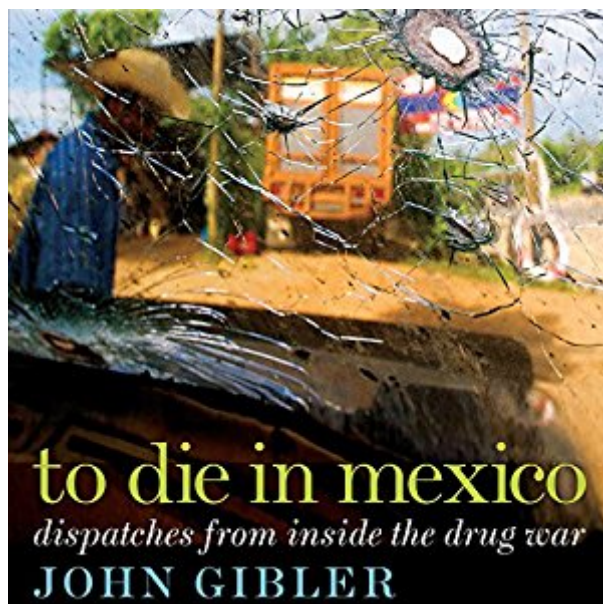


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# To Die In Mexico: Dispatches From Inside The Drug War



## Synopsis

"Gibler is something of a revelation, having been living and writing from Mexico for a range of progressive publications only since 2006, but providing reflections, insights, and a level of understanding worthy of a veteran correspondent." (Latin American Review of Books) Combining on-the-ground reporting and in-depth discussions with people on the frontlines of Mexico's drug war, *To Die in Mexico* tells behind-the-scenes stories that address the causes and consequences of Mexico's multibillion dollar drug trafficking business. John Gibler looks beyond the myths that pervade government and media portrayals of the unprecedented wave of violence now pushing Mexico to the breaking point.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 6 hours and 14 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios

Audible.com Release Date: June 14, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01G7QVLUS

Best Sellers Rank: #60 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Latin America #242

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Politics & Current Events > International Relations #667

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > True Crime

## Customer Reviews

I have read several books on the topic of the current drug war in Mexico from Bowden to Campbell. While I enjoyed each, I found Gibler's book *To Die In Mexico* to be the best in providing both the 35,000 foot view while detailing the situation on the ground. Gibler's book puts the drug war in the context of a larger geopolitical arena in which the drug industry has actually kept a weak global economy turning and how agreements like NAFTA allow shipments of drugs to reach its consumers in the United States. Gibler's book will take you from the streets of Culiacan to Ciudad Juarez to Reynosa, where you meet survivors of murder attempts, families of the dead who cry for justice, and journalists who try to do their jobs in the backdrop of hopeless violence. The book's theme focuses on one word; impunity or the ability for the killers to work unencumbered by the rule of law. The

book illustrates this theme in several ways such describing how murders and kidnappings can happen on busy city streets while federal police and/or the army can be less than a block away. Impunity is also seen in the authorities inability or unwillingness to take action despite knowing identities and location of the killers. And finally impunity dictates the way that journalists in Mexico City, Monterrey, and Juarez are allowed to do their jobs in covering the drug war. By reading this book, one gets the sense that this situation is hopeless since the Mexican government is powerless to stop the drug war, especially given the fact that it seems to favor one cartel over the other and is even implicit in assisting one group get the upper hand.

I've really been looking forward to reading this relatively short and new contribution to the growing body of published work on the drug war. Many of my colleagues have read it and said it was great, so my expectations going into it were pretty high...just so you know. Gibler starts the book off a la Saving Private Ryan, with lots of back-to-back stories of gruesome narco deaths and explanations about the silences that follow them. I particularly like how he details the story of a photographer who snapped shots of a man in police, then Navy, custody one day, only to be taking photos of his body on the side of the road the next day. But then the first chapter started to meander, and I picked up on a couple of things that bugged me. First, Gibler touches upon how the illegality of drugs fuels the violence - true enough. He says, "Legalization would put the traffickers as they exist today out of business." However, he then spends several pages describing how cartels have branched out into kidnapping, extortion, oil theft, etc., which somewhat contradicts his stance on legalization. He even acknowledges that statistics regarding the estimated values of cartel drug profits are only guesses, and sometimes wild ones, so it's tough to see how he reconciles these things. I was happy that he touched upon the extent of cartel money laundering and how much money gets injected into the Mexican economy by the drug trade. However, Gibler drops a bomb here; he quoted a reporter from London's The Observer who said, "Drug money worth billions of dollars kept the financial system afloat at the height of the global crisis." The reporter got this info from a man at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and Gibler ticks off some theoretical statistics about how this is possible.

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