Gary J. Hale
U.S.-Mexico National Security and Intelligence Policy Expert

Gary J. Hale is a policy expert who completed a 37-year career with the U.S federal government and who specializes in Mexico national security and U.S.-Mexico border issues.

Hale began his career as a Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) Operator with the U.S. Army Security Agency and worked on Soviet, Communist Bloc, Middle East and North Africa issues while stationed at a classified facility in Europe (1972 -1977.) During his last assignment he served as an Executive Agent for the National Security Agency at the U.S. Air Force School of Applied Cryptologic Sciences, Goodfellow Air Force Base, San Angelo, Texas (1977-1978.) Hale joined the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 1979 and rose to the rank of the senior-most DEA Intelligence Official operating on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border during his last posting in Houston where he was reported to the DEA and to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in Washington, D.C.

Hale was the Embassy Intelligence Coordinator, U.S. Embassy La Paz, Bolivia from 1987-1990. In 1990 Hale received the DEA Administrator's Award, the agency's highest recognition, for conceiving and implementing Operation SCREAMING EAGLE that led to the seizure of hundreds of general aviation aircraft involved in cocaine transport throughout Bolivia, Peru and Colombia. He also directed a tactical operation that resulted in the capture of Roberto SUAREZ-Gomez, known as Bolivia's "King of Cocaine." Hale also received a Special Act Award for his participation in pre-invasion intelligence operations (Operation BLUE SPOON) and during the invasion of Panama and the arrest of Panamanian dictator Manuel NORIEGA (Operation JUST CAUSE.)

Hale had various assignments in Washington, D.C. (1990-2000) including assignment as Chief, DEA HQs Intelligence Publications Unit where he authored, edited, proofed, laid-out and published national-level strategic analysis publications such as the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report; the National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee Annual Assessment; the Worldwide Cocaine Situation Report; numerous Country Profiles; the Laboratory Lexicon - A Guide to Cocaine Laboratory Terminology and others. Hale served on a multi-agency fact-finding panel of intelligence experts commissioned by Attorney General Janet Reno to assess the drug, crime and security situation in the Caribbean as it related to the overall threat to the U.S. Hale subsequently authored and briefed a theatre-wide assessment to General Reno and other policy makers.

As Chief, Sensitive Operations Unit Hale served as DEA's National SIGINT Officer and graduated from the National Senior Cryptologic Course (CY-600) at NSA-Ft. Meade, MD. In this capacity, Hale managed DEA's worldwide SIGINT collection programs, coordinated unilateral and bilateral collection operations with NSA and sanitized and disseminated SIGINT products to DEA offices worldwide. He developed policy by formulating a Target Specific Information (TSI) protocol that provided a legal mechanism for federal law enforcement agencies to request support from the National SIGINT system.

In 1993, Hale served a tour of duty at the U.S. Embassy Bogota, Colombia where he participated in the capture of Pablo ESCOBAR and the demise of the Medellin Cartel. In 1995, Hale was recognized by Attorney General Janet Reno as a "Hispanic Hero Serving America." In 1997-1998 Hale served at the U.S. Embassy Mexico City where he participated in the capture of head of the Juarez Cartel, Amado CARRILLO-Fuentes, also known as the "Lord of the Skies." He also led the hunt for Agustin VASQUEZ-Mendoza, a federal fugitive who killed a DEA Agent in Phoenix in 1994 and who was hiding in the mountains of the state of Michoacán.

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As Chief of Intelligence, DEA Houston Field Division (2000-2010,) Hale authored drug policy papers including the first-ever DEA submission to the Presidential Daily Brief; conceptualized and developed an Alternate Futures - Red Cell Analysis for Washington policy makers; served as a speaker and panel member for bi-lateral drug policy plenary sessions in Cuernavaca, Washington, San Antonio and Houston with U.S. and Mexico Cabinet members, agency heads and members of the U.S. Congress.

In November 2008 Hale served as a Mexico expert for the Obama Presidential Transition Team by providing policy direction on the issue of cross-border, or spill-over violence from Mexico to the U.S. In this role, he crafted the federal government definition for spill-over violence and assisted the intelligence community with preparing a briefing for president-elect Obama.

Hale was the keynote speaker at DEA Hispanic Heritage Ceremonies in Dallas (2002) and Houston (2008, 2009) and was a featured speaker and panel member at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy regarding drug strategies employed in the U.S. and Mexico (2008, 2010.) In 2009 Hale served as a keynote speaker at 29 venues during which he addressed drug enforcement, border violence, terrorism and homeland security issues for approximately 2000 law enforcement, security, intelligence and policy professionals in the U.S. and Mexico. Hale retired from DEA in July 2010 and was appointed as a Drug Policy Fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy in December 2010. In this capacity he has authored numerous publications regarding U.S. and Mexico security issues.

In January 2011, Hale joined the U.S. Embassy Mexico City as the Law Enforcement-Intelligence Program Coordinator for the Merida Initiative. Hale worked closely with U.S. and Government of Mexico (GOM) officials to aid in the analysis of law enforcement intelligence needs and to determine and help define and document program requirements, activities and functions. Hale assisted in the development of intelligence requirements, all-source intelligence-gathering and fusion, development of data collation structures, conduct of research and analysis; development of reporting and dissemination procedures and products, operational planning; force structure and personnel specializations; training and career development; ethics, corruption, vetting, internal affairs, and polygraph.

His knowledge and experience in these areas assisted the development of concepts of operations, programmatic elements, budgetary estimates and implementation and policy strategies for U.S. involvement in the development of Mexican counter-drug forces including the Federal Police (Secretaria de Seguridad Publica – SSP) Army (Secretaria de Defensa - SEDENA,) the Navy (Secretaria de la Marina - SEMAR,) the Federal Attorney General's Office (Procuraduria General de la Republica – PGR) and the national Intelligence Service (Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional – CISEN.) Hale conducted liaison, coordinated, advised, and mentored GOM officials to assist them in better understanding law enforcement intelligence principles and implement effective intelligence-gathering and analytical strategies. In this capacity Hale managed several multi-million-dollar budgets out of a 1.6-billion-dollar enterprise that were used to provide equipment, training and other law enforcement-intelligence capacity assistance to GOM agencies that performed counter-drug missions. Hale provided support by developing intelligence units in numerous Mexican states with emphasis on U.S.-Mexico Border States such as Sonora, Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas and other areas designated by the U.S.-Mexico bi-lateral High-Level Group (HLG) in Washington, D.C. and Mexico City.

In July 2012, Hale separated from the U.S. Embassy to serve as an independent intelligence and national security consultant to the Presidential Transition Team of Enrique Peña-Nieto, then president-elect of Mexico. Hale was tasked with reviewing the national intelligence requirements of the GOM, and the national threat assessment provided during the transition to President Enrique Peña-Nieto by the Calderon administration, to determine what areas need immediate attention, what areas need improvement and what areas need development. Hale provided ideas and proposals for the consideration of the Transition Team including proposals that drew upon existing capabilities.

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Hale recommended the formation of Intelligence Fusion Centers to better track and prosecute drug trafficking, terrorist or other criminal targets. Hale also recommended that intelligence sharing agreements be revised, formalized and written to ensure that national sovereignty is respected, and that Mexico receives the value of intelligence collected by other nations with which it collaborates. As a result of recommendations made by Hale, the GOM began taking steps to establish a "Comando Unico" or Unity of Command between federal and state law enforcement agencies. This structure will be further developed by the creation of the Gendarmería Nacional of first-ever Mexican National Guard. When implemented, the Comando Unico structure will lend itself to passing intelligence methods down to the state level and thereby further increase the intelligence capacity of the various participants throughout the Mexican government, thereby leading to a more secure U.S.-Mexico border.

In October 2012, Hale formed The Center for Trans-Border Security Policy as a forum for Mexican and U.S. academics, jurists, business leaders, students, statesmen and government officials to monitor, assess and analyze Trans-Border Spill-Over Incidents from San Diego to Brownsville. The Center provided objective data analysis and reporting with policy recommendations; produced policy recommendations for maintaining safe borders while ensuring security, continued economic growth and sound immigration policies; advocated for U.S. and Mexico victims of cross-border violence by way of providing information and facts; reviewed and assessed the alleged terrorist-cartel links and their impact on the U.S. Mexico border; provided training and education recommendations to state and federal law makers in order to enact legislation sensitivity training on migrant and other issues a requirement for all local, state, federal and military agents assigned to any border states - northern and southern borders, and served as a resource for U.S. and Mexico local, state and federal agencies operating on the border. Hale sponsored the inaugural conference of the Center for Trans-Border Security Policy in Laredo, Texas on October 26, 2012 where numerous military, state, federal and other policy makers attended and provided their monetary and political support for moving forward. Later, in March 2014, the Center for Trans- Border Security Policy was adopted by the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy where Hale became a founding member and expert at the newly formed Mexico Center.

In August 2015 Mr. Hale was appointed as the Principal Investigator for a research project funded with by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) under Grant Award Number 2015-ST-061-BSH001 through the DHS Office of Science & Technology and the University of Houston Center of Excellence (COE) for Borders, Trade and Immigration.

As Principal Investigator, Mr. Hale provided leadership to a team of scholars and scientists who developed mitigation strategies for a project entitled "Uncovering Human Smuggling Patterns from Guatemala to the U.S." The project involved Human Subjects Research and received Federal Wide Assurance authorization number FWA00024108 from the Department of Health and Human Services as well as separate approvals from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Western Independent Review Board (WIRB) and DHS Compliance Assurance Program Office (CAPO) for the conduct of interviews of hundreds of Central American migrants being processed at U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) detention facilities in various cities along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The primary objective and deliverable of this research project was to develop the "Unknown Got-Aways" (Estimated Illegal Entries) element of the Total Interdiction Rate (TIR) Formula which is used as a measure of effectiveness by the USBP and DHS. In addition, this research yielded other benefits including an understanding of the capacity of the human smuggling networks that pass migrants from Central America through Mexico and into the United States. The project also collected information about the geography of the routes taken by migrants and incorporated Geographic information Systems (GIS) capabilities to catalogue and map data collected during interviews of migrants, as well as information obtained from open sources. The resulting analysis produced a better understanding of the waypoints, support structures and major decision points of the routes taken or used by the migrants and provided DHS and USBP with a model for the development of a quantifiable variable for "Unknown Got-Aways" aspect of the TIR formula. The project concluded in June 2018.

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Mr. Hale has testified as a Subject Matter Expert for asylum cases in federal immigration courts in Dallas and Houston, Texas. His testimony covered the loss of governance and rule of law in Mexico and the implications of Mexican government acquiesance to power sharing with non-government entities as it relates to the United Nations Convention Against Torture (CAT) of 1984.

Mr. Hale holds a B.S. in Computer Sciences from Franklin Pierce University, Nashua, New Hampshire and an LL.M. (*Legum Magister*) in European Law and Judicial Policy from the Universidad de Almería, Spain. Hale is an alumnus of the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government and the University of Virginia's Darden School of Leadership. Hale is a native of Laredo, Texas, is a polyglot who speaks English, Spanish, German and beginner level Arabic. He held a Secret level security clearance with the Department of Defense that expired in 2015.