

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February #, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to urge the Department of State to consider designating many of the world's most violent drug cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs).

Under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), Congress gave the State Department the authority to designate certain organizations as FTOs. To be designated as an FTO, an organization must 1) be a foreign organization 2) engage in or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorism and 3) threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national defense, foreign relations, or economic interests of the United States.

Numerous drug cartels employ terrorist tactics that clearly fit this definition, such as the Reynosa/Los Metros faction of the Gulf Cartel, the Cartel Del Noreste faction of Los Zetas, the Jalisco New Generation Cartel offshoot of the Sinaloa Cartel. These groups use terror to intimidate and to advance their agenda. They threaten the stability of governments across the globe. Even the United Nation's Security Council has recognized the clear link between drug trafficking and terrorism.

Many drug cartels are based in Latin America, regions of which have seen decades of ruthless violence. According to a Congressional Research Service report, since 2006 there have been roughly 150,000 organized crime-related killings in Mexico alone. Additionally, Mexico's Citizens' Council for Public Security lists that forty-two of the fifty most violent cities in the world are in Latin America. Many of these cities are more dangerous than war zones. Drug cartels have committed heinous acts of terrorism, from carrying out bombings that have killed innocent people, conducting ISIS-style beheadings, assassinating government officials and members of law enforcement, and engaging in torture and indiscriminate murder.

Violent drug cartels are not just a domestic policy issue limited to their home countries. These groups view America's sovereign borders as merely minor inconveniences. In 2017, Immigration and Customs Enforcement made more than 2,300 fentanyl arrests and 405 seizures of fentanyl totaling 2,383 pounds. Additionally, cartels operate human trafficking operations into the U.S. that compel victims into forced labor or sexual slavery. While it is difficult to estimate the number of people trafficked each year into the United States, the Department of Justice increased the number of trafficking cases filed by 79% between 2009 and 2016. About 80% of trafficked victims are women, and half are children.

Given these harrowing circumstances, law enforcement needs to have every tool at their disposal to dismantle drug cartels. Labeling cartels that utilize terrorism as FTOs would make it unlawful for any person who knowingly provides “material support or resources” to the cartel to enter the United States, prevent any member of a designated drug cartel from legally entering the United States, and allow the Secretary of the Treasury to block all assets possessed or controlled by the drug cartels. It would also further stigmatize these groups both at home and abroad.

We believe that many drug cartels, such as those listed above, fit the INA’s definition of FTOs. Accordingly, we urge the Department to designate these and similar cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. The brave men and women of law enforcement deserve all the help they can get in combating these animals.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

MARK E. GREEN, M.D.
Member of Congress

CHIP ROY
Member of Congress