as the Mérida Initiative with Mexico, aimed at dismantling drug networks. This geopolitical focus has shaped foreign relations and trade policies, especially concerning countries implicated in drug production and trafficking. The crisis has heightened awareness among international organizations and governments about the need for collective action in controlling narcotics, improving addiction treatment, and reducing harm associated with opioid use worldwide.

## Questions To Consider

- What reforms can be implemented to prevent the overprescription of opioids?
- How will public addiction in the United States be handled, as a public health problem, or a criminal offense? How will the committee handle the social repercussions that come with said measures?
- How will the committee support addicted individuals in their reintegration into society?

- What funding will be directed towards the mitigation of the opioid crisis?

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## Members

- Marco Rubio- Secretary of State
- Scott Bessent- Secretary of Treasury
- Pete Hegseth- Secretary of War
- Pam Bondi- Attorney General
- Howard Lutnick- Secretary of Commerce
- Kristi Noem- Secretary of Homeland Security
- Tulsi Gabbard- Director of National Intelligence
- Brian O'Toole- Special Representative for International Relations
- General Randy A. George- Chief of Staff of the Army

## Terms and Definitions

**CJNG**- The Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación, founded around 2014, is notorious for extreme violence and the trafficking of synthetic drugs.

**Cartel**- Criminal organization with or alliance of drug trafficking groups that control the production, organization, transportation, and distribution of narcotics.

**Opioid**- a class of drug such as oxycodone and fentanyl known for binding against opioid receptors in the brain and blocking pain signals.

**Corruption**- dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power often involving bribery.

## Sources and Further Reading

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