

THIS IS YOUR WAR ON DRUGS

[youtube]nl5gBJGnaXs[/youtube]

Of all the shootings that have happened in the last day, I suspect this one—of two US government employees in a diplomatic car in Mexico—may get the least attention in the US. The shootout occurred between what has been reported alternately as members of Mexico's Marines and/or their Federal police (or not described at all) and the two Americans—whose names have been reported as Jess Hoods Garner and Stan Dove Boss. Mexico's press say the vehicle carrying the Americans was hit by at least 60 bullets. The Americans are now in a hospital in Cuernavaca being treated for gunshot wounds. The site of the shootout—on the two-lane free highway between Mexico City and Cuernavaca—is being guarded by Mexican police and military forces. Here's AP's report on the shootout (which doesn't mention the reported involvement of Mexican personnel).

The report comes after two recent revelations of US intelligence involvement for the drug war in Mexico. First, Statfor emails detail US military presence in and intelligence sharing between the US and Mexico.

Then there's the recent report that there exists a SEAL Team 6 plan to capture or kill the Sinaloa cartel boss, El Chapo Guzmán. Of particular interest, news of the plan pissed off Mexico's military.

Given how difficult it's been to catch Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman, the U.S. government has prepared a plan to capture the drug kingpin, in an operation similar to that held in Pakistan last year in the assassination of Osama Bin Laden.

Military sources in Mexico and the U.S. confirm the existence of the plan, which

was developed by the Pentagon several months ago and now is being held back because it is an operation that was designed with only Americans in mind, an idea that is not viewed with pleasure by their Mexican counterparts.

The plan was introduced to Felipe Calderon who promoted it among the armed forces. And although there was a sharp rejection by the Mexican Army and Navy, Washington has not thrown away the plan and propose to show it to the next Mexican president, Enrique Pena.

Until recently, the DEA was cooperating with key members of the Sinaloa cartel in an effort to shut down Sinaloa's competitors, though recently US law enforcement has been cracking down on Sinaloa directly. Cuernavaca, however, is (as far as I understand it) far from Sinaloa turf.

Now, all these data points may be unrelated. The shooting in Mexico may have a less suspicious explanation than what it, at the moment, seems—it could be “just” a kidnapping attempt (though AP reports the shots were focused at the front passenger), or reports of Mexico Federal involvement could be false, or it may have to do with another cartel or nothing to do with the “war on drugs” at all. But we know the US has been putting more intelligence and military resources in Mexico to fight drug trafficking—which often means fighting corrupt members of Mexico's law enforcement. Our actions have become increasingly aggressive throughout Latin America.

Maybe Latin American countries are getting less and less happy with our “war on drugs” because it seems to have less and less to do with actual drugs?

Update: The Mexicans are beginning to solidify their story, now claiming that the Federales who shot the Americans were in the location investigating another crime. But it sounds like

the Americans were trying to enter some location and that's when the shooting—and a four vehicle car chase—started. They're claiming the Navy showed up later just to protect the site which sounds ... dubious. Also remember the driver of the American car was **also** from Mexico's Navy.

Meanwhile, here's what the CIA said when asked whether the guys who got shot were theirs.

CIA spokeswoman Jennifer Youngblood declined to comment and referred reporters to the State Department.

And this CNN story is useful not for any indication of what happened, but for a jumble of assertions, none of which appear to match the known facts. This AP story appears to be the most complete in English—it even notes that the Mexican Navy story leaves out key details.

The Mexican stories appear to have taken the names above (which didn't seem very credible in any case) out of their stories.

Update: OK, the official story appears to be that the Americans—who are clearly “trainers”—and their Mexican Marine captain driver were pulling into a naval base when they were ambushed by 1 carload of Federales. A chase ensued, and 3 more cars of Federales joined in, during which the driver called for backup. By the time military backup arrived, the shootout was over.

Local witnesses, though, say there were 6 cars, not 4, and one of the reasons the area was shut down all day was to find everyone involved, which suggests there may actually have been 2 cars of non-Federales in Federales cars who got away. Then there's the claim that the Americans and their driver were unarmed. Not only don't I believe the driver would be unarmed, sources say there were at least 60 casings found at the scene, and only 30 bullets that hit the car. Note, too, that pictures don't show the bullet-proof glass having been pierced, yet both Americans were wounded. And a couple of the

stories wonder how they Americans got hurt if they had such a fancy bullet proof car, which is something I had been wondering, as well. So there are likely several reasons why the military shut down the shootout scene all day.

Finally, the head of the Federales ordered that the Americans be transferred from the private hospital in Cuernavaca back to Mexico City. And there seems to be some question whether the government of the local state, Morelos, is cooperating or not. One report notes that the shootout ended right at the border of Morelos (on the Morelos side) and DF. Finally, earlier reports noted there had been a guy (an electric company worker) killed the night before in a shootout in Cuernavaca itself, which seems unrelated but may not be.