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Opium Eradication Efforts in Mexico: Cautious Optimism Advised [Unclassified Digest]. GSD-77-6. February 18, 1977.

Report to Rep. Charles B. Rangel; by Elmer B. Staats, Comptroller General.

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Congressional Relevance: House Committee on International Relations; Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Rep. Charles B. Rangel.

With the disruption of the Turkish-French heroin connection in recent years, more poppies have been cultivated in Mexico to meet the demand for heroin in the United States. Findings/Conclusions: The Drug Enforcement Administration identified Mexico as the source of 89 percent of the heroin in the United States. Approximately 5.2 metric tons of Mexican heroin entered the United States in 1975. Conflicting information exists on opium poppy cultivation, and such information may not accurately reflect the current situation. Since 1970, the United States has contributed about \$35 million to assist the Mexican Government with narcotics control efforts. U.S. assistance to Mexico has escalated without sufficient detailed planning. Eradicating poppies by aerial spraying with herbicides has been a priority goal of the program, and about twice as many fields were destroyed from January to April 1976 as during the 1975 program. The strong endorsement of the new Mexican Government is necessary for continued improvement in narcotics control. Recommendations: The U.S. Mission in Mexico should develop a more comprehensive narcotics control plan which will clearly define U.S. goals for assisting the Mexican Government in developing its own capabilities and will develop specific objectives and criteria to evaluate progress. (RRS)

This is an unclassified digest furnished in lieu of
a report containing classified security information.

COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S REPORT TO
THE HONORABLE CHARLES B. RANGEL
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OPIUM ERADICATION EFFORTS
IN MEXICO:
CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM ADVISED
Departments of State
and Justice

D I G E S T

The opium poppy, from which heroin is derived, has been cultivated in Mexico for 30 years, despite increasing efforts by the Mexican Government to prevent it. With the disruption of the Turkish-French heroin connection in recent years, more poppies have been cultivated in Mexico to meet the demand for heroin by addicts in the United States. (See p. 1.)

The Drug Enforcement Administration's analyses of selected seizures in 1975 identified Mexico as the source of 89 percent of the heroin in the United States. (See p. 2.) It estimates that 5.2 metric tons of Mexican heroin entered the United States during 1975 and that gross opium production in Mexico totaled between 100 and 110 metric tons.

Conflicting information on opium poppy cultivation exists; and, past estimates--as well as reports used in developing the estimates--may not accurately reflect the current situation. (See pp. 5 to 7.) The Drug Enforcement Administration, the Department of State, and the Foreign Intelligence Subcommittee of the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control are aware of this and have acted to improve the situation. (See pp. 10 to 13.)

Since 1970 the United States has contributed about \$35 million to assist the Mexican Government with narcotics control efforts. Most of this assistance has been provided to the Mexican Attorney General's Air Services Section for aircraft and related support for improving the mobility of enforcement and eradication personnel. (See app. III.)

00613

Eradicating poppies by aurally spraying them with herbicides has been a priority goal of the narcotics control program since late 1975. This placed greater responsibility on the Air Services Section. (See p. 16.) According to reported results for January through April 1976, about twice as many fields were destroyed during that period as during the 1975 program. (See app. II.)

The narcotics control action plan is to be the basic planning document for narcotics control funding, through the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control. U.S. assistance to Mexico has escalated without sufficient detailed planning. (See pp. 18 to 20.)

A new administration took office in Mexico in December 1976, and its strong endorsement of the eradication program will be necessary for continued improvement. According to the Department of State, the new administration has recently pledged its continuing support of the eradication program.

The Drug Enforcement Administration will analyze U.S. heroin "removal" statistics to evaluate the eradication program. The Drug Enforcement Administration believes that a decline in availability, followed by a rise in price and/or by a drop in purity of heroin at the retail level, will indicate program success. Heroin removal statistics show a 6-month trend of lower purity and higher prices from March through September 1976. The Drug Enforcement Administration expects the trend to continue. (See pp. 34 and 35.)

To insure continued improvement and ultimate success for the opium poppy eradication program in Mexico, the Secretary of State, as Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control, should require the U.S. Mission in Mexico to develop a more comprehensive narcotics control plan which will

--clearly define U.S. goals for assisting the Mexican Government in developing its own capabilities to control narcotics and

--develop specific objectives and criteria to evaluate progress being made. (See p. 37.)

The Department of State advises that the outgoing Mexican administration prepared a study of the resource needs for the ongoing program which will be reviewed by both governments and that a plan is being developed for identifying program goals and resources needed. (See p. 38.)

Comments from the Departments of State and Justice and from the Central Intelligence Agency were obtained and considered in the report.