

ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	VCI-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DS-00
	AVC-00	UTED-00	SIPD-00	DIAS-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	L-00
	MOFM-00	MOF-00	VCIE-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00	NSCE-00	OMB-00
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	ISNE-00	SP-00	SS-00
	TRSE-00	T-00	ASDS-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-00
	G-00	SAS-00	/000W				

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0438

INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
 WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
 HQ BICE INTEL WASHINGTON DC
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 FBI WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS MATAMOROS 000170

APPEALS PANEL ACTION: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELEASED B1

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 13526: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ASEC, SNAR, KJUS, MX

SUBJECT: Holy Week Vacations Marred by Violence; San Fernando Body Count Reaches 196

REF: A) 11 MATAMOROS 156; B) 11 MATAMOROS 106;

1. (SBU) Summary: Though not publicized by authorities, the number of bodies found in mass graves in the San Fernando area since April 1 has reached 196 and is expected to rise as Mexican Army (SEDENA) and Marine (SEMAR) forces continue to search the area (Reftel A). Authorities have arrested 74 people in connection with the mass graves, including 17 San Fernando police officers. Despite government assurances of increased security, the Holy Week vacation period (April 16-24) saw several violent events, including attacks on three buses traveling on state highways. In Reynosa Federal Police freed 171 kidnapping victims from several houses and arrested seven Reynosa police officers during a raid on police headquarters. The publicity surrounding the San Fernando graves has brought out an increase in public complaints about the effects of Transnational

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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Criminal Organization (TCO) violence on businesses and communities in Tamaulipas. The state government continues to push all responsibility onto the federal government. Federal Government spokesman National Security Spokesman Poire, for his part, publicly blamed the state for not bringing the problem to the federal governments attention through the formal judicial process. End Summary.

Body Count in San Fernando Continues to Rise

2. (SBU) The total number of bodies found in mass graves in the San Fernando area has reached 196 and is expected to rise, according to official sources (Reftel A). SEDENA and SEMAR continue to search for new bodies, while the federal Office of Special Investigations of Organized Crime (SIEDO) and state officials work to identify the remains. State officials have collected 280 DNA samples from family members for comparison. Only three bodies have been identified two Mexicans and one Guatemalan none through the use of DNA. Officials have arrested 74 persons in connection with the crime, including 17 of San Fernandos 36 police officers. The prisoners are being held by SIEDO in Mexico City.

Violence during Holy Week

3. (SBU) Following the San Fernando discoveries, state government officials had issued various assurances of safety for tourists visiting Tamaulipas during the Holy Week (April 16-24) vacations. Despite these claims, however, there were several major incidents of TCO violence.

4. (SBU) On April 21 gun battles between rival TCOs broke out in the border town Miguel Aleman and were eventually quelled by SEDENA forces. According to a SEDENA press release, the military response was due in part to local residents requests for SEDENA aid via unspecified social media networks. (Note: Blogs which follow TCO issues cite Twitter. End note.) The gunfights left one soldier and one TCO member dead and at least eight businesses badly damaged, including a bank and several car dealerships (see photo below). SEDENA forces captured 11 TCO members and seized weapons and vehicles.

5. (SBU) On April 23 three buses were attacked on the Victoria-Monterrey highway outside Hidalgo, a small town near the Tamaulipas-Nuevo Leon border. Two of the buses were driving to Monterrey and one to Nuevo Laredo. According to media reports three people, one on each bus, were injured by gunfire. Following the attacks, Governor Torre Cantu announced that state government would work more closely with Hidalgo police to reinforce security.

6. (SBU) On April 24 gun battles between rival TCOs broke out in

several neighborhoods in Tampico, a popular tourist destination. According to newspaper reports at least five businesses were targeted with grenades and gunfire. One civilian was killed when the store he was in was attacked and five more were injured while driving in private vehicles. The businesses attacked were all located in the zona dorada (Golden Zone) a major commercial area along Tampicos main thoroughfare. There was also an attack on a Soriana Department Store in the neighboring tourist town Madero on April 24. Newspapers quoting official sources say that unknown persons threw a grenade and Molotov cocktail at the store which caused a fire.

Reynosa Police Arrested, 171 Kidnapping Victims Freed

7. (SBU) On April 20 Federal Police in Reynosa captured two TCO members and rescued 68 kidnapping victims (including 12 from Central America). According to press reports the victims said they were kidnapped by the Gulf Cartel (CDG) while travelling on buses to Reynosa. On April 25 a Special Operations unit of the Federal Police raided Reynosa municipal police headquarters during a morning flag ceremony and arrested five municipal and two transit officers. Later that day Federal Police rescued another 51 kidnapping victims, including 18 from Central America. On April 28 SEDENA forces rescued another 52 people, described as undocumented migrants of various nationalities.

Citizens Begin to Speak Out About Effects of Violence

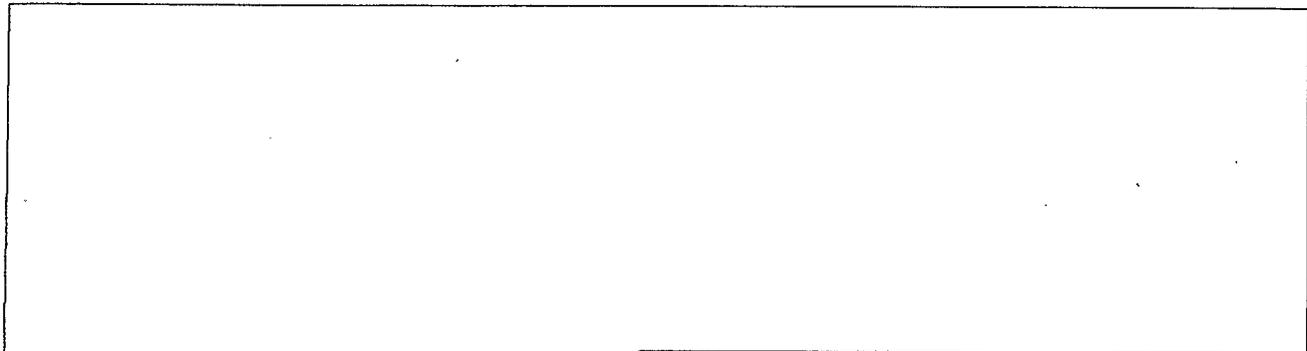
8. (SBU) The San Fernando discoveries appear to have emboldened state residents and local organizations to speak more openly about the effects of TCO violence. There has been a rise in the number of stories dealing openly with TCO violence in the local media. Officials of the Tamaulipas branch of the Teachers Union (SNTE-30) stated publically for the first time that beginning in 2010 violence has caused over 300 teachers to desert their posts. SNTE officials said that among the worst-hit communities were San Fernando, Mier, Miguel Aleman, and other Frontera Chica communities. Business and agricultural groups, including Victorias chamber of commerce, have also made public statements saying that the security situation is affecting their businesses ability to function. Before the San Fernando discoveries organizations rarely spoke publically about the widespread effects of the violence.

State Government Downplays Violence

9. (SBU) Despite stating privately in January that security in general, and highway violence in particular, is their top concern (Reftel B), government officials have avoided publicly drawing attention to the level of violence in Tamaulipas. In a press conference held April 26 in Tampico, whose business district had been

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seriously damaged in TCO attacks two days previously, Governor Torre Cantu said that the state is still a good place for investors, characterizing recent violent events as disagreeable. State officials have focused their official remarks on playing up investment and the tourism generated by the Holy Week vacations. Official statements about Holy Week tourism have revolved around the relatively high numbers of tourists in the resort city of Tampico and the safe conditions on the heavily-patrolled beaches, ignoring the violence in other areas of the state. Officials have also repeatedly stated that they can guarantee security for any investing businesses, though without explaining how they plan to do so.

Comment:



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There is now a heavy military presence on the highways around San Fernando which has temporarily deterred TCO activity in that area. Post sees no evidence, however, that the military presence has substantially limited TCO ability to operate in Tamaulipas when the federal troops leave there is little doubt that the TCOs will return to fill the power void.

<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-TOTFVbBeHH0/TbCKRQp5PCI/AAAAAAACw8/JkvFu1sDboE/s1600/fordespecial.preview.jpg>

A Miguel Aleman Ford dealership after the April 21 TCO fight.
Source: Blogdelnarco.com
BARKIN

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