

EL CHAPO

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the
captur
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Chapo
Guzmán.



According to Mexico's *el Universal*, Sinaloa Cartel boss Chapo Guzmán was captured by authorities at 6:40 AM (it's unclear whether this is Mexico City or Mazatlán time, which are an hour and two behind ET, respectively; and the local Sinaloa press says the operation started at 3:30 AM).

The AP broke the story at 10:52 AM, sourcing to a US official. At around 11:00 (presumably, Mexico City time), Mexico's Attorney General Jesús Murillo Karam announced the capture – he attributed the delay to taking time to confirm Guzmán's identity.

And around that same time, President Enrique Peña Nieto tweeted out congratulations to Mexico's security services for the capture.

As of right now, I've seen no comment from the White House on the capture, even though the DEA were said to be heavily involved.

There have been two pictures circulating relating to the arrest: a KSM-style picture of Guzmán at least partially undressed, and pictures taken in full daylight of him being transferred, fully dressed, to a helicopter by masked men wearing Mexican Navy uniforms.

I lay out these details because I have been wondering for some time why, alone among the world leaders spied on by the NSA, Peña Nieto never complained all that loudly. When Spiegel first reported the spying, it suggested the US was trying to determine how seriously Peña Nieto

– then still a candidate – meant his campaign promises to change the war on drugs. But according to Dana Priest, subsequent to the start of that spying, upon being presented with the range of our spying in Mexico, the President ended much of that “cooperation.”

The new administration has shifted priorities away from the U.S.-backed strategy of arresting kingpins, which sparked an unprecedented level of violence among the cartels, and toward an emphasis on prevention and keeping Mexico’s streets safe and calm, Mexican authorities said.

Some U.S. officials fear the coming of an unofficial truce with cartel leaders. The Mexicans see it otherwise. “The objective of fighting organized crime is not in conflict with achieving peace,” said Eduardo Medina Mora, Mexico’s ambassador to the United States.

[snip]

U.S. officials got their first inkling that the relationship might change just two weeks after Peña Nieto assumed office Dec. 1. At the U.S. ambassador’s request, the new president sent his top five security officials to an unusual meeting at the U.S. Embassy here. In a crowded conference room, the new attorney general and interior minister sat in silence, not knowing what to expect, next to the new leaders of the army, navy and Mexican intelligence agency.

In front of them at the Dec. 15 meeting were representatives from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the CIA, the FBI, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and other U.S. agencies tasked with helping Mexico destroy the drug cartels that had besieged the country for the past

decade.

The Mexicans remained stone-faced as they learned for the first time just how entwined the two countries had become during the battle against narco-traffickers, and how, in the process, the United States had been given near-complete entree to Mexico's territory and the secrets of its citizens, according to several U.S. officials familiar with the meeting

Four months after that meeting, Peña Nieto involved his government in the information sharing process between the US and Mexico, and he reportedly kicked out Americans working in Mexican fusion centers.

Medina Mora, the Mexican ambassador, said in an interview that his nation considers U.S. help in the drug war "a centerpiece" of Mexico's counternarcotics strategy. But the Mexican delegation in Washington also informed U.S. authorities that Americans will no longer be allowed to work inside any fusion center, including the one in Monterrey. The DEA agents and retired military contractors there will have to go.

Mind you, it's clear that this change in strategy didn't really come about – or if it has, the US has accelerated its own work without the Mexicans – as can be seen by the string of Guzmán associates who've been rolled up in recent weeks.

There were further hints of Mexico's close cooperation when James Clapper, at a recent hearing, refused to elaborate in public session on an answer suggesting that Mexico was cooperating as closely as ever. And this response – in a background briefing in advance of President Obama's trip to Toluca last week –

makes it clear the Americans believe cooperation is still ongoing.

Q I was wondering, since we're on the topic of messages, and you've already outlined the main topics of the summit, what sort of message is the President going to give the Mexican President Peña Nieto with the ongoing violence in Michoacán and whether or not they're going to talk about new initiatives or somehow renewing the – or expanding the Merida initiative to combat drug traffickers down there. So in other words, what sort of deliverables can we expect from this summit? Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks for that question. First of all, we have a very good and effective security relationship with Mexico and we have for a number of years now, including with this administration. Certainly our shared security interests are going to be a part of the conversation. As President Obama made very clear in his initial meeting with President Peña Nieto, we stand by to help in any way we can and to cooperate as determined by the government of Mexico as it develops its security posture and deals with security concerns and judicial reform in Mexico.

You mentioned the Merida programs; those are continuing. And there's a process in place between our two governments to develop priorities for cooperation. There's a greater emphasis on the judicial cooperation now and finding ways to work together in that field. With respect to Michoacán, certainly we're following closely what is happening there and stand by the government of Mexico as it confronts challenges there and elsewhere. [my emphasis]

And now Chapo is in custody, reportedly as a result of several weeks of cooperation between the DEA and Mexico's Navy.

We shall see whether this time he stays in custody, and if so, in which country.