

“No Small Drop in the Bucket”
SAT’s Train the Trainer Graduation Blog Post
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It’s easy for people to hear about the Merida Initiative and wonder how the money is being spent, or if it’s really making a difference. The recent graduation of several Mexican Customs (SAT) Officers from a Train the Trainer program provided by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) vividly answers both questions.

Es muy fácil oír acerca de la Iniciativa Merida y preguntarse en que se ha gastado el dinero, o si realmente esta haciendo la diferencia. La reciente graduación de varios miembros de la Aduana Mexicana, oficiales del programa Entrena al entrenador, que es ofrecido por la CBP, responde ambas preguntas.

In fact, this graduation represents a microcosm of how Mexican and U.S. policymakers are working to achieve shared security goals. This one agency and its band of officers characterize what is happening all over Mexico; the professionalization of law enforcement, institutionalizing and sustaining the rule of law and a culture of lawfulness, and disrupting the capacity of drug trafficking organizations.

De hecho, esta graduación representa un microcosmos de como México y Estados Unidos trabajan para lograr metas de seguridad en conjunto. Esta agencia y sus oficiales se

These new officers, who will soon be tasked with participating in the training of all new Mexican Customs officers, represent a nationwide effort to professionalize law enforcement work in Mexico. During their intense three-week course at the CBP Field Office Academy in Glynco, Georgia, they dedicated significant time not only to skills in antiterrorism, officer safety, tactical response, and questioning and interviewing techniques, but also the ethical principles of public service; loyalty, integrity, justice, responsibility, and vocation of service. The Mexican Government is working overtime to change the culture and perception of its law enforcement authorities. By instilling pride in public service, Mexico is building a strong foundation for rule of law and prudent officers to enforce it.

SAT is also an early adopter of the vetting and anti-corruption effort known as “Control de Confianza,” a program designed to instill public confidence in government authorities. Control de Confianza works two ways. It uses a variety of tools to vet recruits before bringing them into law enforcement, including polygraph exams and background checks. This process smartly weeds out applicants from the hiring process. Control de Confianza also employs an internal investigations function that scrutinizes law enforcement officials already on the job, assuring that police who enter the force free of corruption stay that way.

On the ground, these officers serve a critical function in U.S. and Mexican efforts to create a safe and secure border. Customs officers are on the front lines monitoring not only the security of travelers, but guns and bulk cash moving south and drugs and human trafficking moving north. With every successful seizure, SAT officers disrupt the capacity of drug trafficking organizations by chipping away at the very assets that make them so powerful.

And thus we have the microcosm. While the training of a handful of Mexican Customs officers may seem like a drop in the bucket at first glance, it’s more like the dye that colors St. Patty’s day beer green; small drops, but wildly effective.

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