

21 June 2011

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Latin America Military and Security Watch

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MEXICO

Report on the Mexican Prison System – 18 June 2011

From December 2006 to May 2011, 615 prisoners have been killed while incarcerated in Mexican prisons. The majority of these deaths can be attributed to a settling of scores between rival criminal groups. On 08 December 2006, the transfer of Adela Hernández Gallegos, aka El Padrino, to a municipal prison in Cancun, Quintana Roo prompted a protest that involved 300 inmates and lasted over 15 hours. Following this protest, it was reported that four inmates were killed, 21 were wounded, and 80 had escaped. It was later reported that 63 of the 80 fugitives were later captured.

This protest and the violence associated with it were just some of the first signs that the prison system in Mexico would be overcome with violence, overcrowding, and corruption. In the case of the prison mentioned above, it had been built for 320 inmates, but was housing over 1000.

An investigation carried out by the media source *El Universal* revealed that the number of inmates murdered within Mexican prisons has increased yearly since December of 2006. Some of the statistics regarding this situation were reported as follows:

- 2007: 80 inmates killed
- 2008:107 inmates killed
- 2009:140 inmates killed
- 2010: 184 inmates killed
- To date in 2011:100 inmates have been killed

The Struggle between Opposing Gangs:

The practice of housing members of rival criminal groups in prisons triggers extreme violence and generates unfortunate incidences such as those that have been noted in Durango, Tamaulipas, in Sinaloa. Take for instance the case of Sinaloa. On 14 June 2010, 29 Los Zetas operators were killed by Sinaloa Cartel operators at a prison in Mazatlan. Days before the actual incident occurred, Rolando OMAR Pimentel aka El Pájaro Loco, a Los Zetas operator, implored the Assistant District Attorney to transfer them out of this prison because they feared for their lives. Their demand was not heeded, and a simultaneous attack in four prison blocks left 29 of them dead (18 died of gunshot wounds while the others were stabbed).

The then Governor of Sinaloa, Jesus AGUILAR Padilla, blamed the Federal Government for the murders, and stressed that the state did not have the resources or staff to address federal prisoners.

Attacks on Prison Directors:

Between December 2006 and May 2011, 8 prison directors and 76 security guard chiefs and members of the administrative staff have also been killed due to violence in prisons. One of the driving factors behind

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all the murders was identified as revenge. Some of the cases listed regarding prison directors and other individuals working within the prison system that have been killed were reported as follows:

- On July 25, 2008, Salvador Barreno and his bodyguard were killed after being shot 60 times.
- On 13 May 2010, Abelardo CASTRO Camacho, the Director of the Navolato Penal System, Sinaloa, was killed
- On 30 May 2010, the body of Daniel BRAVO Mota, the Director of the prison in Iguala, Guerrero, was recovered from the bottom of a well
- Gerardo Ortiz Arellano, the operational coordinator of Prisons in Chihuahua, was executed in November 2010, after handing over 62 prisoners to the federal government.
- Arellano ORTIZ Veracruz took control of the prison in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua in 2007. In November of 2010, he became the operational director of all prisons within the state. Ten days after assuming this position, he ordered the transfer of 10 inmates to a Federal Social Rehabilitation Center, and four days later, was killed along with his son, Jesus ORTIZ Gerardo Dominguez, 29.
- On 14 January 2011, Marco MUÑOZ Rodríguez, the Director of a State Prison in Chihuahua, was murdered.
- In February 2011, Nicasio REBECA Vazquez, the acting Director of the Center for Implementation of Sanctions in Nuevo Laredo, was stabbed by an inmate while touring the facility.

Documented Prison Escapes:

El Universal reported that 737 inmates escaped from Mexican prisons between December 2006 and May 2011. Of those states ranked highest in terms of prison breaks, Tamaulipas tops the list with 396 fugitives and 66% of the total number of escapees. Prison breaks by year from 2006 to date were reported as follows:

- 2006: 17
- 2007: 50
- 2008: 70
- 2009: 146
- 2010: 396
- In what has passed of 2011: 58

Factors that contribute to prison breaks include overcrowding and corruption.

Violent incidents reported within Mexican prisons:

- 26 July 2008: Victaorio Araujo was gunned down in the lobby of the Aguaruto prison headquarters. Araujo was brother of Gonzalo Araujo aka El Chayo Araujo, a leader within the Sinaloa Cartel.

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- 20 October 2008: a struggle for control within a Reynosa prison led to a scuffle between Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas operators. This incident left 21 dead and 34 wounded.
- 10 February 2009: A commando stormed a prison tower in Torreon, Coahuila, killed three inmates, and set their bodies on fire. The slain prisoners belonged to a gang of kidnappers led by a dentist and an active military member.
- 20 January 2010: a knife fight within a Durango prison left 24 dead.
- 14 June 2010: 29 Los Zetas operators were killed by rival Sinaloa Cartel members at a prison in Mazatlan.
- 20 May 2011: 14 inmates were killed at the hands of Los Zetas operators at a prison in Apodaca, Nuevo Leon. The victims were allegedly burned to death. Some of the same victims were later identified as Gulf Cartel operators.

Spanish Source: <http://www.mundonarco.com/2011/06/morir-tras-la-rejas-devora-la-violencia.html>

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Government Official Reports Final Results of Joint Operation Conago 1 – 19 June 2011

Marcelo Ebrard, the Federal District Government Chief and President of the National Governors' Conference, reported statistics on the first-ever, all-nation coordinated operation in Mexico that was carried out between 13-19 June 2011. The results were reported as follows:

- Arrest of 3,705 individuals
- Recovery of 1,258 vehicles
- Execution of 712 arrest warrants
- Seizure of 131 firearms

Spanish Source: <http://www.milenio.com/cdb/doc/noticias2011/fdb53552a41b303bcbc48e1519fef5f2>

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VERACRUZ

Dismembered Murder Victim Left in Front of School in Playa Vicente, Veracruz – 18 June 2011



On 18 June 2011 at around 0430 hours, a dismembered murder victim was left in front of the Center for Technical and Industrial Studies (CETIS) in Playa Vicente [approximate location 17.8305 -95.8131], Veracruz. A narco message was also left with the victim and contained a warning directed to all criminals operating in the area. At this point, authorities have not identified the victim.

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Spanish Source: <http://www.blogdelnarco.com/2011/06/dejan-hombre-descuartizado-frente.html>

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NAYARIT

Authorities Recover Body Hanging From the Los Lobos Bridge in Tepic, Nayarit – 17 June 2011



On 16 June 2011 at 0751 hours, authorities recovered the body of a 35 year old male murder victim from the Los Lobos Bridge in the Guadalupe neighborhood of Tepic[21.5040-104.8945], Nayarit. This individual is said to have gone by the nickname “Piojo”, and allegedly worked for Los Zetas and the Beltrán Leyva Organization. Days before being murdered, he was kidnapped. The message taped to his body read as follows, “This is El Piojo, he fixed the cars for the Mazaltecos, we have a lot of information, and we are coming for you. XXX”.

Spanish Source: <http://www.narcoguerra.com/index.php/easyblog/entry/el-piojo-trabajaba-para-los-zetas-y-los-beltrn-leyva> , <http://www.narcoguerra.com/index.php/easyblog/entry/amanece-otro-colgado-en-el-puente-de-los-lobos-en-tepic-nayarit>

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QUINTANA ROO

Gunmen Kidnap and Behead Butcher in Cancun, Quintana Roo – 15 June 2011



On 15 June 2011 at approximately 2100 hours, a group of gunmen kidnapped Vidal PÉREZ Pérez, 29, from his home in the Haciendas Real del Caribe neighborhood of [approximate location 21.1534 - 86.9010], Cancun, Quintana Roo.

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On 16 June 2011, the decapitated head of this same individual was left at his residence in a black plastic bag. His body was located a few meters from the head. It was noted that before being killed, Perez worked as a butcher.

Spanish Source: <http://www.blogdelnarco.com/2011/06/decapitan-carnicero-en-quintana-roo.html>

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NUEVO LEON

Gunmen Murder Four Alleged Los Zetas Operators in Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon – 19 June 2011

On 19 June 2011 at around 0300 hours, gunmen killed a group of four young adults who were drinking beer outside of a residence located on Río Grijalva Street [25.6792 -100.1632] in the Dos Ríos neighborhood of Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon. It was reported that the gunmen were traveling in multiple vehicles and yelled “For being Zetas, you bastards” as they shot at the house. AEI investigators recovered numerous AR-15 shell casings from the scene.

Spanish Source: <http://www.blogdelnarco.com/2011/06/comando-armado-ejecuta-cuatro-jovenes.html#more>

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Gunmen Murder Three Men at Bar in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon – 19 June 2011

On 18 June 2011 at around 2200 hours, a group of gunmen entered the Encanto Bar located at the intersection of Jerónimo Treviño and Juan Álvarez Streets [25.6825 -100.3232] in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon. Once inside, they ordered everyone to the ground, killed three individuals, and wounded five others. Once finished, the gunmen took one of the bodies from the crime scene. This same body was later recovered on 19 June 2011 at around 0930 hours at the intersection Artículo 123 and Carlos Salazar Streets [25.6848 -100.3374] in Monterrey. That victim was subsequently identified as a 30-year-old bouncer that was employed at the Encanto Bar.

Spanish Source: <http://www.blogdelnarco.com/2011/06/acribillan-tres-hombres-en-bar-de.html#more>

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Nuevo Leon Reports May 2011 as Deadliest Month in History – 18 June 2011

Faced with escalating violence and increased regional insecurity, Nuevo Leon reported May 2011 as the “deadliest month in history” with a staggering 241 murders. It was noted that Nuevo Leon is in a state of panic due to the violence. At this point, no decreases in violence are projected. Between the dates of 15

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and 16 June 2011, a record 33 individuals were killed in Nuevo Leon to include two bodyguards that worked for the Governor of Nuevo Leon, Rodrigo Medina.

Based on current and projected homicide statistics, Nuevo Leon is on track to surpass the 241 murders reported in May 2011, which could mark June 2011 as the new record-setting month. According to police, in 2010, increased levels of violence in the Monterrey metropolitan area was attributed to the dispute for the Plaza between the Gulf Cartel and their former allies, Los Zetas. Statistics regarding homicides in the Monterrey metropolitan area since 2009 were reported as follows:

- 2009: 267 murders
- 2010: 828 murders
- To date in 2011: 737 murders. Of this number, 80% are attributing to organized crime related activity.

Spanish Source: <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/80833.html>

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AEI Agents Arrest 26 Municipal Police for their Alleged Ties to the Murder of the Governor's Bodyguards in General Zuazua, Nuevo Leon – 20 June 2011

On 16 June 2011 at around 0700 hours, AEI Agents arrested 26 municipal police officers while they were in the process of changing shifts in General Zuazua [25.8930 -100.1060], Nuevo Leon. These same officers have been accused of being involved in 15 June 2011 deaths of two bodyguards that worked at the service of Nuevo Leon Governor, Rodrigo Medina (see the 17 June 2011 Newsbriefs for original article). Following their arrests, all 26 officers, to include three females, were transferred to the Ministerial Police Building on Gonzalitos Avenue [25.6944 -100.3514] in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon.

Spanish Source: <http://www.milenio.com/cdb/doc/noticias2011/25458368abe9dd4d462349602449e497>

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ZACATECAS

Federal Police Arrest Los Zetas Plaza Leader in Fresnillo, Zacatecas – 20 June 2011



Following his arrest on 16 June 2011, it has been reported that Édgar HUERTA Montiel aka El Wache/El Huache, will be held for 40 days in Fresnillo [23.1726 -102.8609], Zacatecas. Huerta Montiel was initially arrested with his girlfriend, Brenda Azhyade INFANTE Acevedo, on charges related to for illegal weapons possession and for the role he played in the kidnapping and murder of more than 70 migrants in San Fernando, Tamaulipas. Huerta Montiel has been

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identified as a Plaza leader for Los Zetas in the San Fernando area.

Spanish Source: <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/186394.html> and <http://www.milenio.com/cdb/doc/noticias2011/25458368abe9dd4d462349602417360a>

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TAMAULIPAS

Government Denies Rumors That Heriberto “El Lazca” Lazcano Lazcano Died During Confrontation in Matamoros, Tamaulipas – 17 June 2011



On 16 June 2011, soldiers repelled an attack by a group of Los Zetas operators in the Pedro Moreno neighborhood [25.8466 -97.5200] of Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Initial and unofficial reports immediately surfaced in newspapers and on social media sites indicating that one of the suspects killed was Heriberto “El Lazca” Lazcano Lazcano, the Leader of Los Zetas. On 17 June 2011, Alejandro Poiré, the Mexican Security Secretary, released a statement via Twitter that debunked the rumors that the Zetas leader had been killed.

Spanish Source: <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=273107>

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SONORA

Marines Seize More Than One Metric Ton of Marijuana in Puerto Peñasco, Sonora – 16 June 2011



On 14 June 2011, Marines arrested Marco Antonio Flores López, 36, while conducting patrols on Lomas Campestre Street in Puerto Peñasco [31.3182-113.5367], Sonora. Seized from him were 104 packages of marijuana weighing 1,063.7 kilograms. It was reported that this individual was originally from Tijuana, Baja California.

Spanish Source: http://www.semar.gob.mx/sitio_2/index.php/sala-de-prensa/comunicados-de-prensa-2011/1640-comunicado-de-prensa-199-2011.html

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CENTRAL AMERICA

Authorities Seize \$(USD) 37,000 along the El Salvador/Honduras Border – 19 June 2011



On 17 June 2011, authorities arrested Guatemalan national Bárbara Suzette Couderes Orellana, 40, after discovering she had \$(USD)26,920 worth of cash strapped to her body. This individual originally entered into El Salvador at the El Amatillo border crossing point (located in the Department of La Unión[13.5970-87.7661]). Her plan was to travel with the cash to Costa Rica. Authorities speculate that the Guatemalan was returning from a drug related operation or was planning to use the cash to purchase drugs.

In a separate operation, authorities arrested José Luis González García, 36, after he was caught entering into El Salvador at the El Amatillo border crossing point with \$(USD)10,200, \$(EUR)1,500, and small quantities of cocaine and crack.

Spanish Source: <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/el-salvador/lodeldia/199721-decomisan-mas-de-37000-en-el-amatillo.html>

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Guatemalan Authorities Recover Incinerated Aircraft in Retalulheu, Guatemala – 17 June 2011



On 17 June 2011, residents living near a ranch operating under the name “Alaska” discovered an incinerated aircraft along a dirt road. More specifically, this aircraft was located 15 kilometers off a principal highway that leads to Champerico [14.3006-91.9085] in the Retalulheu Department of Guatemala. The plane in question was described as a single motor aircraft with blue stripes in the words “Centurión II” written on the side. Recovered from the

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interior of this aircraft were multiple barrels of gasoline that were allegedly used to set it on fire.

Spanish Source: http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/justicia/Localizan-avioneta-calcinada-finca-Retalhuleu_0_500950086.html

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