



Los Zetas Fact Sheet

Introduction

Los Zetas originated in the late 1990's as the enforcement and security arm of the notorious Gulf Cartel. They are now an independent Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) with direct access to Colombian cocaine suppliers as well as a highly sophisticated organized crime syndicate. Los Zetas initially began operations in the Mexican states near the Gulf of Mexico but have since spread their activities throughout the Republic. (b)(7)(C)

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Structure

In 2003 Gulf Cartel leader Osiel Cardenas-Guillen was arrested by Mexican authorities and later extradited to Houston, Texas in 2007. Subsequently, Los Zetas emerged as an independent DTO led by (b)(7)(C)

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(b)(7)(C) They include Mexican military deserters, former police officers and family members of Zetas as well as *Kaibiles* (former Guatemalan Army Special Forces soldiers.) (b)(7)(C)

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Modus Operandi

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(b)(7)(C) Los Zetas engage in propaganda designed to alert and warn the local population of their presence and also as a means of recruitment (b)(7)(C)

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Once they are well entrenched in an area, Los Zetas also implement a *piso* (or tariff) on all drugs transported through their turf. With an area under control they engage in traditional organized crime activities such as drug distribution, counterfeit copyrighted CD's and DVD's, liquor sales, auto theft, gambling, prostitution, extortion, kidnapping, murder-for-hire, money laundering, human-smuggling and wholesale petroleum product theft. Further, Los Zetas activities are generally masked by suppressed media attention that is a result of their influence of media outlets in Mexico, through corruption payments or intimidation of newspapers, television and radio stations.

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