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FROM

FM AMCONSUL MATAMOROS

CONTROLS

UNCLAS MATAMOROS 000156

SENSITIVE

DECONTROLLED

SIPDIS

E.O. 13526: N/A

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

***** THIS IS A COMBINED MESSAGE *****

BODY

SUBJECT: TAMAULIPAS' MASS GRAVES: BODY COUNT REACHES 145

REF: A) 11 MATAMOROS 146; B) 11 MATAMOROS 148; C) 11 MATAMOROS 106;

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: SUMMING UP OFFICIAL SOURCES, A TOTAL OF 36 GRAVE SITES CONTAINING 145 BODIES WERE DISCOVERED IN THE SAN FERNANDO AREA DURING A MEXICAN MILITARY (SEDENA) OPERATION WHICH TOOK PLACE APRIL 1-14. APRIL 1-8 DISCOVERIES WERE REPORTED IN REFTEL S A AND B. POST HAS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE APRIL 8 DISCOVERIES AS WELL AS ABOUT DISCOVERIES MADE APRIL 10, 11, AND 12. POST HAS REPORTS OF AT LEAST TWO US CITIZENS KIDNAPPED FROM BUSES IN THIS AREA DURING THIS PERIOD AND IS WORKING WITH AUTHORITIES TO VERIFY WHETHER THEY ARE AMONG THE VICTIMS. SEVENTEEN (17) LOS ZETAS TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION (TCO) MEMBERS AND 16 MEMBERS OF THE SAN FERNANDO POLICE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEATHS. THE MATAMOROS FORENSICS OFFICE (SEMEFO) WAS OVERWHELMED AND OFFICIALS MOVED 105 BODIES TO FACILITIES IN THE MEXICO CITY AREA. DESPITE WIDESPREAD KIDNAPPINGS, TAMAULIPAS BUS COMPANIES HAVE MADE NO FORMAL COMPLAINTS TO OFFICIALS AND THE MAJORITY CONTINUES TO RUN ROUTES THROUGH THE SAN FERNANDO AREA. IT IS UNCERTAIN WHETHER STATE AND FEDERAL PROMISES FOR FURTHER SECURITY COOPERATION WILL YIELD CONCRETE RESULTS. END SUMMARY.

NEW NARCOFOSAS DISCOVERED

2. (SBU) AS A RESULT OF INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM TCO MEMBERS AND KIDNAPPING VICTIMS (REFTELS A AND B), SEDENA FORCES DISCOVERED THE REMAINS OF 145 PEOPLE IN 36 GRAVE SITES DURING OPERATIONS CONDUCTED

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Steve Blodgett, Senior Reviewer

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APRIL 1-14 NEAR THE TOWN OF SAN FERNANDO, TAMAULIPAS. OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE VICTIMS WERE KIDNAPPED OFF PUBLIC BUSES IN THE SAN FERNANDO AREA BY THE LOS ZETAS TCO. ONLY THREE VICTIMS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED THUS FAR AND OFFICIALS STATE THAT DNA TESTING WILL BE NECESSARY TO IDENTIFY MANY OF THE VICTIMS. POST IS WORKING WITH OFFICIALS TO DETERMINE WHETHER ANY AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE AMONG THE DEAD. THE SEARCH FOR NEW GRAVES WAS HALTED ON APRIL 13, BUT OFFICIALS HAVE STATED THAT THEY INTEND TO CONTINUE SEARCHING FOR BODIES.

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TCO MEMBERS AND SAN FERNANDO POLICE ARRESTED

3. (SBU) SEVENTEEN (17) LOS ZETAS TCO MEMBERS AND 16 MEMBERS OF THE SAN FERNANDO POLICE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEATHS. THE ARREST OF 14 OF THE TCO MEMBERS WAS REPORTED IN REFTTEL B. ON APRIL 10 SEDENA DETAINED TWO OTHER TCO-MEMBERS. ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS, ALL OF THE DETAINEES ARE LINKED WITH THE KIDNAPPING AND MURDER OF BUS PASSENGERS IN THE SAN FERNANDO AREA. THE PRISONERS ARE NOW IN THE CUSTODY OF THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS OF ORGANIZED CRIME (SIEDO) IN MEXICO CITY. ATTORNEY GENERAL MORALES HAS ALSO OFFERED REWARDS RANGING FROM 5 TO 15 MILLION PESOS (APPROXIMATELY 425,000-1.3 MILLION USD) FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE ARREST OF FOUR OTHER LOS ZETAS TCO MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN LINKED TO THE CRIME.

4. (SBU) SIXTEEN (16) SAN FERNANDO POLICE OFFICERS WERE ARRESTED APRIL 13. THEY ARE BEING CHARGED WITH PROTECTING THE LOS ZETAS TCO MEMBERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KIDNAPPING AND MURDER OF BUS PASSENGERS IN THE SAN FERNANDO AREA. (NOTE: SAN FERNANDO, WITH A POPULATION OF APPROXIMATELY 57,000, HAD 36 POLICE OFFICERS. END NOTE.)

BODIES MOVED

5. (SBU) ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, ON APRIL 13 THE FEDERAL ATTORNEY GENERALS OFFICE (PGR), WHICH IS IN CHARGE OF THE INVESTIGATION, TRANSFERRED 76 OF THE BODIES TO THE FORENSICS CENTER (SEMEFO) IN MEXICO CITY AND 14 TO THE ONE IN NEIGHBORING TOLUCA. AN OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE CONCERNING THE TRANSFER STATES THAT 70 BODIES WERE MOVED, BUT OFFICIAL SOURCES HAVE CONFIRMED THAT A TOTAL OF 105 BODIES LEFT MATAMOROS ON APRIL 13. THE REMAINING BODIES REMAIN IN MATAMOROS, THOUGH OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT THE MORE DECOMPOSED BODIES MAY BE SENT TO TAMAULIPAS CAPITAL CIUDAD VICTORIA. OFFICIALS SAY THE BODIES ARE BEING MOVED BOTH TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BETTER EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES IN THE D.F. AND TO FACILITATE INQUIRIES FOR FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE MISSING FROM GUANAJUATO AND MICHOACAN. (NOTE: DUE TO SPACE RESTRICTIONS, MOST OF THE BODIES WERE BEING HELD IN A

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REFRIGERATED TRUCK OUTSIDE THE MATAMOROS MORGUE. END NOTE.)

***** START OF SECTION 2 *****

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TAMAULIPAS' MASS GRAVES: BODY COUNT REACHES 145

SPEAKING OFF THE RECORD, SOME OFFICIALS SAY THAT THE BODIES ARE BEING SPLIT UP TO MAKE THE TOTAL NUMBER LESS OBVIOUS AND THUS LESS ALARMING.

FAMILIES FILE DENOUNCES

6. (SBU) THE MATAMOROS SEMEFO OFFICES, WHERE ALL 145 BODIES WERE HELD UNTIL APRIL 13, HAVE BEEN CROWDED WITH FAMILY MEMBERS SEEKING INFORMATION SINCE THE DISCOVERY WAS PUBLICALLY ANNOUNCED APRIL 6. OVER 350 PEOPLE HAVE COME TO THE OFFICES TO SEEK INFORMATION OR FILE A FORMAL MISSING PERSONS REPORT (DENUNCIA). THE SAN FERNANDO DISCOVERIES HAVE DRAWN OUT MANY FAMILY MEMBERS WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY AVOIDED FILING OFFICIAL REPORTS DUE TO FEAR OR TCO THREATS. ACCORDING TO STATE OFFICIALS, THE LACK OF FORMAL COMPLAINTS BEFORE THE DISCOVERY OF THE MASS GRAVES PREVENTED AN OFFICIAL STATE INVESTIGATION OF PROBLEMS SUSPECTED IN THE SAN FERNANDO AREA. GUSTAVO RODRIGUEZ VEGA, BISHOP OF NUEVO LAREDO WHOSE DIOCESE INCLUDES THE FRONTERA CHICA, SAID ON APRIL 13 THAT FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF EVIL FORCES, THEY HAVE ALWAYS HAD KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE EVENTS THAT OCCUR. I DONT KNOW WHY THEY ACT SO SURPRISED ABOUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING DAILY IN THE STATE. THEY KNEW THEN AND KNOW NOW THE SITUATION IN THE STATE. (CONSULATE GENERAL NUEVO LAREDO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS PARAGRAPH.) BUS TRAVEL MANY DISAPPEARANCES, FEW COMPLAINTS

7. (SBU) NONE OF TAMAULIPAS BUS COMPANIES HAS FILED AN OFFICIAL COMPLAINT ABOUT TCO ATTACKS ON BUSES OR PASSENGERS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE KIDNAPPING OF BUS PASSENGERS HAS BEEN A WIDESPREAD AND (NOW) WIDELY PUBLICIZED PHENOMENON. ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS, AUTHORITIES HAVE ONLY RECEIVED TWO UNOFFICIAL REPORTS OF KIDNAPPINGS FROM PUBLIC BUSES THOSE OF THE TWO MASS KIDNAPPINGS ON MARCH 24 (REFTEL B) THOUGH AUTHORITIES PRIVATELY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT KIDNAPPINGS ARE COMMON. THE REGIONAL NEWSPAPER EL NORTE REPORTS THAT NINE BUSES HAVE DISAPPEARED FROM THE SAN FERNANDO AREA IN RECENT MONTHS. ACCORDING TO A REPORTER THAT NUMBER WAS COMPILED FROM REPORTS FILED BY FAMILY MEMBERS OF MISSING PASSENGERS.

8. (SBU) SOME BUS COMPANIES HAVE CHANGED ROUTES AND SCHEDULES TO AVOID NIGHTTIME TRAVEL THROUGH SAN FERNANDO OR TO AVOID THE AREA

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ALTOGETHER. MOST, HOWEVER, STILL OFFER AT LEAST SOME ROUTES WHICH GO THROUGH THE **SAN FERNANDO** AREA. ACCORDING TO COMPANY PERSONNEL, OF THE FIVE BUS LINES THAT HAD MATAMOROS-CIUDAD VICTORIA BUS ROUTES WHICH PASSED THROUGH **SAN FERNANDO**, TWO, OMNIBUS AND ETN, ARE NO LONGER OFFERING THOSE ROUTES AND ONE, SENDA (TRANSPORTES DEL NORTE LINE), IS ONLY RUNNING ONE DAYTIME TRIP. THE REMAINING TWO, TRANSPAIS AND GRUPO ESTRELLA BLANCA (ORIENTE AND FUTURA LINES), ARE RUNNING THEIR NORMAL SCHEDULES, INCLUDING TRIPS AFTER DARK.

COMMENT

9. (SBU) **TAMAULIPAS OFFICIALS APPEAR TO BE TRYING TO DOWNPLAY BOTH THE SAN FERNANDO DISCOVERIES AND THE STATES RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM, EVEN THOUGH A RECENT TRIP TO CIUDAD VICTORIA REVEALED STATE OFFICIALS FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE HAZARDS OF HIGHWAY TRAVEL IN THIS AREA (REFTEL C).** STATE OFFICIALS PROMISE TO WORK WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BUT ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT THE TCOS ARE A FEDERAL PROBLEM AND THAT THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DEAL WITH THEM. THE TRANSFER OF 105 BODIES FROM THE OVERCROWDED, UNDERSTAFFED MATAMOROS MORGUE TO THE D.F. IS UNDERSTANDABLE FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW, BUT WILL ALSO HELP TO LESSEN THE VISIBILITY OF THE TRAGEDY IN **TAMAULIPAS** ITSELF. STATE OFFICIALS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT ON TOURISM FOR THE UPCOMING HOLY WEEK VACATION PERIOD AND ARE ADVERTISING SPECIAL PLANS FOR HIGHWAY SECURITY. FEDERAL OFFICIALS ARE ALSO PROMISING INCREASED COOPERATION AND SUPPORT. SIMILAR PROMISES WERE MADE FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY OF THE 72 MURDERED MIGRANTS IN AUGUST 2010, HOWEVER, WITH FEW CONCRETE RESULTS. WITHOUT A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN MILITARY RESOURCES, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE SAFETY OF **TAMAULIPAS** HIGHWAYS CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED.

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