

US Secretary of State Rubio and Mexican President Sheinbaum unveil security pact

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On September 3, a day after the US military sank an alleged Venezuelan drug-carrying boat in the Caribbean, killing 11, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is also serving as President Trump's national security advisor, met with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum at the National Palace in Mexico City. The agenda centered on "bilateral security issues" and on drug cartels, which Trump has designated as terrorist organizations.

At a press conference after the meeting Rubio pledged to foster "security cooperation and respect Mexico's sovereignty and territory." "We have reached a historical level of cooperation," he said, praising the transfer of dozens of high-level cartel members wanted by the Trump administration for trial in the US.

"It is the closest security cooperation we have ever had, maybe with any country but certainly in the history of US-Mexico relations," Rubio gushed. He gave "[m]uch credit ... to President Sheinbaum and her administration in really taking on things that had not been taken on for a very long time."

This marks a de-escalation from the recent belligerent calls by Vice President Vance, Attorney General Pam Bondi and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth for direct intervention against the cartels in Mexico, if not outright invasion.

It is also facially a marked change from Rubio's blasting as recently as two years ago of Sheinbaum's predecessor and political patron, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), for turning "entire sections of his country over to drug cartels."

At the same time, Rubio said the Trump administration intends to expand its lethal strikes on drug cartels throughout Latin America, both in the Caribbean and the Pacific Ocean. While in Mexico, he defended last Tuesday's strike on the boat off the Venezuelan coast.

Rubio said following a meeting with Mexico's Foreign Minister Juan Ramón de la Fuente that the two countries would create a "high-level bilateral group" that would meet regularly to coordinate security matters, from countering cartels to eliminating clandestine border tunnels and

stemming fuel theft.

But "each one in his own territory," de la Fuente quickly stressed. Mexico would prefer "nonintervention; peaceful solution of conflicts." Cooperation "will put an end to the trafficking of fentanyl and other illicit drugs as well as the end of arms trafficking," he claimed.

A U.S. State Department spokesman said that during the meeting Rubio also "emphasized the importance of resolving trade and non-trade barriers to further the prosperity of both of our nations."

Wednesday evening the two governments issued a joint written statement along the above lines. It said:

The aim is to work together to dismantle transnational organized crime through enhanced cooperation between our respective national security and law enforcement institutions, and judicial authorities. Additionally, we are working to address the illegal movement of people across the border.

The agreement said that both nations would establish "teams" to meet regularly and follow up on commitments made within their respective borders, including "measures to counter the cartels, strengthen border security and eliminate clandestine border tunnels, address illicit financial flows, enhance collaboration to prevent fuel theft, increase inspections, investigations and prosecutions to stop the flow of drugs and arms."

It continued:

Our close coordination has allowed us to secure the border, reduce fentanyl trafficking, and advance intelligence sharing, all within our respective legal frameworks. [We] further intend to strengthen collaboration in public health and coordinate campaigns to prevent the abuse of illicit substances

and opioids.

Earlier this year, Trump claimed that Mexico is “run by cartels.” Historically, there is a measure of truth to that claim. Drug cartels have bribed high-level government officials and their families at least as far back as the 1988-1994 presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

Genaro García Luna, the secretary of public security under President Felipe Calderon (2006 to 2012) was convicted in 2023 in U.S. federal court of cartel-related charges, including drug trafficking; and Gen. Tomás Ángeles Dauahare, Calderón’s sub-secretary of National Defense, has declared that Calderón knew about García Luna’s cartel involvement.

Others have claimed that AMLO himself was a recipient of campaign funding from the Sinaloa Cartel, and it is the case that he made a special effort to reach out to the mother of the co-leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquín “Chapo” Guzmán Loera, who was convicted in U.S. federal court in 2019 of trafficking, and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In any event, at whatever level, national or state, undoubtedly there has been significant corruption of MORENA political honchos, something Sheinbaum and her administration want to keep under wraps.

Two weeks ago Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada García, the other co-leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, pleaded guilty to two counts of drug trafficking. Such a plea would require El Mayo to testify as to those complicit with him, both in the cartels and the government. Without doubt there are government officials who will be exposed by him.

Trump previously floated the deployment of US troops to dismantle Mexico’s cartels, and threatened drone strikes on fentanyl labs or to kill cartel bosses on Mexican territory.

At the time, Sheinbaum turned down Trump’s “offer,” insisting that while Mexico was willing to cooperate on law enforcement efforts and intelligence sharing, no US troops would be allowed inside the country on anti-narcotics missions.

The Sheinbaum administration hopes that the agreement on enhanced cooperation reached on Wednesday will prevent the Trump administration from taking unilateral military action on Mexican soil, at least for the time being.

The Mexican navy is already active in stopping the flow of drugs, especially cocaine trafficking through the Pacific, the main corridor for transnational cartels.

A senior Mexican naval officer stressed Wednesday that if the US asked Mexico’s navy to open fire on a vessel and kill its crew, it would be against Mexican law, and greatly damage the relationship the two militaries have built up.

Of course, the White House’s enthusiasm for Mexico and

Sheinbaum is in large part due to her accommodating, if not fawning, approach to Trump, which many in Mexico see as appeasement.

She previously had helped curb migration flows toward the US, massively increased drug seizures, and allowed the transfer of what is now more than 50 cartel leaders north. She has also imposed tariffs on Chinese goods and struck agreements on cross-border water transfers, all wins that the White House has touted as accomplishments.

Mexico hopes for new agreements with the US in trade, tariffs and investments, which it desperately needs to reduce business uncertainty. Despite threats, so far Trump has only imposed relatively moderate tariffs on Mexico, backing off from more extreme threats. The entire 2020 United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (T-MEC) that entered into force in July 2020 is up for renegotiation, so Sheinbaum has been treading softly.

Despite the apparent lighter touch with Mexico put forward by Rubio last week and the pledge that the US will foster security cooperation and respect Mexico’s sovereignty and territory, that policy could turn on a dime. US imperialism could quickly put into high gear its impetus toward full on war and invasion of Mexico, even though that would result in a highly bloody and drawn out conflict, potentially triggering a confrontation as well with the close to 40 million US residents and citizens of Mexican extraction.

In fact, the US is attempting to reassert its power and strategic influence over the entire Latin American region, which includes its Mexican neighbor. In its existential conflict with China, which is heavily invested in the region, US imperialism seeks control over the region’s critical resources, such as rare earth elements, lithium, gold, oil and natural gas.

The slide of US imperialism toward further violence in Mexico, and throughout Latin America, requires a class response: the united movement of the working class across the Americas, and internationally, to bring to an end to the capitalist nation-state system.



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