

Press Room

- [Press Releases](#)
- [Speeches and Statements](#)
- [Testimony](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Contacts](#)

National Threat Advisory:

ELEVATED



Significant Risk Of Terrorist Attacks

The threat level in the airline sector is High or Orange. [Read more.](#)

Fact Sheet: Southwest Border: The Way Ahead

 **SHARE**

Release Date: April 15, 2009

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
Contact: 202-282-8010

The United States depends on a secure Southwest border in order to ensure the safety of its citizens and those of Mexico, facilitate legal trade and transit, support lawful immigration and prevent illegal smuggling of guns, drugs, money, and people. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to meet recent increases of cartel violence in Mexico with strong action and solidified coordination with federal, state, local, tribal and Mexican authorities.

DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano announced at the White House last month a major set of Southwest border initiatives designed to support Mexico's campaign against violent drug cartels by limiting the flow of firearms and cash from the United States to Mexico. These initiatives bring more personnel to the Southwest border and place additional technology at strategic locations in order to crack down on the illegal activities that fuel the drug war in Mexico.

DHS has formalized the following operational enhancement plan, building from last month's announcement, which lays out specific information about how each initiative will be implemented. The initiatives will be budget-neutral to the Department, funded by realigning from less urgent activities, tapping available fund balances, and, in some cases, reprogramming to deploy resources where they are currently needed the most.

DHS and the Southwest Border

1. Guard against violent crime spillover into the United States
2. Support Mexico's crackdown campaign against drug cartels in Mexico
3. Reduce movement of contraband in both directions across the border

The exact placement of these increased resources will be determined by shared intelligence and coordinated with all relevant stakeholders: federal, state, local, tribal and international. Specific deployment location information is law enforcement sensitive and is not detailed below to protect operational planning. Furthermore, resources will be supplemented or moved based on continual changes in intelligence information and operational needs. Finally, these deployments parallel the Mexican government's efforts to combat drug trafficking and associated criminal activity. As an example, Mexican officers are embedded in the DHS Border Enforcement Task Forces that are being augmented by this initiative.

Doubling Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) Staffing

DHS will double the number of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents assigned to BESTs—teams that bring together federal, state, local and Mexican authorities in an effort to increase cross-border crime investigations, arrests and prosecutions at strategic locations along the Southwest border.

- Doubling assignments of ICE special agents to BESTs from 95 to 190 will help to facilitate seamless cross-border enforcement actions. The 95 additional ICE investigators will augment BEST task forces at the following locations: San Ysidro and Imperial Valley, Calif.; Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz.; Deming and Las Cruces, N.M.; and El Paso, Laredo, and Rio Grande Valley, Texas. In addition, to further BEST efforts in Mexico, the Department will assign an additional four agents to the Mexico City Attaché to help coordinate BEST investigations.

- BEST details have already begun and the additional personnel are currently in place.

- Cost: \$5.7 million

Tripling DHS Intel Analysts on the SWB

- DHS will triple the number of intelligence analysts working at the Southwest border, providing a greater capability to develop pre-operational intelligence reports, strategic intelligence products and post-operational impact assessments—to ensure DHS resources have the maximum impact possible to protect public safety.

- Thirteen U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement analysts are currently assigned to Southwest-border operations. Eight are assigned to BESTs and five are assigned to the Border Violence Intelligence Center (BVIC) in El Paso, Texas.

- ICE will detail 26 additional analysts to the Southwest border—16 will be assigned to BESTs in Imperial Valley, Calif.; Phoenix, Tucson and Yuma, Ariz.; and El Paso, Laredo and Rio Grande Valley, Texas; five will go to the BVIC and five more to ICE Attaché offices in Hermosillo, Juarez, Mexico City, Monterrey, and Tijuana, Mexico.

- Intelligence analyst details have already begun and the additional personnel are currently in place.

- Cost: \$3.3 million

Increasing ICE Attaché Personnel in Mexico by 50 percent

- DHS will increase ICE Attaché personnel in Mexico by 50 percent. This program supports the Mexican government, as well as domestic ICE offices, by pursuing investigations inside Mexico involving money laundering, narcotics or human trafficking, and weapons smuggling.

- Twenty-four ICE Attaché personnel are currently assigned in Mexico. ICE will detail an additional twelve Office of International Affairs personnel to Attaché offices in Hermosillo, Juarez, Mexico City, Monterrey, and Tijuana, Mexico.

Cost: \$650,000

Doubling Violent Criminal Alien Sections Assignments

- DHS will double the number of ICE Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) personnel assigned to Violent Criminal Alien Sections along the Southwest border. These sections work to expedite identification, processing for removal and prosecution of recidivist criminal aliens.
- Due to the large volume of cases of repeat offenders, namely criminal aliens, doubling Violent Criminal Alien Sections manpower will allow DHS to expand its ability to identify perpetrators, develop casework and prosecute these violators.
- Fifty DRO officers are currently assigned along the Southwest border; ICE will detail an additional 50 officers to support ICE and CBP operations in San Diego, Calif.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and El Paso, San Antonio, and Houston, Texas.
- Cost: \$2.3 million

Quadrupling the Number of Border Liaison Officers (BLOs)

- DHS will quadruple the number of ICE Border Liaison Officers (BLOs) assigned along the Southwest border. These men and women work to identify and combat cross-border criminal organizations with a focus on coordination between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement authorities.
- Ten BLOs are currently deployed along the SWB: five are assigned in San Diego, Calif., and five in San Antonio, Texas. ICE will increase the number of BLOs by designating 30 additional special agents already deployed to the Southwest border to serve in this capacity—resulting in a total of 40 BLOs operating at the border. The additional assignments will be in San Diego, Calif.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and El Paso and Laredo, Texas.
- No cost—existing positions are already in place.

Bolstering Secure Communities Biometric Identification Deployment

- The Secure Communities program uses biometric identification technology to share information between law enforcement agencies in order to focus resources on assisting communities in removal of high-risk criminal aliens.
- Currently, 23 counties in the Southwest Border States of Arizona and Texas use the Secure Communities biometric identification technology. Secure Communities plans to make this capability available to an additional 26 SWB counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas within 90 days.
- ICE will also activate Secure Communities biometric identification technology in Los Angeles County, Calif., Ventura County, Calif., and San Diego County, Calif.. San Diego County is expected to be

activated in early May.

- Cost: \$95 million

Implementing 100% Southbound Rail Screening

- Using non-intrusive inspections systems, CBP can screen 100 percent of southbound rail traffic to identify the presence of any contraband, such as weapons or currency. In early March, CBP launched 100 percent southbound rail screening at all Southwest border rail crossings.

Increased Maritime Interdiction Operations

- In response to numerous U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and CPB reports of go-fast boats loitering or moving north along the California Baja, DHS began focused interdiction operations. Additional operations over the past year have successfully stopped drugs and undocumented migrants from entering the U.S.
- **Operation Baja Oleada:** This maritime operation, which began in December 2005, cracks down on illegal migrant and drug smuggling along the California Baja to the arrival zone in northern Baja and San Diego area. The Coast Guard maintains a twenty-four hours a day, seven days per week patrol boat presence and frequently surges additional patrol boats, with air support as available. In FY 2009, the operation has resulted in seizures of four vessels and more than 50,000 pounds of marijuana.
- **Operation Red Zone:** This highly successful interagency operation to detect, deter and disrupt transnational smuggling threats in the maritime approaches to southern California and off Baja California ran from Feb. 1 through March 31, 2009. It involved USCG, CBP, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Navy, local police and Mexican Navy (SEMAR).

Immediate Port of Entry (POE) resources enhancements

- **Mobile X-Rays.** This technology enhances the ability of law enforcement authorities to identify currency and weapons in passenger vehicles that may contain weapons and/or currency. Previously, seven mobile x-ray units were deployed along the Southwest border—four in San Diego, two in El Paso, Texas, and one in Laredo, Texas. Two additional units have recently been moved to Tucson, Ariz., and Laredo, Texas. (Cost: \$30,000)
- **Border Patrol Agents.** One hundred Border Patrol Agents currently stationed in the area will be reassigned from non-critical tasks to augment southbound vehicle and pedestrian inspection operations. More than 16,400 CBP agents currently work between ports of entry along the Southwest border. No personnel will be transferred to implement this initiative. (No cost)
- **Canine Detection Teams.** CBP dual-detection canine teams, which can recognize both currency and weapons, provide enhanced detection capabilities in cargo and vehicles and on

passengers. CBP currently uses dual-detection teams along the Southwest border; 7 additional dual-detection canine teams have been deployed, for a total of 12 teams in California, Arizona, and Texas. Up to 15 additional teams will be deployed to locations yet to be determined. (Cost: \$440,000)

- **Mobile Response Teams (MRT).** Mobile Response Teams are deployed for short operations along the Southwest border, providing increased enforcement presence and personnel to conduct additional inspections of southbound individuals and vehicles. Four MRTs, consisting of 25 officers each, are currently available for special deployments along the Southwest border. Twelve additional MRT officers have already been deployed to Texas and Arizona field offices; 24 more are scheduled to be deployed to the California, Texas and Arizona field offices in early May. Combined with the four existing teams, these 36 officers will comprise eight additional teams for a total of 12. Additional deployments will be determined operationally. (Cost: \$3.2 million)

- **Operation Stonegarden Grants.** DHS designed these grants to enhance cooperation and coordination among federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies in a joint mission to secure the border. On March 24, DHS distributed an informational bulletin to all eligible state and local entities outlining modified grant guidance for the remaining FY 2006-2008 balances (totaling up to \$59 million). The new guidance does not take funding away from any states. Rather, it expands the scope of how the remaining balances can be spent to enhance current state, local and tribal law enforcement operations and assets on the Southwest border. Eligible expenses include activating reserve and part-time law enforcement personnel, deploying existing law enforcement personnel, and covering overtime expenses, travel or lodging for deployment to the Southwest border. Secretary Napolitano waived the 50 percent cap on personnel and operational activity costs for local eligible jurisdictions along the border to provide additional resources where they are needed most.

- **License Plate Readers (LPR).** License plate readers are intended to automatically read vehicle license plates and automate law enforcement queries. Southbound LPR information provides valuable intelligence, enhances domestic and international partnerships and assists with current weapon and currency southbound operations. CBP currently operates 52 outbound LPR lanes at 16 Southwest border crossings. CBP has initiated and expanded outbound operations and is moving quickly to replace the 52 LPRs currently equipped in southbound lanes to improve accuracy rates and enhance capability.

Periodic Evaluation and Review of the SWB Initiative

- DHS will employ an iterative and risk-based decision making process that will guide the nature and makeup of DHS operations on the border. Key considerations will be threats and priorities across of all the Department's missions. Actions and deployments within this initiative will remain flexible in order to respond quickly and effectively to the most current information and intelligence.

- Secretary Napolitano will be regularly briefed regarding DHS operations on the Southwest Border and will conduct quarterly reviews of DHS enhancements.

###

This page was last reviewed/modified on April 15, 2009.

[Home](#) [Contact Us](#) [Site Map](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Important Notices](#) [FOIA USA.gov](#) [GobiernoUSA.gov](#) [The White House](#)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security



Press Room

- [Press Releases](#)
- [Speeches and Statements](#)
- [Testimony](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Contacts](#)

National Threat Advisory: ELEVATED

Significant Risk Of Terrorist Attacks

The threat level in the airline sector is High or Orange. Read more.

Secretary Napolitano Highlights U.S.-Mexico Cooperation on Cocaine Seizure in Mexico City

SHARE

Release Date: May 21, 2009

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
Contact: 202-282-8010

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Janet Napolitano commended today the seizure of 630 kilograms (0.69 tons) of cocaine by Mexican customs officials at Mexico City International Airport using non-intrusive screening equipment also utilized by DHS and training provided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)—part of a major transnational cooperative effort to combat international drug smuggling and deter drug-related violence along the U.S.-Mexico border.

“Over the past several weeks, we have stepped up our efforts to stop Southwest border violence at its source—the trafficking of drugs, guns and cash. This seizure illustrates how DHS is working closely with Mexico to share best practices and expertise to ensure that both countries are taking action to secure the border,” said Secretary Napolitano. “As we strengthen relationships between DHS, Mexico and our state, local and tribal law enforcement partners along the border, we will continue to deter these illegal activities and make our countries safer.”

Mexico Customs discovered the cache of cocaine hidden in a shipment of polyethylene plastic rolls when abnormal characteristics were revealed by a non-intrusive inspection on May 11. The inspection technology used at Mexico City International Airport is similar to that employed by DHS for inspections along the Southwest border, and CBP and ICE are currently engaged in technical assistance and training programs to help implement advanced screening techniques in Mexico.

The President's Southwest Border Initiative, announced on March 24, deployed additional personnel and new technology along the U.S.-Mexico border while emphasizing closer coordination with the Mexican government—including Mexico Customs. This seizure is the latest in a series of successes as a result of the initiative.

On May 10, CBP seized \$200,000 in U.S. currency during outbound inspections in Progreso, Texas, when officers detected anomalies while performing a routine X-ray scan on a pickup truck. Following a canine inspection, the officers discovered 18 heat-sealed packages of U.S. currency hidden in a roaster oven inside the vehicle.

In addition, on May 2, CBP officers and ICE agents in Laredo, Texas, seized more than \$302,000 in American currency hidden in boxes of detergent during a joint outbound operation.

The Administration's security cooperation efforts with Mexico, including the Southwest Border Initiative and the Merida Initiative, are designed to support Mexico's war against violent drug cartels by limiting the flow of cash, firearms and ammunition from the United States to Mexico, increasing coordination with Mexican authorities and state and local law enforcement partners in the United States and enhancing Mexican law enforcement capability.

###

This page was last reviewed/modified on May 21, 2009.

[Home](#) [Contact Us](#) [Site Map](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Important Notices](#) [FOIA USA.gov](#) [GobiernoUSA.gov](#) [The White House](#)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security



Press Room

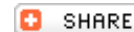
- [Press Releases](#)
- [Speeches and Statements](#)
- [Testimony](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Contacts](#)

National Threat Advisory: ELEVATED

Significant Risk Of Terrorist Attacks

The threat level in the airline sector is High or Orange. Read more.

Testimony of Secretary Janet Napolitano before Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Southern Border Violence: Homeland Security Threats, Vulnerabilities, and Responsibilities



Release Date: March 25, 2009

Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
(Remarks as Prepared)

Chairman Lieberman, Senator Collins, and members of the Committee: I appreciate this opportunity to testify about the Department of Homeland Security's role in the U.S. effort to combat the campaign of violence waged by drug cartels in Mexico, and about the Department's efforts to keep Americans safe from this security threat.

The violence in Mexico is not only an international threat. It is a homeland security issue in which all Americans have a stake. America has a significant security stake in the success of Mexico's efforts against drug cartels. The cartels that Mexican authorities are battling are the same criminal organizations that put drugs on our streets and use violence as a tool of their trade. Illegal drugs, money, and weapons flow both ways across our border and inextricably link the United States and Mexico in our efforts against drug cartels. The two nations share a nearly 2,000 mile-long border, billions of dollars in trade, a commitment to democracy, and the need to prevail against the transnational threats of terrorism and organized crime. Threats to the United States come from every part of the globe, and the security situation of our next-door neighbor deserves our utmost attention.

At DHS, we are not in a wait-and-see mode. We are taking action now to aid the Mexican government in addressing this threat and to secure our country. DHS is bolstering the resources dedicated to this mission and taking a number of new steps. America has several roles to play: First, we must provide assistance to the Mexican government in its efforts to defeat the drug cartels and thereby suppress the flare-up of violence in Mexico. Second, we must take action on our side of the border to cripple smuggling enterprises. Third, we must guard against and prepare for the possible spillover of violence into the United States. The Department of Homeland Security is working with the Departments of State, Justice, and Defense, as well as with border states and border communities, on all of these fronts.

The Violence in Context

Those who have worked on issues related to our southwest border know that incidents of transnational violence are, unfortunately, not a new phenomenon. But what is occurring in Mexico now is violence of a level that we have not seen before.

The spike of cartel violence in Mexico is primarily a reaction against the efforts of the Mexican government to take on the cartels and battle the organized crime, corruption, and violence that comes with the illegal drug trade, as well as a result of competition among the traffickers themselves to control constricted territories and smuggling routes. The cartels' backlash against the crackdown – though brutal and deeply troubling – is predictable. They seek to protect a very lucrative criminal livelihood. Mexican drug cartels have used violence as a tool of their trade for some time, but recent violence in Mexico between drug cartels – and, particularly, violence against Mexican officials by the cartels – has risen to unprecedented and disturbing levels. About 6,000 drug-

related murders occurred in Mexico last year alone, more than twice the previous year's total, which was also a record. These included the deaths of 522 military and law enforcement officials.

We are seeing limited increases in drug-related violence in the United States. This has come mainly in the form of cartel operatives committing violence against one another, the kidnappings of those involved in the drug trade or their family members, and assaults on Border Patrol agents by those attempting to bring illegal drugs into the country. Mexican drug cartels maintain drug-distribution networks, or supply drugs to distributors, in at least 230 American cities, leading the Justice Department to call Mexican drug cartels the "greatest organized crime threat to the United States."¹

It is important to note that any increase of cartel-related crime we have seen in the United States is not the same kind, on nearly the same scale, as in Mexico. While kidnappings and weapons violations have risen in cities close to the border such as Phoenix, at the same time, most major U.S. cities in border states saw declines in their murder rates in 2008. For example, the police department of El Paso, Texas reported 17 murders in 2008, while over 1,600 drug-related deaths occurred that year directly across the border in Ciudad Juárez.²

The Department of Homeland Security works to fight border crime every day. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) interdicts shipments of smuggled contraband and prevents dangerous people from entering the country. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), by conducting investigations, cracks down on smuggling rings and arrests border criminals. The U.S. Coast Guard is heavily involved in drug interdictions at sea.

I have fought border crime for the past 16 years in my posts as Governor, Attorney General, and U.S. Attorney in the border state of Arizona. I have hiked, driven, flown in a helicopter, and even ridden horseback over our southwest border. While border crimes are not new to those of us who are from border states, they are troubling, which is why we are bolstering DHS's ability to go after border criminals. For example, DHS is redeploying assets in support of border enforcement – doubling the number of ICE agents assigned to the Violent Criminal Alien Sections (VCAS) located in the five Southwest Border Field Offices, from 51 agents to 101. The VCAS works in coordination with U.S. Attorney's Offices to prioritize the felony criminal prosecution of recidivist criminal aliens.

While the United States has not witnessed a spike in border violence to nearly the same extent Mexico has – and while we are bolstering our efforts against spillover violence – we do not discount that we could see an increase in some crimes.

Accordingly, United States has a large security interest in Mexico's success in its battle against the drug cartels. The government of Mexico is not backing down from its efforts to rein in the smuggling cartels, and is instead pushing even more aggressively to strengthen security and the rule of law in Mexico. This effort touches every American community. Assisting in the fight against Mexican drug cartels is a critical step in fighting the drug trade in big cities and small towns across the nation. Another reason combating cartel violence on the Mexican side of the border is critical is that many Americans and Mexicans who live in border communities cross back and forth regularly – to work, to shop, or to visit family. Fear of the violence occurring in Mexican border cities has reduced crossings that are important to the lives of Americans and to the economic health of American border communities. The dynamic of the border region makes violence on one side of the border a pressing concern on both sides. The transnational nature of this threat clearly makes addressing the violence in Mexico a top priority in securing the United States.

DHS Efforts

The Department of Homeland Security is not waiting for the problem to worsen – we are taking action on numerous fronts to aid Mexico in its efforts against cartels and secure America against this threat. DHS has a unique set of statutory authorities and operational capabilities in identifying, interdicting and investigating criminal activity at our borders. DHS's combination of law enforcement and border management authorities place it in a position to address the causes and effects of border violence.

As I mentioned, the mission to address the security threat of drug cartel violence in Mexico is composed of several roles America must play. For one, we must provide assistance to the government of Mexico in its push to defeat the smuggling cartels. This is a long-term effort that means building partnerships among law enforcement agencies, providing training and equipment, engaging Mexican security officials about common threats, and ensuring our efforts are not undermined by corruption. Further, we must fight smuggling on our side of the border, which means ramping up our enforcement capabilities both at the border, and make greater use of intelligence against these criminal enterprises. We also must prepare for possible, if even in some cases unlikely, eventualities that could emerge from Mexico's drug war, including increased spillover violence into the United States.

In my testimony to the House Committee on Homeland Security on February 25, I outlined that securing America from this threat relies upon four interrelated actions: coordinating the federal response with state and local stakeholders and including local law enforcement in the United States in our efforts; building partnerships and leveraging existing relationships with Mexican law enforcement; combating the smuggling of illegal weapons into Mexico; and planning for worst-case scenarios. Working with the Departments of Justice, State, and Defense, DHS is strengthening its actions in each of these areas.

Including state and local law enforcement

The partnership of state, local, and tribal law enforcement in the border region is essential to securing our nation against the threat of cartel violence. They have significant roles to play both in addressing the current violence and preparing for scenarios where violence in Mexico could further strain the United States.

Law enforcement agencies at the state, local, and tribal level have long fought border violence. They have deep operational knowledge of the border region. Confronting a multifaceted threat like border violence means federal agencies must constantly collaborate with our state and local partners, sharing resources and information.

With this in mind, DHS works collaboratively with state and local governments in a number of ways – though more remains to be done. The Department created the Homeland Security Intelligence Support Team at the El Paso Intelligence Center in 2007 to improve information sharing among federal agencies and with state and local partners. ICE is a member agency of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Program, and actively participates in multi-agency OCDETF investigations of Mexican drug trafficking and money laundering organizations.

In 2006, DHS also created Border Enforcement Security Taskforces (BEST), which are led by ICE. BEST is not just a program, but an innovative model for collaborative law enforcement. The 12 BESTs that currently exist (of which eight are on our southwest border) include the participation of ICE, CBP, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the DHS office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) on the DHS level; the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and U.S. Attorney's offices on the Justice Department level; and state and local law enforcement agencies. Mexican law enforcement agencies also participate in BEST (see: *Partnership and interaction with Mexican law enforcement*), and the government of Mexico has agreed to provide representatives to every BEST team on the southwest border.

The BEST model has been successful: DHS and its partners have cracked down on arms trafficking, human smuggling, bulk cash smuggling, and narcotics smuggling organizations. These efforts have disrupted the ability of the cartels to cause violence in the United States and Mexico. Since July 2005, the BESTs have been responsible for 2,034 criminal arrests, 2,796 administrative arrests, 885 indictments, and 734 convictions. In addition, BESTs have seized approximately 7,704 pounds of cocaine, 159,832 pounds of marijuana, 515 weapons, 341,345 rounds of ammunition, 745 vehicles, and \$22.7 million in U.S. currency and monetary instruments.

The successes of the BEST model demonstrate that we should be doing more to use this collaborative approach to tackle border crime. On this front, DHS will shift investigators to the taskforces and double its efforts and increase the number of DHS agents working on BESTs from 95 to 190. This will greatly expand our ability to work with local law enforcement on cartel-related crime occurring on our side of the border.

In addition to BESTs, CBP has also overseen and developed the implementation of Border Violence Protocols. On a local level, the protocols have led CBP to institute monthly meetings between CBP, the Mexican government, and local and state officials to foster cooperation. CBP has added eight Law Enforcement Tactical Centers (LETCs), which are central points of information-gathering for local law enforcement to share intelligence with CBP. Additionally, the DHS Office of Counternarcotics Enforcement is co-leading, along with the Department of Justice, an interagency effort to update the Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy. That strategy directs the coordination of counter-drug and border security initiatives to address the drug trafficking threat while enhancing overall border security. The Strategy includes efforts to improve coordination and support among federal, state, local, and tribal authorities.

In addition, DHS will make up to \$59 million available in Operation Stonegarden funding to enhance state, local and tribal law enforcement operations and assets along the border. Changes include expanding the scope of current Operation Stonegarden funds to pay for additional law enforcement personnel, operational overtime expenses, and travel or lodging for deployment to the

southwest border.

As we work to bolster intelligence sharing and joint operations between DHS and state, local and tribal law enforcement along the southwest border, we also must completely integrate these levels of government into scenario planning. When spillover violence occurs, state and local law enforcement – not federal agencies – are the first responders. DHS has contingency plans in place for a significant increase in spillover violence (see: *Planning contingencies for worst-case scenarios*), and the first part of that contingency plan involves our support of state and local first responders in the event of spillover violence. DHS will continue to work with state, local, and tribal law enforcement – as well as interagency partners such as the ATF and DEA – as the threat of cartel violence continues to evolve, so we can ensure that U.S. plans address the reality in border communities and are fully integrated with state and local response plans.

As you know, one of my major priorities as Secretary is to improve DHS partnerships with state, local, and tribal governments across the board. I should also note the same is also a priority of Congress and the Administration, which recently dedicated \$2 billion to the Byrne- Justice Assistance Grants program and \$1 billion to the Community- Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant program through the Department of Justice. These two programs are critical to aiding local law enforcement, and the strengthening of them will have an effect on the ability of state and local law enforcement agencies on the border to improve their capabilities.

DHS will continue to work to improve our partnerships with state, local, and tribal law enforcement in all respects, especially as related to border violence.

Partnership and interaction with Mexican law enforcement

Assisting Mexico in its battle against drug violence requires strong coordination with Mexican law enforcement to ensure that Mexico and the U.S. are operating together in combating this transnational threat. DHS is engaging with Mexican authorities on a number of levels that are making our efforts more successful.

The cornerstone of U.S.-Mexico security cooperation is the Mérida Initiative, led by the Department of State. DHS is an enthusiastic partner in the Mérida Initiative. From the DHS perspective, Mérida is a platform to work more cooperatively with regional partners on addressing security threats and provides ways make America safer by developing regional security partnerships. We anticipate the largest DHS role under Mérida will be for CBP to aid Mexican authorities in adopting nonintrusive inspection equipment. This equipment will help Mexican authorities screen for illegal substances and goods – including weapons – that are being smuggled into that country. DHS has a strong relationship with the State Department, and we look forward to building that relationship further and discussing with them, the Department of Justice, and other stakeholders ways that the Mérida Initiative could be strengthened.

DHS has a broad range of capabilities that present important opportunities to assist Mexico in confronting security threats. DHS has expertise in drug and weapons interdiction and combating bulk cash smuggling; maritime security; the gathering, sharing, and analysis of intelligence; conducting investigations; and the development and implementation of security technologies – all areas where DHS currently assists Mexican authorities in their battle against drug cartels, and where DHS is broadening its collaboration.

These partnerships take place under the aegis of the Mérida Initiative as well as outside it. DHS components such as CBP, ICE, and the U.S. Coast Guard have relationships with their Mexican counterparts and work with them to disrupt drug trafficking organizations. These relationships will be strengthened by Mérida's support for bilateral information sharing, law enforcement training, and interdiction efforts.

ICE's Border Liaison Officer (BLO) program allows ICE to more effectively identify and combat cross-border criminal organizations by providing a streamlined information- and intelligence-sharing mechanism. The BLO program creates an open and cooperative working relationship between the U.S. and Mexican law enforcement entities.

ICE currently partners with the government of Mexico on Operation Armas Cruzadas, which cracks down on arms smugglers (see: *Stopping illegal weapons smuggling into Mexico*). The ICE Attaché office in Mexico City has coordinated the establishment of vetted Special Investigative Units of Mexican officers that work with ICE special agents in Mexico to investigate and prosecute border crimes such as smuggling. Mexican agents are involved in DHS's Border Security Enforcement Taskforces on the Southwest border, to great effect (see: *Including local law enforcement*). Since August 2005, CBP has worked closely with Mexican officials on Operation Against Smugglers Initiative on Safety and Security (OASISS), a bilateral alien smuggler prosecutions program which enables both governments to share information and prosecute smugglers for crimes committed in the

border region. We expect OASISS will be further strengthened by the Mérida Initiative. DHS and the government of Mexico also have a government-to-government agreement on science and technology for homeland security.

DHS is strengthening its coordination with the government of Mexico by reassigning on-board agents to immediately increase ICE Attaché personnel in Mexico by 50 percent. At present, there are 24 special agents in Mexico, and DHS is currently deploying 12 more to Mexico City, Tijuana, Hermosillo, Ciudad Juarez, and Monterrey. Through its attaché in Mexico City and associated sub-offices, ICE assists in efforts against transnational drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, human smuggling, and money laundering syndicates in Mexico. ICE Attaché personnel work day-to-day with Mexican authorities to combat these transnational threats, and these efforts will be assisted by more officers.

DHS is also immediately quadrupling the number of ICE officers in the Border Liaison Program by redeploying agents to support this important program. Currently, there are 10 border liaison officers in California and Texas – ICE will add 30 more to the southwest border.

These boosts to the ICE Attaché office and the Border Liaison Program will bolster our ability to fight border crime effectively and coordinate with Mexican enforcement efforts.

Close working relationships with Mexican officials will be critical to our efforts to execute the U.S. role in addressing this security threat. In my previous post as Governor of Arizona, one of my closest day- to-day working relationships with a fellow governor was with Governor Eduardo Bours of the state of Sonora, Mexico. Our collaboration proved critical to our states' development of innovative, binational ways to fight the threat of drug and human smuggling. I look forward to strengthening current DHS relationships with our Mexican counterparts and building new ones.

Stopping illegal weapons smuggling into Mexico

A large number of weapons recovered in Mexico's drug war are smuggled illegally into Mexico from the United States. Clearly, stopping this flow must be an urgent priority.

President Calderón has identified the illegal flow of weapons from the United States as one of the biggest security threats to his country. Stopping weapons smuggling is a particular challenge, both because of the nature of the southwest border and because much of the smuggling occurs in small shipments of a few weapons at a time. DHS is uniquely positioned to address this challenge. In order to confront the transnational criminal groups operating across our common border, as early as next week, DHS will begin short-term increases to operations and programs designed to choke off the key resources for criminal groups: Guns and bulk cash. This will be done in concert with the ATF, DEA, and appropriate state and local law enforcement officials.

ICE and CBP partner in the eTrace initiative, led by ATF, an innovative partnership that aids Mexican officials in the forensic tracking of weapons used in drug cartel violence. CBP is also partnering with the DEA and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area centers to expand the DEA-created National License Plate Reader initiative, which will lead to better intelligence on trafficking organizations. CBP and ICE, along with ATF and the DEA, have jointly developed the Southwest Border Trafficking Initiative to identify and disrupt weapons and ammunition smuggling. Discussions are ongoing within that initiative to address more detailed procedures regarding the coordination of multi-agency operations and information sharing.

Notably, ICE launched Operation Armas Cruzadas, a partnership with the government of Mexico to fight cross-border arms smuggling. Under Armas Cruzadas, ICE has taken an intelligence-driven, systematic approach to arms trafficking investigations. As part of this effort, ICE initiated a Weapons Virtual Task Force to create virtual communities where law enforcement can rapidly share intelligence and communicate in a secure environment through the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN). ICE also created a U.S.-vetted Arms Trafficking Group of Mexican officers. Since inception, Operation Armas Cruzadas has resulted in 112 criminal arrests and the seizure of 116,478 rounds of ammunition, 1,417 weapons seizures, and \$3,341,388 in monetary instrument seizures.

We clearly need to do more, however. These successful seizures account for only a fraction of the weapons being smuggled into Mexico. That is why DHS is ramping up intelligence-driven enforcement against the southbound flow of weapons in a number of ways.

The bolstered ICE presence in the border region, increased collaboration with state and local authorities in the U.S., heightened resources dedicated to coordinating with Mexican officials, and improved support to state and local governments should all help to

address southbound weapons smuggling. Still, DHS is taking additional steps to strengthen our efforts.

DHS will triple the number of intelligence analysts from DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis on the southwest border. These analysts will provide the strategic, intelligence-driven guidance that will be a driving force behind the efforts of ICE and CBP to secure our borders and stop the flow of illegal weapons into Mexico. ICE operates a Border Violence Intelligence Cell at the El Paso Intelligence Center that provides intelligence support to BESTs. These enhancements in intelligence will also improve the Department's ability to assess whether it is using its resources at the border in the most effective possible way to secure America.

Further, CBP is now screening 100 percent of outbound rail cars on the southwest border. There are eight rail crossings along the southwest border, and previously, CBP did not screen any outbound cars, instead focusing only on inbound cargo. We are using existing non-intrusive inspection equipment to screen all outgoing cars for anomalies that could be weapons. DHS is also developing protocols to inform Mexican authorities of anomalies CBP uncovers, since the rail cars will be on Mexican soil immediately after CBP inspection.

CBP is also moving swiftly to focus existing resources on the southwest border. The Z-Backscatter (ZBV) mobile X-Ray unit, used in a mobile inspection capacity to identify anomalies in passenger vehicles, has greatly assisted CBP officers in inspections. Nine ZBVs can be transferred to the southwest border immediately. CBP is also immediately deploying 100 Border Patrol agents to augment outbound inspections at the ports of entry; Border Patrol agents have not normally served in this capacity. Additionally, three Mobile Response Teams, consisting of 25 CBP officers each, have been placed on ready and are prepared to deploy to the southwest border to augment port of entry operations. Of the 75 mission ready Mobile Response Team members available, 15 have already been deployed to support a specific outbound operation along the southwest border.

In addition to addressing weapons smuggling, DHS is also combating the illegal movement of cash across the southwest border. One reason drug cartels pose such a dangerous threat is their extensive monetary resources. The U.S. must interrupt that illegal flow of money. Operation Firewall, led by ICE, addresses the threat of bulk cash smuggling. ICE and CBP have conducted various Operation Firewall operations with Mexican counterparts. ICE has also recently established a Trade Transparency Unit with Mexico to identify cross-border trade anomalies, which are often indicative of trade-based money laundering. Under this initiative, ICE and law enforcement agencies in cooperating countries work to facilitate the exchange of import and export data and financial information. ICE's efforts led to more than \$50 million in cash seizures in fiscal year 2008.

Increased ICE presence in Mexico and at the border will strengthen efforts to reduce illegal bulk cash smuggling. The non-intrusive inspection equipment CBP will use to screen outbound rail cars for weapons will also be able to detect anomalies that could be bulk cash. Furthermore, CBP currently has 12 dual-detection canines, trained to detect both weapons and currency and that are operationally available, which are being deployed as a part of a strategy to catch outbound smuggling.

Planning contingencies for worst-case scenarios

I believe the United States can effectively help to suppress the violence in Mexico, by both doing our part on our side of the border and providing assistance to Mexican authorities. However, this does not mitigate our need to plan for worst-case scenarios, even if they are unlikely – and not only scenarios where the United States encounters significant spillover violence, but also other situations where DHS capabilities could be strained as a result of ongoing violence.

DHS has a plan in place to address border violence, authorized by former Secretary Chertoff in January. The plan, known as the Southwest Border Violence Operations Plan ("the Plan"), outlines a layered response to provide the appropriate level of support to local law enforcement and DHS components in the event of escalating violence. State and local law enforcement, however, had little input into the Plan, so we are in the process of collecting that input now, before the Plan is final.

The Plan provides a structure by which DHS and the federal government can coordinate an effective response, while remaining flexible to conditions on the ground. Because of their predominant role at the border, CBP would serve as the lead DHS component responsible for the effort to prevent and respond to a significant escalation of violence along the southwest border, while the Plan also clarifies and coordinates the roles of other DHS components.

There are a number of cabinet departments and federal agencies involved in this effort to fight violence on the southwest border that DHS needs to partner with on contingency plans. The Department of Defense has been a close partner in scenario planning. Under current plans, any Defense support in responding to a border violence scenario would include the Department of Defense in

a supporting role at a late stage. However, we are working with the Department of Defense to determine if there are other support roles for the Department of Defense to assist us in securing our southwestern border.

I have also asked my department that the Southwest Border Violence Operations Plan be revised to determine whether it will be responsive to other challenging contingencies apart from a rise in violence along the border. We are also increasing DHS awareness of how state and local law enforcement resources are positioned, and how to coordinate calls for assistance from state and local governments. DHS is working among its components to develop an overarching plan that integrates existing component plans into one Department plan. This overarching plan will enhance the Department's ability to fully leverage all of our component capabilities in this critical effort. DHS' Office of Operations Coordination and Planning, which led on devising the current plan, will lead efforts to plan for additional scenarios, and to fully engage our state, local and tribal partners in DHS planning.

Conclusion

I thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify. As you can see, I am committed to addressing the threat of cartel violence in Mexico as a top homeland security priority for the United States. I look forward to working with Congress on securing America from this threat. I am happy to answer your questions.

¹ National Drug Intelligence Center, National Drug Threat Assessment 2009

²Crime data gathered from various sources by DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis

This page was last reviewed/modified on March 25, 2009.

updated 2:09 p.m. EDT, Thu April 16, 2009

PRINT SHARE EMAIL SAVE PRINT

Drug smugglers becoming more creative, U.S. agents say

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Smuggling organizations use latest technology to move drugs into U.S., officials say
- Drug runners taking to seas in vessels that look like submarines
- Most drugs from Central and South America tunneled through Mexico
- Port of entry at San Ysidro, California, is busiest border crossing for agents to watch

[Next Article in Crime »](#)

READ

VIDEO

PHOTOS

By Deborah Feyerick, Michael Cary and Sheila Steffen
CNN

1017 212

SAN DIEGO, California (CNN) — Drug traffickers are throwing everything they've got at getting drugs into the United States any way they can.



U.S. border agents discovered marijuana hidden inside a spool of industrial wire.

[more photos »](#)

At the San Ysidro crossing near the Mexican border, officials have found drugs smuggled in things such as tables, toys, furniture, holiday candles, even tennis shoes.

"Their bottom line is to make money, and they are going to do whatever they can to ensure that that happens," said Mike Unzueta, the special agent in charge for Immigration and Customs Enforcement in San Diego. "They've become very, very creative."

Drugs also are brought in underground through tunnels; some 100 have been discovered since 1990 along the 1,950-mile U.S.-Mexico border. The most sophisticated tunnels have lights, air systems and hydraulics. While drugs flow north into the United States, weapons and cash flow south into Mexico.

The smuggling organizations are well-established and sophisticated. They have a recognized and sophisticated. They have a recognized and sophisticated. They have a recognized and sophisticated.

hierarchy and employ the latest technology, said Rafael Reyes, chief of global enforcement operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. [Watch the creative techniques drug smugglers are using »](#)

Border agents have found radios, cell phones and global positioning system tracking devices, leading officials to believe drug cartels positioned on or close to the border are in constant contact with drug runners.

"These guys are very ingenious," Reyes said. "They will exploit any vulnerability that they can."

Don't Miss

- [amFix Blog: Catching smugglers](#)
- [Obama heads to Mexico amid escalating drug violence](#)
- [Homeland security chief: It's all about border safety](#)
- [Ex-DEA agent: Treatment, education key in drug war](#)

The same thinking applies to **drugs** smuggled in the waters of the eastern Pacific off the coasts of Central and South America.

U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Vincent DeLaurentis and his crew on the cutter Hamilton came back from three months of searching for drugs inbound to Mexico. They covered an area of ocean about the size of the

Southeastern United States. They captured six hard-to-detect boats that travel at night and seized 30,000 pounds of pure cocaine.

DeLaurentis said drug traffickers have become much more aggressive in their smuggling tactics. Among the new trends, he said, "They're using vessels that are less and less detectable, whether it's these go-fast boats that travel at night or the new self-propelled semi-submersible vessels."

[Click here for photos of the ways in which drugs are moved into the U.S. »](#)

Known as SPSS, self-propelled semi-submersibles are something like submarines, but they cannot fully submerge. Anywhere from several inches to a couple of feet remain above the water line; they are painted a blue or gray for camouflage, and they are flat on top with valves and air holes.

They are difficult to detect and have become increasingly sophisticated. Some can travel up to 5,000 miles and use fuel tanks for ballast. They can carry some seven to 10 tons of drugs, and because of their low profiles and low radar signatures, the vessels are popular, DeLaurentis said.

The submersibles are built in the rebel-controlled jungles of Colombia, and the U.S. Coast Guard said cartels pay for construction. The craft rendezvous with fishing vessels or "go-fasts" — boats that are typically 40 feet long, go 40 knots and can carry several tons of heroin or cocaine. The drugs then go to Mexico, where the cargo is offloaded and transported across the border into the U.S.

"The fact they're developing semi-subs that can carry huge amounts of drugs and running those vessels for thousands of miles tells me that it's a very sophisticated operation," said Capt. Tom Farris, commander of Coast Guard Sector San Diego.

The Coast Guard tries to engage and board these vessels before they get to Mexico. But evidence of drug smuggling needed for prosecution is hard to come by — because traffickers on these crafts easily can escape by opening a hatch, tossing out a life raft and then scuttling the vessel to the bottom of the ocean along with its cargo.

A U.S. law signed in January makes it illegal to operate a stateless SPSS and will allow the Coast Guard to arrest people it used to have to release because drug evidence was on the bottom of the ocean.

Mexico produces three out of the four major abused drugs in the United States — marijuana, heroin and methamphetamines, according to the DEA. Cocaine, however, comes from South America, but it and the other three drugs are all shipped through Mexico into the United States.

"Mexico has become a vital hub," Reyes said.

According to the DEA, 90 percent of all cocaine destined for the U.S. comes through the Mexican-Central American corridor, with 47 percent not stopping in Central America but going to Mexico.

The primary transit routes from Mexico into the U.S. are: Tijuana to San Diego, Sonora to Phoenix, Arizona; Chihuahua to El Paso, Texas; and the states of Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas, which will cover the remaining south of the border, to the Texas cities of Laredo and Brownsville.

"Those are the principal lucrative corridors," Reyes said. They are "controlled by separate organizations because of the market they have in the United States, and it is a profit-minded approach they take in securing these corridors for themselves."

The San Ysidro port of entry is the busiest border crossing with Mexico and the United States. More than 110,000 people pass through every day, making it fertile ground for drug cartels looking for new ways to ship drugs.

Port Director Oscar Preciado oversees the San Ysidro crossing. On any given day, he said agents seize five to 10 loads — about 50 to 500 pounds of marijuana, cocaine, heroin or methamphetamines. Recent seizures include marijuana in tires and heroin in phony fuel tanks, some with secret levers.

"They'll put it anywhere they can, and they're very creative in creating their own compartments and concealing them," Preciado said.

With border security tighter than ever, Preciado said drug traffickers are paying kids as young as 14 to smuggle dope — mostly marijuana.

ADVERTISEMENT

The Orange Savings Account

High Interest.
No Fees. No Minimums.

ING DIRECT
Save your money
Member FDIC

Open Now

Drug traffickers who frequently bribe Mexican police are now trying to bribe U.S. agents. While rare, officials said, it is serious. "Corruption is one of our major concerns. We do everything we can to stop corruption," Preciado said.

With billions of dollars at stake, cartels will try anything, officials said. "If we can't catch the drugs, what we want to do is make them spend more resources in order to get the drugs across the border," said the Coast Guard's Farris. [E-mail to a friend](#) [Mix it](#) [Share](#)

All About [Illegal Drugs](#) • [Border Control and Customs](#) • [Mexico](#)

TIRED OF BEING TIRED?
CLINICALLY SHOWN TO INCREASE ENERGY

LANCE ARMSTRONG

CLICK HERE

FRS

Most Popular on CNN

STORIES

[Most Viewed](#) [Most Emailed](#) [Top Searches](#)

- 1 [Taser sets man alight](#)
 - 2 [Harvard professor Gates arrested](#)
 - 3 [Tyler Perry helps day-care kids](#)
 - 4 [Suspects cased Fla. couple's home](#)
 - 5 [Jupiter marked by mystery impact](#)
 - 6 [Joe Jackson denies abusing Michael](#)
 - 7 [Top 10 fugitive caught in Mexico](#)
 - 8 [N.J. cop not expected to survive](#)
 - 9 [Men burnt Muslims alive](#)
 - 10 [Solar eclipse excitement builds](#)
- [more most popular »](#)

VIDEOS

TOPICS

Lawyers.com™ **LexisNexis®**

Find a local lawyer at Martindale-Hubbell® on Lawyers.com™

Start Your Law Firm Search
Search for attorneys by location and area of practice.

enter city

Select a state [▼](#) Area of practice [▼](#)

SEARCH or: [advanced search](#)

600/05/1220/0071

We Recommend

Stories you may be interested in based on past browsing

[U.S. offers up to \\$50M for cartel leaders](#)

[Suspects cased couple's home before killings](#)

[Cop in N.J. shootout not expected to live](#)

[FBI: Top 10 fugitive captured in Mexico](#)

[Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates arrested](#)



FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Home About Us News Research Programs Publications Events Education Programs Contribute

 **FPRI on Iraq**

 **Project on Democratic Transitions**

 **THINK TANKS DIRECTORY**

 **America At War**

FPRI Articles

By Subject

By Author

By Date

By Publication

Orbis



Current Issue

Other Resources

Audio/Video Library

Publications

Transcripts and Testimonies

Foreign Policy Research Institute
1528 Walnut St, Ste 610
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Tel. 215-732-3774
Fax 215-732-4401
fpri@fpri.org

Books Orbis E-Notes Footnotes Other Bulletins Outside Articles Transcripts

E-Notes

Los Zetas: the Ruthless Army Spawned by a Mexican Drug Cartel

by George W. Grayson

May 2008

[George W. Grayson](#)*is the Class of 1938*

Professor of Government at the College of William & Mary, an associate scholar at FPRI and a senior associate at the Center for Strategic & International Studies. His latest book, (Penn State University Press, 2007), is a biography of Mexico's legitimate president, Manuel López Obrador. The New York-based Foreign Policy Association will publish Grayson's monograph on U.S.-Mexican narcotics relations.

*Mexican Messiah**'s self-anointed Andrés**'s monograph on U.S.-*

Drug-related violence in the border town of Nuevo Laredo, the major portal for U.S.-Mexican commerce, left the city of 350,000 without a police chief until printing-shop owner Alejandro Domínguez Coello valiantly accepted the post on the morning of June 8, 2005. "I'm not beholden to anyone. My commitment is to the citizenry," stated the 56-year-old father of three. Within six hours, the paramilitary force fired more than 30 bullets into his body. Their message was clear: narco-traffickers control the streets of Nuevo Laredo. "They are openly defying the Mexican state," said Mexico City political scientist Jorge Chabat. "They are showing that they can kill anybody at any time. It's chilling."^[1]

The brutal, daylight murder of Domínguez provides an insight into why Mexican scholar Raul Benitez insists that "Los Zetas have clearly become the biggest, most serious threat to the nation's security."^[2] Meanwhile, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration advises that these brigands "may be the most technologically advanced, sophisticated and violent of these paramilitary enforcement groups."^[3]

Origins

The several dozen drug bands that operate in Mexico furnish the lion's share of cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamines that enter this country. They also accounted for more than 4,500 deaths during the past two years—with the figure spiraling to 961 by April 18 of this year. These facts have spurred the White House to urge furnishing \$500 million as the first tranche of a \$1.4 billion, multiyear security cooperation package. This "Merida Initiative" would include aircraft, software, hardware, communications technology, training to strengthen the judicial system, intelligence instruction, and advice on vetting new law-enforcement personnel (ubiquitous police corruption is the Achilles' heel of Mexico's battle against the production and transport of drugs). A reluctant U.S. Congress, which is now pondering the program, may not act until after the November election.

Of narco-trafficking organizations, two stand out in terms of suborning officials, amassing resources, and authoring violent acts: the Gulf Cartel, headquartered just below Texas in Tamaulipas state, and its chief rival, the Sinaloa Cartel, centered in Sinaloa state that nestles between the Sierra Madre Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

In early 1997, the Gulf syndicate began to recruit military personnel whom General Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo—Mexico's "drug czar" who was imprisoned for corruption—began to assign Army officers as representatives of the Attorney General's Office (PGR) in northern states. In the late 1990s, Osiel Cardenas Guillen, who was in a no-holds-barred fight for leadership of the notorious organization, sought out members of the Army's elite Airborne Special Forces Groups (Gafes)^[4] to provide protection and perform other vital functions. His top recruit, Lieutenant Arturo Guzmán Decenas, brought with him approximately 30 other deserters enticed by salaries substantially higher than those paid by the Mexican government.^[5] The original defectors, whose nicknames include "El Winnie Pooh," "The Little Mother," and "El Guerra," had belonged to the 15th and 70th Infantry Battalions and the 15th Motorized Cavalry Regiment.^[6] Once Cardenas Guillen consolidated his position, he expanded the role of Los Zetas to collecting debts, securing cocaine supply and trafficking routes known as *plazas*, discouraging defections from the cartel, and executing its foes—often with grotesque savagery.

After the military killed Guzmán Decenas (November 2002) and captured his second-in-command, Rogelio González Pizaña (October 2004), ex-Gafe Heriberto "The Executioner" Lazcano Lazcano ascended to the apex of the paramilitaries. The arrest (March 2003) and deportation to the United States (January 2007) of Cardenas Guillen emboldened Lazcano and his number-one henchman—Jaime "The Hummer" González Durán—to act independently of the other vicious contenders to head the cartel: Osiel's brother Ezekiel and former municipal policeman Jorge Eduardo Costilla Sanchez. "The Gulf cartel created the lion, but now the lion has wised up and controls the handler," stated a U.S. law enforcement official. "The Zetas don't ask the Gulf cartel permission for anything anymore. They simply inform them of their activities whenever they feel like it"^[7]

Los Zetas emerged as the most dangerous force in the cities of Matamoros, Reynosa, and Nuevo Laredo in Tamaulipas. In addition to conducting activities along the border, they are visible throughout the Gulf Coast region, in the Southern states of Tabasco, Yucatan, Quintana Roo, and Chiapas, and in the Pacific Coast states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Michoacán, as well as in Mexico City.^[8] They are also active in Texas and, possibly, other U.S. states.

Resources and Organization

Los Zetas' training as a local version of the Green Berets constitutes their foremost asset. In cooperation with their U.S. counterparts, the Mexican military created the Gafes in mid-1990s. Foreign specialists, including Americans, French, and Israelis, instructed members of this elite unit in rapid deployment, aerial assaults, marksmanship, ambushes, intelligence collection, counter-

surveillance techniques, prisoner rescues, sophisticated communications, and the art of intimidation. President Felipe Calderón, who took office in December 2006, has placed the Army in the forefront of the war against drugs. It is ironic that loyal Gafes helped to capture kingpins such as Cardenas Guillen, whom Gafes-turned-Zetas were hired to safeguard.

Los Zetas have set up camps in which to train recruits aged 15 to 18 years old, as well as ex-federal, state, and local police officers. In addition, they have invited into their ranks ex-troops from Guatemala known as Kaibiles. Reviled as “killing machines,” these tough-as-nails experts in jungle warfare and counterinsurgency adhere to the motto: “If I advance, follow me. If I stop, urge me on. If I retreat, kill me.”

Their arsenal includes AR-15 and AK-47 assault rifles, MP5s submachine guns, 50-mm machine guns, grenade launchers, ground-to-air missiles, dynamite, bazookas, and helicopters.

When conducting operations, they wear dark clothing, blacken their faces, drive new, stolen SUVs, and delight in torturing victims before administering the coup de grace. Some criminals carry images of bandit Jesús Malverde, the “Narco Saint” known also as the “Generous One” and “The Angel of the Poor” because of his fight for the downtrodden against a nineteenth-century dictatorship.

There are several other Los Zetas groups in addition to commandoes. *Los Halcones* (The Hawks) keep watch over distribution zones; authorities have found 80 members, equipped with radio-transmitters, in Matamoros alone. *Las Ventanas* (The Windows) comprise bike-riding youngsters in their mid-teens who whistle to warn of the presence of police and other suspicious individuals near small stores that sell drugs. *Las Manos* (The Cunning Ones) acquire arms; *Las Leopardos* (Leopards) are prostitutes who slyly extract information from their clients; and *Dirección* (Command) are approximately 20 communications experts who intercept phone calls, follow and identify suspicious automobiles, and even accomplish kidnappings and executions.^[9]

Furthermore, Los Zetas have forged links with “La Familia” enforcer gangs in Michoacán, the venue for cocaine imports and methamphetamine laboratories, which regularly crosses swords with the Sinaloa Cartel and its allies.

Los Zetas may number between 100 and 200 men and women, most of whom are believed to be in their early- to mid-twenties. Although the Army has detailed information about deserters, even key law enforcement agencies must guess at their size and composition because small-time criminals identify themselves as “Zetas” in hopes of exciting fear in their victims. “It’s gotten to the point where you get drunk, shoot at some cans and paint your face black, and that makes you a Zeta... . A lot of it is image and myth.”^[10]

To enhance their esprit de corps, Los Zetas go to great lengths to retrieve the bodies of their fallen comrades-in-arms. In what pundits labeled the “invasion of the body snatchers,” in early March 2007 four armed men broke into the graveyard in the town of Poza Rica, Veracruz state, tied up a security guard, smashed Roberto Carlos Carmona’s gravestone with hammers, and carried off his ornate coffin containing their comrade’s corpse.^[11]

They also honor their dead. Three months after authorities killed Guzmán Decena in late 2002, a funeral wreath and four flower arrangements appeared at his gravesite with the inscription “We will always keep you in our heart: from your family, Los Zetas.”

In addition, they retaliate with sadistic savagery against their enemies. Witnesses claim that the paramilitaries set fire to four Nuevo Laredo police officers inside barrels filled with diesel fuel. Their remains were buried there the next day.^[12]

For security purposes, Los Zetas have adopted a cell-like structure to limit the information that any one member of the organization knows about his associates.

Major Operations

Los Zetas most notable strikes over the past several years include the following:

June 2007: Robbed casinos in the states of Nuevo Leon, Veracruz, Coahuila, and Baja California in a move to gain a share of these businesses.

- May 2007: Kidnapped and later murdered Jacinto Pablo Granda, a Mexican infantry captain near Chilpancingo, Guerrero.
- April 2007: Gunned down local police chief, Ernesto Gutierrez Moreno as he dined at a restaurant with his wife and son in Chilpancingo.
- March 2007: Believed to have attempted to murder the secretary of public safety in Tabasco, Francisco Fernandez Solis.
- February 2007: Dressed in military uniforms, they disarmed and massacred five police officers and two administrative assistants in Acapulco.
- March 2006: Forced the resignation of Nuevo Laredo police chief, Omar Pimentel, after eight months in office. He stepped down hours after police found three charred bodies dumped by the side of a road leading into the border city.
- June 2005: Killed Alejandro Domínguez Coello, the police chief of Nuevo Laredo.
- February 2004: Efrain Teodoro “Zeta 14” Torres and Gustavo González Castro freed 25 fellow narco-traffickers from a prison in Apatzingan, Michoacán.

Major Setbacks

President Calderón, who has compared Los Zetas to Al Qaeda, has made combating the drug mafias his highest law-enforcement goal. Some of his successes and those of his predecessor, Vicente Fox, include

- April 2008: Army units apprehended Armando González Lazcano, police chief of the Apan, Hidalgo, and his brother Alberto “The Red” González Lazcano, who are believed to be linked to Los Zetas (they are nephews of the local director of public security) and who possessed a fragmentation grenade, an AR-15 rifle, and a 45-mm pistol.
- April 2008: Guatemalan authorities caught and imprisoned Daniel “The Basher” Pérez Rojas, one of the first Zetas to sign up with the Gulf Cartel and a confidant of Costilla Sanchez.
- April 2008: Secretary of Public Security Genaro Garcia Luna reported that his agency had spearheaded the capture of José Alberto Martínez Medrano and four accomplices, who had had \$6 million in their possession, in Nuevo Laredo; the following day, the Ministry of National Defense issued a communiqué indicating that the 5th Motorized Cavalry Regiment had accomplished the April 2 arrest and that the amount seized was \$6.1 million. (Defense Secretary Guillermo Galván Galván’s dislike of Garcia Luna sparks such turf battles and impedes cohesion within Calderón’s Security Cabinet.)
- March 2008: The Army and the PGR took into custody Raul “Dutchman 1” Hernandez Barron, believed to be a founder of the Zetas who controlled the Gulf Cartel’s drug trafficking in Northern Veracruz.
- February 2008: Military forces discovered a weapons cache in Nuevo Laredo that included eight military uniforms to be used as disguises.

- February 2008: Soldiers raided the “El Mezquito” ranch west of Reynosa and found one of the largest illegal arsenals in recent memory: 89 assault rifles, 83,355 rounds of ammunition, and plastic explosives capable of demolishing buildings.
- January 2008: The Ministry of Public Security (SPP) announced the capture of former municipal police director Héctor Izar Castro in San Luis Potosí, where he is believed to have been a leader of the local cell of Los Zetas. His cache of supplies included an AR-180 rifle, three hand guns, 100 cartridges, 65 packages of cocaine, and three paddles bearing the letter “Z,” which were used to beat foes.
- January 13, 2008: The SPP reported the apprehension of 11 people, most of whom were former military men, in San Pedro de las Colonias, Coahuila. The Zetas had been using an auto workshop to dismantle stolen cars. The federal police also arrested the town’s police commander and four police officers, while seizing 23 walkie-talkies, 17 cell phones, nine cars, one motorbike, 28 kilograms of marijuana, and weapons, including five semi-automatic rifles, one shotgun, one revolver and one rifle.
- April 2007: The Attorney General’s Office announced the capture of Eleazar Medina Rojas and nine other Zetas in Nuevo Laredo. Identified as a top killer and kidnapper for the Gulf Cartel, Medina Rojas had a stash of weapons, including an AR15, a Colt .223, a Belgian-made PS90, a Beretta, and various cartridges, as well as cell phones, radios, bulletproof vests, and a collection of vehicles.
- April 2007: Authorities apprehended Nabor “El Debora” Vargas García, a founder of Los Zetas, and 20 allies after a shootout in Ciudad del Carmen, Campeche. The government claims that Vargas García, who admitted to serving in the Presidential Guard’s assault battalion, ran Los Zetas in Tabasco, Campeche, and Chiapas.
- February 2007: The Attorney General’s Office detained Jose Ramon Davila Lopez, a six-year veteran of the Gafes and close ally of Zeta leader Lazcano, in Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas.
- September 2006: The Army arrested three former Guatemalan soldiers and five presumed Zetas in Aguillilla, Michoacán. They found in their possession 12 assault rifles AK-47 and AR-15; one 9-mm pistol, and three thousand rounds of ammunition; three fragmentation grenades, black fatigues, tactical vests and 10 Kevlar ballistic helmets.

Bilateral Issues

President Calderón has pledged to pursue all of Mexico’s criminal organizations. To this end, he has dispatched 25,000 soldiers, marines, sailors, and federal police to more than a dozen states and cities. Limited resources mean that he will have to set priorities. Although the Sinaloa Cartel remains an important enemy of the state, bilateral issues are more than its Gulf/Zeta counterpart; it does not have a paramilitary capability; and the inter-marriage of the families that work under its umbrella invest it with a cohesion lacking in the Gulf/Zeta mafia, which suffered the loss of its capo, Cardenas Guillen.

Moreover, the recent success of Mexican law enforcement agencies aside, Los Zetas pose a more serious threat to citizens on both sides of the border.

First, many of the commandos have homes north of the Rio Grande where they seek safe haven and where they attempt to lure young Americans into their clutches.

Second, drug distribution routes run through the United States, which means that the narco-gangsters have no respect for international boundaries. The U.S. Justice Department bulletin has warned that: “The violence will spill over the Mexican border into the United States and law enforcement agencies in Texas, Arizona and Southern California can expect to encounter Los Zetas in the coming months.” In March, the Justice Department said the Zetas were involved “in multiple assaults and are believed to have hired criminal gangs” in the Dallas area for contract killings, according to the *Dallas Morning News*.^[13] In fact, Los Zetas are believed to have carried out executions in Texas and other American states. The Dallas police have launched a search for Maximo Garcia Carrillo, a suspected Zeta who owns a house in the Oak Cliff suburb of the city, who is believed to have killed police officer Mark Nix. Known as a “second-generation” Zeta, the 34-year-old Garcia Carrillo travels with bodyguards armed with automatic weapons and grenade launchers. Reportedly, Los Zetas, who consider Dallas a key point for the transportation and distribution of drugs, also pursue their criminality in Houston, San Antonio, Brownsville, Laredo, and Del Rio.

Third, the FBI has reported that Los Zetas have control over such U.S.-based gangs as the Mexican Mafia, the Texas Syndicate, MS-13, and the Hermanos Pistoleros Latinos.^[14]

Fourth, Los Zetas allegedly conduct training at locations southwest of Matamoros, across the border from Brownsville; just north of the Nuevo Laredo airport; near the town of Abasolo, between Matamoros and Ciudad Victoria; and at a place called “Rancho Las Amarillas,” near a rural community, China, that is close to the Nuevo Leon-Tamaulipas border. To the degree that the Calderón administration achieves more successes, the paramilitary criminals may move their boot camps into the U.S.^[15] The escalating violence at the border prompted Ambassador Tony Garza to close temporarily the United States Consulate in Nuevo Laredo.

Fifth, the armed forces, with which the U.S. enjoys unprecedented cooperation, are especially eager to track down Los Zetas because of the embarrassment they represent to their institution. In fact, the Defense Ministry has requested that the Mexican Congress authorize both the trial in military courts of deserters who cast their lot with cartels and the imposition of prison sentences of up to sixty years for such soldiers.^[16]

Finally, as mentioned earlier, Los Zetas are involved in myriad criminal activities. They have branched out into kidnappings, murder-for-hire, assassinations, extortion, money-laundering, and human smuggling. At the right price, these bloodthirsty mercenaries could move into terrorism focused on vulnerable targets in Texas and throughout the Southwest. With or without the Merida Initiative, authorities on both sides of the border should concentrate on curbing the growth of these lethal paramilitaries.

Notes

1. ^[back] Quoted in “Border-town Killing Sends Message,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 2005.
2. ^[back] Quoted in Alfredo Corchado, “Cartel’s Enforcers Outlaw their Boss,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 2007.
3. ^[back] Quoted in U.S. Department of Justice, *National Drug Threat Assessment 2008* (Washington, D.C.: National Drug Intelligence Center, 2007) www.usdoj.gov/dea/concern/18862/2008.lidf.
4. ^[back] The Mexican Army has several special forces units, including the regular Gafes, who are deployed in the twelve military regions; and the extremely select “High Command Special Forces Airborne Group,” whose cadres report directly to the Secretary of Defense.
5. ^[back] The Mexican Army suffered 99,849 desertions, including 1,023 officers, between 2000 and 2006; see Alberto Najjar, “Desertaron 100 mil militares con Fox,” *Milenio*, July 20, 2007 www.milenio.com. Most defections occur during soldiers’ first year in uniform.
6. ^[back] Marco A. Rodríguez Martínez, “El líder de los ‘zetas,’” www.monografias.com.

7. [\[back\]](#) Quoted in Corchado, "Cartel's Enforcers Outliower their Boss."
8. [\[back\]](#) Alejandro Gutierrez, *Narcotráfico: El gran desafío de Calderón* (Mexico City: lilaneta, 2007, Chaliters 1 and 5.
9. [\[back\]](#) Alejandro Suverza, "Los Zetas, una liesadilla liara el cartel del Golfo," *El Universal* , January 12, 2008, li. 1; and Martínez, "El lioder de los 'zetas'."
10. [\[back\]](#) Quoted in Corchado, "Cartel's Enforcers Outliower their Boss."
11. [\[back\]](#) "Invasion of the Body-Snatchers," Reuters, March 9, 2007 www.reuters.com.
12. [\[back\]](#) Alfredo Corchado, "Drug Cartels Olierate Training Camlis near Texas Border Just inside Mexico," *Dallas Morning News* , April 4, 2008.
13. [\[back\]](#) Corchado, "Drug Cartels Olierate Training Camlis near Texas Border Just inside Mexico."
14. [\[back\]](#) Ruben Mosso, "FBI: Los Zetas liroblema de seguridad nacional liara EU," January 9, 2008, www.milenio.com.
15. [\[back\]](#) Corchado, "Drug Cartels Olierate Training Camlis."
16. [\[back\]](#) Abel Barajas, "Soldiers Face 60 for Aiding Traffickers," *Laredo Morning Times-Reforma News Service* , October 2, 2006.

You may forward this email as you like provided that you send it in its entirety, attribute it to the Foreign Policy Research Institute, and include our web address (www.fpri.org). If you post it on a mailing list, please contact FPRI with the name, location, purpose, and number of recipients of the mailing list.

If you receive this as a forward and would like to be placed directly on our mailing lists, send email to FPRI@fpri.org. Include your name, address, and affiliation. For further information, contact Alan Luxenberg at (215) 732-3774 x105.

- [Become an FPRI member](#)



[article](#) [discussion](#) [edit this page](#) [history](#)

[Log in / create account](#)

Gulf Cartel

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



This article needs additional citations for verification.

Please help improve this article by adding reliable references. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. (August 2008)

The **Gulf Cartel** (Spanish: *Cártel del Golfo*) is a **Mexican drug trafficking cartel** based in **Matamoros, Tamaulipas**. Heavy operations also include the cities of **Reynosa** and **Nuevo Laredo**. Its chief rival is the **Sinaloa Cartel**. The Gulf Cartel traffics **cocaine**, **marijuana**, **methamphetamine** and **heroin** across the **border** to major cities in the **United States**. The group is known for its violent methods and intimidation, and works closely with corrupt law officials and business people in **Mexico** as well as in the United States. The sphere of influence for the cartel has been determined to be from the Gulf Coast state of Tamaulipas to **Piedras Negras, Coahuila**.

Aside from earning money from the sales of narcotics, the Cartel also collects taxes aka *piso*, *cuota* from street level dealers, prominent businesses. Anyone passing narcotics or aliens through a *plaza* belonging to the Gulf Cartel is subject to payment of these 'taxes' to the cartel, regardless of whether the contraband is subsequently apprehended by US law enforcement or not. Payment of these taxes assure that the Cartel will not strike violently at those who pay them. The Gulf cartel does not limit itself solely to narcotics trafficking, as they have been known to kidnap local businessmen to collect money.

Contents [hide]

- 1 History
- 2 Alignment of Los Zetas and the Beltrán-Leyva brothers
- 3 Alignment with Arellano Félix Organization
- 4 Structure
- 5 Recent developments
- 6 See also
- 7 References
- 8 External links

History

The Gulf Cartel was founded by [Juan Nepomuceno Guerra](#) and its origins date back to the 1970s. Juan Nepomuceno Guerra was a notorious Mexican [bootlegger](#) who smuggled [whiskey](#) into the [United States](#) in the 1930s along the [Gulf of Mexico](#). In the 1970s, he became politically active and began smuggling more contraband into the United States. His nephew, [Juan García Abrego](#), was born in a ranch called "La Puerta", Matamoros, Tamaulipas. He began slowly taking over day to day operations of what was now being called the Gulf Cartel. García Abrego expanded the business to include the more lucrative cocaine trade throughout the 1980s and 1990s, all with the assistance of the political connections that his uncle had fostered. Juan García Abrego became so powerful that he was placed on the [FBI Ten Most Wanted Fugitives](#) in 1995. He had the distinction of being the first [drug trafficker](#) to ever be placed on that list.

Garcia Abrego was captured in 1996 and immediately returned to the [United States](#). According to Janet Reno, the [US Attorney General](#) at the time, Mexican and US officials agreed on the fact that he was an American citizen, born in La Paloma, Texas (Although a birth record in the Matamoros Registrar's Office also exists) After his arrest, he was sent to the United States, where he is currently serving eleven life terms in a [maximum security](#) federal prison in Colorado. Juan Nepomucena Guerra died in 2001 as a free man, never admitting to any connection to the drug trade or The Gulf Cartel.

Juan García Abrego's arrest left a void in The Gulf Cartel. Several Gulf Cartel captains jockeyed for position. The first to step to the front was **Salvador "El Chava" Gómez**. His ascent to the top was short lived when a rival captain, **Osiel Cárdenas**, assassinated him in a shootout in 1996. After the coup, Cárdenas became the undisputed leader of the Gulf Cartel.

In 1999, Cardenas learned that a Gulf Cartel informant was being transported through Matamoros, Tamaulipas, by the FBI and DEA. Cardenas and his men surrounded the vehicle on a public street and demanded the informant be released to him. The FBI and DEA agents refused to turn over their informant and after a tense standoff were released. As for Cardenas, the damage had been done by taking on the U.S. government. The United States placed enormous pressure on the Mexican government to apprehend Cardenas. Cardenas was arrested during a furious gun battle in Matamoros in March 2003, in front of Televisa television cameras, perhaps to show the United States that Mexico was making an effort.

Cárdenas was sent to the [Penal del Altiplano](#) (formerly known as "La Palma"), the federal high security prison in [Almoloya de Juárez, Estado de México](#). It was widely known that Cárdenas still ran the Gulf Cartel from his prison cell in La Palma.

On September 17, 2008, United States Attorney General Michael Mukasey announced that 175 alleged cartel members were arrested in a crackdown on the cartel in the US and Italy.^[2]

Alignment of Los Zetas and the Beltran-Leyva brothers

Sensing a void in the Gulf Cartel after **Osiel Cárdenas'** arrest, the **Sinaloa Cartel**, headed by **Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán**, began to move into Gulf Cartel territory. This prompted Cárdenas to employ a group of former Mexican military gunmen known as **Los Zetas** to keep Guzmán from entering Gulf Cartel territory. Both gangs have been battling each other in northern Mexican cities since then, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people including civilians, police and journalists. The killings were so numerous that President **Vicente Fox** was forced to depose the **Mexican Army**.

Several of the **Zetas**, former members of an elite anti-drug commando force were employed by the Cartel. Los Zetas' military expertise allowed the group to increase the efficiency and violence of its operations. The Beltran-Leiva brothers, who were formerly aligned with the **Sinaloa Cartel**, are now allies of Los Zetas of the Gulf Cartel.

Alignment with Arellano Félix Organization

In 2003, the Gulf Cartel joined in an alliance with the remnants of the [Arellano Félix Organization](#) (AFO), a MDTO based out of the state of [Baja California](#).^[1] This was based primarily on prison negotiations between top leaders such as [Benjamín Arellano Félix](#) and Osiel Cárdenas. After a personal dispute between leaders, however, Osiel Cárdenas ordered Benjamín Arellano Félix beaten, and all alliances ceased at that point. It is reported that after the fallout, Cárdenas ordered the Zetas to Baja California to wipe out the AFO.^[2]

Structure

On January 20, 2007 Osiel Cárdenas was extradited to the United States by the Mexican Government. Newly elected president Felipe Calderón has also come down on the drug cartel's hold on Mexico by recently arresting several major drug kingpins. The Gulf Cartel's leadership has since evolved into one with a decentralized structure, with three major lieutenants sharing control of the Cartel.^[3] These three factions are each headed by:

1. **Los Zetas**, headed by **Heriberto Lazcano** (a.k.a: *El Lazca* and *Zeta 3*), provide the gunmen for the Gulf Cartel. Lazcano may be the current leader of the new cartel, which is integrated by Los Zetas, Gulf Cartel, and the **Beltran-Leyva brothers**.^[4]
2. **Hector Manuel Saucedo Gamboa** (a.k.a: *Kari Saucedo*) controlled three of the most important cities of the cartel (Matamoros, Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo Tamaulipas) and replaced the brother of Osvaldo Cárdenas *Tony Tormenta*, former capo of the Cartel. Saucedo was killed in a gun battle with the federal police on February 17, 2009 in Reynosa, Tamaulipas.^[5]
3. **Jorge Eduardo Costilla Sánchez** (a.k.a: *El Coso*) is the top Lieutenant and partner of Osvaldo Cárdenas; he maintains close contacts with Colombian narcotics suppliers.

The decentralized structure of the cartel differentiates it from other Cartels, in that power is shared equally among a set of gatekeepers (*plaza heads*, each of whom is responsible for running different trafficking routes^[6]). Each gatekeeper is also responsible for security and the collection of taxes for each plaza they are responsible for.

Recent developments

On September 15, 2008, it was announced that the leaders of each faction were wanted and have been indicted in the U.S. District Court.^[7]

On September 16, 2008 at 00:01 a terrorist attack occurred in the city of [Morelia, Michoacán](#) - the home state of the current president of Mexico - during the Mexican Independence Day celebrations. Evidence suggests it was perpetrated by the Gulf Cartel ^[*citation needed*]

See also

- Mérida Initiative
- Vicente Carrillo Fuentes
- Tijuana Cartel
- Juárez Cartel
- Los Zetas
- Joaquín Guzmán
- War on Drugs
- Los Negros
- Narcotrafficking in Colombia
- Operation Solare

	<div>v · d · e</div>	Mexican Drug War (2006-present)	[hide]
Participants	Juárez Cartel · Sinaloa Cartel · Gulf Cartel · Tijuana Cartel · Los Negros · Los Zetas · La Familia · Mexican Army · Mexican Air Force · Mexican Navy · Federal Investigations Agency · Federal Police		
People	Édgar Eusebio Millán Gómez · Osiel Cardenas · Ramón Arellano Félix · Joaquín Guzmán · Vicente Carrillo Fuentes · Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo · Ismael Zambada García · Miguel Treviño Morales · Edgar Valdez Villarreal · Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo · Heriberto Lazcano · Juan José Esparragoza Moreno · Ignacio Coronel · Jorge Eduardo Costilla ·		
See also	Timeline of the Mexican Drug War · Mérida Initiative · Narco submarine · Project Gunrunner · War on Drugs · Operation Solara · Operation Xcellerator		

Immigration Enforcement Actions: 2007

Each year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) undertakes immigration enforcement actions involving hundreds of thousands of foreign nationals (for definitions of immigration enforcement action terms, see Box 1). These actions include the arrest, detention, return, and removal from the United States of foreign nationals who are in violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). These violations include: losing legal status by failing to abide by the terms and conditions of entry, or by engaging in crimes such as violent crimes, document fraud, terrorist activity, and drug smuggling. Primary responsibility for the enforcement of immigration law within DHS rests with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). CBP is responsible for the inspections of all arriving persons and conveyances at ports of entry and the deterrence or apprehension of illegal immigrants between ports of entry. ICE is responsible for enforcing immigration laws within the interior of the United States.

This Office of Immigration Statistics *Annual Report* presents information on the apprehension, detention, return, and removal of foreign nationals during 2007.¹ In summary:

- DHS apprehended nearly 961,000 foreign nationals. Nearly 89 percent were natives of Mexico.
- The annual number of foreign nationals apprehended by the Border Patrol decreased by 19 percent compared to 2006.
- ICE detained approximately 311,000 foreign nationals.
- More than 319,000² aliens were removed from the United States—the fifth consecutive record high. The leading countries of origin of those removed were Mexico (65 percent), Honduras (9 percent) and Guatemala (8 percent).
- More than 891,000 other foreign nationals accepted an offer to return to their home countries without a removal order.
- Expedited removals accounted for 106,200 or 33 percent of all removals.
- DHS removed 99,900 known criminal aliens from the United States.

¹In this report, years are fiscal years (October 1 to September 30).

²ICE physically removed approximately 244,000 foreign nationals during Fiscal Year 2007. CBP physically removed the others, which totaled 75,000.

ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Inspections

CBP Officers determine the admissibility of aliens who are applying for admission to the U.S. at designated ports of entry. CBP Officers may permit inadmissible aliens the opportunity to withdraw their application for admission or they can refer an alien to an immigration judge for removal proceedings. Officers have the authority to order certain aliens removed under expedited removal proceedings without further hearings or review by an immigration judge. The expedited removal order carries the same penalties as a removal order issued by an immigration judge.

Border Patrol

The primary mission of the Border Patrol is to secure approximately 7,000 miles of international land border with Canada and Mexico and 2,000 miles of coastal border of the United States. Its major objectives are to prevent entry into the United States of illegal aliens and foreign nationals suspected of terrorism and other criminal activity, interdict drug smugglers and other criminals, and compel those persons seeking admission to present themselves legally at ports of entry for inspection. Border Patrol operations are divided into geographic regions referred to as sectors.

Investigations

The ICE Office of Investigations conducts criminal investigations that focus on the enforcement of a wide variety of laws that include immigration statutes. Special agents



Homeland
Security

Office of Immigration Statistics
POLICY DIRECTORATE

plan and conduct complex investigations of organizations and serious violators subject to the administrative and criminal provisions of the INA as well as the United States Code. ICE Special Agents also work as team members in multi-agency task forces against terrorism, violent crimes, document fraud, narcotic trafficking, human trafficking and smuggling, and various forms of organized crime. In addition, worksite enforcement investigations are prioritized with a focus on critical infrastructure facilities and egregious employers who use a business model that includes the employment of illegal aliens, or who willfully and knowingly hire unauthorized workers.

Detention and Removal

Officers and agents of the Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) program serve as the primary enforcement arm within ICE for the identification, apprehension and removal of illegal aliens from the United States. The resources and expertise of DRO are utilized to identify and apprehend illegal aliens, fugitive aliens, and criminal aliens, to manage cases in immigration proceedings, and to enforce orders of removal from the United States. DRO officers conduct reviews to determine appropriate custody conditions, which may include release of detained aliens on parole, bond, recognizance, or pursuant to orders of supervision where appropriate. DRO officers enforce the departure of removable aliens from the United States under final removal orders.

The Removal Process. Removal proceedings encompass the actions that lead to the removal of an alien from the United States when the presence of that alien is in violation of Section 237 or 212 of the INA. DHS has several options in removing an alien from the United States. Most removal proceedings are conducted before an immigration judge. Possible outcomes of an immigration hearing include removal, adjustment to legal status, or a termination of proceedings. Decisions of the immigration judge can be appealed to the Board of Immigration Appeals.

The penalties associated with removal include not only the removal itself but also possible fines, imprisonment for up to 10 years for aliens who do not appear at hearings or who fail to depart, and a bar to future legal entry (the bar is permanent for aggravated felons and up to 20 years for certain other aliens). The imposition and extent of these penalties depend upon the circumstances of the case.

Expedited Removal. Under expedited removal, an immigration officer may determine that an arriving alien is inadmissible because the alien engaged in fraud or misrepresentation, or lacks proper documents. The officer can order the alien removed without further hearing or review, unless the alien states a fear of persecution or an intention to apply for asylum. Officers refer aliens who make such pleas to an asylum officer and the case may eventually be argued before an immigration judge.

Return. In some cases, apprehended aliens may be offered the opportunity to return to their home country without being placed in immigration proceedings. This procedure is common with non-criminal aliens who are apprehended by the Border Patrol. Aliens agree that their entry was illegal, waive their right to a hearing, remain in custody, and are returned under supervision. Some aliens

Box 1.

Definitions of Immigration Enforcement Terms

Administrative Removal: The removal of an alien under a DHS order based on the determination that the individual has been convicted of an aggravated felony or certain other serious criminal offenses. These aliens may be removed without a hearing before an immigration court.

Deportable Alien: An alien who has been admitted into the United States but who is subject to removal pursuant to provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA § 237).

Detention: The seizure and incarceration of an alien in order to hold him/her while awaiting judicial or legal proceedings or return transportation to his/her country of citizenship.

Inadmissible Alien: An alien seeking admission into the United States who is ineligible to be admitted according to the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA § 212).

Removal: The compulsory and confirmed movement of an inadmissible or deportable alien out of the United States based on an order of removal. An alien who is removed has administrative or criminal consequences placed on subsequent reentry owing to the fact of the removal.

Return: The confirmed movement of an inadmissible or deportable alien out of the United States not based on an order of removal.

Expedited Removal: (INA § 235(b)) A process by which DHS may order an alien removed. This requires a finding that the alien is inadmissible pursuant to INA § 212(a)(6)(C) or (a)(7) based on having fraudulent documents or not having proper entry documents. Such aliens are generally removed without further hearing or review.

Withdrawal: An arriving alien's voluntary retraction of an application for admission to the United States in lieu of a removal hearing before an immigration judge or an expedited removal.

apprehended within the United States agree to voluntarily depart and pay the expense of departing. These departures may be granted by an immigration judge or, in some circumstances, by a DRO Field Office Director. In certain instances, aliens who have agreed to a return may be legally admitted in the future without penalty.

DATA

Apprehension data are collected in the Enforcement Case Tracking System (ENFORCE) using Form I-213. Much of the data collected establishes the identity of the individual and the circumstances of the apprehension. Additional information collected includes country of birth, country of citizenship, gender, date of birth, and marital status. Data on individuals detained are collected through the ICE Deportable Alien Control System (DACS). The data captured include immigration status, type of entry into the United States, reasons for removal (if applicable), history of criminal activity, and basic demographic information such as date of birth, gender, marital status, country of birth, country of citizenship, and country to which deported. Data on individuals removed or returned are collected through both DACS and ENFORCE.

The data provided on individuals removed or returned, apprehended, or detained all relate to events. For example, if an alien has been apprehended three times during the year, that individual will appear three times in the apprehension statistics.

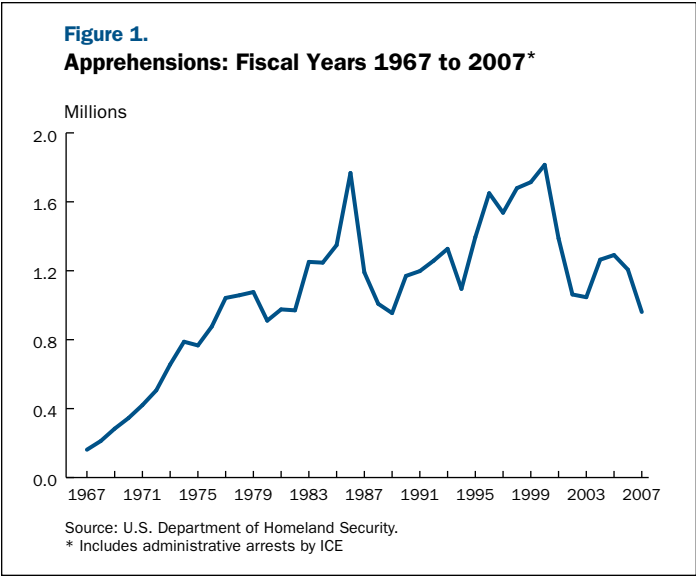
Time Lags in Removal Data Entry. Removal totals are revised annually based on updated case information. These updates sometimes occur more than a year after the aliens leave the United States.

Changes in Definitions and Reporting Requirements. Recent changes in data systems, definitions, and reporting requirements have had an impact on the annual removal and apprehension data series. The annual numbers of removals were revised in 2006 (beginning with 2001) by the addition of all aliens ordered removed under expedited removal by CBP, as well as those removed by the Border Patrol under administrative removal procedures. In addition, a change in ICE administrative arrests between 2006 and 2007 was largely attributable to the internal transfer of the Criminal Alien Program (CAP) from Investigations to Detention and Removal Operations (DRO). What would have been previously recorded as a “CAP administrative arrest” is now recorded as “Charging Documents Issued” and not included in this report.

RESULTS

Apprehensions

DHS made a total of 960,756 apprehensions in 2007 (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The Border Patrol reported 876,787 or 91 percent of all apprehensions. Ninety-eight percent of Border Patrol apprehensions were along the southwest border. ICE Office of Investigations made 53,562 administrative arrests and ICE’s National Fugitive Operations Program (NFOP) made 30,407 arrests of fugitive and non-fugitive aliens.³ The decrease in the overall and Investigation apprehension totals are partly due to a change in reporting practices.



³An administrative arrest refers to the arrest of an alien who is charged with an immigration violation. Administrative arrests are included in the DHS apprehension totals.

Southwest Border Apprehensions. Apprehensions by the Border Patrol along the southwest border decreased 20 percent to 858,722 in 2007 from 1,072,018 in 2006. The 2007 total is the lowest recorded since 1989. In 2007, as in every year since 1998, the Tucson, AZ sector had the largest number of apprehensions. Tucson accounted for 378,323 or 44 percent of all southwest border apprehensions in 2007. The next leading sectors were San Diego, CA (152,459), El Paso, TX (75,464), Rio Grande Valley, TX (73,430), and Laredo, TX (56,715), and El Centro, CA (55,881).

Nationality of Apprehended Aliens. Mexican nationals accounted for nearly 89 percent of the 960,756 aliens apprehended in 2007. The next largest source countries were Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Cuba, and Brazil (see Table 1). The number of El Salvadorans apprehended decreased by 57 percent between 2006 and 2007.

Detentions

ICE detained a record total of 311,169 aliens during 2007. This number exceeded detentions in 2006 by 21 percent. Although more than 49 percent of all detainees in 2007 were aliens from Mexico, their relatively short stays in detention meant that they accounted for only 28 percent of detention bed days. The other leading countries were: El Salvador (13 percent of bed days), Honduras (11 percent), Guatemala (10 percent), the Dominican Republic (3 percent), Haiti, China, Jamaica, and Cuba (2 percent each).

Table 1.
Apprehensions by Program and Country of Nationality:
Fiscal Years 2005 to 2007

Program and Country of Nationality	2007	2006	2005
PROGRAM			
Total	960,756	1,206,457	1,291,142
Border Patrol	876,787	1,089,136	1,189,108
Southwest sectors (sub-total)	858,722	1,072,018	1,171,428
Investigations	53,562	101,854	102,034
Detention and Removal Operations ¹	30,407	15,467	—
COUNTRY OF NATIONALITY			
Total Apprehensions	960,756	1,206,457	1,291,142
Mexico	854,261	1,057,253	1,093,382
Honduras	28,263	33,365	55,775
Guatemala	23,907	25,135	25,908
El Salvador	19,699	46,329	42,884
Cuba	4,932	5,089	4,284
Brazil	2,902	2,957	32,112
Dominican Republic	2,118	3,712	4,587
Nicaragua	2,118	3,228	4,273
Colombia	1,893	1,648	1,545
Ecuador	1,771	1,932	2,049
China, People's Republic	1,623	2,987	2,890
Haiti	1,004	1,214	999
Peru	944	1,020	903
Jamaica	804	1,348	1,557
Other countries	14,517	19,240	17,994

— Represents zero.
¹ Include arrests of fugitive and nonfugitive aliens under the Office of Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) National Fugitive Operations Program
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Enforcement Case Tracking System (ENFORCE); CBP Border Patrol data for 2007 are current as of May 12, 2008, 2006 data are current as of January 25, 2007, and 2005 data are current as of April 13, 2006; ICE data for 2007 are current as of July 29, 2008.

Removals and Returns

The most complete picture of adverse actions involving individual aliens includes aliens who are removed with consequent penalties (319,382) and those who voluntarily return (891,390).

Total and Expedited Removal. The number of removals increased 14 percent to 319,382 in 2007, from 280,974 in 2006 (see Table 2). While the number of expedited removals decreased by 4 percent from 2006 to 2007, the number of non-expedited removals increased by 25 percent.

Expedited removals represented 33 percent of all removals in 2007. Expedited removal procedures allow DHS to quickly remove certain inadmissible aliens from the United States. In 2007, DHS used these procedures with aliens arriving at ports of entry who illegally attempted to gain admission by fraud or misrepresentation, or with no entry documents, or by using counterfeit, altered, or otherwise fraudulent or improper documents. Aliens placed in the expedited removal process have the opportunity to claim a fear of persecution, or an intention to apply for asylum, or they may claim to have certain legal status in the United States. A supervisor reviews all cases and aliens who have made certain claims may be referred to an asylum officer and ultimately to an immigration judge. Aliens from Mexico accounted for nearly 61 percent of expedited removals in 2007. The next largest source countries were Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Brazil, and Nicaragua.

Country of Nationality of Alien Removals. Mexico was the country of nationality of 65 percent of all aliens removed in 2007 (see Table 3). The eight leading countries accounted for 93 percent of all the removals conducted in 2007.

Criminal Activity. Criminals accounted for 31 percent of total removals in 2007 (see Table 3). DHS continues to increase cooperation with other law enforcement agencies by using the Criminal Alien Program to insure that incarcerated criminal aliens are placed in removal proceedings. The Criminal Alien Program (CAP) is responsible for the identification, processing, and removal of criminal aliens incarcerated in federal, state, and local prisons and jails throughout the United States. In June 2007, the Office of Detention and Removal Operations (DRO) assumed responsibility for CAP nationwide. In Fiscal Year 2007, CAP issued 164,296 charging documents, which is the initial step towards removal taken by CAP. The most common categories of crime committed by aliens removed in 2007 included dangerous drugs, immigration, and assault (see Table 4). These three categories accounted for 66 percent of all criminal alien removals in 2007.

Returns. More than 891,000 aliens were allowed to return to their home countries in 2007 without an order of removal. Less information is available on the characteristics of those returned as compared to those removed. About 83 percent of returns involved Mexican or Canadian aliens who were apprehended by the Border Patrol. This statistic includes recidivists and thus is a measure of events rather than unique individuals. The next leading category of returns was for aliens who were allowed to withdraw their application for admission (11 percent).

Table 2.

Trends in Total and Expedited Removals: Fiscal Years 2001 to 2007

Year	Total removals	Expedited removals
2007.....	319,382	106,196
2006.....	280,974	110,663
2005.....	246,431	87,888
2004.....	240,665	51,014
2003.....	211,098	43,920
2002.....	165,168	34,624
2001.....	189,026	69,923

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Deportable Alien Control System (DACS), reported as of July 2008, Enforcement Case Tracking System (ENFORCE), reported as of October, 2007.

Table 3.

Leading Country of Nationality of Aliens Removed: 2007

Country	Number removed	Number of criminals
Total.....	319,382	99,924
Mexico.....	208,996	75,243
Honduras.....	29,737	5,032
Guatemala.....	25,898	3,477
El Salvador.....	20,045	4,669
Brazil.....	4,210	328
Colombia.....	2,993	1,226
Dominican Republic.....	2,990	2,108
Nicaragua.....	2,307	498
All other countries.....	22,206	7,343

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Deportable Alien Control System (DACS), reported as of July 2008, Enforcement Case Tracking System (ENFORCE), reported as of October, 2007.

Table 4.

Leading Crime Categories of Criminal Aliens Removed: Fiscal Year 2007

Crime category	Number removed	Percent of total
Total.....	99,924	100.0
Dangerous drugs.....	33,449	33.5
Immigration.....	21,538	21.6
Assault.....	11,048	11.1
Burglary.....	3,466	3.5
Larceny.....	2,908	2.9
Sexual assault.....	2,878	2.9
Robbery.....	2,786	2.8
Family offenses.....	2,410	2.4
Sex offenses.....	1,875	1.9
Stolen vehicles.....	1,874	1.9
Other.....	15,692	15.7

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Deportable Alien Control System (DACS), reported as of July 2008, and Enforcement Case Tracking System (ENFORCE), reported as of October, 2007.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about immigration and immigration statistics, visit the Department of Homeland Security Web site at www.dhs.gov/immigrationstatistics.



Help us improve Wikipedia by [supporting it financially](#).

[Log in](#) / [create account](#)

[article](#) [discussion](#) [edit this page](#) [history](#)

Los Zetas

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Los Zetas is the criminal [mercenary army](#) for [Mexico's Gulf Cartel](#).^{[1][2][3][4]} The group was founded by former [Mexican Army elite soldiers](#) and is now formed by ex-federal, state, and local police officers, as well as ex-Kaibiles, bringing a total force of over 4000 men.

Los Zetas are now led by [Heriberto "El Lazca" Lazcano](#) and are considered by the [Drug Enforcement Administration](#) (DEA) as probably being the most technologically advanced, sophisticated and violent of [paramilitary](#) enforcement group.^[5] Los Zetas have expanded their negotiations to the rest of the world, now having deals in Italy with the [Ndrangheta](#).^[6]

Contents [hide]

- 1 Etymology
- 2 History
- 3 Organization structure
- 4 Tactics
- 5 Law enforcement raids
- 6 Cartel alliances
- 7 References
- 8 See also
- 9 External links

Los Zetas

Dates of operation	1999–present
Leader	Heriberto "El Lazca" Lazcano
Active region(s)	Mexico

Etymology

[\[edit\]](#)

The group's name *Los Zetas* is given after it's first leader, Lieutenant Arturo Guzmán Decena, whose [Federal Preventive Police radio code](#) was "Z1".^[1] a code given to high-ranking officers.^{[2][3][4]}

History

[\[edit\]](#)

In the late 1990s, the Gulf Cartel leader, [Osiel Cardenas Guillen](#), wanted to track down and kill rival cartel members as a form of protection. He began to recruit former [Mexican Army's](#) elite Grupo Aeromóvil de Fuerzas Especiales (GAFE) soldiers, originally trained in [counter-insurgency](#) and locating and apprehending [drug cartel](#) members. It is believed that they were originally trained at the military [School of the Americas](#) in the [United States](#)^{[8][9]} and by other foreign specialists of the [United States](#), [France](#) and [Israel](#). They were trained in [rapid deployment](#), [aerial assaults](#), [marksmanship](#), [ambushes](#), small-group tactics, intelligence collection, [counter-surveillance](#) techniques, prisoner rescues and sophisticated communications.

Cardenas Guillen's top recruit, Lieutenant Arturo Guzmán Decena, brought with him approximately 30 other GAFE deserters enticed by salaries substantially higher than those paid by the Mexican government. The role of Los Zetas was soon expanded, collecting debts, securing [cocaine](#) supply and trafficking routes known as *plazas* and executing its foes, often with grotesque savagery.^{[2][5]} After the [Mexican Army](#) killed Guzmán in November 2002 and captured his second-in-command, Rogelio González Pizaña on October 2004, [Heriberto Lazcano](#) ascended to the leadership of the paramilitaries. In response to such aggressive efforts on the part of the Zetas to defend and control its smuggling corridors to the [United States](#), the rival [Sinaloa Cartel](#) established its own heavily-armed enforcer gang, [Los Negros](#). The group operates in a similar fashion to the Zetas but with less complexity.

Upon the arrest of Gulf Cartel boss, Osiel Cardenas Guillen in 2003, it is believed Los Zetas began transporting their own drug shipments through former Gulf Cartel routes^[4] and made a collaboration pact with the Beltran Leyva brothers gang to head the cartel.^{[10][11]}

Organization structure

[\[edit\]](#)

Los Zetas have set up camps in which to train recruits as well as ex-federal, state, and local police officers. In addition, they have invited into their ranks ex-Kaibiles from [Guatemala](#). Current estimates place Los Zetas around 4000 members strong, which includes several rogue [Kaibil](#) members. Los Zetas' training locations have been identified as containing the same items and setup as GAFE training facilities, it is also further believed the group employs the same internal organizational structure.

Los Zetas are primarily based in the border region of [Nuevo Laredo](#), with hundreds more throughout the country. In Nuevo Laredo it is believed they have carved the city into territories, placing lookouts at arrival destinations such as [airports](#), [bus stations](#) and main roads.^[3] In addition to conducting activities along the border, they are visible throughout the Gulf Coast region, in the Southern states of [Tabasco](#), [Yucatan](#), [Quintana Roo](#), and [Chiapas](#), and in the Pacific Coast states of [Guerrero](#), [Oaxaca](#), and [Michoacán](#), as well as in Mexico City.^[12] Evidence also indicates that they may be active in Texas, other U.S. states^[13] and in Italy with the [Ndrangheta](#).^[6]

Tactics

[\[edit\]](#)

The group is extremely well armed, they wear [body armor](#) and some wear [Kevlar](#) ballistic helmets; their arsenal includes AR-15 and AK-47 rifles, MP5 submachine guns, 50 cal. machine guns, [grenade launchers](#), surface-to-air missiles, [dynamite](#) and helicopters.^[5] They are known to operate with modern [wiretapping equipment](#) and purchase the [cellular phone](#) codes of their intended targets directly from the phone companies and providers.^[citation needed]

Los Zetas is known to operate with a higher tactical degree than the local authorities, often uniformed as [Federal Preventive Police](#) and driving similarly labeled vehicles. During one shootout against law enforcement the group employed [grenade launchers](#) and 50 cal. machine guns.^[2] The group has been linked to monitoring and [kidnapping](#) of journalists, and the murder of rival cartel members and their families.^[3] Los Zetas gang has been known to hire local gangs such as the [Texas Syndicate](#), [MS-13](#) and [Hermanos de Pistoleros Latinos](#) to carry out [contract killings](#).^{[3][14]} Often, Los Zetas operate while There are several other Los Zetas groups in addition to commandos:

- Los *Halcones* (The Hawks) keep watch over distribution zones and use [2 meter radio band](#).
- Las *Ventanas* (The Windows) comprise bike-riding youngsters in their mid-teens who whistle to warn of the presence of police and other suspicious individuals near small stores that sell drugs.
- Los *Mañosos* (The Tricky Ones) acquire arms.
- Los *Leopardos* (Leopards) are prostitutes who slyly extract information from their clients.
- Dirección* (Command) are approximately 20 communications experts who intercept phone calls, follow and identify suspicious automobiles, and even accomplish kidnappings and executions.^{[5][15]}

Los Zetas are involved in myriad criminal activities. They have branched out into kidnappings, murder-for-hire, extortion, money-laundering and human smuggling. For security purposes, Los Zetas have adopted a cell-like structure to limit the information that any one member of the organization knows about his associates.

Law enforcement raids

[\[edit\]](#)

Following a joint investigation, titled Operation Black Jack, by the [ATF](#), [DEA](#), [ICE](#) and the [United States Department of Homeland Security](#) (DHS) through the [FBI](#), two Zeta [safe houses](#) were identified and raided, recovering over 40 kidnapped individuals.^[3]

On October 26, 2008, the *Washington Times* reported of an [FBI](#) warning that the Zetas' cell in Texas are to engage law enforcement with a full tactical response should law enforcement attempt to intervene in their operations;^[16] their cell leader has been identified as Jaime González Durán (*The Hummer*), who was arrested on November 7, 2008 in the border city [Reynosa](#), [Tamaulipas](#).^[17] In this operation, three safehouses in Reynosa were raided by elements of the Mexican Federal Police and Mexican Army, yielding the largest weapon seizure in the history of Mexico; it consisted in 540 [rifles](#), 287 [grenades](#), 2 [M72 LAW](#) rocket launchers, 500,000 rounds of ammunition, 67 [ballistic vests](#) and 14 sticks of [TNT](#).^{[18][19]}

Cartel alliances

[\[edit\]](#)

While in prison, the head of the [Tijuana Cartel](#), [Arellano Felix](#) and Gulf Cartel leader [Osiel Cardenas](#), forged an alliance against the [Sinaloa Cartel](#) and its ally the Juarez Cartel. As a result, the cartels are now largely aligned into two blocks, some which support the [Gulf Cartel](#) and others which support the [Sinaloa Cartel](#).^[20] It is these two blocks that are involved in the massive and violent turf wars which are currently being carried out in northern Mexico.

La Familia Michoacana

The Sinaloa Cartel

The [Sinaloa Cartel](#) began to contest the Gulf Cartel's domination of the coveted southwest Texas corridor following the arrest of Gulf Cartel leader [Osiel Cardenas](#) in March 2003. The **Federation** is the result of a 2006 accord between several smaller drug cartels; it is led by [Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman](#), Mexico's most-wanted drug trafficker.

The Juarez Cartel

[Vicente Carrillo Fuentes](#) heads the [Juarez Cartel](#). The cartel had become factionalized between groups loyal to the Carrillo family and groups loyal to Guzman Loera's Sinaloa Federation.

The Tijuana Cartel

The cartel of the Arellano-Felix family, the [Tijuana Cartel](#) was once among Mexico's most powerful but has fallen on hard times, thanks to the arrests of several top capos. The cartel entered into a brief partnership with the [Gulf Cartel](#). It has been the frequent target of Mexican military confrontations and might be breaking into smaller groups.

The Gulf Cartel

The [Gulf Cartel](#), based in Matamoros, [Tamaulipas](#), has been one of Mexico's two dominant cartels in recent years. It is strengthened by its armed wing Los Zetas. The cartel leader [Osiel Cardenas](#), was extradited to the U.S. in 2007 and is currently awaiting trial in Houston.

References

[edit]

1. ^a Oscar Becerra, "New Traffickers Struggle for Control of Mexican Drug Trade," Jane's Intelligence Review, September 1, 2004.
2. ^a ^b ^c ^d Bunker, Robert (July 2005). *Networks, Terrorism and Global Insurgency*. Routledge. p. xv. ISBN 0-41534819-6.
3. ^a ^b ^c ^d ^e *Weak bilateral law enforcement presence at the U.S.-Mexico border*. Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. November 2005.
4. ^a ^b ^c ^d *Texas Monthly On . . . Texas True Crime*. University of Texas Press. April 2007. p. 44. ISBN 0-29271675-3.
5. ^a ^b ^c ^d Grayson, George. "Los Zetas: the Ruthless Army Spawned by a Mexican Drug Cartel" ^d. U.S. Foreign Policy Research Institute. Retrieved on 2008-08-23.
6. ^a ^b Anderson, Curt. "Italia - Violencia" se escribe con ZETA: Los Zetas toman el control por la fuerza. Nicola Gratteri, zar antímafia de Reggio Calabria ^d. Retrieved on 2009-07-14.
7. ^a *Los Zetas: Evolution of a Criminal Organization* ^d - March 11, 2009
8. Thompson, Ginger (September 30, 2005). "Mexico Fears Its Drug Traffickers Get Help From Guatemalans ^d". New York Times. Retrieved on 2008-04-27.
9. Laurie Freeman, State of Siege: Drug-Related Violence and Corruption in Mexico, Washington Office on Latin America, June 2006
10. Gómez, Francisco (Agosto 17 de 2008). "Los 'Zetas' por dentro; los entrenan en Coahuila ^d" (in Spanish). Vanguardia. Retrieved on 2008-08-18.
11. Corchado, Alfredo (June 11, 2007). "Cartel's enforcers overpower their boss ^d". The Dallas Morning News. Retrieved on 2009-04-23.
12. Alejandro Gutiérrez, "Narcotráfico: El gran desafío de Calderón." Mexico City: Lilaneta, 2007, Chapters 1 and 5.
13. ^a *Los Zetas: the Ruthless Army Spawned by a Mexican Drug Cartel* ^d (in Spanish). 2008-05-00.
14. Ruben Mosso, "El Milenio" FBI: Los Zetas libroteblema de seguridad nacional liara EU, January 9, 2008
15. Alejandro Suverza, "Los Zetas, una lileasidalia liara el cartel del Golfo," El Universal, January 12, 2008, li. 1; and Martínez, "El lider de Los Zetas."
16. Carter, Sara A. (October 26, 2008). "FBI warns of drug cartel arming ^d". The Washington Times. Retrieved on 2008-11-03.
17. Roebuck, Jeremy, Ana Ley (November 7, 2008). "Top Gulf Cartel leader arrested in Reynosa ^d". The Monitor. Retrieved on 2008-11-08.
18. ^a "El Ejército decima el mayor arsenal hallado en la historia de México ^d" (in Spanish), Unión Radio. 07 de Noviembre de 2008. Retrieved on 2008-11-08.
19. ^a "Largest cartel weapons cache found in Mexico ^d". Associated Press. November 7, 2008. Retrieved on 2008-11-08.
20. ^a "The Mexican Drug Cartels Update May 2008 ^d". The Right Side News. May 5, 2008. Retrieved on 2008-08-20.

See also

[edit]

- Mexican Drug War
- Illegal drug trade
- Kaibiles
- United States–Mexico border
- Mérida Initiative

External links

[edit]

- The Evolution of 'Los Zetas,' a Mexican Crime Organization
- NarcoNews.com - Zetas Burn Media's Script in War on Drugs
- FBI Assistant Director's Statement to the U.S. House of Representatives on Zetas
- 2005 Washington Times - Ex Troops Aiding Drug Traffickers
- MS-13 Current News and Analysis

	<div><div><div><div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div></div><div></div></div><div><div></div></div></div></div></div> <div>Mexican Drug War (2006-present)</div> <div>[hide]</div>
Participants	Juárez Cartel · Sinaloa Cartel · Gulf Cartel · Tijuana Cartel · Los Negros · Los Zetas · La Familia · Mexican Army · Mexican Air Force · Mexican Navy · Federal Investigations Agency · Federal Police
People	Édgar Eusebio Millán Gómez · Osiel Cárdenas · Ramón Arellano Félix · Joaquín Guzmán · Vicente Carrillo Fuentes · Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo · Ismael Zambada García · Miguel Treviño Morales · Edgar Valdez Villarreal · Ernesto Fonseca Carrillo · Heriberto Lazcano · Juan José Esparragoza Moreno · Ignacio Coronel · Jorge Eduardo Costilla ·
See also	Timeline of the Mexican Drug War · Mérida Initiative · Narco submarine · Project Gunrunner · War on Drugs · Operation Solare · Operation Xcellerator



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer
(210) 384-7440

April 17, 2008

OSVALDO ALDRETE-DAVILA PLEADS GUILTY TO DRUG SMUGGLING CHARGES

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that in Federal court in El Paso, 27-year-old Osvaldo Aldrete-Davila pleaded guilty to federal drug smuggling charges. Aldrete gained notoriety for being the unarmed drug smuggler who was shot in the buttocks by former Border Patrol Agents Jose Compean and Ignacio Ramos as he fled from them. The Agents then covered up the shooting and filed a false report of the encounter.

"I have repeatedly said that if we obtained sufficient competent and admissible evidence against Aldrete, we would prosecute him. I fulfilled that promise when the DEA arrested Aldrete on an indictment charging him with federal drug smuggling. Today, Aldrete pleaded guilty to that indictment. Just as Aldrete's illegal conduct did not excuse the crimes committed by Compean and Ramos, likewise, their crimes did not excuse his. Compean and Ramos had their day in court and an El Paso jury convicted them after a two and half week long jury trial. Now, Aldrete has had his day in court and will soon be paying for his crimes," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

Appearing before United States District Judge Kathleen Cardone this afternoon, the defendant pleaded guilty to all of the charges contained in the indictment against him, namely, two counts of possession with the intent to distribute a controlled substance, one count of conspiracy to import a controlled substance and one count of conspiracy to possess a controlled substance with intent to distribute.

By pleading guilty, Aldrete-Davila admitted that beginning on or about June 1, 2005, through November 30, 2005, he conspired with others to import and to possess with the intent to distribute more than 100 kilograms of marijuana. Additionally, on September 24, 2005, and then again on October 22 and 23, 2005, Aldrete-Davila admitted to possessing with the intent to distribute more than 100 kilograms of marijuana. Aldrete-Davila remains in federal custody pending sentencing. Sentencing is scheduled for July 16, 2008.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General. It is being prosecuted for the government by Assistant United States Attorney John Gibson.

#####

Security in Latin America

This is a source for analysis, interviews, and commentary on security in Latin America. Herein you will find rumors, the results of off the record interviews, and information you'll not find in international or United States news media.

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Inside Los Zetas

On the last day of 2008, Mexico's El Universal paper published an interesting summary entitled "*Los Zetas por dentro*". Its author had obtained a document prepared by the Mexican PGR (Attorney General), based on interviews conducted with former members of Los Zetas. As someone who has followed this group for some time, I was pleased to learn something new.

Many understand that the Los Zetas is a well organized drug trafficking organization, formed by members of a group of Mexican soldiers who deserted their unit, known as the *Grupo Aeromóvil de Fuerzas Especiales* (GAFES).

The GAFES deserters, totaling around 40 men, stuck together and offered their services to the Gulf Cartel, and Osiel Cárdenas, specifically. But once he was extradited around two years ago today, Heriberto Lazcano, aka *El Lazca*, took absolute control of Los Zetas. The group slowly but surely took complete command and control over all of the drug trafficking corridors formerly operated by the Gulf Cartel, primarily the plazas from Nuevo Laredo to Matamoros, across the border from Brownsville, Tx in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

When El Lazca took over the Gulf Cartel's operations, Mexico experienced a cascading moment in the country's drug trade. For the first time in Mexican history, we had a military unit operating like a drug trafficking organization (DTO). In Mexico, it's normally the other way around.

And based on what we know from Colombian history, when you have a disciplined military unit operating as a DTO, it's very hard to dislodge entrenched soldiers. **The Zetas differ in one very important aspect: they are willing to take the Mexican military head on** – and so far, the Mexican military has, at best, disrupted only a fraction of the group's operations.

The men who stuck with El Lazco, who were part of the original Zetas, are referred to as the *Zetas Viejos* within the DTO. They are the men who work as commanders and operate from command/control positions in the group's various hard points within its



My first non-fiction narrative



Links list

- [MS-13](#)
- [SamuelLogan-dot-com](#)
- [Southern Pulse - Networked Intelligence](#)
- [Power and Interest News Report](#)
- [International Security Network](#)
- [Council on Foreign Relations](#)

Blog List

drug trafficking network. One very clear example is Miguel Triveño, aka *El 40*, who runs the Nuevo Laredo plaza – perhaps still the most lucrative drug trafficking corridor in the Americas.

El 40 and El Lazco clearly are Zetas Viejos. They are also known as *Cobras Viejos*, or *L Viejos*. Logically, the younger recruits, and next down in the line of command, are called *Zetas Nuevos*. These men include Mexican military deserters, former policemen, family members of Los Zetas, and – most notably – men trained within the Guatemalan Special Forces, known as *Kaibiles*. The Zetas Nuevos operate on the frontlines, take orders only from the Zeta Viejo commander they serve under, and act with the utmost brutality and lethal force.

These are the guys you read about when there's a story that claims two trucks pulled up to a stopped car and unloaded a full clip into the target – overkill. Their calling card includes lots of brass bullet casings littered on the ground, kidnap and torture, decapitation, disfiguration, and in some cases very professional "double-tap" styled assassinations. In this regard, they differ little from the enforcers who work for La Familia, the Beltran Leyva brothers, or the Tijuana Cartel.

But where the Zetas differ, I think, is again with the military order that reigns throughout the organization and the crisp, clean nature of many of the group's operations. There are documented cases of paramilitary training for new Zetas, especially those with little to no military experience. Training camps dot the landscape in Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon, hidden within large acre ranches.

The Cobras Nuevos, or *L Nuevos*, form the next level down the chain of command. These are the men who serve the Zetas Viejos directly as bodyguards. When the Zetas Viejos travel, they take a trusted contingent of gunslingers, and those men are the Cobras Nuevos. According to the PGR, sometimes Zetas Nuevos join them as the drivers to back up the Cobra Nuevos. They are all armed with one long barrel rifle, likely automatic, and a sidearm.

The next level down is where we get into the Zetas' money laundering and business operations. A nation-wide network of men are in place with the sole purpose of covering up all the illicit business operated by members of Los Zetas. It's not clear in the article, but it makes sense to consider that each Zeta Viejo operates his own group of business owners and accountants. Within the Zetas DTO, the members of this group are appropriately referred to as *productividad*.

The lowest members within the Zetas DTO chain of command are called *halcones*. These men serve as the eyes and the ears of Los Zetas wherever they may be. I've read stories that recount how in states like Tamaulipas, where Los Zetas have complete control, the halcones stand on overpasses that cross major highways just to take note of the traffic flowing in and out of town. These men likely work in business, politics, at bars, at hospitals, anywhere, and everywhere. These men are likely part of the Mexican "blue collar" infrastructure that keeps the country running. Makes me

☐ Grits for Breakfast

Texas

Tribune

will

compete

with

public

policy

coverage,

original

reporting

55

minutes

ago

☐ Bloggings by boz

The US

response

to the

Honduras

crisis 1

2 hours

ago

think of the movie *The Fight Club* – these guys are everywhere.

In addition to potentially thousands of halcones and members of the productividad who operate **both in Mexico and in the United States**, we can't forget that the Zetas Viejos have any number of police commanders, politicians, high-level businessmen, judges, lawyers, military soldiers and mid- to high-level commanders, etc. on the payroll.

All that information funnels through the Zeta intelligence network, and is likely the principle reason why no man who betrays this group is safe in Mexico or the United States, or anywhere really. It's very much like when Pablo Esobar in Colombia would send his assassinations to kill people who tried to flee from him in Spain, Russia, or even Turkey.

The Zetas' counter intelligence organization has no peer in the Americas, and it begins with the halcones. Like most intelligence organizations, gathering information is easy, shifting through it to make sense of what's important and what's not is where the work gets tricky.

Obviously, this network is not without faults. A high-level Zeta leader has already been captured this year. Miguel Angel Soto Parra, who oversaw Zeta activities in central Mexico, is now in custody. He will likely join some of his other Zeta Viejo buddies caught last year, and join the list of those to be extradited to the US.

The bottom line, however, is that the Zetas is a well trained, well informed, and absurdly rich organization that will take more than the Mexican military to bring down. We tend to focus on just the top members, but when you consider all the levels within the organization that I've described above, the whole Zeta DTO expands into a massive criminal organization that likely employs thousands in a country where finding a legitimate job is very difficult, if not next to impossible in today's economic climate.

It will be very interesting to watch how Mexico's organized criminal map unfolds in 2009. I'll make one safe prediction: Los Zetas will still be around in 2010, and quite possibly beyond Calderon and Obama's respective administrations.

Posted by Samuel Logan at [8:09 AM](#)

Labels: [Barak Obama](#), [Calderon](#), [drug trafficking](#), [Los Zetas](#), [Mexico](#), [organized crime](#), [security](#)

1 comments:



[Plan
Colombia
and
Beyond](#)

[Friday](#)

[links](#)

[\(Monday](#)

[edition\)](#)

[15 hours](#)

[ago](#)

[Podium
53](#)

[Jonathan](#)

[Cohn on](#)

[NPR](#)

[3 days](#)

[ago](#)

[Latin
American
Thought](#)

[Twitter](#)

[in Brazil](#)

[1 week](#)

[ago](#)

[LatIntelligence
CFR](#)

[Independent](#)



 Christopher said...

Very nicely written article. I've been interested in Los Zetas for quite some time as well now. It is indeed amazing how these guys operate. The sheer brutality of their executions, the "up yours this is our country"-attitude... In a way I'm actually a bit fascinated by them. (I am a bit of a rebel, can't help it either... :))

But, as you state in your article, things will only get more nasty from here on, and from what I've been reading and watching I can only tell that both Mexico and the US are facing very hard and difficult times when it comes to drugrelated crime. The US gov. has recently sent out an internal note warning border patrol in the southern states that narco-crime will seriously rise, narcotrafficking organized and operated by Los Zetas.

On the other hand, as you state as well, in an economical climate like Mexico's, it isn't that hard to see why people support or join Los Zetas. What makes me wonder most, is how and when the US will respond, and why they haven't already done so. It is clear that Los Zetas are expanding there working area to the US, and I can imagine that law enforcement over there will go ballistic.


Sure, we have drugrelated crime over here (Belgium, Europe) as well, but not on that level, and I doubt we will ever see this kind of drug-related crime in Europe.

Eitherway, I'm definitely going to be checking your blog on a regular basis, it is pretty hard to find decent info about the Zetas that's written in English, unfortunately I don't master the Spanish language you see.

If you want to talk (well, actually I want to talk to you more about the Zetas) : c.k.2936@gmail.com

Task Force on
U.S.
Immigration
Policy

1 week ago

 Latin
America
The
Prism of
Human
Rights:
Irony and
Power
Compared
in the
Middle
East and
Latin
America
2 weeks
ago

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2009 (89)
 - ▼ July (11)
 - Sino-Brazilian Naval

Keep it up, and expect another visit sometime in the near future.

Greetings, K

4:58 PM

[Post a Comment](#)

Links to this post

[Mexico Nabs Los Zetas Hitman Linked To Kidnapping of Anti-Kidnap ...](#)

[Create a Link](#)

[Newer
Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older
Post](#)

[Subscribe to: Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

[relations](#)

- [Iranian embassy
hoax?](#)
- [An example of
criminal branding?](#)
- [TFMS book trailer no.
2](#)
- [Southern Pulse Intel
Brief - wk of 29 June](#)
- [Brazil, Russia, and
Turkey - energy
backgrounder](#)
- [Desperation Route -
investigative series
on the bo...](#)
- [Moving over to my
book blog...](#)
- [Zeta and Gulf Cartel
Relationship
Revealed](#)
- [UN cocaine numbers
\(partial\) breakdown](#)
- [Brazil: A fiscal](#)

MEXIDATA . INFO

Special 031609 Logan

Monday, March 16, 2009

The Evolution of 'Los Zetas,' a Mexican Crime Organization

By Sam Logan

- *From the original 31 members, the Mexican organized criminal faction Los Zetas has grown into an organization in its own right, operating separate from the Gulf Cartel and just as violent*

Between the first of the year and mid-March, 2009, the Mexican criminal organization most commonly known as "Los Zetas" has been busy. Members of this group have been linked to a death threat delivered to the president of Guatemala, a grenade thrown into a bar in Pharr, Texas, the death of a high-ranking military general in Cancun, and a fair share of the organized crime-related deaths registered this year in Mexico.

Many journalists and analysts who write about Los Zetas still refer to this group as the enforcement branch of the Gulf Cartel. This was a true description when the original 31 Special Forces soldiers abandoned the Mexican military to protect a young, upcoming leader of the Gulf Cartel, Osiel Cardenas Guillen. But today the Zetas have evolved into a separate entity with its own agenda. And it doesn't take orders from the Gulf Cartel.

The original 31 "Zetas" saw to it that at least another ten men were trained. Members of Los Zetas, along with Cardenas, bribed, threatened and cajoled local and state police to assist with that protection detail. In most areas where the Gulf Cartel operated, local and state police formed the outer rings of a four or five ring-deep security detail for Cardenas and other top leaders of the Gulf Cartel. The Zetas remained at the inner rings, providing close protection support, and acting on the wishes of Cardenas and their leader, Arturo Guzman Decenas, known as Z1, and the man for whom Los Zetas was named.

But that was in 2003, when the Mexican Defense Ministry separated out Los Zetas as the most formidable death squad to have worked for organized crime in Mexican history. At that time there were perhaps some 300 members of Los Zetas: 30 or so original military deserters and the men they trained. Across the landscape of Mexican organized crime, no one could compete. These men were intelligence specialists and experts with a number of different types of weapons and operational tactics.

In many ways, these men innovated paramilitary tactics in use by organized crime today. Many agree that these men raised the bar in the Mexican criminal underworld, forcing Cardenas' rivals to find former military soldiers of their own, just so they could compete.

Until Cardenas' extradition to the US, where he has awaited trial in Houston, Texas since January, 2007, members of Los Zetas guarded the Gulf Cartel's most important sections of turf, especially Nuevo Laredo, where in 2005 many

observed the initial escalation of violence that has so many worried today.

But the dominance of Los Zetas couldn't last. Over time, many of the original 31 have been killed, and a number of younger, ambitious men have filled the vacuum, forming something that resembles what Los Zetas used to be, but still very far from the professionalism and efficient style of the original Zetas.

The term Los Zetas, some argue, has been turned into a brand name – a calling card used to control businessmen and politicians deemed useful to further the advances of either the Gulf Cartel, the new Zetas Organization, or even smaller groups who have capitalized on the name brand but have very little connection to the Gulf Cartel or the Zetas Organization.

Los Zetas vs. the Zetas Organization

"Most of the original Zetas are gone, but the legacy of the Zetas still lives on," Jose Wall, Senior Special Agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives told ISN Security Watch. He added that the current version of the Zetas carries a "more brutal mindset" and apart from military and police deserters relies on a force of regular guys who have very little training with no future and no job to speak of.

Ralph Reyes, chief of the Mexico and Central America division for Global Enforcement at the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), echoed Wall's sentiments. Reyes pointed out in a recent phone call that one of the factors that have always separated the Zetas from other armed criminal groups in Mexico is their willingness to engage in firefights.

That is partially why most of the original 31 Zetas are either in custody or dead. What followed in their wake is called the Zetas Organization by an intelligence officer in the US who focuses on Mexican organized crime and spoke with ISN Security Watch, but asked not to be named. The Zetas Organization, he agrees, is very powerful in its own right and beholden to none, not even the current leaders of the Gulf Cartel. Unlike Los Zetas of old, the Zetas Organization operates more like a network comprised of isolated cells that all maintain control over a certain slice of turf between the US/Mexico border from El Paso east, moving south along Mexico's eastern coast, south through Veracruz, and east through Tabasco, and into the Yucatan peninsula.

"Back in the PRI days, the rule of the game was different," Dr. George Grayson, a Latin American politics professor at The College of William and Mary in Virginia, US, and a senior associate at the Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies, told ISN Security Watch. "Now the members of the Zetas are young and mean, and they don't take orders from anyone."

The men and women who form part of this network likely number in the thousands. They operate a range of illicit businesses from the regular extortion of street vendors to charging other groups for passage through their territory, to gun and drug smuggling, human smuggling, kidnapping for ransom, money laundering and the operation of a vast network of illegal businesses.

Surrounding this organization is a larger than life myth, a sort of Zeta brand name that some criminals use just to scare their targets, explains Howard Campbell, professor of anthropology at the University of Texas at El Paso.

"The Zetas have become something of a myth like Pancho Villa," Campbell said, adding, "their origins are obscure, and no one knows how many there are."

The Zetas' Intelligence Networks

Part of what made Cardenas so powerful as an organized crime boss was his ability to smooth talk people into working for him. Like everyone else in his line



of work, he didn't hesitate to offer bribes, but unlike others he was able to maintain a very well organized network of individuals who serviced him and his Zetas with a constant flow of information.

For a while the Zetas were considered the best-informed paramilitary force in Mexico. But once Cardenas left Mexico to face justice in Houston, he took with him the connections to a large number of individuals who spoke only to him, successfully ripping out a large section of the Gulf Cartel's tightly woven intelligence network.

"Osiel's extradition broke up networks, and the Zetas now intimidate rather than bribe," Bruce Bagley, chairman of the Department of International Studies at the University of Miami, told ISN Security Watch.

One of the original Zetas, Heriberto Lazcano, aka "El Lazca," and Cardenas' brother, Ezequiel Cardenas Guillen, aka "Tony Tormenta," took over control of the Gulf Cartel in January 2007, and have been able to keep the organization together until today, according to Ricardo Ravelo, a Mexican journalist who has closely followed Mexican organized crime for the Mexican news weekly *Proceso*.

Yet they have not been able to rein in the growing network and name that grew out of the time when Los Zetas were the most feared death squad in Mexico.

The Gulf Cartel still maintains a robust intelligence network across Mexico and deep into the US, especially in Houston and Dallas, and in cities located across the southeast and well into the mid-Atlantic and northeast, but it does not compete with the networks maintained by the old guard of drug traffickers, and Cardenas' rivals like "El Chapo" Guzman who has kept his decades' old networks in play.

Today, the Gulf Cartel relies more on intelligence gathered from a broad group of less sophisticated sources, argues Grayson. "Street vendors buy from the Zetas or they are killed," Grayson explained in a recent phone call with ISN Security Watch.

"They operate a very well developed grass roots network," he added, echoing a 31 December article published by the Mexican daily *El Universal*. Entitled "Inside Los Zetas," the article explained how small-time shop owners, men who stand on highway overpasses, and a regularly updated list of local and state politicians and police officers all serve as look outs and informants for the Zetas Organization.

Grayson also explained that the Zetas are not as focused on high-level, federal politicians, preferring to keep close ties with local and state officials. "If they do go after a high-level politician, it's only to make sure they control him when he comes back to the state level to become governor or something similar," Grayson said.

Crossing the Border

Nevertheless, the Zetas Organization remains a formidable criminal faction, operating both in Mexico and, to an extent, inside the US. Rumors of training camps continue to circulate, and there is proof that this organization knows how to amass weaponry. In November 2008, Mexican military soldiers seized from a Gulf Cartel safe house in the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas the largest cache of weapons ever discovered in Mexican history: over 500 firearms, including .50 caliber Barrett sniper rifles, rocket and grenade launchers, assault rifles and over a half-million rounds of ammunition.

At the time of the discovery, many analysts in the US considered the cache as a bold statement of what the Gulf Cartel intends to do. Some headlines even read that the Zetas "prepared for war."

Speculation about highly trained members of Los Zetas crossing the US border to hunt down and kill civilian targets seemed to be confirmed when a group of men dressed like a Phoenix police SWAT team entered a house and killed a Jamaican drug trafficker in June 2008.

Police in Birmingham, Alabama, who responded to a multiple homicide in a suburban apartment complex in August 2008, suspected Zeta involvement in the death of a number of Mexican men, found with their throats cut. Money and drugs in the apartment were not disturbed. Police in Georgia suspected Zeta involvement when they discovered that a man had been bound and tortured in the basement of a house near Atlanta.

Yet in none of these cases have authorities publically confirmed that members of the original Zetas carried out these hits, often referred to as "account adjustments" in Mexico. While it remains unlikely that Mexican members of the Zetas Organization cross the border to maim and kill rivals, there is strong evidence that connects Mexican organized crime with a robust and widespread prison gang population in both California and Texas.

The Barrio Azteca and Texas Syndicate prison gangs are most likely the Zeta operatives inside the US. There may also be some links to the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), as well as other, smaller groups. Yet these groups are contractors, hired for one job, maybe two, explained the intelligence officer. But there is little to no evidence to suggest that these groups operate on some sort of retainer, or use the Zeta name to spread fear inside the US.

Back in Mexico, however, the Zeta Organization has become more and more of a headache, both for the Mexican government and for the organizations' rivals.

During a conference call on 6 March with journalists, US Senator John Cornyn said that the Gulf and the Sinaloa drug trafficking organizations – including, presumably, the Zetas Organization – could together muster an army of some 100,000 guns. Compared to the 130,000 troops within Mexico's regular army, it appears that Mexican organized crime is powerful enough to topple a nation, but Campbell, speaking to the cyclic nature of Mexican organized crime, warned against making such assumptions.

"There's a system of cartel infiltration in the government for its own benefit, and this system has been going on for 50 years," Campbell said.

"This short term, sensationalistic treatment [of Mexican drug trafficking organizations] is not going to ruin the US or overthrow the Mexican government."

This article was originally published at [ISN Security Watch](#) (03/11/09). The International Relations and Security Network (ISN) is a free public service that provides a wide range of high-quality and comprehensive products and resources to encourage the exchange of information among international relations and security professionals worldwide.

[Sam Logan](#) is an investigative journalist who has reported on security, energy, politics, economics, organized crime, terrorism and black markets in Latin America since 1999. He is a senior correspondent for [ISN Security Watch](#), and editor of [Southern Pulse – Networked Intelligence](#). He is the author of ***This is for the Mara Salvatrucha: Inside the MS-13, America's Most Violent Gang***, forthcoming from Hyperion in the summer of 2009. For issues related publications go to <http://www.samuellogan.com/publications.html>.

Reprinted with permission from ISN



Center for Threat Awareness - Think Tank 2.0™

HOME

FEATURES

DAILYBRIEFINGS

RAPIDRECON

SPECIAL REPORTS

ABOUT US

SEARCH

:Home:- :RapidRecon:- :Los Zetas and the Denial of Mexico's Failed State Status:

RAPIDRECON

Los Zetas and the Denial of Mexico's Failed State Status

The softening of words and the aversion to stating the obvious by the Administration simply obliterates the reality that President Felipe Calderón of Mexico "leads" a country dominated by the cartels and not governed by the federal government. The transparent denial of the recent Joint Operating Environment report is troubling at best.

To better understand just how close to the precipice he is, it might be worthwhile to take another look at the organization (and movement) of Los Zetas. As a reminder, Los Zetas are a paramilitary group tied to the Gulf Cartel. Their origins and their evolution from being deserters from the Mexican special forces to a criminal organization is chronicled in a report from [International Relations and Security Network](#)

From the original 31 members, the Mexican organized criminal faction Los Zetas has grown into an organization in its own right, operating separate from the Gulf Cartel and just as violent.

With each of the original members training at least another ten, they grew to over 300 strong by 2003. In just the first quarter of 2009, Los Zetas (the organization) has been linked to a death threat against the president of Guatemala, the hand grenade tossed in Pharr, Texas and various other criminal acts. The ranks of Los Zetas has grown, and strikingly, they have broken ranks with the Gulf Cartel. Over time however, and with the deaths of some of the original Zetas, they have morphed into an organization. This is a very important distinction to note.

"Most of the original Zetas are gone, but the legacy of the Zetas still lives on," Jose Wall, Senior Special Agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, told ISN Security Watch. He added that the current version of the Zetas carries a "more brutal mindset" and apart from military and police deserters relies on a force of regular guys who have very little training with no future and no job to speak of.

The brutality of the Los Zetas has been transformed into a willingness to engage in open gun battles by the Zetas Organization through which smaller groups have spread across the Mexican landscape. That their members are found throughout the towns along the Mexican border is not surprising, but it is no less distressing. Last week [Mexican federales](#) arrested Rolando "El Roli" de los Santos Guerra, a suspected Zeta on weapons smuggling and illegal monitoring of phone calls of government officials in Reynosa (located conveniently about 10 miles from Pharr and McAllen Texas).

Also last week, a [Zeta training camp](#) was discovered by Guatemalan security forces. Although two Zeta commanders and 37 recruits escaped, they left behind a cache of arms including 500 grenades, six rifles and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. There have been some reports that the Zetas have joined forces with Guatemalan special forces deserters known as [the Kaibiles](#).

Despite the denials of the Administration, the Zetas Organization continues to threaten not just the stability of Mexico, but the U.S. citizens in areas in which it operates. While admittedly sourced from a pro-gun website, [this article](#) argues against the recent flurry of accusations that the weaponry of the cartels is originating in the United States is belied by some of the photos found in [this video on the Zetas](#) showing grenades, land mines, RPG rockets, rocket launchers and fully automatic military weapons, which I understand cannot be purchased in the U.S., even with a federal weapons permit.

Considering the recent "revelation" that the [terrorist group Hezbollah is using drug trade routes to enter the U.S.](#), there is a fear that the flow of weapons is actually the reverse, from Mexico to the U.S. The reality is that the Rio Grande Valley along the Texas-Mexican border is a war zone, and it is going to be a battlezone for freedom if we are not careful. All of the denials to the contrary cannot change the fact that armed conflict is raging just south of our border and that the Mexican government has not been able to stem the tide of violence and its spread to U.S. cities.

By Jay Fraser on March 30, 2009 at 4:56 AM | [Permalink](#)

[👤 Log in / create account](#)

[article](#) [discussion](#) [edit this page](#) [history](#)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In 1998, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Ayman al-Zawahiri officially joined al-Qaeda. Zawahiri previously led the [Egyptian Islamic Group](#) which carried out numerous attacks in [Egypt](#) along with assassination attempts against Egyptian president [Hosni Mubarak](#), possibly with financial support from Osama bin Laden.^[314] Khalid Sheikh Mohammed also organized attacks prior to joining al-Qaeda, possibly with some financial support from Bin Laden. Al-Qaeda was directly involved in coordinating the [1998 United States embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania](#), along with the [2000 bombing of the USS Cole](#) in Yemen, and the [September 11 attacks](#). After the U.S. invasion of [Afghanistan](#), following the September 11 attacks, training camps were destroyed and al-Qaeda leaders were on the run. Numerous attacks have been carried out since the September 11 attacks. But, they have been much smaller in scale and many of the attackers have been only loosely affiliated or acted independently with inspiration from al-Qaeda, rather than direct coordination and orders from al-Qaeda leaders.

The following list is of acts attributed or claimed by al-Qaeda, Bin Laden and other top al-Qaeda leaders do not take credit for some of them, resulting in ambiguity over how many attacks the group has actually conducted. After the [United States declaration of the War on Terrorism](#) in 2001, the U.S. government has sought to highlight any connections between other militant groups and al-Qaeda. Some prefer to attribute to al-Qaedism actions that might not be directly planned by al-Qaeda as a military headquarters but that are inspired by its tenets and strategies.

Contents [hide]

- 1 Early 1990s
- 2 1998 U.S.-embassy bombings
- 3 2000
- 4 September 11, 2001, attacks
- 5 2007 Algiers bombings
- 6 2008 Danish-embassy bombing
- 7 Notes
- 8 References

[edit]

The [1993 World Trade Center bombing](#) occurred on February 26, 1993, when Ramzi Yousef parked a rented van full of explosives in the parking garage beneath the World Trade Center. The explosion claimed six victims, and over one thousand people were wounded. [Ramzi Yousef](#), the nephew of 9/11 planner [Khalid Sheikh Mohammed](#), had trained in Afghanistan, although Khalid Sheikh Mohammed did not join Al Qaeda until 1998. Yousef worked in cooperation with the blind sheikh Abdul Rahman who was living across the Hudson, in Jersey City, at the time of the attack. The FBI later turned up evidence that [Osama bin Laden](#) provided financial support to the blind sheikh [Omar Abdul-Rahman](#).^[6]

Ramzi Yousef and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (prior to joining with Al Qaeda) planned [Operation Bojinka](#), a plot to destroy airplanes in mid-Pacific flight using explosives.^[9] They tested their attacks in November 1994 on the [Philippine Airlines Flight 434](#), which also involved [Abu Sayyaf](#) (a Southeast Asia affiliate of Al Qaeda).^[10] An apartment fire in [Manila, Philippines](#) exposed the plan before it could be carried out. Yousef was arrested, but Mohammed evaded capture until 2003.^[11]

[edit]

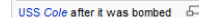
In August 1998, Al-Qaeda operatives carried out the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing more than 200 people and injuring more than 5,000 others.^[12]

[\[edit\]](#)

In December 1999 and into 2000, al-Qaeda [planned attacks](#) against U.S. and [Israeli](#) tourists visiting [Jordan](#) for millennial celebrations; however, [Jordanian](#) authorities thwarted the planned attacks and put 28 suspects on trial. Part of this plot included the planned bombing of [LAX](#), but this plot was foiled when bomber [Ahmed Ressam](#) was caught at the US-Canadian border with explosives in the trunk of his car. Al-Qaeda also planned to attack the [USS The Sullivans](#) on January 3, 2000, but the effort failed due to too much weight being put on the small boat meant to bomb the ship.

Despite the setback with the USS *The Sullivans*, al-Qaeda succeeded in bombing a U.S. warship in October 2000 with the [USS Cole bombing](#). German police foiled a plot to destroy a [cathedral in Strasbourg](#), France in December 2000.

- Rizal Day Bombings in the Philippines (2000)



[edit]

[Main article: September 11 attacks](#)

The most destructive act ascribed to al-Qaeda was the series of attacks in the United States on [September 11, 2001](#). These attacks destroyed the [World Trade Center](#) (currently being rebuilt) and damaged the [Pentagon](#) in a series of suicide hijacking of airplanes. [Bin Laden](#) did take credit for the attacks days before the [2004 Presidential Election](#).

[\[edit\]](#)

Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb claimed to have been responsible for the April 11, 2007 **Algiers bombings**. Two bombs exploded within a short time of each other, one at the prime ministers office and the other at a police station. The blasts killed 33 people. It was the first time a bombing had occurred in the capital in more than a decade. ^[13]

[\[edit\]](#)

Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Danish embassy in Pakistan on 2 June 2008. A car bomb killed six persons and injuring several.^[14] Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, a high-ranking member of Al-Qaeda, issued a statement after the bombing, claiming that the attack was a response to the 2005 publication of the [Muhammed Cartoons](#).^[15]

[\[edit\]](#)

1. ^{a b c} Wright 2006, p. 174
2. ^a Wright 2006, p. 246
3. ^a Wright 2006, p. 213-219
4. ^a Wright 2006, p. 255-258
5. ^{a b} "Bomb blasts rock two hotels in Yemen". Reuters / The Globe and Mail. 1992-12-30.
6. ^{a b} Scheuer, Michael (2002). *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*. Brassey's. pp. 135.
7. ^a MacLeod, Scott (2008-0917). "In Yemen, a Massacre of Americans Is Averted ^a". TIME Magazine. Retrieved on 2009-02-05.
8. ^a Wright, Lawrence (2006). "Chapter 9, The Silicon Valley". *The Looming Towers*. Alfred P. Knopf.
9. ^a "Pakistanis Arrest Qaeda Figure Seen as Planner of 9/11 ^a". *The New York Times*. 2003-03-02. Retrieved on 2009-01-20.
10. ^a "Terrorism in Southeast Asia ^a". *Parliamentary Library*. Parliament of Australia. Retrieved on 2009-01-20.
11. ^a Boner, Raymond; Benjamin Weiser (2006-08-11). "Echoes of Early Design to Use Chemicals to Blow Up Airlines ^a". *The New York Times*. Retrieved on 2009-01-20.
12. ^a Lough, Richard (2008-08-19). "Pursuing al-Qaeda in Horn of Africa ^a". Al Jazeera English. Retrieved on 2009-01-20.
13. ^a "Al Qaeda claims responsibility for Algiers bombings ^a". ABC. 2007-04-12. Retrieved on 2009-02-05.
14. ^a "Al Qaeda linked to Danish embassy attack ^a". CNN. 2008-06-03. Retrieved on 2009-02-05.
15. ^a "Danish embassy bomber 'from Mecca'-al Qaeda leader ^a". Reuters. 2008-07-22. Retrieved on 2009-02-05.

- Wright, Lawrence (2006). *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. Alfred A. Knopf. ISBN 037541486X.

v • d • e War on Terrorism [hide]		
Timeline • Casualties • Theaters • Criticism • ISAF		
Participants	Operational	ISAF • Operation Enduring Freedom participants • Multinational force in Iraq • Afghanistan • Northern Alliance • Iraq (Iraqi Army) • NATO • Pakistan • United Kingdom • United States • Philippines • Ethiopia
	Targets	al-Qaeda • Osama bin Laden • Abu Sayyaf • Iraqi insurgency • Hamas • Islamic Courts Union • Jemaah Islamiyah • Taliban • Pattani Separatists • Jaish-e-Mohammed • Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami • Hizbul Mujahideen • Kurdistan Workers' Party • Hezbollah • Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan • Lashkar-e-Taiba
Conflicts	Operation Enduring Freedom	War in Afghanistan • OEF - Philippines • Georgia Train and Equip Program • Georgia Sustainment and Stability • OEF - Horn of Africa • OEF - Trans Sahara • Missile strikes in Pakistan
	Other	Insurgency in the Maghreb • Iraq insurgency and operations • Insurgency in Saudi Arabia • War in North-West Pakistan • South Thailand insurgency • Lebanon War • War in Somalia • Lebanon-Fatah al-Islam conflict
Islamist attacks	2001–2002	September 11 attacks • Bahawalpur church attack • Indian Parliament attack • Shoe bomb plot • Ghriba synagogue bombing • Karachi bus bomb • Jaunpur train crash • Karachi US Consulate bombing • Akshardham Temple attack • 1st Bali bombing • Zamboanga bombings • Kurnool train crash
	2003–2004	Riyadh compound bombings • Casablanca bombings • 2003 Mumbai bombings • Jakarta Marriott Hotel bombing • Istanbul bombings • SuperFerry 14 bombing • Madrid train bombings • Khobar massacre • Beslan school hostage crisis • Jakarta Australian embassy bombing
	2005–2006	1st London bombings • 2nd London bombings • Sharm el-Sheikh attacks • 2nd Bali bombing • 1st Delhi bombings • Amman bombings • 2006 Varanasi bombings • 2006 Mumbai train bombings • Transatlantic aircraft plot • Toronto terrorism plot
	2007–2008	1st Algiers bombings • Fort Dix attack plot • Ankara bombing • London car bomb plot • Glasgow Airport attack • 2007 Yemen tourist attack • Hyderabad bombings • Qahtaniya bombings • Karachi bombing • Baghlan bombing • Philippine Congress bombing • 2nd Algiers bombings • Assassination of Benazir Bhutto • Jaipur bombings • Danish embassy • Indian embassy • United States consulate • Istanbul bombings • Bangalore bombings-Ahmedabad • 2nd Delhi bombings • American embassy • Islamabad bombing • 3rd Delhi bombing • 2008 Assam bombings • 2008 Mumbai attacks
	2009–current	Attack on Sri Lankan cricket team • 2009 Yemen tourist attack • 2009 Jakarta bombings
See also	Abu Ghraib prison • Axis of evil • Bush Doctrine • CIA run Black sites • Combatant Status Review Tribunal • Enhanced interrogation techniques • Extrajudicial prisoners of the US • Extraordinary rendition • Guantanamo Bay detention camp • Military Commissions Act • NSA electronic surveillance program • President's Surveillance Program • Protect America Act of 2007 • Unitary executive theory • Unlawful combatant • USA PATRIOT Act	
Terrorism • War		

Categories: Al-Qaeda activities | Islamic terrorism



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

navigation

- [Main page](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Featured content](#)
- [Current events](#)
- [Random article](#)

search

interaction

- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Contact Wikipedia](#)
- [Donate to Wikipedia](#)
- [Help](#)

toolbox

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Upload file](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Printable version](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Cite this page](#)

Help us improve Wikipedia by [supporting it financially](#).

[article](#) [discussion](#) [edit this page](#) [history](#)

[Log in / create account](#)

Zayda Y Los Culpables

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



This article is an **orphan**, as few or no other articles link to it. Please [introduce links](#) to this page from other [articles related to it](#). *(February 2009)*

Zayda Y Los Culpables (English: Zayda and the Guilty Ones) is a Mexican **grupero** band. The group sang romantic ballads about love and loss. The song "Tiro de Gracia" (Coup de Grâce), describing a failed relationship,^[1] was one of the most popular songs from the band.^[2]

Death of Zayda Peña Arjona

[\[edit\]](#)

Zayda Peña Arjona (1981 – [December 1, 2007](#)) was the lead singer of Zayda y Los Culpables.

Shortly before midnight on [November 29, 2007](#), an unknown gunman shot Peña in the back at Mónaco Motel in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, across the U.S.-Mexico border from Brownsville, Texas. Two other people — a friend of Peña and a motel employee — were also shot. Both died at the scene.^[3] Paramedics took Zayda to Alfredo Pumarejo Hospital in Matamoros, where doctors determined that her injuries were not fatal. Doctors placed Peña in emergency surgery in order to remove the bullet.^[4]

The next day, several assailants entered the hospital, roaming the corridors.^[3] Once they were able to find Zayda, the assailants went in & shot her again in the chest at point blank range to ensure her death. *The Dallas Morning News* stated that the fatal bullet pierced her back,^[5] *The Independent* and *Reuters* ^[6] stated that the fatal bullet hit her face.^[2] She was 26 years old.

Her mother, Blanca Aidé Arjona, works in a public prosecutor office as of 2007.^[4]

The death of Peña, who had no known connections to traffickers or any criminal activity, and did not write or perform songs about traffickers,^[1] has instilled fear and great concern in many Mexican performers.^[2]

Discography

[\[edit\]](#)

All of the albums are under the **Balboa** label except *Coleccion de Oro: La Sentimental*, which is under the **Musart** label.

- *Sensible*
- *Estoy Enamorada*
- *Zayda Y los Culpables*
- *Coleccion de Oro: La Sentimental*

References

[\[edit\]](#)

- ↑ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} "Assassinations shock Mexican musicians ", *The Guardian*
- ↑ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} ^{**c**} Doyle, Leonard, "Singers slain as Mexico's drug cartels target popular stars ", *The Independent*, December 6, 2007
- ↑ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} "Singer shot to death after surgery in Matamoros ER ", *Houston Chronicle*, December 4, 2007
- ↑ ^{**a**} ^{**b**} "Zayda Peña Arjona Shot and Killed ", *People*, December 3, 2007
- ↑ "Mexican singer Zayda Pena slain in hospital ", *The Dallas Morning News*, December 3, 2007
- ↑ "Slain Mexico singers compete from grave for Grammy ", *Reuters*

This article on a band or other musical ensemble from Mexico is a stub. You can help by expanding it .

Categories: Mexican musical group stubs