# Significant arrests of drug lords mark new chapter in battle against trafficking



On Thursday, a significant development occurred in the ongoing battle against drug trafficking, as Mexican authorities detained two prominent figures in the narcotics world: Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, a co-founder of the notorious Sinaloa cartel, and Joaquín Guzmán López, the son of the infamous Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. This event took place following their arrival in Texas, onboard a private aircraft, having been seized upon landing at an airport in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, near El Paso.

This high-profile event has resulted in an unusual public appeal from Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. During his daily press briefing, President López Obrador urged drug cartels to refrain from internal conflicts following these notable arrests. He warned that increasing confrontations would only lead to further suffering and loss of life. This appeal marks a continuation of his strategy to promote dialogue and reduce violence associated with organised crime.

The detentions of Zambada, aged 76, and Guzmán López, aged 38, have shed light on potential betrayals and intrigue within the cartel's ranks. Zambada’s attorney, Frank Perez, has claimed that his client was forcibly kidnapped by Guzmán López, who allegedly ambushed and handcuffed Zambada before transporting him to the United States. According to Perez, Zambada believed he was travelling to northern Mexico to inspect real estate.

US authorities have provided a contrasting narrative, detailing how Guzmán López voluntarily surrendered and subsequently led to the capture of Zambada, who has eluded law enforcement for decades. This series of events has prompted sharp criticism from Mexican officials, including President López Obrador, who has demanded a full report from the United States regarding the operation.

Security concerns following the arrests have led the Mexican military to deploy an additional 200 elite paratrooper soldiers to the state of Sinaloa, as a preventive measure. Despite these precautions, there were no immediate reports of escalated violence over the weekend.

The history of the Sinaloa cartel, founded in the late 1980s, is laden with violence and significant control over Mexico’s drug trade. The organisation has been pivotal in the country's drug war, contributing to high levels of violence and numerous deaths. El Chapo, the former leader, is currently serving a life sentence in the United States after being extradited in 2017. His capture, escape, and subsequent reapprehension have played a crucial role in the cartel’s infamy.

The cartel's structure has been fragmented over the years, with factions led by Zambada and El Chapo’s sons, including Guzmán López. This internal division has often resulted in violent power struggles. The latest arrests not only exhibit the cartel’s continuing influence but also highlight ongoing efforts by law enforcement to dismantle these powerful criminal networks.

The legal proceedings following the arrests are underway. Zambada has entered a not guilty plea to all charges in US District Court in El Paso and is scheduled for a status conference on August 1st. Guzmán López is expected to appear in federal court in Chicago on related charges of narcotics trafficking, money laundering, and firearms violations.

The US authorities' operation, which led to these arrests, has yet again underscored the international efforts aimed at combating drug trafficking. The implications of these arrests on the cartel's dynamics and Mexico's security landscape remain to be seen, as the country’s administration continues to navigate the complexities of addressing organised crime.