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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 SSO-00
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R 132053Z MAY 11
FM AMCONSUL MATAMOROS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0451
INFO WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
HQ BICE INTEL WASHINGTON DC
HQ NORAD USNORTHCOM INTEL PETERSON AFB CO
ICE CORPUS CHRISTI TX
DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC
DEA MCALLEN TX
EPIC EL PASO TX
CIA WASHINGTON DC
US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION WASHINGTON DC
AMCONSUL MATAMOROS
FBI WASHINGTON DC

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

UNCLAS MATAMOROS 000188

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
SBU

E.O. 13526: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ASEC, SNAR, KJUS, MX
SUBJECT: Mexican Army Seizes Weapons of Local Police in Tamaulipas

REF: A) 11 MATAMOROS 156; B) 11 MATAMOROS 170; C) 11 NUEVO LAREDO 72;

Weapons of Local Police Seized

1. (SBU) On May 9, Mexican Army (SEDENA) forces disarmed the Municipal and Transit Police in all but one of the 43 Tamaulipas' municipalities. SEDENA has not made public comments about the seizure, and Post inquires to local contacts have been fruitless. A similar seizure occurred in 2008 when SEDENA disarmed municipal police to reportedly determine if their weapons had been used in crimes. Initial reports indicate that this seizure was made for the same reason. In April SEDENA forces arrested 17 San Fernando police officers in connection with the discovery of 196 bodies in mass graves in that city (Reftel A) and Federal Police arrested seven officers in Reynosa connected to the kidnapping of 171.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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migrants (Reftel B). According to Matamoros police sources, the weapons are being sent to Mexico City for inventory and ballistics testing and will be returned in two to three weeks. Press reports state that SEDENA is holding the weapons locally.

The Situation in Matamoros

2. (SBU) Matamoros contacts stated that the Municipal Police are not patrolling the city as usual and that they are only responding to emergency situations and even then will only respond in large groups. Consulate sources with the Tamaulipas State Police have unofficially stated that they are assisting the Municipal Police in life-threatening situations. The Tamaulipas State Police have not formally been requested to take over patrol duties at this time, though Matamoros Security Chief Lopez Ordaz has stated publically that he has requested help from the State and Federal Police as well as the military. Contacts in the 066 Call Center (the equivalent to 911) stated that they are screening calls for threats to life or property because the local police are currently not responding to minor disturbances. Municipal Police decide whether or not to call for State Police backup.

3. (SBU) Consulate sources state that SEDENA seized a total of 460 weapons in Matamoros. This leaves Matamoros' 700 police officers without weapons. The Municipal Police security details for the Mayor's Office and the Chief of Police have retained their weapons. (Note: Transit Police generally do not carry service weapons. End note.) Weapons seized include 223 assault rifles and other weapons including 38 specials, 9mm semi-automatic Berettas, CZ-75s, 12 gauge Mossbergs, and 9mm Uzi sub-machineguns.

4. (SBU) The one apparent exception to this seizure has been the municipality of Nuevo Laredo. Their assault rifles and shotguns were seized in February following the assassination of newly appointed police chief, Manuel Farfan (Reftel C). Since that time, the municipal police force has had to rely solely on their side arms. The Mayor and Police Chief were called back this week to Ciudad Victoria for consultations with the state government. It is unclear why Nuevo Laredo was spared in this process.

Reactions Mixed

5. (SBU) Government officials in the southern resort towns of Tampico, Altamira, and Madero have all made public statements that the streets are now patrolled by military forces and the Federal Police and that security in those cities has not been affected. In Matamoros local Security Chief Col. Lopez Ordaz said

that crime has increased. The local media have seized on this

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statement and are reporting a 10% increase in crime.

Comment

6. (SBU)

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It is certainly possible that the weapons seizure could lead to an increase in crime over time. However, since citizens generally do not report crimes it is not clear how authorities could have accurate statistics to back up this claim of an immediate rise in crime.

7. (SBU) Consulate General Nuevo Laredo contributed to this cable.

BARKIN

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