

Mexico confirms arrest of drug kingpin wanted by the U.S.

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Photograph provided by the Secretary of the Navy (Semar) of the Government of Mexico of the arrest of Mexican drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, in San Simón (Mexico). Caro Quintero, the most wanted fugitive by the United States Drug Enforcement Agency | Photo: Semar

Mexico City, July 16 (RHC)-- Mexican federal authorities captured in the state of Sinaloa (northwest) the drug trafficker Rafael Caro Quintero, 69, founder of the defunct Guadalajara Cartel, for whom the U.S. anti-drug agency is offering \$20 million with an extradition order, confirmed on Friday night the federal Secretariat of the Navy.

"In an operation carried out by the Attorney General's Office (FGR) in coordination with naval personnel, the arrest of an alleged lawbreaker was achieved in the state of Sinaloa (northwest), identified as a priority target for the Government of Mexico and the United States," said a statement from the Mexican Navy.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) "recognizes the aforementioned alleged drug trafficker as the leader of a criminal group in this country" and requests him to Mexico "with an extradition order," says the Navy's statement.

This action results from field and cabinet work "carried out since his release in 2013," says the statement, which does not mention the man wanted for drug trafficking by name but offers the details of his case.

Caro Quintero was released in 2013 after serving 28 years in prison due to a procedural error. Days after his surprise release, two new arrest warrants were issued; he was one of the ten most wanted men in the world by the United States.

After locating the fugitive in the municipality of San Simón Choix, in the state of Sinaloa, "the aforementioned target was located in the bushes by a canine element of this institution, named Max, whose search and rescue training allowed his location," details the Navy's report. The detainee was handed over to the Attorney General's Office for the corresponding investigation.

In the same communiqué, the Navy reports that during the operational activities carried out by this institution, "a Mexican Navy aircraft crashed in Los Mochis, Sinaloa," the same state where the fugitive was arrested.

Based on the information available, "a Black Hawk helicopter suffered an accident, the causes of the accident are unknown at the moment," reports the Navy without linking the two incidents. The aircraft "was carrying 15 people, 14 of whom unfortunately lost their lives and one is receiving medical attention," the statement said.

The DEA accuses the famous drug trafficker of the murder of US drug agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena and pilot Alfredo Zavala Avela, perpetrated in February 1985 in Mexico.

The US government is offering the highest reward for the veteran drug lord, who is originally from the legendary remote town of Badiraguato, Sinaloa, in the mountains of the so-called Golden Triangle of drug trafficking (Sonora, Durango and Chihuahua), where his contemporary Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, founder of the Sinaloa Cartel who is serving a life sentence in prison in the US, was also born.

The arrest comes days after President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's visit to Washington, D.C., where he met at the White House with his US counterpart, Joe Biden.

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