

# Local police to play key role in Mexico's crime war

**Mexican President Felipe Calderón announced a change in tactics in his war on crime -- he plans to rely more on local rather than federal police.**

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**MEXICO CITY** - President Felipe Calderón pledged Monday to wage a permanent war against organized crime by coordinating more closely with local police and giving all law enforcement better training, equipment and intelligence work.

Calderón has largely relied on federal police and soldiers for a series of massive anti-crime sweeps in several Mexican states, but he has said future efforts will need to rely more on local police.

"In order to win the war on crime, it is indispensable that we work in a united manner," Calderón told a national gathering of state governors and top public safety officials.

His comments came three days after his administration extradited four alleged drug lords and 11 other suspects to the United States. He said he wouldn't give up the battle.

"This is a permanent fight in which, unfortunately, many have lost their lives," he said. "We are fighting without pause so that these sacrifices will not have been in vain."

Karen Tandy, chief of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, described the extraditions as "an enormous leap forward."

"Most were major drug traffickers. Many were long-term targets of the United States. All now face their worst fear: U.S. justice," Tandy said in a media conference call Monday. "On behalf of the DEA, I have one last thing to say to these 15 criminals: Welcome to the first day of the rest of your lives."

Tough-to-control prisons, untrained or corrupt local police and citizens' distrust of police are all major obstacles that Calderón faces in his crackdown on drug violence that includes executions, gun battles and beheadings.

He said on Monday that he hopes to use the federal operations to strengthen local police, although in some cities, like Tijuana, one of the federal agents' first jobs has been to investigate local forces for alleged corruption or violence.

"We will extend and fortify joint operations against organized crime, with the aim of having these operations result, in the end, in leaving behind strengthened local police forces," Calderón said.

He proposed better training, equipment, vetting and intelligence work, including a unified national criminal information data center.