In Brief:

The main concern in Mexico is the drug traffic and narco-related activities. The Mexican drug cartels have as many as 100,000 foot soldiers, which is about the size of the Mexican army. Drug cartels are active in the shared border with the US and police corruption and collusion with drug cartels is a crucial problem. The current President, Felipe Caleron, has made abating drug trafficking one of the top priorities of his administration.

A New Struggle: The War Against Drugs

Mexico is a major drug-producing nation: a) an estimated 90% of the cocaine smuggled into the United States every year moves through Mexico and b) fueled by the increasing demand for drugs in the United States, the country has become a major supplier of heroin, producer and distributor of ecstasy, and the largest foreign supplier of marijuana and methamphetamine to the U.S.'s market. Major drug syndicates control the majority of drug trafficking in the country, and Mexico is a significant money-laundering center.

In 2007, there was a major escalation in the Mexican Drug War: a) Cultivation of opium poppy in 2007 rose to 17,050 acres (69.0 km²), yielding a potential production of 19.84 tons of pure heroin or 55.12 tons of “black tar” heroin. Black tar is the dominant form of Mexican heroin consumed in the western United States. b) Marijuana cultivation increased to 21,992 acres (89.00 km²) in 2007, yielding a potential production of 17,416.52 tons.

The Mexican government conducts the largest independent illicit-crop eradication program in the world, but Mexico continues to be the primary transshipment point for U.S.-bound cocaine from South America.

Articles:

In May 2008, Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora announced that over 4,000 people had been killed in drug-related violence since President Calderon took office—1,400 of the deaths occurred in 2008 alone.

In Aug. 2008, hundreds of thousands of protesters across the country marched for the more than 2,700 people who were killed and 300 kidnapped in drug-related violence since January 2008. In Dec. 2008, the number of killings registered between 1 January and 2 December was 5,376—a rise of 117% from the previous year. In Nov. 2008 alone, there were 943 drug-related murders.

In Dec. 2008, the U.S. released $197 million of a $400 million plan called the Merida Initiative to help Mexico fight the drug cartels, yet drug violence continued mostly unabated. By the end of 2009, an estimated 6,500 people had been killed in drug-related violence.
Despite Calderón’s pledge to bring down the drug cartels, drug-related violence escalated into 2010. After the fatal shooting in March 2010 of a pregnant U.S. consulate employee by an alleged drug trafficker, Calderón stepped up his pressure on the U.S. to take responsibility for its role in the crisis; U.S. arms traffickers supply weapons to the cartels and drug users in the U.S. are consumers of Mexican drugs. As the violence spilled over into the U.S., officials did in fact acknowledge the country’s role in the growing problem and the potential risks to U.S. national security. The U.S. and Mexico revised their counter narcotics strategy with a $330 million program intended to expand the Merida Initiative, which was begun under President Bush. The plan includes strengthening poor communities to give citizens alternatives to crime, better screening at the border, and shifting the focus of funding from military equipment to a civilian police force that will patrol Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez.

Late April and early May 2009 brought a new challenge: a flu outbreak. A new strain of influenza, known as swine flu, originated in Mexico and spread to at least 24 other countries. The World Health Organization declared that a pandemic was a possibility. Originally, Swine Flu was thought to be quite dangerous, though as time passed, Mexican authorities said they may have overestimated the threat. As a precaution, the Mexican government shut down all nonessential business for five days starting on May 1, 2009. Other governments limited travel to and from Mexico.