Ron DeSantis and the Question of Mexico

by Gary Fouse

I won't bother trying to give my non-expert opinion on who did well or badly in last night's Republican debate in Milwaukee. I do want to comment, however, on a statement made by Ron DeSantis (my favored candidate) in answer to a specific question about Mexico and fentanyl. DeSantis stated that he would unilaterally send American forces/police into Mexico to root out the labs and traffickers.

I am as concerned about the fentanyl crisis as anyone, having been a DEA agent and once in Pittsburgh being involved in a major fentanyl operation that had claimed the lives of about 15 drug addicts who thought they were injecting China White heroin.

As was mentioned in the debate, China is complicit in the fentanyl traffic, sending precursors to Mexico where they are used to produce fentanyl which is, in turn, smuggled into the US. Is Mexico doing enough to stop the traffic? No. Mexico has never done enough to stop the traffic. The current president of Mexico, Andres Manuel Lopez-Obrador, has shown himself to be no friend of the US.

Mexico's problems with smuggling and corruption are well known. DEA, which has offices in Mexico, knows full well the problem in this regard. The 1985 kidnapping, torture, and murder of DEA agent Enrique Camarena, a horrific episode that involved official Mexican corruption, is still a thorn in the side of Mexican-American police relations. In short, Mexico has not been a good neighbor to the US for several decades now when it comes to the issues of drug and human smuggling. Stronger measures on our part are clearly necessary.

But sending military forces and additional police personnel into Mexico absent permission and cooperation with that country is not the answer. True, Mexico cannot and will not do it on its own, but a 100% effort with American help, intelligence, and technological assistance could produce better results. But how to gain that 100% cooperation from Mexico? That is the question that has haunted our relations for several decades.

The carrot is not sufficient. We have pumped billions of dollars into Mexico to help them combat the drug traffic. It has not stopped the corruption. We need to use the stick. What I mean by that is to use the threat of a border shutdown, travel advisory to Americans stating that the country is unsafe for travel, and cessation of foreign aid. In other words, eradicate the drug trafficking problem, particularly fentanyl or else.

But an invasion would only produce a catastrophic result. No American would be safe in Mexico, and the Mexican military

would only resist. The US has invaded Mexico before, remember? We never did find Pancho Villa, and if you think Afghanistan was a fool's errand, wait until we invade Mexico.

Of course, all of this discussion is hot air as long as Biden is president. He won't even secure our border with Mexico. As for DeSantis, I wish he would think this out better. If elected, he will surely finish building the wall, and he will get the Border Patrol back to stopping illegal crossings. I support that. In addition to that, he needs to tell Mexico in no uncertain terms that he will cut off aid and put a serious dent in Mexico's tourist industry with a travel advisory for the entire country. We can't stop Americans from going to Mexico, but we can sure educate them as to why they should choose a different beach in a different country. We could also create obstacles to Mexicans living here sending cash transfers back to their families in Mexico. Any country has the right to set limits and restrictions on the export of its own currency.

The main thing, however, is the border, and that includes our ports of entry if necessary. In short, I favor a drastic change in policy toward Mexico. We cannot continue to allow fentanyl to come across our open border and kill thousands upon thousands of our people. In addition to China and Mexico, our current lax border policies are also part of the problem. Self-criticism is also in order.

But to literally invade Mexico is not the answer.