

AFSC DELEGATION TO MEXICO:

Shared Security and Roots of Migration in Arms Trade

Location:

Mexico City, Guerrero, one other Mexican state

Proposed Dates:

June 12-26 2016 (final confirmation in mid-March)

A U.S. delegation of 15 activists and journalists will visit Mexico in June 2016 for approximately 12 days. The visit will explore the nature of arms sales and U.S. militarization in Mexico and their impacts on Mexicans and Central American migrants in various parts of the country that are impacted by militarization and arms sales, and that have nonviolent social movements addressing security and state violence.

A majority of participants will be from AFSC and allied groups in the United States, including key youth, activists, and journalists/videographers. The group will begin in Mexico City, hearing from human rights, migrant support, and weapons control organizations. Then it will travel to two regions, one where Mexican communities are directly impacted by violence aggravated by the weapons trade (probably Guerrero, where Ayotzinapa is located), and one where the delegation may hear from Central American migrants impacted by Mexican immigration enforcement and community agencies working with migrants (Chiapas or Oaxaca).

To consolidate the relationships, analysis, and advocacy developed during the delegation, a brief mini-tour will follow the delegation, with visits to California and Washington, DC, by two representatives of ally groups from Mexico, for nine days in September 2016. The work will also include production of at least one video based on testimonies gathered during the delegation, for use and distribution with communities in the United States and Mexico.

Background:

Since September 2014, when 43 students were disappeared by Mexican police in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, Mexicans have been highly mobilized to end state violence and impunity, with a high degree of awareness of the US role in arming the Mexican state, which is deeply complicit in both direct human rights abuses and with the violence of organized crime. Mexico has become a narco-state at the highest levels; the United States should not be arming such a state. The Mexican army and navy have committed abuses and been implicated in criminal organizations, but police forces are especially corrupt.

US arms sales to the Mexican police and military have grown enormously, to \$3.5 billion since the end of 2012. The bulk of the dollar value of these sales is in helicopters used by police, Army, Navy and Air Force, as well as Humvees (armored vehicles). In May 2015, a Federal Police operation in Tanhuato, Michoacán fired from a Blackhawk helicopter indiscriminately at members of a drug trafficking organization, killing 42 people. In addition, there is an even larger volume of military-grade assault weapons—that are purchased commercially in the United States and trafficked to Mexico for use by criminal organizations.

At the same time, Mexico is a transit state for people fleeing violence in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, which have the highest homicide rates in the world. After a large influx of children from these countries arrived at the U.S. border in the summer of 2014, the United States urged Mexico to detain

these migrants in southern Mexico, and Mexico has done so in a massive way. The U.S.-supported detention and deportation of Northern Triangle immigrants by Mexican agents – Programa Frontera Sur - has splintered migration routes, pushing refugees and migrants into more dangerous areas dominated by organized crime – which obtains its weapons from the United States, through illegal trade.

In March 2016, an international caravan through Central America and Mexico on its way to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs in New York will draw attention to the violence generated by the drug war, working with human rights and other civil society groups across Mexico. The delegation provides a useful follow-on to connections made by the caravan, whose organizers we are in touch with. Members of SOA Watch and Marin Interfaith Task Force have expressed interest in participating.

This project addresses multiple concerns, including: U.S. weapons and military transfers to Mexico that subvert needs for true shared security, and the ways that escalated militarization, violence, and human rights abuses in Mexico contribute to state violence and impunity for human rights abuses. Advocacy goals of the delegation and project include: a) increasing transparency around US arms sales to Mexico, and b) understanding and reducing the pressure from the U.S. on Mexico to interdict and repatriate Central American migrants without the opportunity to solicit protection or refuge.

Objectives of the delegation include:

- Lay the groundwork for collaboration between AFSC and allies from both the United States and Mexico to work on issues of violence and weapons.
- Develop our knowledge and analysis on these issues.
- Establish connections with young people and indigenous communities confronting violence in Mexico, to strengthen AFSC's youth network and awareness of issues linking youth.
- Gather video testimony and footage for a video to be used in a U.S. campaign and grassroots education on impacts of the weapons trade and militarization on human rights and migration.
- Lay the groundwork for a campaign that focuses on arms dealers and public policy.
- Contribute to AFSC's capacity to conduct relevant research, through opportunities to interview officials and persons impacted by militarism during the delegation.
- Develop and produce an infographic that charts the timeline of past arms sales to Mexico that preceded the current violence, and current arms transfers, leading to... what future?

Longer term follow-up will include dissemination of the video produced from footage gathered during the delegation; production of grassroots education and advocacy resources on the issues; further advocacy for the goals described above; and working with media to draw mainstream attention to the issues addressed by the delegation.

Cost: \$1500, includes all costs within Mexico, between arrival/departure in Mexico City.

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