

CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL

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RELEASE IN PART
B1,1.4(D),B6

From: [REDACTED]
 Sent: 1/23/2013 5:08:43 PM
 To: svcSMARTHBTSP08
 Subject: Mexican Citizen Self-Defense Groups [REDACTED]

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MRN: 13 MEXICO 37
 Date/DTG: Jan 23, 2013 / 232209Z JAN 13
 From: AMEMBASSY MEXICO
 Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
 E.O.: 13526
 TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, SNAR, MX
 Reference: A) 13 MEXICO 208
 B) 12 MEXICO 923
 Subject: Mexican Citizen Self-Defense Groups [REDACTED]

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Summary

1. (C) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In December 2012 and January, self-defense groups operating in small communities in the state of Guerrero have imposed checkpoints, curfews, and school holidays to control criminal activity. The state government appears to recognize some effectiveness in the operations of self-defense groups,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] self-defense groups have been noted in other parts of the country as well. Additionally, lynching criminals and threats of lynching have received public attention in poor communities in and around Mexico City and more vigilante groups have surfaced in Nuevo Leon. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

End Summary.

Self-Defense Groups in Guerrero [REDACTED]

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2. (U) Complaining that the government lacks the ability to protect them from persistent crime, residents of the communities of Ayutla and Tecoaapa in Guerrero reportedly took over public security duties on December 22, because of what they said was the presence of organized crime and insufficient police protection. According to news reports, about 800 men of a group called the Regional Council of Community Authorities (CRAC) and carrying shotguns or small-caliber rifles with their faces covered by bandannas or ski masks set up checkpoints in and around these towns, and claimed to have detained over 40 men that they accused of crimes including kidnapping and extortion. The CRAC ordered curfews in these towns, and after there were reports of threats from outsiders against schoolchildren, decreed a suspension of school activities. The towns' public schools complied by observing a three-day holiday in mid-January. CRAC members say it will

Classified by DAS, A/GIS, DoS on 05/04/2015 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason: 1.4(D), B1 ~ Declassify on: 01/23/2023

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Adolph Eisner, Senior
 Reviewer

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continue with these operations until their communities are guaranteed security by the presence of federal or state forces. On January 14, four additional counties in the Costa Chica region of Guerrero (Florencio Villarreal, San Marcos, Cuautepec, and Juan R. Escudeo) were reported to be activating self-defense groups, and news reports on January 22 confirmed that an armed group was operating in San Marcos.

3. (U) According to news reports, on January 5 armed civilians in this area of Guerrero mounted an operation of search and rescue after a kidnapping was reported. These civilians subsequently killed a taxi driver at a checkpoint after he allegedly opened fire against them. Guerrero Governor Ángel Aguirre met with the elected county leader on January 11 and offered to launch "Operation Safe Guerrero" in order to allay residents' concerns about security, and on January 13, federal police and elements of the army (SEDENA) and navy (SEMAR) entered Ayutla and Tecoaapa. However, members of the self-defense groups [redacted] said they would continue their checkpoints, curfew, and school holidays, [redacted]

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[redacted] News reports on January 23 said that after soldiers arrived in two communities in San Marcos and Tecoaapa and tried to get the self-defense groups to withdraw, the armed citizens rejected their proposal to guarantee their security.

4. (U) According to reports, most of the residents of these communities are indigenous Mixtecs and Tlapanecs. The CRAC declared that it would try presumed criminals according to indigenous "uses and customs," the term frequently used by residents of the indigenous communities to describe their tribal method of governing (Ref A). According to news reports, a larger group called the Union of Towns and Organizations of the State of Guerrero (UPOEG) was initiated 17 years ago, and claims to have members from 107 communities in the regions of Costa Chica and La Montaña in Guerrero. A spokesperson said that it trains its members (about 1,300 members at present) in the use of arms.

5. (U) Governor Aguirre [redacted]

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[redacted] On January 8, he was quoted by news media as saying that he backs armed civilian groups only and when they do not "over-reach" in their actions. On January 22, press reported Aguirre as telling an assembly of community police that some sort of legal framework was needed for them to continue operations, emphasizing the need for training for proper police functions, and trying to steer them towards functions of crime prevention (as opposed to enforcement) and first aid and civil protection in the event of a natural disaster. The state sent 1,200 uniforms, four vehicles, and \$115,000 for "infrastructure" to the CRAC community police, but the CRAC claimed it was also promised 200 AR-15 rifles as well as other unspecified equipment and monetary support.

Detainees, Death Prompt Mounting Concerns Mount About Human Rights

6. (U) News reports say that on January 22, community police in Atliaca, Guerrero shot and killed a young man who had been detained by them and was trying to escape their custody. The armed civilians claim that he was a known robber of businesses and homes. According to news reports on January 22, the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) began an investigation into the community police of Ayutla, Tecoaapa, and San Marcos, citing Article 17 of the Constitution which prohibits private citizens seeking justice by their own actions. Press also reported that the head of the Guerrero human rights commission was turned away by angry townspeople on January 18 when he attempted to gain access to 45 presumed criminals the communities were holding. A community spokesperson said that these detainees will be tried by a "citizen's tribunal" on January 31.

Previous Incidents in Guerrero and Michoacán

7. (U) The above incidents represent at least the second time in the last six months that armed self-defense groups have taken action in Guerrero. In October, news reports told of the inhabitants of the counties of Olinalá and Cualác en la Montaña taking up arms and patrolling the streets after what they considered a crime wave broke out.

8. (U) Press reported that on January 10, the county elected official of Paracho, Michoacán, was "kidnapped" by the indigenous community of Urapicho, and carried to their town to dramatize their demand for federal security forces to oppose organized crime. They also carried away other town officials and at least eight municipal police, a total of 16 people. All were then released without being harmed, but the town announced that it would place barricades in the approaching roads to try to keep out criminals. Residents of this town also placed barricades and stationed armed men in

October, in response to citizen fear from a series of crimes. In April 2011, the small town of Cherán, Michoacán placed barricades to protect themselves against organized crime. They later expelled the political parties and created their own system of government and communal police.

Profile of Guerrero

9. (SBU) [redacted] Guerrero (which literally means "warrior" in Spanish, but was actually named after Vicente Guerrero, a hero of the 19th Century War of Independence) [redacted]

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[redacted] Constant rebellions originated in Guerrero against the 30-year rule of President Porfirio Díaz prior to the Mexican Revolution in 1910. It is traditionally among the country's three poorest states (along with Oaxaca and Chiapas). [redacted]

Similar Developments in Other Parts of the Country

10. (SBU) Consulate General Nuevo Laredo observes that "neighborhood watch" groups are surfacing [redacted] in response to [redacted] the crime rate [redacted] To date, these groups have not armed themselves or carried out any sort of offensive operation. Additionally, landowners in northern Coahuila and Nuevo León have reportedly been cooperating to hire private armed security groups. In Sinaloa, mayors of the cities of Concordia and Mazatlán reportedly proposed in early January the establishment of armed self-defense groups in isolated mountainous regions that are subject to narco-violence. (Note: The Peña Nieto government proposes to create a "gendarmerie" force to police areas like this (Ref B. End Note.) According to press, armed self-defense groups completely control the roads with checkpoints around the towns of Guadalupe y Calvo and Guachochi in southwest Chihuahua, despite the presence of military checkpoints. In addition, they patrol the towns after dark, causing a de facto curfew.

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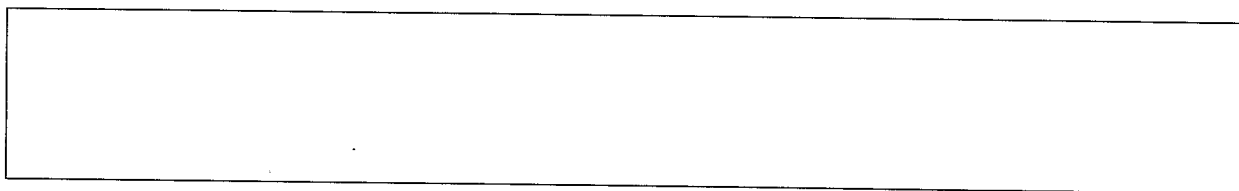
Mexico City Lynchings: Not an Empty Threat

11. (SBU) Metropolitan Mexico City has seen a recent spate of street banners posted by residents, threatening to lynch criminals, further specifying that they will deliberately not turn over criminals to authorities. January 5 news reports highlighted such banners in the borough of Xochimilco in Mexico City, and the city's public security chief and attorney general responded publicly by saying that more police patrols would be sent to these areas. José Luis Pérez Martínez of the Mexico City police (SSP-DF) was quoted in the daily *Reforma* as saying that the majority of people do not have the "culture" to report crimes due to their lack of trust in authorities. [redacted]

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12. (U) On February 10, 2012, three men were lynched by a mob in Chalco, State of Mexico when they were accused of being kidnappers. In fact, according to the press, one of the men was visiting his girlfriend in the district when he offended her mother, who managed to stir up an angry crowd against them. The mob seized the men after police came and took them into custody. The men were beaten and set afire, and two of them died.

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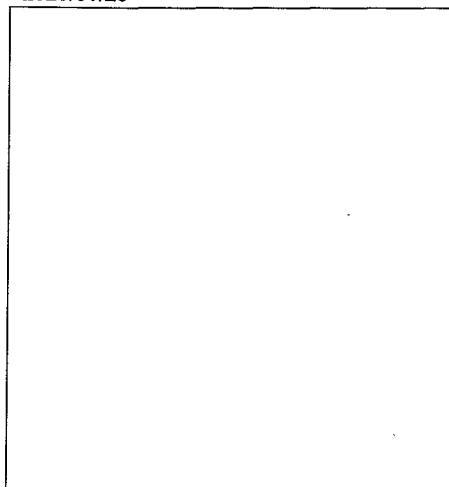
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Declassify On:

2023/01/23

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