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Mexico Sours on the Drug War

Ted Galen Carpenter, The National Interest



AP Photo

When Mexico's new president Felipe Calderón launched a military-led offensive against the country's powerful drug cartels in December 2006, his strategy enjoyed widespread domestic support. But his confrontational approach has not gone as planned. At

least forty-four thousand¹ and according to at least one estimate, perhaps as many as fifty-two thousand² people have perished in the upsurge of violence over the past five years. That unpleasant reality has gradually caused major segments of Mexico's population and, perhaps even more important, key Mexican political leaders to become disenchanted with the drug war.

There were signs of growing discontent as far back as late 2008. Rubén Aguilar, the president's former director of communications, stunned his...

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