

# Trans-Border Institute Justice in Mexico Project

University of San Diego

TBI and JMP Fact Sheet:  
Mérida Initiative

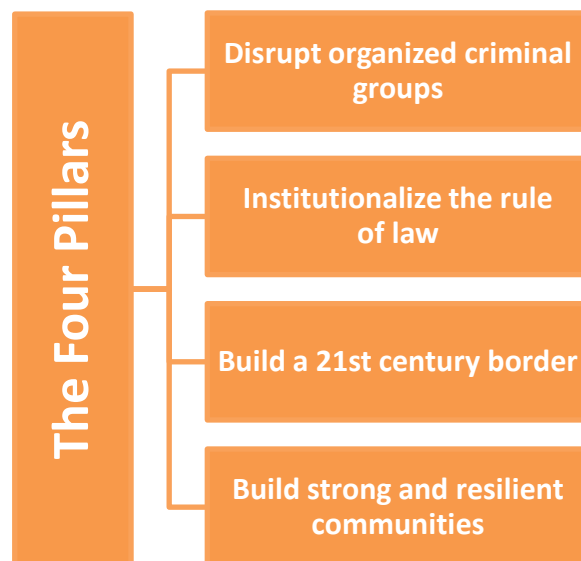
June 2013

## What is the Mérida Initiative?

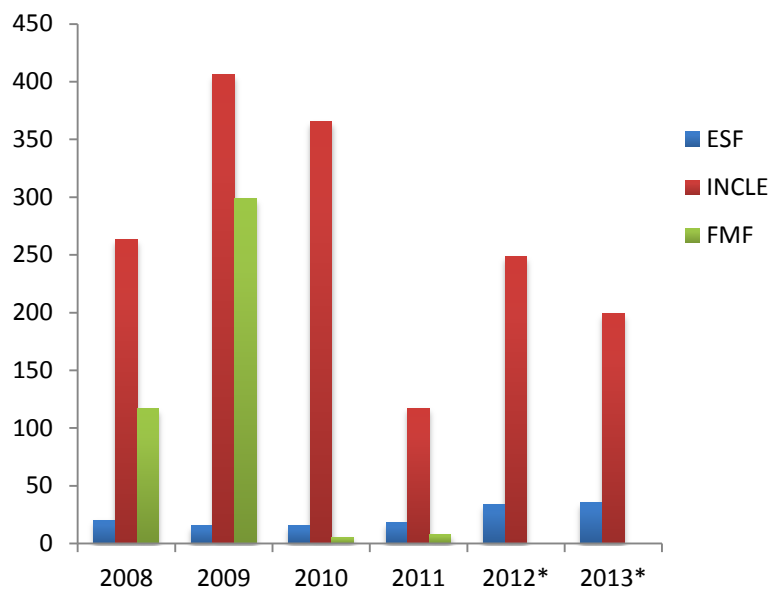
The Mérida Initiative is a security cooperation agreement between the United States and Mexico. Under the plan, the U.S. Congress has approved \$1.9 billion (USD) in anticrime and counter-narcotics equipment and training assistance to Mexico, up from its original appropriation of \$1.6 billion. The assistance is channeled through Mérida's four objectives: disrupting organized criminal groups, strengthening institutions, building a 21<sup>st</sup> century border, and building strong and resilient communities.

## Why was the Mérida Initiative enacted?

The partnership was launched in 2007 under U.S. President George W. Bush, in part because of Mexican President Felipe Calderón's exceptional request for U.S. aid in Mexico's battle against its increasingly violent trans-national criminal organizations (TCOs). Mexican TCOs are the principal players in the illicit U.S. drug market, and the fight to control access to this highly profitable market has contributed to high levels of violence and brutality in Mexico. U.S. concerns about the security and economic implications of the instability in Mexico—an important political ally and major trading partner—as well as a sense of co-responsibility in the drug trade and related violence were factors in the endorsement of initiative.



Mérida Initiative Funding in Millions of U.S. Dollars, 2008-2012



\*The FMF did not contribute any funding to the Mérida Initiative in 2012 or 2013.

Financing for the Mérida Initiative comes predominately from three U.S. funding streams: Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE), and the Economic Support Fund (ESF). Because the security strategy of the Mexican government has changed over the years, financing for military equipment and training has decreased dramatically while funding for institution building has increased.

*Human Rights Conditions: The U.S. Congress put in place stipulations on the disbursement of Mérida funds to Mexico so that 15% of all assistance is subject to Mexico meeting specific human rights conditions. Since 2008, the U.S. State Department has twice withheld money because of these conditions. \$18 million (USD) is currently being withheld until Mexico is in compliance with the standards set by the U.S. Congress.*

**Mérida Contributions**

**Dismantling TCOs and Takedown of Cartel Leaders:** 25 of the 37 most wanted Mexican drug traffickers and kingpins had been apprehended or killed as of October 2012

**Increase in Extraditions:** from 2007 to 2012, 587 people were extradited from Mexico to the United States, more than double the number of extraditions from 2001 to 2006

**Drug, Cash, and Weapons Seizures:** improved intelligence sharing between the two countries has contributed to record narcotics, currency, and arms seizures

**U.S.-Mexico Cooperation:** there are unprecedented levels of binational cooperation, including on initiatives and projects such as the Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BEST), Operation Against Smuggler (and Traffickers) Initiative on Safety and Security (OASISS), and the Electronic Trace Submission System

**Pending Issues**

**Persistent Violence:** drug-related crime and violence in Mexico has not decreased, and reports indicate that over 60,000 drug-related deaths and 26,000 disappearances occurred between 2006 and 2012

**Impunity:** the continued weakness of the Mexican criminal judicial system, exemplified by the fact that only 2% of all crimes result in a conviction, undercuts bilateral anticrime efforts

**Proliferation and Diversification of TCOs:** the dismantling of large, powerful TCOs has led to the proliferation of smaller, more violent splinter groups that are involved in various illicit activities in addition to drug trafficking, including armed robbery, human trafficking, kidnapping, and extortion

**Lack of a U.S. Commitment:** no gun control or arms trafficking measures have passed in the U.S. Congress as of June 2013 and illicit drug demand remains high

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