The Zeta Yoke.
Northern Coahuila, 2010-2011.

Sergio Aguayo (El Colegio de México) and Jacobo Dayán (Universidad Iberoamericana).

Translation: Fionn Petch

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La evolución de la violencia en el norte de Coahuila. By Víctor Manuel Sánchez and Manuel Pérez Aguirre (**Only in Spanish).**

Note on the investigation

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A draft of the final version was circulated to all those who provided information. The suggestions received were considered by the authors to decide which to include.

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For ease of reading, slight adjustments were made to the language included in the legal files, while taking care not to alter the essential meaning of the accounts. The translation also seeks to replicate the colloquial language used in some of the witness statements.

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Objectives and findings

With this research we seek:

a) To make sure that the events that we are going to narrate do not get filed away in the cabinet of discarded issues. Getting closer to the truth is a step forward in the search for justice, and a way of working together with the families of the disappeared to shed light on what might have happened to their loved ones.[i]

b) To study violence in order to combat it. This is a challenge to state and society alike. In the Seminar on Violence and Peace we carry out research, deliver courses and invite public and private discussion of the multiple forms that violence and peace can take.

Northern Coahuila

In a memorandum from 2003 the DEA declared that the Zetas (at that time the armed wing of the Gulf Cartel) already controlled Ciudad Acuña and Piedras Negras.[ii] By 2010 and 2011 their control over northern Coahuila was total. The municipalities were subjugated. The state government was not doing its job and some of its officials were complicit. The federal government was indifferent and complacent. Everyone ignored the victims.

All of this has already been described by victims, journalists, government institutions, academics and civil organizations. The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) has informed time and again about the presence of organized crime in Mexican prisons, and the Coahuila State Public Prosecutor confirmed that the prison of Piedras Negras was under the control of the Zetas. It is also well known that in March 2011 the Zetas embarked on a terrible vendetta in Piedras Negras, Allende and other municipalities.

Those who have written about this region include Juan Alberto Cedillo, Diego Enrique Osorno, Ginger Thompson, Jason Buch, Guillermo Contreras and Alfredo Corchado. Then there would be the investigations of the Open Society Justice Initiative, the International Federation of Human Rights and the Human Rights Clinic of the University of Texas School of Law, in Austin. The Seminar on Violence and Peace at El Colegio de México also carried out research about Allende, and Professor Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera produced a book about the Zetas.[iii]

Against this background, and using unpublished information obtained from other archives and judicial files, we present this account of what happened in northern Coahuila. The newest aspects concern three elements: the events in the Piedras Negras prison, the scale of the Zeta revenge campaign that began on March 18, 2011, and the responsibility of the US government in relation to this revenge.

a) Piedras Negras Prison

We present an exceptionally detailed account of life, punishment and death inside a prison controlled by the Zetas. Dossier APP 005/2014-BIS containing 1,535 folios provided by the Coahuila State Attorney General only included the first stage of the investigation into the events in the prison. The second part of the same dossier, containing 639 folios, presents the results obtained up to September 4, 2017. The dossier containing both parts includes the statements given by 17 Zeta members, 58 inmates, 26 prison officers and 18 prison staff. In total, 148 statements full of details and keys that give insight into life in the Piedras Negras prison.

The prison functioned as a base of operations that played a key role in the Zeta model of business and terror. Even once they knew what was going on, the state and federal governments continued to subsidize the penitentiary. In 2011, the public budget for prisons in Coahuila was 135 million pesos (10.86 million USD[1]).

b) The Zeta vengeance.

Between March 18-22, 2011 the Zetas unleashed a campaign of revenge throughout the region. Over these five days a total of 1,451 calls to the emergency 089 number were made from Allende and Piedras Negras. These figures—and other documentary evidence—allow us to assert that the authorities knew about the attacks occurring in Allende. The case grows in magnitude and complexity. It is not fully clarified nor closed. Establishing with greater precision the number of victims will help the families of the disappeared and make it possible to assign responsibility.

c) The responsibility of the US government in the Zeta campaign of vengeance

The violence that afflicts Mexico has been influenced by the society and government of the United States. Americans purchase the drugs sent by the Mexican cartels, they supply the arms that make the cartels so lethal, and they have imposed a mistaken strategy on the Mexican government.

There are also specific cases of direct responsibility. The Zeta campaign of vengeance was the responsibility of the Drugs Enforcement Administration (DEA), and of the Federal Police who still refuse to reveal the identity of those responsible.

[1] All the exchange rates are calculated as follow: exchange rate for 2010 $12.63 pesos per USD; for 2011 $12.43 pesos per USD; and for both 2010 and 2011 $12.53 pesos per USD. http://www.banxico.org.mx/SieInternet/consultarDirectorioInternetAction.do?accion=consultarCuadro&idCuadro=CF373

1. Prisons in Mexico

In May 2017 the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) presented General Recommendation 30/2017 "The conditions of self-government and/or co-government in Mexican penitentiaries."[iv] We took from that recommendation two definitions and a number of figures and concepts.

The definitions

The CNDH uses international criteria to assert that:

Self-government exists when the "effective control of all internal aspects are in the hands of certain inmates," and **co-government** when "the prison administration shares power in the running of a penal center with some of the inmates."

The figures

As of 2015 there were 362 detention centers in the country.

> The CNDH visited 154 and found that in 71 there existed conditions of self-government and/or co-government. It established three categories of risk: high (self-government), medium (co-government) and low (absence of self-government/co-government).

Prisons and organized crime

The CNDH added that "the problem with the conditions of self-government/co-government is worsened by the increase in the number of inmates linked to organized crime… who in general are the ones in control of the prison, a situation that is tolerated by some authorities."

It also states that "this situation, according to civil society organizations, **is particularly notable in northern states where there is a strong presence of organized crime.**"

Prisons in Coahuila

The CNDH reviewed the situation of three prisons in Coahuila between 2011 and 2015: the Torreón Penitenciary, the Saltillo Mens' Prison, and the Piedras Negras Prison. They were all classified as under "self-government/co-government," with the exception of Saltillo in 2014. The Piedras Negras CERESO stood out as having received a "zero" qualification in 2011. Given the level of insecurity inside the prison, the CNDH staff were unable to enter.[v]

2. The Zeta prison in Piedras Negras, Coahuila

The Center for Social Rehabilitation (CERESO) of Piedras Negras operated as a criminal enclave. John Sullivan defines these as "'lawless zones,' 'ungoverned spaces,' 'other governed spaces,' or 'zones of impunity' where state challengers have created parallel or dual sovereignty, or 'criminal enclaves' in a neo-feudal political arrangement."[vi]

This enclave was key to the Zeta organization because, a) it was a secure refuge for Zeta bosses who wanted to hide from the federal forces that were not on their payroll; b) it was used to obtain income selling drugs, sodas and pork rinds, charging fees for the use of the cells and renting out the rooms used for conjugal visits; c) it provided them with a discreet and secure place to install the secret compartments in the cars that carry drugs to the United States; d) it served as a recruiting ground for assassins; and, e) it was a center used to temporarily hold hostages, to torture and execute people, and to disappear corpses.

The prison of Piedras Negras is just 6.35 kilometers (4 miles), as the crow flies, from the US border. It stands on a site with an area of 47,616 square meters (512,000 sq. ft.). In 2011 it held 655 inmates, with 77 guards responsible for overseeing the prison.[vii] In the Zeta hierarchy, this enclave was the responsibility of David Loreto Mejorado, known as *Comandante Enano* (or *Nano*). It was up to him or his superiors to designate the person responsible for running the prison.

The plaza chief

The plaza chiefs are key players in Mexican criminal organizations. They are the ones responsible for a locality, zone, or specific geographical area. They receive instructions and objectives for running it and defending it against the "contra," but also have the autonomy to make their own mark. Since the accounts of this location refer to a number of different plaza chiefs, in order to avoid confusion we will refer to him as the Prison Boss in this text.

This Prison Boss was designated in December 2009 and ran the CERESO until January 2012. When he gave his statement (December 2014) he was 45 years old. He declared that he was "of the Christian religion" before going on to say that "he doesn't smoke, doesn't drink, and doesn't take drugs." He does acknowledge having "a criminal record for kidnapping." A Coahuila newspaper was more precise: this individual was the leader of a gang to which "more than 10 extortions and kidnappings"[viii] were attributed. His CV also includes having worked as a municipal police officer.

Some of the Prison Boss's pastimes were inoffensive:

a) An inmate recalled that "he sang karaoke into a microphone." Sometimes he did this standing on "the steps at the entrance" to the prison.[ix]

b) Two guards added that "he organized the baseball and soccer teams" in the prison and "paid for the inmates' soccer strips."[x]

c) Sometimes he exploited his privileges to "leave [the prison] to drink coffee and read the newspapers, eat in a good restaurant in the evening and return to his cell at night."[xi]

Other habits were more sinister:

a) He selected "wives, sisters or family members of inmates" to have sexual relations with them.[xii]

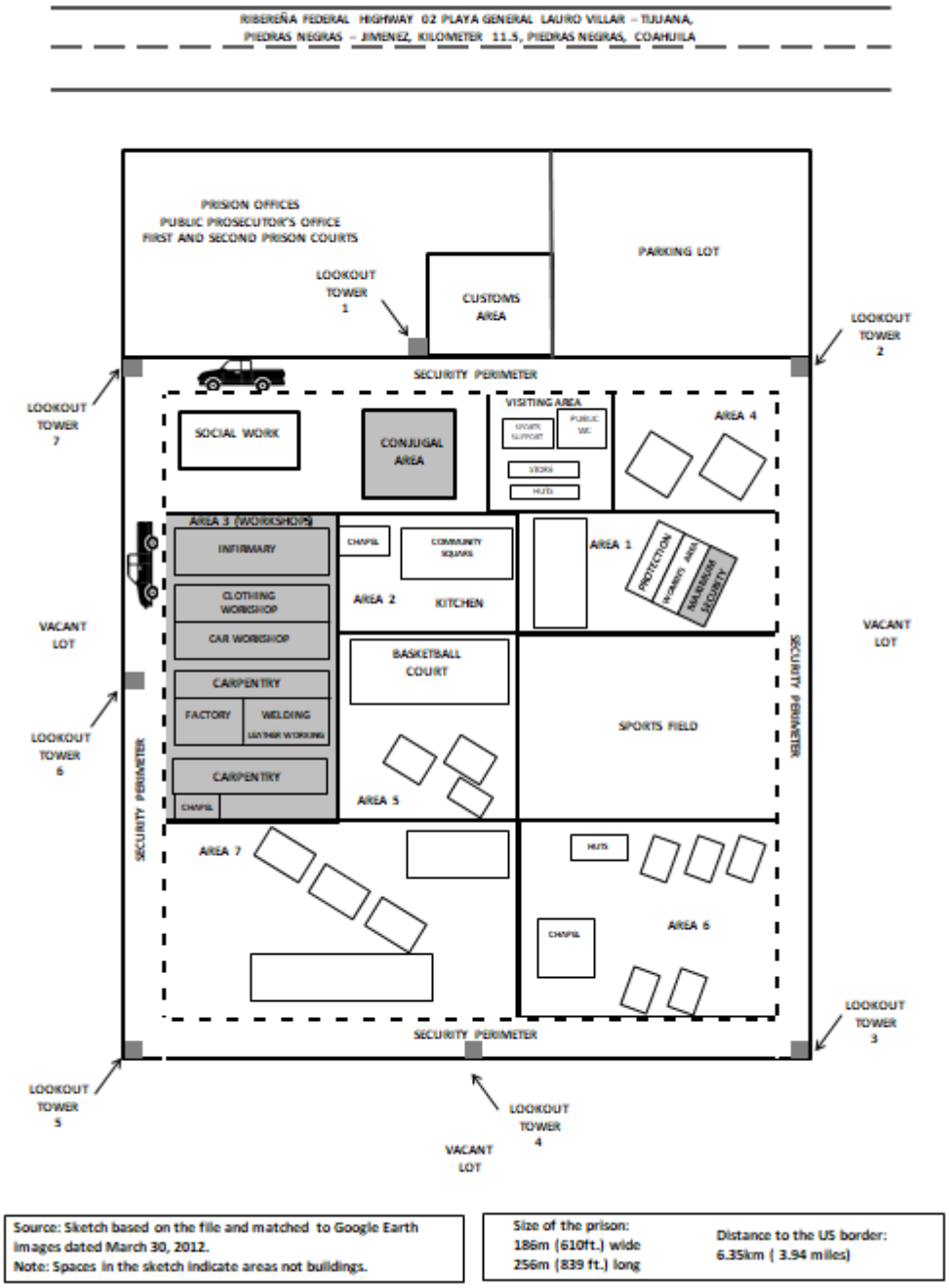
b) For a period the authorities had to close the prison's watchtowers because the Prison Boss liked firing rounds "at the guards just for fun."[xiii]

c) It appears that he was homophobic because, according to one inmate, "he had a faggot electrocuted […] because they saw him screwing another dude."[xiv]

The responsibilities of the Prison Boss

The Prison Boss was modest when he described his responsibilities: "I was in charge of running the plaza inside the prison" so that a) "everything stays calm" and b) "the sale of drugs among inmates" operated smoothly.

In the diagram below, note the security perimeter and the buildings marked in gray. The workshops, the maximum security area and the conjugal area (where the Prison Boss and his closest allies lived) were fortresses that were opened or closed at the will of the cartel.



Source: Sketch based on the file and matched to Google Earth images dated March 30, 2012.
Note: Spaces in the sketch indicate areas not buildings.

Size of the prison:
186m (610ft.) wide
256m (839 ft.) long

Distance to the US border:
6.35km (3.94 miles)

To carry out these responsibilities, the Prison Boss had a team of 92 at his service (an approximate figure). Some were specialists in particular tasks, others rotated among jobs. Inmates were not part of the Zetas but were sometimes obliged to work for the criminal organization; they were persuaded with threats, payments, and the provision of drugs. The addictions of a large, but indeterminate, number of the inmates made them dependent on whoever monopolized the sale of drugs.

For greater clarity, we have prepared tables showing the approximate distribution of personnel by task. It should be noted that the numbers are based on those mentioned in the files by name and/or nickname. It is possible that the total is higher because some witnesses refer to other persons or groups who, since they are unidentified, are excluded from this list.

The Prison Boss and his close collaborators

Lieutenants	6
Bodyguards	10
Errand runners	3
Others (various functions)	15
Total	**34**

We present the following table on the assumption that the number one priority of the Zetas is money and violence. Since the most lucrative activity is drugs trafficking, then fixing up cars is in first place. In second place is preparation of military uniforms and in third, the destruction of bodies.

Teams ordered by importance of activity

Bodywork and painting workshop for the preparation of secret compartments in cars for drug smuggling	8
Tailoring workshop	13
"Cooks" (elimination of bodies)	20
Sale of drugs and other products	9
Collection of debts	4
Carpentry workshop	2
Soldering workshop	2
Total	**58**

Source: Witness statements contained in file APP 005/2014-BIS of the Deputy Attorney's office for investigation and search of missing persons, support for victims and witnesses of the state of Coahuila de Zaragoza.

Control of the prison

The Prison Boss was scrupulous about details. He always had "errand runners" available, who were his right-hand men, and his eyes and ears. For example, one or two of them always had to witness the disappearance of bodies.[xv] It is possible that he did this to avoid evidence leaking.

He brought about order and secured obedience by spreading fear and applying brute force at the slightest opportunity. This is clear from how new inmates were received. The authorities left them at the entrance to the facility. The guards collected them and took them to the "visiting area" where they were received by the Prison Boss who informed them that here, he was the "commander and chief."[xvi]

As one inmate recalls, the socialization process began immediately: the new arrival "was given a beating and read the rules."[xvii] Then they were sent "to work for a month."[xviii] When he had reason to distrust someone, the Prison Boss ordered their transfer to the maximum security area where they remained for "as long as he pleased."[xix]

Beatings were part of daily life. The most frequent punishment was the so-called "*tablazo*": "with a wooden board and aluminum bats they beat the inmates on their buttocks." This custom comes from the initiation rites in military schools, and this was probably where it was borrowed from by the ex-soldiers who founded the Zetas (according to some, this practice has been disappearing in military institutions). Its use is frequently mentioned in other regions under Zeta influence.

In the Piedras Negras Penitentiary there were other ways of instilling obedience and fear. They "threw hot water on their backs or hands";[xx] they forced them to "walk among all the Zetas' dealers and assassins" while being beaten or hit with boards; they were set to "dig holes in the soccer pitches" and then fill them in again; "they forced us to drink two liters of water and then run"; they submerged them in "water tanks," and so on.[xxi]

The punishment depended on the gravity of the offense. One of the prisoners relates that he had a conjugal visit and a Zeta "disrespected my wife." The aggrieved inmate objected and the Zeta stabbed him with "a knife in my back," while the Prison Boss "beat him with an aluminum bat" and then locked him up for "about seven months in the maximum security area."[xxii]

The Zetas had their own jail within the prison; this was known as the "hill" (*monte*) and was located in the maximum security area.[xxiii] Here they placed inmates who had committed an offense, as well as people kidnapped from outside while the ransom payment was negotiated. The place could get very busy; on one occasion it was occupied by as many as 50 punished inmates.

Zeta control over the prison was made complete by preventing information leaks as far as possible. One prisoner relates how "when we made a phone call, the Prison Boss's people watched over us to make sure we didn't talk to our families about what was happening inside."[xxiv]

It must be noted that such close control was made possible by the type of weapons available to each side. The guards were unarmed, except for the shift bosses and commanders. The opposite was the case with the Zetas, who all carried pistols and communication radios which allowed them to control all areas of the prison. Periodically, Zeta members entered from outside with assault weapons.

The narcotics

The prison was a drugs storage depot and, according to the statements delivered at trials in the United States and analyzed by a team from the University of Texas in Austin led by Ariel Dulitzky, it had a workshop to "fix up cars and adapt them for transporting drugs" and to "sell and distribute drugs."[xxv] One characteristic of the Zeta business model was to make use of multi-purpose facilities.

It was also a center of consumption. The Prison Boss acknowledges this and explains that drugs were supplied in view of all: the "drugs were delivered to me by an accountant who worked for the Zetas… the guards let him enter through the main gate of the prison and he handed me over a backpack [that] contained packets of marijuana and cocaine in bags, and rocks of crack cocaine."

Unfortunately, the official from the Public Prosecutor's office did not ask the Prison Boss about the quantities of drugs that entered and left the prison. With regard to small-scale sales in the prison, details are missing on how often this backpack entered, how big it was, and the amounts and prices of the drugs. We know that these were sold to inmates on credit and that the debt collectors asked for payments on Sunday nights (perhaps because this is family visiting day and when they received money). If the payment was late, punishment would not be long in arriving. One inmate witnessed the murder by beating and hanging of an indebted prisoner.[xxvi] On another occasion when a prisoner did not pay up, the Prison Boss was going to cut off a finger from his "left hand with the workshop saw."[xxvii]

Extortion and accounts

At some point in 2010 *Comandante Enano* ordered the Prison Boss to increase the sources of income. He was presented with the example of the prison in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, where "they made a lot of money, screwing over the inmates [with] extortion and fines." The Prison Boss claims he initially refused because he "didn't want to take away from any prison inmate anything that wasn't mine." He ended up doing what they asked and ordered all inmates to pay a weekly charge of 25 pesos (1.98 USD), which later increased to 50 pesos (4.02 USD).[xxviii] That is, they rented out the cells built and maintained by the state.

In light of the cartel's love of money, we sought to understand the reasoning behind charging the inmates rent. According to the file, the Zetas spent approximately 1.5 million pesos a year (125,000 pesos per month) (119, 712 USD per year. 9,976 USD per month) paying off the administration and security staff. The amounts were tiny. A guard was paid on average 1,000 pesos per month (79.81 USD), while the prison warden received 10,000 (798.08 USD) (see the statistical appendix for further details).

It is logical that they sought to minimize costs and maximize earnings. We may suppose that they began to charge rent inside the prison in order to pay the bribes. They started out charging 25 pesos (1.98 USD) per week for each inmate. Assuming that in 2010 they charged all 736[xxix] inmates who were not Zeta members, they received 956,800 (75,756 USD) each year, not enough to cover the 1.5 million (118,764 USD) paid in bribes. Perhaps for this reason in 2011 they increased the charge to 50 pesos per week (4.02 USD). At that point there were 555 inmates not part of the Zetas, meaning they received 1,443,000 pesos (116,090 USD): balanced books.[xxx]

This charge extended to every imaginable activity: 1,000 pesos (79.81 USD) per fortnight "for inmates who obviously had money," "50 pesos (3.99 USD) per night" spent in the conjugal area,[xxxi] fees for electricity and water, interest charges for debts in arrears, etc. The obsession with money infiltrated every nook and cranny of prison life. The Zetas handled the sale of phone cards, pork rinds, sodas, candy and cigarettes. When the hospital received medicines, these were confiscated and then sold to the inmates. They also made money from the workshops and from the kidnapped people brought to the prison.[xxxii]

The business was assured because the wages paid to the prisoners were very low. The person in charge of the store selling pork rinds and candy was given 200 pesos (15.96 USD) a week, the debt collector 500 pesos (39.90 USD) per week and the drug seller 1,000 pesos (79.81 USD) per week. The one who earned the most was the one responsible for burning bodies: 300 dollars per night worked.

We don't know if the Prison Boss had a fixed salary, commissions and benefits for results, his own business or a combination of the above. Nor do we know if he had an expenses account that allowed him to organized parties in the prison or to go for outings around town.

In summary, it was a good business. If we bear in mind that the Zeta structure separated drugs trafficking from the exploitation of resources in an area, the prison was a hybrid of the two because there was a captive market they could exploit, knowing that the government paid the electricity, water and salaries of the guards and staff who were in the service of the Zetas.

The workshops

No details are available on the output, income and expenditure of the four workshops, each run by one leader. This makes it impossible to know their financial importance. What is clear is the function assigned to each.

a) Bodywork and painting. In our view, this was the most important workshop because here vehicles were altered to carry drugs into the United States. Cars, both stolen and purchased, arrived at the prison, where they were repaired, painted, fitted with tinted windows, and had their serial numbers altered when necessary. An inmate who worked in this workshop mentioned that "there were

loads of them, of all makes and models." In his case, he fixed up "about 150 or more, most of them from the States."[xxxiii] It was a profitable business because the paint was stolen from a retail store in Piedras Negras, and some sources indicate that the auto parts used were dismantled in a tow truck garage in Piedras Negras.

b) Tailor. This workshop had an important military function, producing khaki and sand colored army uniforms, uniforms used by the marines, and uniforms used by the GATES (Coahuila special forces) and the AFI used by the Zeta in their operations. They also manufactured covers for bullet-proof vests, trimmings, police-type belts, straps for carrying assault weapons, and holsters for pistols and magazines.[xxxiv] So much importance was given to the quality of the product that the head of this workshop arrived from outside the prison each day. It was also the only workshop to employ a number of women. According to one prisoner, "every week a truck arrived, delivering rolls of material and taking away" everything that had been produced.[xxxv]

c) Welding. This workshop produced stars or spikes used by the Zetas to puncture tires, and assisted in the repair of the vehicles.[xxxvi]

d) Carpenters. Here, wooden effigies of San Judas and Santa Muerte were made, together with furniture for the Zetas in the prison.[xxxvii] We may suppose that these were also sold inside and outside the CERESO.

Hostel and entertainment

When necessary, the prison became a temporary hideout and/or place of recreation.

There are indications that at least one of the two brothers who controlled the region, Omar Treviño Morales, Z-42, hid in the prison when the Marines were engaged in operations to capture him.[xxxviii] As mentioned above, the prison was the safest place for criminals pursued by federal police who were not on their payroll. The federal forces could only enter state prisons when requested to do so by the prison warden.[xxxix]

There was also time for celebrations. "Sometimes the **big bosses** arrived and held parties" with music and women. The party could last "all day and all night" and sometimes they brought in "cows and killed them inside the prison to feed everyone."[xl]

When necessary, the Prison Boss authorized Zeta members to leave the prison to buy beers, visit their families or run errands of different kinds. One inmate relates that "prisoners who were Zetas were allowed to go to work or see their families, and sometimes they went to the Oxxo store to buy *bironga* (beer) and came back."

Execution and extermination camp

The penitentiary was one of the five or six locations set up in Piedras Negras for executions and the destruction of bodies. Other places of extermination were a vacant lot near a place called Laguito Mexicano and, closer to the prison, a municipal dump and a soccer pitch. One possible explanation for the widespread practice of incinerating bodies might be the worldwide scandal resulting from the discovery of 72 migrants who had been executed in San Fernando, Tamaulipas in August 2010.

The careful wording taken by the Prison Boss when describing this kind of activity to the Public Prosecutor is remarkable. He relates that the first time the Zetas arrived with "dead people" they told him that "there's a job to do." When they explained what it was, the Prison Boss claims to have consulted with his "colleagues in the prison." They came to the conclusion that "they didn't do this kind of thing." His boss, *Comandante Enano,* answered that "if he didn't get to work, they'd do the same to us and to our families, since they knew where we were from." This threat put an end to the discussion; the Prison Boss and his team set about learning the trade.

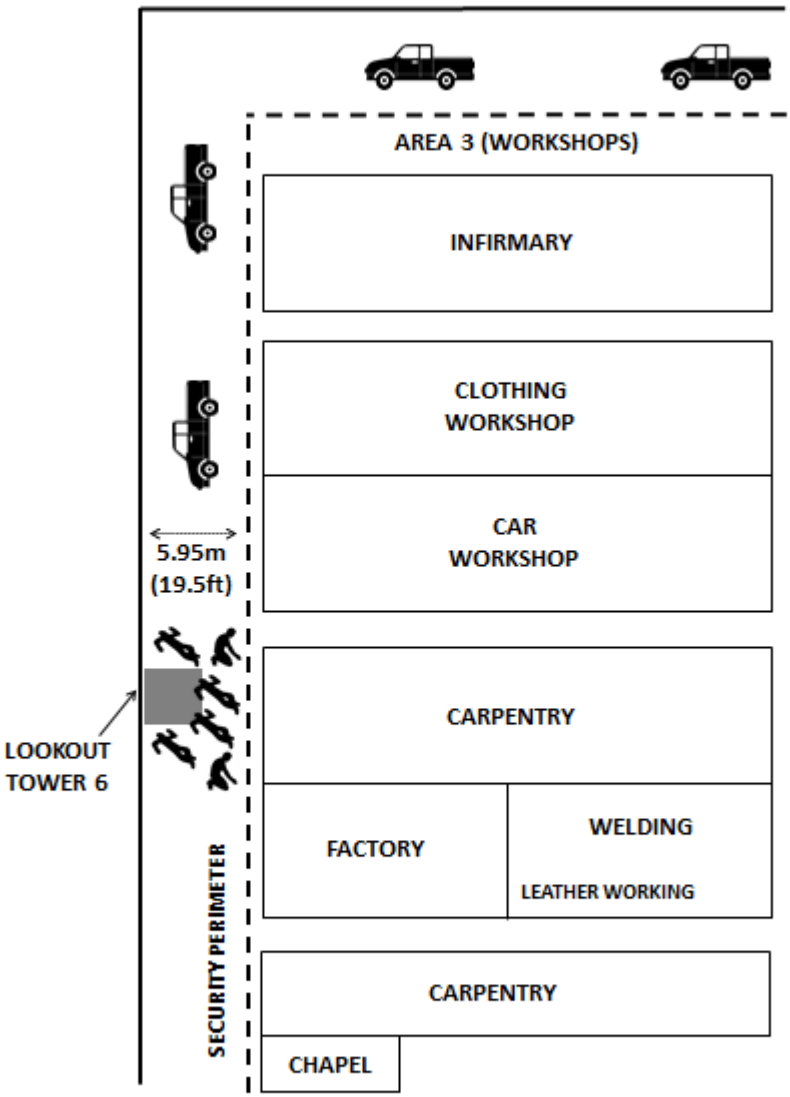
They received training. The first time, "they… put a body in a 200-liter barrel they had on the back of their truck… and poured diesel over it before setting it alight. That was the example they showed us that day." Later they brought "twelve bodies in pick-ups… and we burned them." Another method was to cut up the victims "into pieces, put them in barrels and burn them."[xli] Dismemberment of victims is a common practice amongst this cartel.

Over time, a routine became established. When this kind of job was expected, "they told [the Prison Boss] and he in turn sent one of his people to tell the guards [to] open up straight away." The vehicles drove around the **security perimeter** and upon "reaching the workshop area where the Prison Boss and his people were waiting, they took out" the victims, dead or alive.[xlii] One of the prison staff explains that they "took them… to the workshop area, near the infirmary and the chapel." They walked down the so-called "corridor of death."[xliii]

Inmates, Zetas, guards and staff agree that some victims were still alive when they arrived, "they were kneeling, with their hands tied behind their backs,"[xliv] and sometimes "people screamed, I think they killed them there."[xlv] They were executed in two ways: "with a hammer blow to the head"[xlvi] or "a shot in the back of the neck."[xlvii] It is not clear what determined the choice of method.

The bodies were not treated with respect. "They picked up the dead bodies however they could and threw them on the ground." The Prison Boss explained the procedure: "once the body was inside the barrel they began to add diesel before setting them on fire, so the whole time they were adding diesel." He then explained "that when the people were cooked… they reduced in size, while someone hacked at them with an iron rod until there was nothing left… [then] the barrels were tipped up to empty the residue onto the ground […] which in truth was very little."

While the bodies were burning, the "cooks" chatted, drank beer and took drugs. Observing Diagram 2, note that all of this took place in front of watchtower number 6, which had previously been cleared of guards. We may suppose that they selected this place as it is beside the workshops most closely controlled by the Zetas.



When bodies were being destroyed, life in the prison was turned upside down. The guards received orders to abandon the watchtowers, and inmates were removed from this area. The inmates were locked up in their modules and no one was allowed to approach the workshops. Prisoners were deployed as *halcones* or lookouts: seven to ten in the infirmary and eight to ten in the workshops. However, several inmates were able to see the flames and the column of smoke, and the smell of burned hair and diesel reached much of the prison complex.

Finally, the residue in the barrels was emptied onto the ground, collected with shovels and placed in buckets. The barrels were then flattened, first by jumping on them and then driving over them. According to statements in the file, the buckets with the ashes and the barrels were thrown into the San Rodrigo river near Ejido El Moral on the Piedras Negras–Acuña highway. They also used a vacant lot on the way to Ejido Piedras Negras and a waterwheel on Ejido El Centinela.

The ashes and other residues that remained were scattered in different parts of the prison. One prisoner explains:

> "It seemed the army was coming… suddenly me and everyone in maximum security who were being punished… were put to carrying buckets full of mud that smelt really bad, it smelt rotten or like a dead dog, I guess that the mud was mixed up with the ashes of the people they burned… it had a lot of hair in it… we [emptied it all out] along the edge of the soccer pitch. Then we covered it with earth."

With regards to the victims, the witness statements often suggest they were "*chapulines*" (non-Zeta drug dealers), people who owed money to the Zetas, as well as family members of either of these, and other people with no connection to the Zetas or to criminal activities. The people who disappeared here were residents of Piedras Negras, Acuña, the Cinco Manantiales region (Allende, Morelos, Nava, Villa Unión and Zaragoza) and other nearby municipalities. In the text they speak of men, women, seniors, young people and even children, elderly people, and a woman who was seven months pregnant.

One of the least clear parts of the dossier is the cost in lives. The two parts of the dossier counted 46 victims and the State Attorney General recognizes 150 victims, however the statements found in the judicial dossier lead us to think that the figure could be higher.

The prison as social base

Another function of this criminal enclave was to serve as a base for the recruitment of hitmen.

In Part II we will discuss in detail the vengeance campaign that began on March 18, 2011 and which impacted on Allende, Piedras Negras and the whole Cinco Manantiales region. We documented the active participation of prisoners in these events. According to witness statements, there were some who "entered and left [the prison] at will" because they were "part of the group's payroll in the region." One of them "went out to commit crimes a lot." For this reason, it is natural that they were "present at the vengeance against the Garza family." According to witness statements presented at US courts, when the Zetas needed reinforcements in the region, they took more than 100 inmates from the prison.[xlviii]

Another event confirms this function as a social base for criminals. In September 2012 the media reported on the escape of almost one-fifth of the inmates from Piedras Negras prison. On September 17, 129 prisoners escaped "**in just** 15 minutes" through a tunnel measuring **7 meters** in length by 1.2 meters wide (23 ft. by 4 ft.), the entrance to which was in the carpentry workshop. The prisoners emerged beside tower 6, on the north side of the facility. There, they cut the wire and escaped one by one until they reached a vacant lot, according to information provided by the prison authorities."[xlix]

If we are to believe the statements included in the dossier of the Coahuila State Public Prosecutor and in trials in the United States, what really happened was quite different. According to guards and prisoners, the escape happened because the Prison Boss who by then had been transferred to a jail in Saltillo "needed people to work." It was well planned. One inmate recalls that "they held meetings to ask the prisoners if we wanted to escape." A guard adds that "about four months before the escape… some inmates came to tell me that they were going to escape… we told the warden to send a report to Saltillo… the warden never sent anything."

On the day in question there was no tunnel. According to an inmate: "the people who wanted to leave left by the main gate." They did it by "lining up and there was a bus outside waiting for them." A Zeta member who gave testimony in the United States confirmed this: "I heard it from *El Nano*… two buses were waiting for them as they came out of the front door."[l] In the trials in the US, it emerged that the Zetas needed people to protect the plaza and other regions against an offensive by the Gulf Cartel.[li]

The prison fugitives were one of the resources used by the Zetas to reinforce their ranks. In the states controlled by this criminal group, we have identified escapes by around 400 prisoners, at least, in Coahuila, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, Veracruz and Zacatecas. Determining an exact number of Zeta members who escaped from prison in these and other states is impossible.

Of the 129 escapees, 80 had been recaptured and were interned in CEFERESOS (federal prisons), 20 were killed, and 29 remained at large.

3. The Mexican State's Response to the Zeta Prison

At the three levels of government there were officials who knew about or who were direct witnesses to a situation that was reported on each year by the CNDH. They feigned ignorance of what was happening in Piedras Negras, and as a result, according to the revised dossier, at least 27 different crimes were committed in the prison according to the Coahuila State Penal Code, together with ten crimes of federal jurisdiction. Some of these may be categorized as crimes against humanity (see the appendices).

This violated the obligation of the State to practice effective control of penitentiaries, which implies—among other things—maintaining internal and external security, and preventing crimes committed within prisons. By permitting the Zetas to take control of the Piedras Negras CERESO, the Mexican government allowed crimes and human rights violations to take place without investigating, trying and punishing those responsible. [lii] In this case there is an international responsibility on the part of the State for the actions of its agents,[liii] and for the actions of individuals not attributable in principle to the State. [liv]

The absent or complicit municipality

The Zetas controlled the municipal police in Northern Coahuila. Abandoned to their fate by the state and federal governments, they became—whether out of fear or thanks to the crumbs they were paid as bribes—silent witnesses, obedient servants or enthusiastic accomplices.

In **Allende** the municipal police became involved with organized crime from 2009, and by 2010 their submission was complete.[lv] In Piedras Negras and other municipalities across the region a similar situation prevailed, though this needs to be clarified with greater precision.

One of the prisoners in Piedras Negras recounted an experience from September 2011, "…**a municipal police patrol came to my home**… they told me to come out… **and they handed me over [to the Zetas]** who handcuffed me again." [lvi]

In March a male disappeared in Sabinas, a municipality in the coal-mining region adjacent to Allende. His wife filed the police report in 2014 and explained that she had:

"heard rumors that… he was stopped by the municipal police and then an armed group arrived and put him in a pick-up, while a police officer took away my husband's pick-up." [lvii]

The causes of the abandonment of the municipalities due to the scale of criminal control need to be established more clearly. The Bi-monthly Report (December 2008-January 2009) of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico claims that:

"…reports by civil and military intelligence [we may suppose

> these are Mexican, though they could be American] estimate that approximately 62% of the 455,000 civil security agents are in collusion with the cartels. According to military sources 57% of the arms used by these forces have been used to commit a crime."[lviii]

The Coahuila state government and the prison

Those in charge of Coahuila's prisons knew what was going on in Piedras Negras. One guard—now in jail for the crime of allowing prisoners to escape—explained that:

> "**Two or three times a year, the authorities from Saltillo would come and visit this CERESO… they knew about the situation since the wardens at the time I was there made it clear to them. The visits were from the parking lot to the warden's office and back to the parking lot. They rarely entered the CERESO, and these were very quick visits, they didn't take their time, didn't ask questions**, they just stood on the sidelines and like on the other occasions nothing was done to change what was happening here." [lix]

This same official identifies by name one of those who was there in 2011: the Director of the Decentralized Unit for the Discharge of Sentences and Social Reintegration (UDPRS).[lx] This official reported him to the powerful State Attorney General's Office. We don't know if the Attorney General and the Governor knew of the matter.

We do know that the transfer of public resources for the upkeep of the prisons in Coahuila was never halted; as mentioned above, these amounted to 135 million pesos (10.86 million USD) in 2011.[lxi] On the other hand, in the Zeta model, the municipalities they controlled also served to subsidize them; in Allende part of the budget allocated for the gas used by police vehicles was handed over to the Zetas.[lxii]

Part 2 of the dossier includes statements by officials from the CERESO and the Coahuila state government. This makes it possible to understand the actions and omissions of the state authorities.

For example, the State Attorney General affirmed that it was never "asked to provide any kind of support… to intervene in the events taking place inside the CERESO" and "nor was I ever informed that illegal activities were taking place." The dossier includes reports from the officials responsible for the security of the prisons, in which it is reported that there had been no "operations between 2009 and 2011." It is also remarkable that the prison warden of the Piedras Negras CERESO should report that he could not find any "information on operating reviews" between 2009 and 2010. The only visit undertaken by state authorities with the support of the Federal Police and SEDENA was in January 2012, to transfer the Prison Boss and other dangerous inmates.

According to the dossier, the presence of state police in Piedras Negras was also reduced. The chief of the Preventive Police reported that "officers in my charge did not provide service in the municipality of Piedras Negras" between 2009 and 2012. The Chief of the Community Police Force provided figures that reveal a fall in the number of officers in Piedras Negras: in January 2009 there were 45 officers but by December 2011 just 16. The motives for this decline in numbers are unknown. Nor is there any information on the presence of officers from the Elite Task Force or the Grupo de Armas y Tácticas Especiales (GATES) force.

This information allows us to propose a working hypothesis. For reasons unknown, the state government withdrew from Piedras Negras and from the CERESO between 2009 and 2011. We lack the evidence to establish the role played by the two governors of the state during the those years: Humberto Moreira Valdés and Jorge Torres López.

All of the above means that just like the municipal police, the prison employees had been left to their fate. The pattern is similar: low pay, many threats, some beatings, and abandonment on the part of the state and federal governments.

One prisoner stated that sometimes the Prison Boss "and his guys rebuked the warden and mocked him, saying that he had to fall into line with them."[lxiii] Another prisoner added the Prison Boss used planks to "beat the prison warden, the shift head, and even the guards."[lxiv]

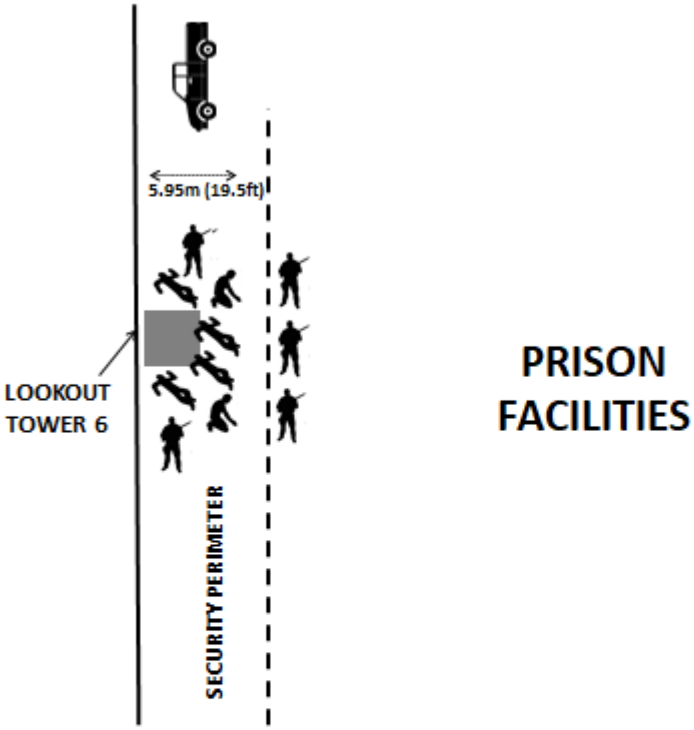
The threats also covered the families and to demonstrate their power they paid home visits. One shift head relates that they came to threaten him at home. He informed the "CERESO warden, who simply said that they'd done the same to him." [lxv]

These declarations make it clear that the prison guards and staff served the Zetas as spectators, drugs distributors and escorts.

Spectators

One shift head went to complain to the warden that the Zetas had threatened him; the prison head responded that "there's no problem, **they're friends**." Another prison employee claims that his superiors—shift heads and warden—"told me and my colleagues not to get into trouble" and that these people "were not to be bothered." In short, the criminals had "control of the CERESO." [lxvi]

The most shocking confirmation of the lines of command within the prisons is the Zeta decision to locate the site of execution and incineration in front of lookout tower number 6, which they had cleared of lookouts, the representation of the State. This was a sign of their contempt for a subjugated and absent State.



Drugs runners

In the prison, they had the space and the time they needed to install the secret compartments in the vehicles intended to smuggle narcotics into the United States. It is possible that they placed the drugs in the vehicles here too, even though none of the police reports mention this. It would have been the most logical way of doing things. In any case, there are indications that the prison was a drug depot. An inmate recalled that the

custodians were letting the Zetas "brings drugs in and out"[lxvii] and a guard said that the shift head "handed over some boxes sealed with parcel tape and told several colleagues and myself that we had to go deliver them to addresses in Piedras Negras." [lxviii]

Escorts

The Prison Boss acknowledged in his statement that "a number of prisoners and I sometimes left the prison." To avoid uncomfortable moments while they were on an errand or out enjoying themselves, the Prison Boss took prison security personnel with him "to protect him and also so they could say, if he were stopped, that it was a transfer."[lxix]
His greatest concern was being detained by federal troops who were "not sorted" (i.e. not on the Zeta payroll).

Investigations without context

The dossier under analysis lacks any assessment of the context in which these crimes and human rights violations took place. Nor is any effort made to explain the structure of the criminal organization and how it interacted with State agents, when the statements offer many clues in this regard. Another significant absence is the lack of statements from the different prison wardens.

We are faced with a mass of testimonials and police statements in which the goal is not to identify the commission of a crime, nor the establishment of the facts. The dossier makes it clear that various authorities were aware of what was happening. For example, in the exercise of criminal action it is indicated that everything happened "with the support and consent of the personnel who were part of the security and surveillance unit of said center, who were aware of the activities they carried out and who permitted the entry and exit of third parties in exchange for financial remuneration [...] in a failure to fulfill the duty of responsibility that according to their position and functions they performed at the time of the events."

As of the time of publication of this text, we still do not know whether the Attorney General's Office has carried out investigations into other criminal acts that took place in the Piedras Negras CERESO.

The federal government and the prison

The government of President Felipe Calderón launched an offensive against the cartels in December 2006. The strategy, imported from the United States, was focused on the elimination of the cartel leaders and breaking them up. Eliminating the Zetas became a priority, given their brutality. Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, director of the civilian intelligence agency (CISEN) during this administration, acknowledges that during this period "the State undertook a powerful onslaught" against them. [lxxi]

If the priority was to finish with the Zetas, it is impossible to understand the indifference shown by the federal government towards what was going on in the CERESOS of Nuevo León, Tamaulipas and Coahuila. According to the CNDH, most of these were in a situation of self-government or co-government, with a strong presence of criminal groups.

It is impossible for them to protest ignorance, because the information was available everywhere. The statement of one prison agent is revealing: "I went to the military garrison […] and told an officer […] that a lot of strange things were going on in the CERESO and he asked me who my boss was, and I told him it was Mr. [XXX] and he replied… 'that guy is so corrupt,' and so I decided not to say anything more." [lxxi] That is, the prison employee refrained from making a complaint when he realized that the military official knew what was going on and had done nothing.

The absence of an integrated strategy is manifest. If there were one, the Coahuila state government would have been pressured or obliged to take back control of this criminal enclave that served as a hideout for the capos whose elimination was one of the key objectives of the federal government, as well as of the United States.

Another dimension of the military presence in northern Coahuila emerges in the trials held in the United States. The drugs trafficker and former production manager for Televisa in Piedras Negras, Adolfo Efrén Tavira Alvarado, declared that "not all the Army" worked with the Zetas, "but yes, some of them. Yes, some Army groups. They also had their agreements with the Federal Police, too." He later added that "if the Marines arrived, they were the ones who could arrest you." [lxxii] In other words, there was a clear differentiation between agencies. Some members of the Army and the Federal Police were "sorted" with the Zetas; the opposite was the case with the Marines.

One of the enigmas that remains to be clarified is to determine individual responsibilities and the lines of command: who knew what, and when. On October 9, 2017 the former governor of Coahuila, Humberto Moreira Valdés, wrote a letter to the International Criminal Court in response to the report "Mexico: murders, disappearances and torture in Coahuila de Zaragoza constitute crimes against humanity." In this text he claims that:

> "Due to the criminal situation at the Piedras Negras Center for Social Readaptation, since 2009, and as a model of the security strategy of the then President Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa, the Center was militarized." He then adds that the Piedras

> Negras CERESO "was run by the military under the guidance of the President of the Republic, and not by the Governor of the State of Coahuila." [lxxiii]

A rather elementary question remains in the air: in 2010 and 2011, which government was responsible for the Piedras Negras prison? Was it the federal government of Felipe Calderón or the state government of Humberto Moreira and Jorge Torres?

In short, the Mexican State, at its various levels, was aware of the situation of self-government at the Piedras Negras CERESO. International organizations had advised it of the situation of self-government in a number of prisons around the country, and of the risks that this entailed. The CNDH itself evaluated the Piedras Negras CERESO and awarded it a qualification of zero. Despite this, the State took no measures to remedy the situation, and as a result it is responsible for the crimes and violations committed against the prisoners and third parties.

4. The Zeta vengeance in northern Coahuila

In order to understand the Zeta vengeance of 2011 it is first necessary to divide Coahuila into three regions. La Laguna was disputed between the Zetas and the Sinaloa Cartel, Saltillo was a relatively peaceful enclave which served as a refuge for the Zeta hierarchy, while the Zetas held firm control of the north of the state.

The Zetas had already arrived in northern Coahuila by 2003. They were originally the hitmen of the Gulf Cartel. As the Zetas became more independent, the importance of Piedras Negras to drugs trafficking grew. Coahuila Secretary of State Armando Luna (2008-2011 and 2012-2015)[lxxiv] offered a good explanation of the method pursued to consolidate their power in the region: first they submitted or eliminated local criminals while gradually bringing local police and authorities under their sway. Building on this foundation, they came to control many different economic activities.

We also need to take into account the role played by the US government. On February 15, 2011 the Zetas executed the ICE agent Jaime Jorge Zapata in San Luis Potosí. Washington demanded the end of the impunity enjoyed by the Zetas and the governments of Felipe Calderón and Barack Obama launched a joint operation that in 12 days led to the detention of hundreds of people. The Zetas felt betrayed by the attack and Saltillo underwent a very difficult period, one we will examine on another occasion.

Simultaneously, the DEA pressured a Zeta member in the United States to provide information that would enable the capture of Z-40 and Z-42, the cartel bosses in northern Coahuila. They obtained the information, and on Friday March 11, 2011 a senior DEA official sent to the Federal Police's Sensitive Investigations Unit the traceable identification numbers of the cell phones of Miguel Ángel Treviño and his brother Omar (Z-40 and Z-42).

Within a few hours, someone in this Federal Police Unit informed the Treviño

brothers, who immediately knew that the information had come from someone around their "closest lieutenant in Coahuila, Mario Alfonso '*Poncho*' Cuellar." Ginger Thompson established that Cuellar was responsible for obtaining "new cell phones every three or four weeks" for his bosses. And Cuellar had assigned this task to "his right-hand man," Héctor Moreno Villanueva "*El Negro*."

One of the witnesses in the US trials was with Z-40 when he found out about the betrayal of "*Poncho*" Cuellar, who had already deceived him by fleeing to the United States when he owed Z-40 10 million dollars. Furious, Z-40 ordered that "everybody and everything that **smelled** of Poncho Cuellar was to be picked up."[lxxv] The death sentence covered all those close to Cuellar, Moreno and another associate, José Luis Gaytán Garza; men, women, children and the elderly whether or not they were involved in the drugs trade.

Cuellar, Moreno and Garza fled to the United States, where the first two became part of the DEA's Witness Protection Program. Before leaving, Cuellar advised those who worked for him to escape. We still don't know whether he also alerted his family.[lxxvi]

The Zetas began an operation in northern Coahuila that included Allende, Piedras Negras, Ciudad Acuña, Morelos, Nava, Zaragoza and Villa Unión. The files allow us to reconstruct in detail what happened in Allende, and present a general overview of what took place in Piedras Negras.

The Zeta operation in Allende had four phases:

a) *The preparations*. The hitmen received the order to "check all the addresses belonging to the Garza family [because] they were going to be picked up and killed."[lxxvii] The 20-strong municipal police force in Allende were instructed that they were "not to go out on patrol, and not to [respond] to any calls for assistance" and also to "detain anyone with the surname Garza"[lxxviii] to be handed over to the Zetas. The Allende police chief held a meeting at which he remarked that things "were going to get hot" and that they weren't to do anything to help citizens, and if they didn't obey they and their families "would be screwed."[lxxix]
b) *The abductions*. On the afternoon of March 18 at least 60 heavily-armed hitmen arrived in Allende, according to the dossier. "At about 6.30 or 7.00 pm," a group of Zetas "used a pickup to break down the main gate" of the Garza family ranch, and "[we] all entered shooting and captured the people who were inside (7-10 people)."[lxxx] These included "four women, elderly ladies… two children… and several young people." This ranch is located midway between Allende and Villa Unión on highway 15. Journalistic sources report that the operation was larger: a large number of pickups (between 40 and 50)[lxxxi]took over the site.

   Considering that each pick-up usually carries four people, the total could be as high as 160 to 200 heavily armed hitmen. They came to the town hall to check the land ownership records for family members of Luis Garza and Héctor Moreno.[lxxxii] The search continued over the weekend. For example,

on the Sunday, a contingent of hitmen and municipal police "arrived and [we] broke in by force, firing our weapons" at the home of a Garza family member. They captured him, his wife and a young child. The Zetas forced them "into a patrol car"[lxxxiii] to take them to one of the two ranches where they were assembling their victims.

c) *Executions and destruction of homes*. According to the reports, the victims were transported to the places of execution, "for them all to be killed by shots to the head."[lxxxiv] During the weekend, they ransacked, vandalized and set fire to their victims' properties. The Zetas incited their neighbors to rob the homes before setting them alight and demolishing them with heavy machinery. The police officers who witnessed the plunder "just watched and said nothing."[lxxxv] A total of 32 homes were destroyed and some set on fire.

The police account states that they heard multiple gunshots, followed by reports of burning houses. The fires spread throughout the town because the Allende fire crews had also received threats: "two new pickups approached the base with people in civilian clothing and armed people and [we were told] they were going to kill us with our families"[lxxxvi] if they put out any fires, a firefighter stated.[lxxxvii]

d) *Handling the bodies* The bodies were destroyed in two ranches using different methods. A truck brought "large barrels" and "diesel or gasoline"[lxxxviii] to the Garza family ranch. The liquid was splashed all over the house and the storeroom where the bodies were piled. Those who showed signs of life were given the coup de grace. One hitman recalled years later that "I had to kill one person with a shot in the head." [lxxxix] Then the fire was lit that lasted all night, "until the bodies were *cooked*."[xc]

On the Los Tres Hermanos ranch (Zaragoza municipality) people were also killed and *cooked*, using a different procedure: barrels were brought and "we all made holes in the sides and bottom of the barrels." Then they threw "one dead body in each barrel. [Then] they splashed the bodies with diesel before setting them on fire […] After five or six hours during which the bodies *cooked* […] they threw the remains in a ditch and a well so nothing could be seen."[xci]

Families of the disappeared advised the military stationed at the kilometer 53 lookout post that something strange was occurring at the Garza ranch. A group of soldiers drove there, and examined the site, "but found no one."[xcii]

The number of deaths remains a mystery despite the fact that Allende is the city that has been most closely studied. According to the state government there were 28 victims, the study we carried out counted 42, and Ginger Thompson produced a total of 60 dead and disappeared. [xciii]

As we advanced with this investigation, we came to conclusion that Piedras Negras was the most severely punished city. Two witnesses in the US trials claimed that during the most violent weekend, a total of 40 people in Piedras Negras were forced to kneel and were

shot dead.[xciv]

In the dossier of the Coahuila State Attorney there appears a sentence mentioned in passing by an employee: "when Allende happened […] there was a lot of movement […] inside the CERESO". These words took on greater meaning when we reviewed the emergency calls made by inhabitants of Allende and Piedras Negras to the Coahuila Center for Communications, Computing, Control and Command (C4) between 18 and 22 March 2011.

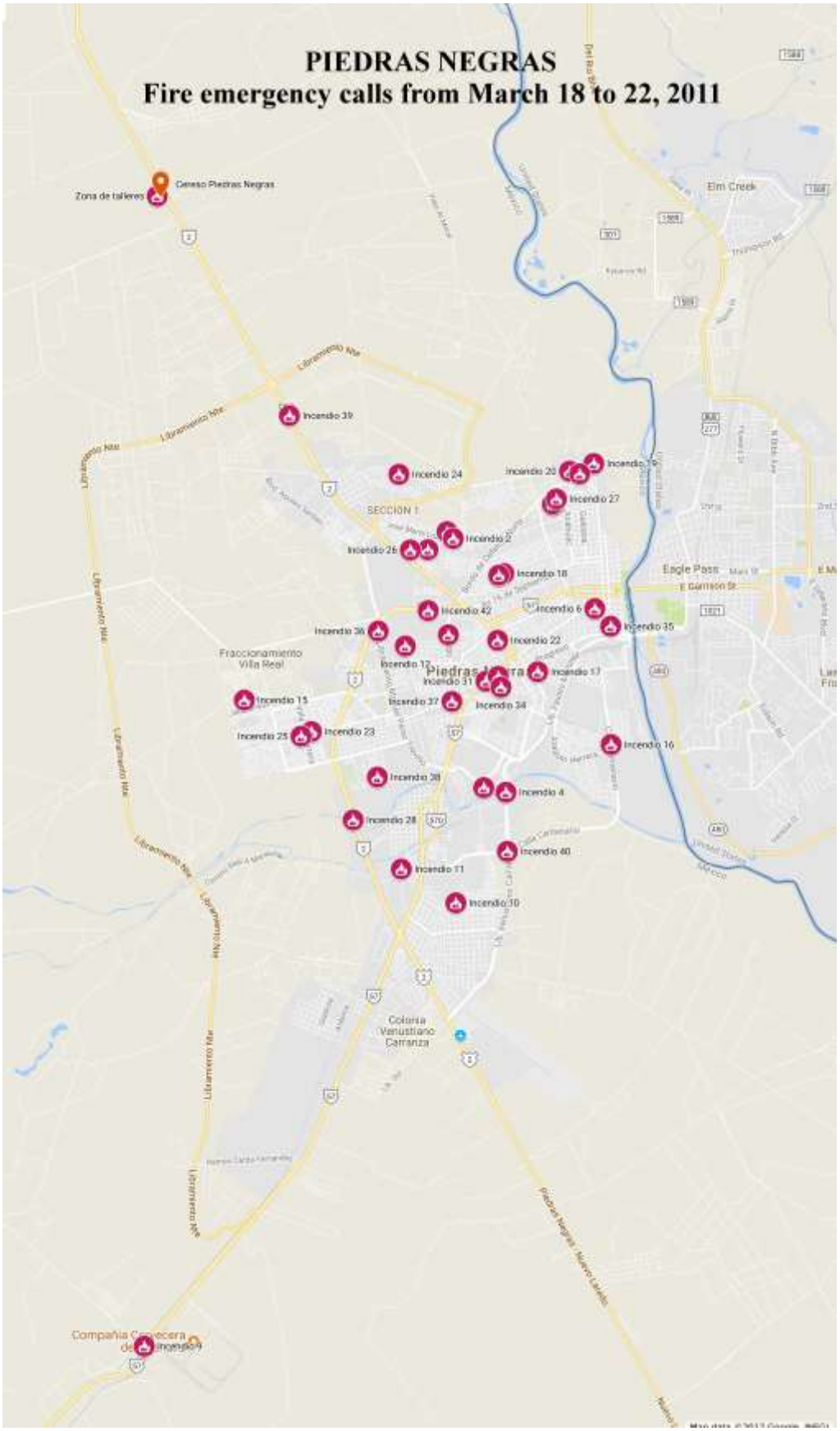
The story of these calls is as follows. The CNDH's First Visitor asked the C4 for the calls from Allende and Piedras Negras, and this public body provided them to us. The disparity is notable. From Allende, with its 22,000 inhabitants, 26 reports were made. From Piedras Negras, with 152,000 inhabitants, there were 1,425 calls. A proportion of 55 to 1. Something very serious happened in Piedras Negras.

Of these calls, 100 are to report 42 different fires in Piedras Negras, and nine calls from Allende about four fires. Too many fires for so few days. Above all because in some sites more than one fire was reported the same day or on consecutive days, even after the fire had been extinguished. We located these fires on maps, shown in an appendix to this report (available in the Seminar's website), cross-referenced with the list of calls, and we found that several of them are in places that, according to several witnesses, were used to kill and burn people. For example, in Allende a fire was reported in the area of Rancho de los Garza, which according to the dossier is where the victims were burned.

From another perspective, while the Zetas were attacking everything that "smelled of Cuellar," the population was reporting the incidents they observed. This is one of the reasons why we think that the largest number of victims was in Piedras Negras, followed by Allende and other municipalities. In other words, the investigation into this act of vengeance has not been concluded, and it would be more correct to speak of the "*Tragedy of northern Coahuila*." There is a possibility that the number of dead and disappeared exceeds 100, and it is even possible that it amounts to as many as 300.[xcv]

Two further considerations:

1. The events in northern Coahuila involve a large number of locations, criminals and victims over a longer time period than one weekend. The vengeance lasted for weeks or months. It is a huge jigsaw.
2. Another clue is that between 2010 and 2012 there were several cases of abandoned children who were taken to the Coahuila official shelters (DIF). It would appear that after killing their parents, the Zetas decided to spare the children and leave them near to the facilities of this government agency. The instructions given to the staff were to hand over the children to whoever came to collect them and claimed to be their family members, without corroborating the relationship in depth, due to the prevailing situation of violence.


PIEDRAS NEGRAS
Fire emergency calls from March 18 to 22, 2011
Cereso Piedras Negras
Zona de talleres
Elm Creek
Libramiento Nte
Incendio 39
Incendio 24
Incendio 20
Incendio 19
Incendio 27
SECCIÓN 1
Incendio 2
Incendio 26
Incendio 18
Eagle Pass
E Garrison St
Incendio 42
Incendio 6
Incendio 35
Incendio 36
Incendio 22
Fraccionamiento
Villa Real
Incendio 12
Piedras Negras
Incendio 31
Incendio 17
Incendio 15
Incendio 37
Incendio 34
Incendio 25
Incendio 23
Incendio 16
Incendio 38
Incendio 4
Incendio 28
Incendio 40
Incendio 11
Incendio 10
Colonia
Venustiano
Carranza
Compañía Cabecera
de Municipio 9

5. The Mexican state's response to the vengeance

It is worth emphasizing what should be obvious: the Mexican State has an obligation to prevent human rights violations and, when these occur, it must establish the facts, deliver justice and repair the damage. To fulfill these tasks—and for victims and society to be able to verify this—a key element is to establish the truth.

One of the greatest obstacles to achieving this ideal is that the judicial and institutional framework in Mexico was not designed to seek the truth and has enormous problems with incorporating this perspective. This leads to frequent clashes with those of

us who believe that access to information and to the truth is a right of victims, their families, and society.

For this project there were bodies—such as the Attorney General's Office (PGR)—that failed to provide any information. Those who did—CEAV, CNDH and the Coahuila State Government, among others—provided El Colegio de México with very important files that we reviewed with complete independence. This is a model that makes it possible to carry out investigations that establish how the State contributed to, and reacted to, the acts of vengeance.

2.1. Municipality

Organized crime and the State interact on a daily basis at municipal level. In this investigation we found that in 2010 and 2011, the Zetas had the 20 police from Allende and other municipalities at their service. However, the police officers got involved in different ways with the criminal group. Some were enthusiastic accomplices; others established a distance without confronting or combating the criminals.

The officers acknowledge that "we all received money from the Zetas, some grudgingly and others willingly."[xcvi] If we compare the accounts in these declarations, 11 of the 20 municipal police actively collaborated with the Zetas (including the police chief and commander) and the rest accepted them passively.

The police were assigned the following functions by the Zetas:

a) Ignore complaints and "reports by citizens."[xcvii]
b) The commander positioned the "police in different points around the city in order to pass on information, that is, the police acted as lookouts."[xcviii] They had instructions to report on the arrival of the Army, Marines or the GATES (Special Tactical Armed Group created by the Humberto Moreira administration in 2009). They also had to report the entry of vehicles with plates from other states since, according to one municipal police officer, "the Zetas feared the entry of another criminal group to compete with them."[xcix]
c) Allow the Zetas to enter the local prison to bring people out or to beat them in their cells. One officer recalls that the plaza boss visited the prison "as if he were in his own house, without anyone saying anything."[c]
d) Claim protection fees to hand over to the Zetas. The police chief gave his subordinates a list of cantinas "for charging protection fees."[ci] They also collected the "prostitute's fees".[cii] Altogether, they collected 14,000 pesos (1,117 USD) from the various establishments (it is not clear if this is daily, weekly or monthly).
e) Actively participate in *levantones* (detentions) and in handing people over to the criminal gang.

We may compare the accounts of the Zetas in the prison of Piedras Negras and with the Allende police force. In Piedras Negras they spent 1,500,000 pesos (120,675 USD) on bribes to staff in 2011, and collected a similar amount from the prisoners. In 2011, they

paid 738,000 pesos (59,372 USD) in bribes in Allende, but we don't know how much they earned (the breakdown of monthly payments appears in the statistical appendix). In any case, it is striking how little it cost them to have the municipal police at their service.

The significance of this subjugation was observed during the weekend of the vengeance campaign. The municipal authorities were warned days in advance of the violence that was to be unleashed, and even took part in it. The 20 municipal police officers were instructed not "to circulate in any patrol cars… and not to attend any calls for assistance," and to "detain anyone with the surname Garza"[ciii] to be handed over to the Zetas.

In the course of the operation a contingent of hitmen and municipal police "arrived and [we] broke in by force, firing our weapons" to the home of a Garza family member. They captured him, his wife and a young child. The Zetas forced them "into a patrol car"[civ] to take them to one of the two ranches where they were assembling their victims.

During the weekend, they ransacked, vandalized and set fire to their victims' properties. The Zetas incited their neighbors to rob the homes before setting them alight and demolishing them with heavy machinery. The police officers who witnessed the plunder "just watched and said nothing."[cv]

The municipal authorities became accomplices or passive witnesses. Their presence was purely decorative. The person who was mayor of Allende in March 2011 declared in writing to the Attorney General that "I was not an eyewitness to the events," that "I learned from isolated comments from people who had not witnessed the events either," that "I never received any notification, complaint or police report from people or victims of the violent events." The commander of the Public Security Directorate revealed that he had not received any complaint or information from any person or via any other means and that, since it is not within the municipality's powers to undertake an investigation, he did nothing. Some testimonies refer to the participation of the municipal police in the looting of the destroyed houses.

The City Council Act number 31 for Allende dated March 30, 2011, the first one subsequent to the events, makes no mention of the violence. The mayor's office maintains no record of the enormous violence suffered in Allende in March 2011: for them, it is as if nothing happened.

In summary:

a) The criminal organization controlled the local security apparatus, and some of the police officers were an integral part of the Zetas.
b) The municipal government was non-existent and its officials violated multiple Mexican and international laws. For example, they failed to meet the obligation to "immediately" report cases of forced disappearance.
c) If the findings from Allende and Piedras Negras are repeated in other municipalities—and there is evidence that this is the case—then it would appear that local government is the weakest flank of the Mexican State.

2.2. The Coahuila State Government

The interim administration of Jorge Juan Torres López (January 4 to December 1, 2011) is marked by denial. This evasion was made possible by the fact the Piedras Negras prison was not in the news, and because the Zeta vengeance was initially ignored by the media. The Attorney General's Office received just one complaint, and made one visit to Allende.

A key figure in 2010-2011 is the Attorney General designated by governor Humberto Moreira Valdés in May 2009. After several administrative reforms, the Attorney General was in charge of the Attorney General's Office, the Department of Public Security, and the "organization, oversight and control of the Centers for Social Reinsertion," that is, prisons like Piedras Negras.[cvi] This powerful Attorney General held the post until 2011.[cvii] He was in charge during the events of Allende, Piedras Negras, and other municipalities.

In the dossier on Allende handed over to us by the Coahuila State Government there appears one single emergency call to the Center for Communications, Computing, Control and Command (C4). It was made on March 22, 2011 at 15:09. Given its importance, we reproduce it here in its entirety.

> "Female caller provides the following information: states that 'Allende is a lawless town, they are burning houses, detaining people, many people have disappeared, the Zetas took them, I think one group betrayed another because there is a brutal, terrible disorder […] So many people have disappeared, they are ransacking homes. This has been going on since Friday afternoon and it's the same every night.' No further details are given and the caller hangs up."[cviii]

This implies that on March 22 a state authority in Saltillo knew what was happening in Allende. Was this message passed on to their superiors? Did it reach the Attorney General? Did the Attorney advise the Governor? We don't know.

The Rubén Moreira administration did acknowledge the gravity of the events, but reacted differently to the events in the jail and the vengeance. In the case of the Piedras Negras prison they acted in 2012 at the beginning of his administration. Allende was ignored until 2013. They began to treat it as a higher priority from January 2014, as media attention grew.

The files focus on the reprisals against the Garza family without mentioning acts undoubtedly carried out by the Zetas in neighboring municipalities to punish Cuellar and Moreno. This lack of concern for the truth and the desire to put an end to the matter may have influenced the Coahuila State Government's insistence to the families and their representatives (in this and other cases) that the disappeared were dead and that the perpetrators were also either dead or in prison. However, there is a contradiction because in the dossier prepared by the Attorney General's Office the victims are described as "qualified kidnapping" and not as "forced disappearance."

Another example of the lack of interest in the truth is the testimony on July 19, 2016 of the powerful former Attorney General. He was only asked seven questions. The first and last of these were key. We combine them here and place the most important words in bold. "The declarant will state… whether prior to the presentation of the police report for the crime of kidnapping (May 2011) he received information from a victim or **any related person**" about what had happened in Allende and whether "the then mayor [of Allende] requested his support… or whether **any other authority** informed him or requested support in relation to these events."

The former State Attorney General declared under oath that the "first report **from a victim** was when the police report was filed in the group of kidnappings" (May 2011) and that "as far as I remember at no time did **the mayor** request support from me."

If the reader compares the questions and answers, the former Attorney General only speaks of "**victim**" and "**the mayor**" but does not clarify if he received information from "**any related person**" or "**any other authority**." In other words, we do not know if he was aware of the call for help received by the C4 or anyone else, but this exchange suggests deceitful replies and softball questions from legal officials who have no desire to find out what really happened.

An additional problem is the meager work undertaken by the CEEAV and the Coahuila Human Rights Commission. The work of both institutions is inadequate given the scale of the problem. The deep dissatisfaction of the families of the disappeared is thus understandable, when they fail to receive an exact account of what happened, and only bear witness to the slowness and ineffectiveness of the judicial proceedings.

2.3 Federal government, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) and the Executive Commission for Attention to Victims (CEAV)

In a clear example of the delay in the investigations, the Scientific Division of the Federal Police delivered its forensic genetic analysis a year and a half after it was requested. It reports that of "794 fragments presumably of bone remains… none of these samples contained biological material suitable for analysis." The recovery of remains was carried out in April 2014, three years after the events, and the federal response came 18 months later: meaning the results were presented 4.5 years after the events. On top of the specific failings and lack of will, the capacities of the Mexican State are overwhelmed.

There are indications that, as in Piedras Negras, there were also federal officials who learned of the acts of vengeance in northern Coahuila. The most specific clue was given by the former Attorney General, as mentioned above. When in May 2011 he learned about the events of Allende, he made this known to Patricia Bugarín, then head of the SIEDO of the PGR. As far as we know, this official has not been investigated by the PGR or by the authorities of Coahuila. At the end of 2017, the PGR has still not taken over jurisdiction for the case.

The Army and/or the Navy have bases close to the municipalities in the north of Coahuila. We may suppose that the Center for Investigation and National Security (CISEN)

had agents working in these sites. The roles, reports and memorandums they may hold are unknown. It is possible that these contain the names of those who learned of the acts of vengeance. The person who knew this and did not report it or take action concealed a tragedy.

2.3.1 National Human Rights Commission

The CNDH has not fulfilled its obligation to prevent violations of human rights and to investigate them in order to ensure that justice is delivered, reparations are made, and guarantees are put in place so it does not happen again.

Under the direction of Raúl Plascencia, the CNDH abstained from intervening in the Allende case despite the fact that in September 2014 he declared that it had been under investigation for months and that witness statements had been gathered and the location of the events had been examined.[cix] According to Juan Alberto Cedillo from *Proceso* (June 30, 2014), an official letter from the CNDH responded to a complaint about Allende stating that "the matter was handed over to the Coahuila State Commission for Human Rights."[cx] The same *Proceso* reporter interviewed the mayor of Allende, Reynaldo Tapia, who refuted Plascencia stating that the CNDH had turned up in Allende just a few days before the press conference.[cxi]

Since Luis Raúl González has been head of the CNDH, it has carried out investigations into Allende, though lacking in continuity. Indeed, there is a period of inactivity between June 2015 and August 2016, when work began again. It is true that there were obstacles to obtaining the information, but other actions could have been taken to continue the investigation. As of early 2018, no recommendation has been issued.

2.3.2 The Executive Commission for Attention to Victims

During the administration of President Felipe Calderón the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity emerged, together with other victim support organizations. They and their supporters placed the issue firmly on the domestic and international agenda. The State responded by approving laws, creating institutions and allocating budgets. However, the victims, the organizations representing them and those who observe these issues all agree on the unsatisfactory character of the results.

One of the first public acts of President Enrique Peña Nieto was the signing into law of the General Victims Act and the creation of a National Attention to Victims System, which is the highest body for coordination, formulation and evaluation of the public policies dedicated to providing protection, care, support, assistance, access to justice, truth and reparations for victims.

The CEAV is the operational body of this National System. The documentation provided to us and the access made available to us enabled us to confirm that the Commission has not been able to provide timely and quality attention to the victims of Allende. It was only months after the publication of our report *State of Neglect* that the

CEAV brought the case to the federal level. Below, we will make more specific recommendations for Mexican State institutions.

6. The Responsibility of the United States

The Zetas are a criminal organization whose origin, power and operation has been connected to the United States by multiple routes. The elite troops who set up this cartel were trained in this country, the country where the addicts live who buy the drugs and who fill the criminals' coffers. It is US businesspeople who sell and smuggle the weapons with which they kill each other and terrorize and murder innocents.

In short, the United States is jointly responsible for the violence in Mexico, even though it has found ways of evading its responsibility. One of these has to do with the peculiar character of the security agreements between the two countries, as noted in the research done by Ginger Thompson. To confront the chronic corruption of corporations, the DEA has created Sensitive Investigative Units in 13 countries. In essence, the DEA selects the agents and investigates, trains and supervises them.

A leading figure in the DEA—whose identity has been concealed by this body—sent highly sensitive information on the Zeta bosses to a member of this Unit in the Mexican Federal Police. According to one witness, he claimed he had "a friend he could trust." He was wrong. A high-ranking officer in the Federal Police informed the Zetas of the risks they were facing. The Treviño Morales responded by ordering the acts of revenge.

The indifference and informality with which such sensitive information was transmitted is normal in security relations between Mexico and the United States, which are characterized by: a) the absence of, or indifference to, the protocols for sharing information that the United States does apply to countries like Colombia; b) the lack of accountability—neither the DEA nor the Federal Police investigated a leak that cost the lives of hundreds of people; and, c) the two governments conceal information and evade their responsibility. Thompson reports that the DEA spokesperson denied that his agency had its "hands stained with blood."

It is an opinion subject to demonstration. This research points in the opposite direction and confirms two related facts. The opacity on the part of the United States makes it difficult to find the truth. They hold important information for understanding what is happening in Mexico, because of the way they handle the Witness Protection Program. This status was granted to Alfonso Cuellar and Hector Moreno and the government of Coahuila has not been authorized to interview them.

It is essential to establish the potential responsibility of the DEA and other US bodies in relation to the Zeta violence, and to examine with greater care how the Witness Protection Program can affect the lives of Mexican citizens.

At bottom, there is a simple fact: a cross-border criminal violence is occurring that is so obvious that the best way of understanding it is to pursue a cross-border investigation. The victims and both societies deserve a comprehensive explanation.

7. Victims, society and information

In Mexico there is a tendency to undervalue or minimize the weight of organized civil society. This authoritarian undercurrent hinders analysis; there is more than enough information to ensure that the stronger the social fabric is, the lower the level of criminality and the greater the support for victims. Coahuila clearly demonstrates this.

At the heart of the process we are going to examine is information. The Zetas and their allies in the government did everything they could to deny it, conceal it, or alter it. The victims, human rights organizations and some media sources did what they could to recover it, order it and circulate it. Fundamental to this task was the backing of national and international media organizations.

Denial, evasion and manipulation of information

It is frequent for those involved in acts of violence to seek to deny, evade or manipulate information. Leaving aside the individual motivations and degree of awareness of these activities, we seek simply to establish their existence.

Denial

From the judicial dossier on the prison of Piedras Negras we took 29 statements made by personnel working at the prison. We divided these into two groups. 17 accepted that the Zetas controlled the prison and 12 denied it, using phrases such as "I never noticed any irregularities," "everything functioned normally," or "from where I was standing I couldn't see anything." It is notable that the group of 17 worked in the buildings inside the security perimeter; the rest in the court and administration building. A six-meter-wide gap established two different cognitive universes.

Denial was also used by the municipal officers of Allende. In his statement to the State Attorney General, the municipal president assured that he had not been an "eyewitness to the events"; he found out via "isolated comments from people who had not witnessed the events either."

Evasion

This is a mechanism often used to avoid responsibility. It is expressed in many different ways. Here we present how it has been used by a Zeta member and by the president of Mexico.

On different occasions, the Prison Boss ascribed to others the responsibility for the barbarity that he oversaw daily: "with a wooden board **they** beat the inmates on their buttocks"; "**I had no desire to take** anything from a prisoner that wasn't mine"; **they**… put

a body in a 200-liter barrel that **they** brought in on their pick-ups." There is an obvious attempt to deny his involvement.

In 2011 there was already a strong movement in place demanding recognition of the humanitarian crisis impacting on innocent victims. Nevertheless, President Felipe Calderón continued to stick firmly to the narrative that it was "criminals killing each other." In two speeches during those years he presented himself as someone who arrives at their new house to find it full of "termites and cockroaches." Then they find "scorpions and rats" and it is no longer enough to "stick down the carpet with spit and chewing gum." It is necessary to "pull up the carpet and clean out. For however long it takes […] because it's your home."[cxii]

Manipulation of information

It is common that those who control territories seek to halt, control or modulate the flows of information. We will discuss the media below. Here, we set out the very serious concealment of information about the disappeared.

One day before the end of the Felipe Calderón administration, the *Washington Post* revealed the existence of a list of 29,386 people presumed disappeared, compiled by the PGR using data provided by state prosecutor's offices throughout the country. The newspaper correspondent received the document from PGR officials who objected to the silence imposed by the Calderón government.[cxiii]

Combatting denial, evasion and manipulation of information

The victims in Coahuila stand out because many of them lost their fear and filed police reports about what was going on. They found people and institutions prepared to listen to them and spread their message. This effort was decisive in bringing forced disappearance onto the national agenda.

According to several families of the victims, the public prosecutor's offices in northern Coahuila discouraged the filing of police reports. These testimonies were corroborated in the US courts by one of the principal witnesses, Héctor Moreno: when the Zetas "started to kill all these innocent people, and their families tried to file reports, they were told they would not take down even one report, and that they had 24 hours to leave the city."[cxiv]

Given this context, it is notable how many did file a police report. Propuesta Cívica obtained a copy of the database concealed by the Calderón government. Its analysis showed that the Coahuila public prosecutor's office had reported to the PGR 120 "people reported as disappeared" in 2010, and 127 in 2011.[cxv] According to the National Register of Missing or Disappeared People (RNPED) 47 of these (almost 20 percent) were reported in the first year after the event.

Churches and human rights organizations

By early 2017 there were four victims' groups active in Coahuila (Allende, Piedras Negras, Saltillo and Torreón) in continual dialogue with the state government and with national and international bodies. How was it that the victims moved from anonymity to playing a central role in such a short time?

Just one person or institution is needed to set off a process and provide consistency to a strategy. There from the start was the Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights (Saltillo), created in 2002. Here the people met who in 2009 would set up Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Coahuila (FUUNDEC), to represent the families of 21 disappeared people.

In northern Coahuila the social fabric was weaker. The first public actions by victims were in Piedras Negras when 15-year-old Gerardo Heath disappeared on March 18, 2011 (the weekend of the acts of vengeance). One year later, on his birthday, the family organized a huge rosary ceremony. Two thousand people attended, and offered up their prayers under the watchful eyes of the Mexican Army and twelve units from the State Attorney General's Office.

The rosary ceremonies in memory of Gerardo Heath were repeated for another two years. The bishop Alonso Garza never attended, but sent a representative. Of the three bishops in Coahuila the only one to involve himself actively in supporting victims was the Bishop of Saltillo, Don Raúl Vera López. In 2013 the group Familias Unidas en la Búsqueda y Localización de Personas Desaparecidas appeared in Piedras Negras, and organizes legal representation for several victims.

The media

It is worth dedicating more space to analyzing the media, due to their strategic role in the struggle for transparency and accountability. We will compare the reaction of newspapers in the north, in Saltillo and in Torreón. All three agreed that there is an absence of protection from the government.

Zócalo is the daily with the highest circulation in the north of the state, the region under the control of the Zetas. On March 11, 2013 it published an editorial announcing that "due to the lack of guarantees and security for the full exercise of journalistic activities, the Editorial Board of *Zócalo* has decided that, from today, it will not publish any information related to organized crime."[cxvi]

During the first years of the rising Zeta tide, there was more freedom to circulate information in Saltillo. This was due, in part, to the fact it acted as a kind of safe haven for the Zeta leaders. This changed in March 2011 as a result of the bi-national offensive against the Zetas unleashed following the execution a month earlier of a US migration officer.

Ricardo Mendoza was Editor-in-Chief of ***Vanguardia*** (based in Saltillo) and provided us with an unpublished text relating the events of Saturday March 5, 2011. Mid-

morning, they received a cellphone call from the feared Pedro Toga Lara, "*Comandante Güacho*." With the phone on loudspeaker, several journalists listened to the insults, accusations of betrayal and declaration of war. The peroration ended with an order: "you won't publish anything about us, about organized crime, gunfights, Zetas, nothing."[cxvii] They discussed the situation, accepted their vulnerability and followed the order; for a couple of years ***Vanguardia*** maintained a low profile, while still releasing brief news reports.

In La Laguna, the struggle between the Cartel de Sinaloa and the Zetas for control of the plazas created a completely different situation. Javier Garza was Editor-in-Chief of ***El Siglo de Torreón***. In a number of texts and a telephone interview he explained how they handled it. Their starting point was to reject self-censorship, and answer the question: "how to publish without bringing reprisals?" They resolved this by covering the two cartels with scrupulous fairness, publishing only reports that were backed by a government statement, only publishing brief reports and measuring the reaction by an initial release on social networks, before sending them to press, and finally "we leveraged national and international media."[cxviii]

The coverage given to the events in Coahuila by national and international media proved to be fundamental. We may take two key reports as an example. On December 24, 2012, almost two years after the acts of vengeance, Juan Alberto Cedillo published a report in *Proceso* entitled "Apocalypse in Coahuila." It is a clear and valuable text that describes the atrocities of the Zetas in Nava" and Allende. "Hordes of *narcos* razed these two towns in the north of the state, destroying and burning dozens of homes, carrying off entire families, murdering ranch owners and raping women and girls." This pioneering piece lacked an explicit mention of Allende.[cxix]

Two more years passed and in February 2014 the journalist Diego Enrique Osorno published the first chronicle of what took place in Allende during the campaign of vengeance. He narrated the kidnappings, homicides and the destruction of homes. In a long piece published by *Vice* magazine, Allende gradually became a paradigmatic case. It is here that the figure of 300 victims appears for the first time. Osorno also makes reference to what happened at the Piedras Negras CERESO.[cxx]

The impact of information on organizations in Mexico and the United States

Governments have different reactions to atrocities. In Mexico they pay attention when a tragedy is taken up by journalists, human rights organizations and academics. In this sense, Coahuila is a test case because there has been a very intense interaction between victims, the media, human rights organizations and academics. We will refer to three cases from 2011, 2016 and 2017.

The United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances visited Saltillo in March 2011. This was a key moment for making what was happening in the state more widely known, and for empowering victims' groups. This international

recognition, together with the work of local media, was decisive in setting in motion the meetings held between civil bodies and the state authorities.

By 2016, what had happened in Allende was a national and international scandal. The Coahuila state government took the decision to hand over the legal dossier on Allende to the CEAV, who in turn agreed to pass it to the Seminar on Violence and Peace at the Colegio de México. The CNDH, meanwhile, provided a large amount of information. This rare level of cooperation and agreement has led to a greater understanding of the facts and a review of a number of public policies.

The investigation by Ginger Thompson into Allende was published by ProPolitica in June 2017. Two months later, high-level Democrats on the Foreign Affairs and Judiciary Committees of the House of Representatives demanded the Department of Justice and the State Department open an investigation into the operations led by the DEA in Honduras and Mexico, which led to the deaths of dozens—perhaps hundreds—of people who had nothing to do with the drugs trade.[cxxi]

In short, the battles for information are fundamental and Coahuila shows the weight that victims and society can bring to bear when they act in an organized manner.

8. The approach to truth in Coahuila

This project is succeeding in producing a reasonably precise mapping of the criminal violence and the role played by the State, society, and victims. To understand what made this possible it is necessary to go back to the origin of the agreements between the CEAV, the victims' groups, the Colmex, the CNDH, and the Coahuila State Government.

In 2015 Jacobo Dayán published a column criticizing the CEAV and Jaime Rochín, who was president of the CEAV at the time. Rochín sought out Dayán and they discussed the issue, and the latter proposed that they seek innovative methods of achieving integral reparations. One such method was to make an agreement with an institution to carry out research to help clarify the truth.

A CEAV official, Miriam Morales Sanhueza, was participating in the Seminar on Violence and Peace at El Colegio de México, a public institution and established the contacts for initial talks. In March 2016 an agreement was signed to investigate the tragedies of Allende, Coahuila and San Fernando, Tamaulipas. Luis Raúl González Pérez, president of the National Human Rights Commission joined the effort.

The governor of Coahuila, Rubén Moreira Valdés, was receptive to this proposal and handed over an initial dossier of information on Allende. Meanwhile, the Colegio de México signed an agreement with the Inter-American Academy of Human Rights, at that time part of the Autonomous University of Coahuila. At the same time, direct communication was established with victims' support groups in the state.

In October 2016 the Seminar on Violence and Peace at El Colegio de México presented the report *State of Neglect: Los Zetas, the State, Society and the Victims of San Fernando, Tamaulipas (2010) and Allende, Coahuila (2011).* In January 2017 it was presented in Saltillo. In the course of this journey we met with the four organizations that defend victims of disappearance in Coahuila: Alas de Esperanza (Allende), Familias Unidas (Piedras Negras), Fray Juan de Larios (Saltillo) and Grupo Vida (Torreón). At this meeting the groups expressed their interest in continuing the project and agreed to make their archives available to us.

This new understanding between government, victims' groups, media and academics has worked because the results have been considered useful by the victims' groups, the CNDH, the CEAV and the Coahuila state government. They have also been well received by others interested in the subject.

Four factors made it possible to close the gap between academia, victims and government officials:

a) Accept that organized crime is a threat to society and the State and that it is in the interests of both to confront it with research aimed at strengthening the culture of peace and institutions that support peace. This appears straightforward, but the huge level of mistrust between citizens and governments makes it less so.

b) Always take on board the perspectives, aspirations and experiences of victims and organizations that represent them. They deserve to be treated with dignity.
c) Any understanding should be grounded in concrete, viable and rigorous projects. In investigations of this kind it is essential to treat information with respect, verifying each piece of data.
d) Respect the spirit and the letter of agreements made between the different parties.

Knowledge of the events that took place in Coahuila has been, and continues to be, a collective effort. The Seminar on Violence and Peace has several objectives for future years.

a) Expand the research about disappearances to the regions of La Laguna and Saltillo.
b) Complete the stories of the four victims' groups that have worked to locate disappeared people in the state.
c) Establish the total number of victims of the Zeta vengeance.
d) Reconstruct the government strategy followed in Coahuila to regain control.

These investigations are part of two broader objectives:

a) Establish a comprehensive overview of the Zeta's methods and way of thinking, and how they interacted with the State and society.
b) Clarify the negative and positive role played by the United States, as an actor that holds joint responsibility for the cross-border violence. In this text we sought to establish its material responsibility.

State and society are obliged to unite behind Article 1 of the Constitution: the State must prevent, investigate, sanction and repair violations of human rights, in the terms established by the law. A concrete way of approaching this ideal is to make Coahuila the first state to have a more precise cartography about violence and peace.