

Body Counts And Tipping Points

Anyone who has been paying attention to the news knows that drug violence has escalated rapidly in Mexico. More than 7,000 people have died over the last 14 months, and the violence has spilled over the border into Texas. Governor Rick Perry recently visited the far west city of El Paso, which is just across the border from Ciudad Juarez, and was so alarmed that he asked Obama to send one thousand federal troops or border agents for assistance. Obama declined, and later told a group of reporters, *“We’ve got a very big border with Mexico. I’m not interested in militarizing the border.”*

Perry wasn’t asking to “militarize” the entire U.S.-Mexico border, just for help in protecting the citizens of El Paso. But that apparently isn’t enough justification for Obama, whose response suggested he is even less likely to send troops should the entire border actually need militarization – which it might. (Some would argue it already does.)

Obama told the Dallas Morning News, *“We’re going to examine whether and if National Guard deployments would make sense and under what circumstances they would make sense. I don’t have a particular tipping point in mind.”* One would hope the residents of El Paso read the Dallas papers, as they might want to know that their President isn’t quite sure how many of them have to be killed by Mexican drug smugglers before he’ll take the situation seriously. Would that number be 10? 50? 100? 500? How many murders of Americans by Mexicans constitutes Obama’s *“tipping point?”*

Homeland Security official Roger Rufe said *“We’re not concerned, at least at this point, about that violence spilling over into our cities.”* Rufe may not have noticed that drug cartels have been blamed for more than 560 kidnappings in Phoenix in 2007 and the first half of 2008. (Perhaps they were all “peaceful” kidnappings.) Rufe, like Obama, said *“We very much do not want to militarize our border,” but troops would not be called in until other agencies are “overwhelmed.”* Rufe, again like Obama, did not designate a specific “tipping point.”

Changing directions, the Homeland Security attaché to Mexico said U.S. tourists traveling south of the border have gotten the wrong impression as well, and that Mexican violence is not as bad as it is portrayed. (There were more than 1,000 killings in the first eight weeks of 2009. It takes even Detroit two years to match that body count.)

The temporary resident of the Oval Office also said that within *“a few months”* he would come up with a plan to reduce the U.S. demand for drugs and stop the flow of money and weapons from the U.S. to Mexico. Someone might want to remind Obama that for 40 years the United States has been engaged in a “war on drugs” and Washington has never been able to significantly reduce the demand. Obama – himself a former user of marijuana and cocaine and therefore part of the problem – now wants us to believe he’s got a solution that the previous seven Presidents were never able to come up with. (And he’s going to put an end to earmarks too!)

Obama's "plan" likely involves new gun laws, such as H.R. 45, the "Blair Holt Act of 2009," which will place severe licensing restrictions on gun owners. (The legislation was introduced by none other than Illinois Congressman Bobby Rush, a co-founder and former member of radical Illinois Black Panther Party, who himself served a six-month prison term for a weapons conviction.) Obama naively believes that if you simply take guns away from law-abiding civilians, the gang-bangers and drug dealers will somehow also be unable to get their hands on them. His "hope and change" message will somehow encourage thugs to turn in all their weapons and stop obtaining new ones. (Australia's been there and done that and it doesn't work – crime went up, in fact.)

In Obama's mind, of course, the problem is not Mexican drug smugglers who have no respect for the law; it is a lack of federal drug-treatment programs in the United States. *"We're fighting with one hand tied behind our back because our effort to lower demand is grossly under-funded,"* said Obama. (Surprise! He needs more money! Perhaps he could have traded the stimulus bill's \$4.19 billion to ACORN and other "Community Stabilization Activities" for border security and methadone.) *"The average person who's seeking serious substance abuse treatment in a big city like Dallas or Chicago typically has a three, four or six-month waiting list to get enrolled."* To a reasonable number of people that statement could be interpreted as meaning Obama doesn't want to cut off the illegal drugs of anyone who has not yet received free substance abuse treatment. He might as well have said, *"Well, if we stop the drugs from getting into the United States, that will inconvenience some of our addicts... and we certainly wouldn't want to do that – after all, they tend to vote Democrat... and some even produce Hollywood blockbuster movies!"*

Obama reinforces that interpretation by saying, *"If we can reduce demand, obviously that allows us to focus more effectively where interdiction is needed."* But unless and until someone can come up with an effective way to eliminate the demand, shutting off the supply will work wonders. Similarly, you might be able to enroll your teen-ager in an expensive psychiatric treatment program to reduce cell-phone use... but taking away the cell phone is probably cheaper and more effective.

On March 11 Obama named Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske his "national drug czar." Obama, however, sees drugs not as a crime problem but a health issue. *"We do have to treat this as a public health problem, and we do have to have significant law enforcement. If we can reduce demand, obviously that allows us to focus more effectively where interdiction is needed."* (And if jewelry stores would stop selling jewelry, jewelry stores wouldn't get robbed.)

Before the election Obama called the "war on drugs" a *"total failure"* – and now plans on following the same failed battle strategy as all his predecessors, saying he wants to put a fresh emphasis on prevention and treatment. He might want to re-think his viewpoint.

And Governor Perry, you might want to consider calling up the National Guard on your own – before Obama confiscates the guns of El Paso residents.

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March 12, 2009

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