THE THREAT OF DRUG CARTELS
Joseph S. Nye, Jr., North American Group Chair
Paula Dobriansky, Chair

NORTH AMERICAN CHAIR JOSEPH S. NYE, JR: I want to just say a word about the format that we're using for the next panel, since it is new and an experiment.

When the North American Executive Committee met in Pocantico last June, we were exploring ideas or ways in which we could get out some of the ideas that are discussed at the Trilateral meetings on our website to a broader audience without violating the confidentiality which makes our meetings so valuable. After a good deal of talking and thinking about this, we decided that we could use video in the following way.

Instead of Paula, our chair, just launching off here and being videoed, we've asked her to pre-tape a video which will be in lieu of her opening talk here, and you'll see this on these two screens in just a minute.

After that Paula will be interviewing her panelists outside this room and upstairs and asking them questions which they will answer in their own name in their own right, which means that somebody who goes to the Trilateral website can hear what the panel was about and can hear the chair of the panel and the panelists having a conversation about the issues, but without any attribution to people who are in this room.

So we're trying this as a pilot project. If this works, we'll try to do it for more panels. But it's a way to get more access to the content of our meetings, which we think is very good, to a broad audience or a broader audience without violating the confidentiality of the meetings themselves which make our meetings so good.

So this is a trial, and we thank Paula for being the person who is launching our trial. Over to you, Paula. Video first.

CHAIR PAULA DOBRIANSKY (video): Good afternoon. I'm Paula Dobriansky, moderator of the panel which will address the threat of drug cartels. This introduction and brief interviews with each of today's panelists are the first video clips to be placed on the Trilateral Commission website.

Writing in Foreign Affairs, Mark Kleiman, professor of public policy at the University of California, Los Angeles, has well described the current situation of the ongoing drug wars. He asserted that, quote, "More than a thousand people die each month in drug dealing violence in Mexico and the toll has been rising. In some parts of the country, the police find themselves outgunned by drug traffickers and must rely on the armed forces. Meanwhile, the United States suffers from the widespread abuse of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines and cannabis, and mass incarceration including half a million people behind bars for drug offense and at least as many for crimes committed for money to buy drugs," unquote.

According to various experts, the current government policy and strategy in Mexico is having an impact on the drug cartels. The number of cartel leaders imprisoned has never been higher, yet paradoxically, despite this ground-breaking development, violence has increased.
In fact, some argue that the army and the police have exacerbated this situation and have contributed to the rise in violence. It has also been viewed as the logical result of an effective strategy to confront the cartels.

So what to do? Our panel will assess what are the current trends in Mexico and evaluate which approaches both governmental and non-governmental have been effective and which have not.

Our three distinguished participants — Ambassador John Negroponte, former deputy secretary of state and former U.S. ambassador to Mexico; Jorge Tello, former executive secretary of Mexico's National Public Security System and presently an advisor to the state of Nuevo Laredo, where cartel violence continues; and Dr. Jean Daudelin, assistant professor of Carleton University — all will provide their unique perspectives on these critical issues.

Clearly there is a need for new and creative thinking. Traditional approaches, prevention, enforcement and treatment programs, while engendering some results have not significantly altered the situation. In fact, some argue that these measures have actually contributed to and exacerbated the problem. Our northern neighbor, Canada, has, at the insistence of the Harper government, put monies into the war on drugs, but the public view is one of no sense of urgency. Our panel discussion will also take into account the impact of these issues on Canada and what kinds of steps it is taking.

The time is now to look for new solutions, possibly an integrated strategy which involves a comprehensive approach including grassroots economic development, public affairs, social and educational projects.

Other solutions could involve enhanced regional and international cooperation. How can we manage the level of violence and will putting more resources into the fight reap results?

Will exporting best practices have the desired impact or will exporting better practices that are sustainable in-country engender the most promising outcomes?

Our panel will take on all of these difficult issues and more today (end of video).

CHAIR DOBRIANSKY: As you can see we have a lot of ground to cover. But first, before I go to each of our distinguished panelists, I have a quick story to tell about the days of Rome.

You may recall that, during the days of Rome, political prisoners were fed to the lions. Well, several weeks had passed, and the lions were starved. The prisoners were trooped out into the arena, and the crowd which filled every seat was cheering wildly. St. Peter led the group and, once in the arena, went immediately over to the lead lion. The lions were pacing vigorously — as they hadn’t had a meal in weeks. St. Peter went up to the lead lion and whispered something in his ear. Suddenly all the lions just dropped down on the ground.

There was a hush over the arena. The spectators couldn't believe it. They started throwing stones, “Get those lions up! Throwing pitchforks, “Get them up!”

Finally, Caesar called St. Peter over and said, “What on earth did you tell the lead lion?” And St. Peter said, “I simply said there will be speeches after the meal.”

So this panel is going to be a very dynamic. We have many interesting positions taken by each of the panelists and no one will be giving a speech. Instead, we’re going to be having a debate. Let’s begin with opening comments. We're going to first hear from Jorge Tello, who is an expert on national security, law enforcement and intelligence, and is going to address Mexico’s current paradox. Mexico, as Jorge has described it, is somewhat a victim of its own success because of the incarceration of so many cartel leaders, but at the same time the enhanced violence that has unfortunately gripped Mexico.
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