



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on February 23, 2026

Is the Cartel Uprising in Mexico a Pretext for a U.S. Resource Grab?

Coordinated outbreaks of cartel violence have struck parts of western Mexico, particularly in the states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán. According to statements from Mexico's Secretariat of Security and citizen reports carried by [national outlets](#), armed groups set fire to cargo trucks and private vehicles, blocked major highways linking Guadalajara to Puerto Vallarta, and exchanged gunfire with federal security forces. Authorities confirmed multiple fatalities, including suspected cartel members and security personnel, while local governments urged residents in affected municipalities to [remain indoors as a precaution](#).



AP Images

Mexican National Guard patrolling after cartel uprising, Feb. 22, 2026

Commercial flights at Puerto Vallarta International Airport experienced [temporary delays amid road blockades](#), though federal officials said core infrastructure remained operational. Security analysts described the unrest as consistent with past cartel retaliation tactics designed to demonstrate territorial control rather than sustained combat. Reports of kidnappings, however, such as a group of tourists from Mexico City [abducted in Mazatlán](#), underscore the human toll.

Setup for U.S. Supply Chains?

This turmoil is unfolding against a backdrop of [critical mineral production](#). Mexico holds [vast reserves](#) of [lithium, silver, and other critical minerals](#) essential for batteries, electronics, and the Western surveillance capitalism economy — think data centers, electric vehicles, and AI infrastructure. The [U.S. Geological Survey](#) identifies Mexico as a top producer of eight critical minerals; it is the world's largest silver producer and boasts untapped lithium deposits in Sonora. CJNG [i.e., [Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación](#)] territories [overlap key mining areas](#), like silver-rich Guanajuato and Jalisco, where cartels extort operations and [kidnap workers](#).

U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated calls to deploy U.S. military to "sweep away the cartels" may mask deeper concerns about securing supply chains and defending them from China. Echoing historical interventions, such rhetoric recalls propaganda expert Edward Bernays' campaign in the 1950s, portraying Guatemala's Jacobo Árbenz as a communist threat to justify a CIA-backed coup over United Fruit Company interests — creating the "banana republic" trope.

Today's media frenzy over cartel violence, amplified by outlets framing Mexico as a narco-state, could serve as similar propaganda to rationalize invasion. Corruption plagues Mexico, with cartels infiltrating politics. President [Claudia Sheinbaum](#), rejecting Trump's offers, argued that [aggressive tactics against narcos violate legal frameworks and human rights](#), and prioritized due process over confrontation. Yet, her administration faces criticism for leniency, as violence surges despite claims of restored normalcy.



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Amid unconfirmed evacuation rumors — amid her appeals for calm — the cartels' real grip on Mexico could provide the U.S. with a modern "banana republic" excuse.



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