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EHC MEXICO SECURITY MEMO

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MEXICO SECURITY MEMO: JULY 7, 2008

Violence in Oaxaca - Fernando Martinez Sanchez, aka "El Chiquis" and Roberto Jorge Jarquín Paz were arrested July 1 after they were spotted surveilling the movements and activities of the Mexican army as well as law enforcement entities in the area of Salina Cruz, Oaxaca. During interrogation, both Sanchez and Paz said a Gulf cartel member hired them a year ago to surveil military movements. The same week as the arrests, a severed human head was found near Oaxaca Attorney General Envencio Martinez's home in the city of Oaxaca with an attached note threatening Martinez; State Organized Crime Investigator Pedro Guzman; and Jorge Franco, the leader of Oaxaca's ruling party. Authorities said that the note concluded by saying: "You must recognize that we are here and that we will not leave" and was signed by the Gulf cartel. These events highlight the recent rise in violence and cartel activity in Oaxaca State. Oaxaca had been relatively calm compared to surrounding states, and just one year ago these sorts of events would have been unheard of. Mexican counter-narcotic operations and troop deployments to Pacific and Caribbean port cities coupled with aviation restrictions have made land-based drug-trafficking route across the Mexican-Guatemalan border increasingly more important to the cartels. While Oaxaca does not border Guatemala, it is a strategically significant transshipment point on the smuggling route that extends north to the U.S border. And the cartels will do whatever they deem necessary to ensure the security of their shipments. While intimidation and threats directed by cartels toward Mexican state officials is nothing new, it does show that Oaxaca is a significant piece of property for the cartels - something not to be taken lightly. In the case of Sanchez and Paz, the cartels have again demonstrated sophisticated intelligence gathering capabilities. These capabilities have been observed in previous high-level assassinations of Mexican law enforcement officials as well as in recent cartel operations on the U.S side of the border.

The Death Toll Hits 2.000 - The death toll in drug and cartel related murders in Mexico has reached 2.000, official sources reported this past week. With the year only half over, Mexico's death toll for 2008 is on pace to reach 4.000. By comparison, only 2.500 died in 2007. To put the number in context, the total number of people who have died in drug-related murders in Mexico in the past year and a half exceeds the total number of coalition troops killed in Iraq since 2003. Most of this year's violence has been concentrated in the northern states on the U.S border and in Sinaloa. During the first half of the year, much of the violence was focused in Tijuana, Sinaloa state, and Ciudad Juarez. Juarez alone accounts for approximately more than one-quarter of the total deaths, as factions loyal to Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman Loera of the Sinaloa cartel fight the Juarez cartel for control of the lucrative Juarez

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plaza. According to its citizens, Tijuana has experienced a recent lull in violence due to a troop and federal law enforcement deployment. Sinaloa has likewise received a sizeable deployment of troops and federal law enforcement officials, but has not seen a real reduction in violence, as evinced by the nine decapitated bodies found this past week in various parts of the state. While the majority of the violence has remained in the northern tier of Mexican states where the main drug-trafficking organizations are based, Mexico's central and southern states have recently seen an increase in violence largely due to the shift in drug-trafficking routes and general cartel focus as earlier noted. As Mexican troops and federal law enforcement officials shift around from hot spot to hot spot, so does violence and cartel activity.

June 30

- A total of 120 people were killed in Sinaloa during the month of June, including 15 police from four different cities. The state's lead prosecutor, Luis Cardenas Fonseca, attributed most of the violence to organized crime.
- A group of armed subjects executed a man in the middle of the day in the town of Agua Prieta in the northern border state of Sonora. The victim's body was found in the trunk of a car on the side of the highway leading to Chihuahua.

July 1

- Miguel Angel Lopez Sainez, an engineer and the head of transportation for Complejo Petroquimico Cosoleacaque, was abducted by a group of men in a brown Voyager minivan just outside his home in Minatitlan, Veracruz.
- An armed group abducted Oaxacan businessman Horacio Manuel Rodriguez Diaz, the uncle of the Mexican secretary of tourism. The armed assailants were dressed in military uniforms with black ski masks, a typical tactic of cartels.

July 2

- Four headless bodies were discovered in Culiacan, Sinaloa, along with a message from drug traffickers.
- MS-13 gang member Zetina Ron Rodrigo Cortez was arrested in the Mexico City neighborhood of Iztapalapa after assaulting a taxi driver.

July 3

- Rafael Rios Torres, the chief investigator of stolen automobiles for the Sinaloa state police, was murdered along with five others in a span of 10 hours in Sinaloa. The body of the police chief, who was kidnapped July 2, was found in his truck with multiple gunshot wounds from a .45-caliber firearm.
- Two bodies were found in Saltillo, Coahuila, dressed in military uniforms with a message from drug traffickers threatening to kill three of the victims' friends.

July 4

- Authorities seized more than 7 million pirated audio and video products in Puebla.
- Three members of a cell of the Arellano Felix Organization, aka the Tijuana cartel, were sentenced to 60 years in prison for their roles in a kidnapping ring, organized criminal activities, and possession of firearms exclusively for the army. The three men were Armando Nava Millan, aka "El Beto" or "El Preti Boy"; Israel Arturo Silva Aguirre, aka "El Filit"; and Oswaldo Guadalupe Millan Moreno, aka "El Papi".

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July 5

- The bodies of a 35-year-old man and a 25-year-old woman were found in a park with multiple gunshot wounds in Patzcuaro, Michoacan, along with a message from drug traffickers stating that: "This is a wake-up call to those who think that they're untouchable and those who follow Los Zetas from Laredo".
- Four people, including two police chiefs, were killed in less than 24 hours in Sinaloa.

July 6

- Eleven members of Los Zetas and La Familia were captured in a joint Mexican military and federal law enforcement operation in Aguascalientes. It is thought the nine men and three women were involved in the kidnappings of several businessmen and several murders.

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