

DEFEATING LOS ZETAS

ORGANIZED CRIME, THE STATE
AND ORGANIZED SOCIETY IN
LA LAGUNA, MEXICO,
2007-2014

Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán
with the collaboration of Javier Garza Ramos
Translation: Tanya Huntington

EL COLEGIO DE MÉXICO

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Seminario of Violence and Peace,
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Grupo Vida (Silvia Ortiz)

Lantia Consultores (Eduardo Guerrero)

List of interviewees

Adelaido Flores Díaz (various positions at the Dirección de Seguridad Pública de Torreón 2009-2011 and Director 2011-2017, State Coordinator of the Laguna region since 2018). Interviewed by Jacobo Dayán.

Alejandro Hernández (former reporter for Televisa). Interviewed by Francisco Rodríguez.

Alejandro Hope (former member of Cisen). Interviewed by Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán.

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Edna Jaime (Director of México Evalúa). Interviewed by Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán.

Eduardo Olmos (Mayor of Torreón, 2010-2013). Interviewed by Javier

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Fernando Vela (MP officer in the homicide division of the PGJ Laguna, 2002-2013). Interviewed by Francisco Rodríguez.

Guillermo Valdés Castellanos (Gea Consultores and former director of Cisen). Interviewed by Sergio Aguayo.

Javier Canales (former cameraman for Multimedios). Interviewed by Francisco Rodríguez.

Jorge Tello Peón (Consultoría Madison and former director of Cisen). Interviewed by Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán.

José Ángel Pérez (Mayor of Torreón, 2006-2009). Interviewed by Javier Garza Ramos and Jacobo Dayán.

Luis Morales (former reporter of *El Siglo de Torreón*). Interviewed by Jacobo Dayán.

Marco Zamarripa (Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna). Interviewed by Javier Garza Ramos.

María de la Luz López (activist demanding justice for missing persons, known in Spanish as *desaparecidos*). Interviewed by Jacobo Dayán.

Miguel Ángel Riquelme (Mayor of Torreón, 2013-2016, and Governor of Coahuila, 2017-). Interviewed by Javier Garza Ramos.

Miguel Mery (Secretary of the Ayuntamiento de Torreón, 2010-2013). Interviewed by Javier Garza Ramos and Jacobo Dayán.

Miriam Daniela Arreola (Grupo Vida). Interviewed by Jacobo Dayán.

Norma Patricia Albino (Grupo Vida). Interviewed by Jacobo Dayán.

Oscar Sánchez Viesca (Grupo Vida). Interviewed by Jacobo Dayán.

Ricardo Rebollo Mendoza (Mayor of Gómez Palacio, 2007-2009).

Interviewed by Javier Garza Ramos and Jacobo Dayán.

Rubén Moreira (Governor of Coahuila, 2011-2017). Interviewed by Sergio Aguayo.

Sandra Silva (former reporter of Noticias, *Zócalo*, La I, *El Siglo de Torreón*). Interviewed by Francisco Rodríguez.

Silvia Ortiz (Grupo Vida). Interviewed by Jacobo Dayán.

Four interviewees who asked to remain anonymous.

1. Research goals (and several caveats)

One of our missions at the Seminar on Violence and Peace includes contrasting the pessimistic tone of nearly all stories regarding criminal violence with success stories. Such is the case of La Laguna, where government institutions and civic organizations coincided in their diagnostics and concrete public policies; the result has been a sustained decrease in the number of homicides and disappearances. There are issues still pending, of course, but in this text, we explain the underlying causes of their accomplishment.

In 2016, we began to research how organized crime, State institutions and society had interacted in Coahuila. First, we studied the Allende massacre, then the Piedras Negras penitentiary, and in 2020, we completed the present report regarding events in places like La Laguna, a territory where a fierce war was waged between Los Zetas, El Cartel de Sinaloa, and their respective allies. Above all, we were interested in understanding the following:

- a) The logic behind the systemic brutality employed by Los Zetas—the most violent cartel—and how the organization was beheaded and fragmented;
- b) The reasons why the number of homicides and disappearances were reduced substantially and a dialogue established between victims' organizations and the State government, which has been fruitful in terms of legislation and public policies that are beneficial, but could be improved, given that levels of impunity continue to be elevated; and,
- c) The essence of the "Coahuila model" as something to be salvaged as a model so that other cities may implement a replicable formula; one that corrects its deficiencies and improves on its harmonization in the fight against organized crime through integral victim welfare services.

It is worthwhile to point out that when we say success, we refer solely to figures of violence and the willingness of government and civil actors to

dialogue. Issues that are still pending include: truth, justice, reparations, the search for the missing, and dismantling of the economic and political protection networks of organized crime. Apropos the success attained in Coahuila, we also lend a great deal of importance to a fairly misunderstood change of direction in federal strategy. In 2010, the presidential administration of Felipe Calderón threw itself into beheading, fragmenting, and financially strangling Los Zetas. The reason for this about face was the systemic brutality employed by the cartel as part of its business model.

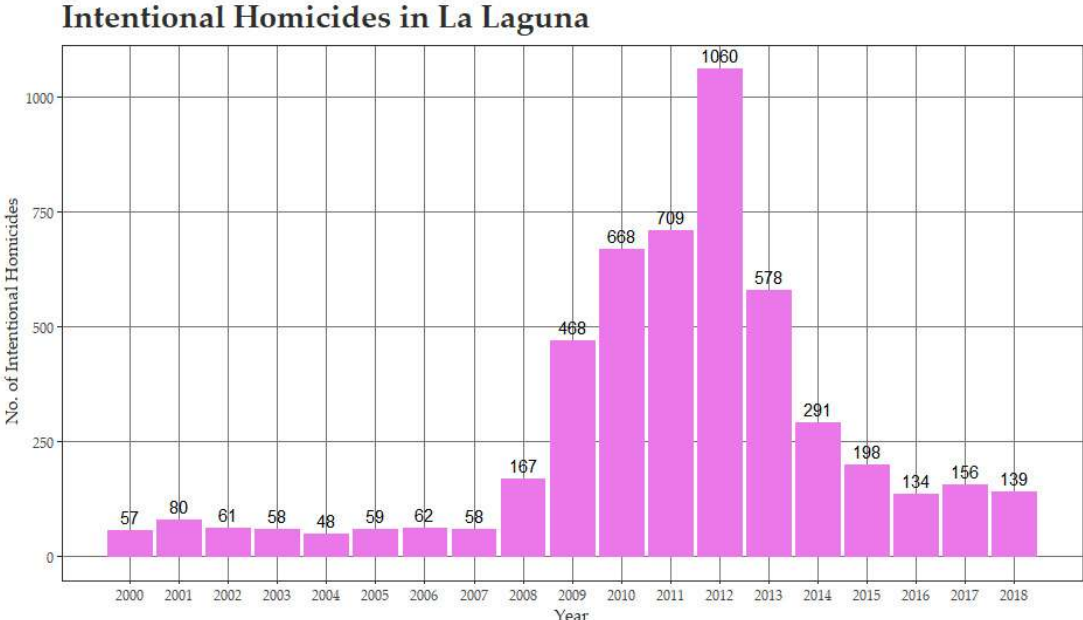
The following presidential administration stayed the course under Enrique Peña Nieto, as did the state governments of Coahuila and Durango, the municipal authorities, and much of organized society. The government of the United States also contributed. Finally, in La Laguna, El Cartel de Sinaloa played an active role, something that poses analytical and ethical dilemmas to be discussed later in this study. The outcome was the beheading and fragmentation of Los Zetas, even though they left behind a legacy of systemic brutality.

In the final stages of this investigation, the United States government arrested Genaro García Luna, accusing him of having been in the service of El Cartel de Sinaloa and Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. We feel we must mention this because, if confirmed, these criminal charges will lead to the reinterpretation of some aspects of the drug wars. At present, it is premature to assume that the accusations are valid and moreover, impossible to ascertain the role performed by the then Secretary of Seguridad Pública in the alteration of a strategy that evidently favored El Cartel de Sinaloa.

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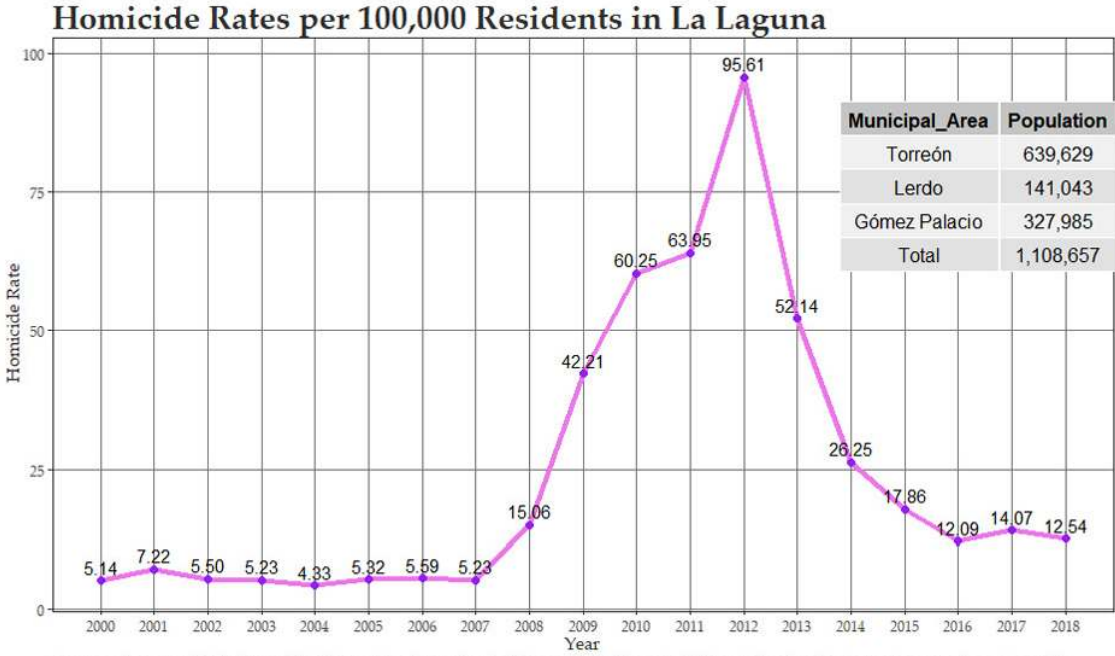
On September 24, 2019, Alfonso Durazo, Secretary of Seguridad y Protección Ciudadana, participated in the Seminar on Violence and Peace held by El Colegio de México. He commented there that La Laguna is "the best model there is in terms of nationwide security of inter-municipal or urban collaboration," and he added, "It is a model that we invariably promote on our cross-country tours."¹ The data confirm these statements.

Figure 1
Homicides in the La Laguna metropolitan area
(2000-2018)



Source: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna, the INEGI database, and the Fiscalía del Estado de Durango. April 2019.

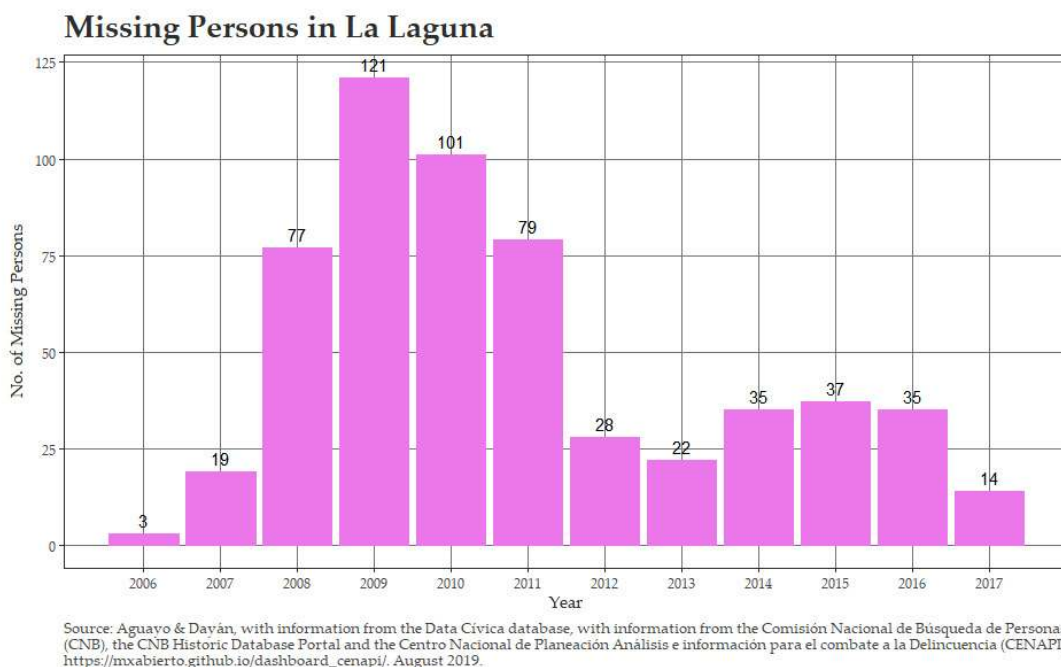
Figure 2
 Homicide rate in the La Laguna metropolitan area
 (2000-2018)



Source: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the database of the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna based on data from INEGI, Fiscalía del Estado de Coahuila, and Fiscalía del Estado de Durango. April 2019.

Figure 3

Missing persons in the La Laguna metropolitan area (2000-2018)



What caused this drop in violence? How has it been sustained for so many years? What factors and figures intervened? And most importantly, can this feat be replicated?

Durazo attributed the success to the Mando Especial, a novel command structure that oversees both the Policía Metropolitana and the Unidad Metropolitana Antisecuestros, permitting coordination between federal authorities and the state and municipal governments of both states, Coahuila and Durango. Doubtless this should be accredited to public officials and politicians. It is not our intention to minimize the importance of the actions taken by Mexican State institutions. Indeed, these institutions are irreplaceable because they hold a legal monopoly on the legitimate use of force, as well as the capacity to shore up the use of public force through other public policies.

Durazo neglected to highlight the role performed by certain figures in organized society. According to other texts, and based on our understanding of how Durazo thinks, this was an involuntary omission, and a fairly common one at that. In the present text, we propose to give these social actors the credit they deserve, because citizen participation in the fight

against crime is a constant in every success story. We have documented such involvement in Chicago during the 1920s, New York in the 1930s, Sicily in the 1990s, and Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey in the 21st century.² In all of these cases, six types of civic organizations took part: the business community, independent media outlets, victims' organizations, civil society associations, and religious and academic groups. Obviously, the form of participation and relative importance of each group varies in each case.

Our investigation is based on a wide variety of sources, although given its original focus and the difficulty we experienced in gaining access to various judicial archives, we relied mostly on interviews of public officials, businesspeople, victims, journalists, and activists. We also found certain judicial files very useful, although we were unable to consult materials requested from the Fiscalía General de la República and the Fiscalía del Estado de Durango, resulting in gaps in our research that will be discussed later on. Our text will be complemented with a documentary film (or perhaps a series of films) in order to share some of the imagery associated with this written record.

The present text is structured as follows: parting from an explanation of the ways in which Los Zetas and El Cartel de Sinaloa resorted to violence, we present the reactions and actions of the Mexican State and of social actors who belong to organized society in La Laguna and the United States. In the final section, these major figures will be contextualized within a broader scenario. We will conclude with a series of recommendations derived from what took place in La Laguna.

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There are several gaps in our research. One rather important gap was our inability to obtain information regarding Durango, one of two states that form part of La Laguna. We encountered walls of silence attributable, perhaps, to the strength El Cartel de Sinaloa continues to possess in that state.

A second deficiency is our imprecision when it comes to differentiating between the "styles" of violence of Los Zetas, El Cartel de Sinaloa, and El Cartel del Poniente (a small organization that eventually formed an alliance with El Cartel de Sinaloa against Los Zetas). We gathered testimonials

regarding Los Zetas brutality—already documented in previous works regarding Allende and Piedras Negras—and the tendency of El Cartel de Sinaloa to be more discreet in its usage of force, combined with a lower propensity to display weapons ostentatiously, although this organization can also be extremely violent. One indicator that requires greater precision attempts to pinpoint where most homicides took place. Up until 2009, the majority of deaths occurred in Gómez Palacio and Lerdo. Because this is Cartel de Sinaloa territory, these figures showed Los Zetas encroachment. But from 2009 to 2012, most homicides took place in Torreón, signaling a counteroffensive by El Cartel de Sinaloa. This was the most violent stage.

Unfortunately, we did not receive the files we requested from the government of Coahuila and the Fiscalía General de la República (FGR) on certain massacres (see Annex 7), and the local media declined to go into detail regarding the identities of perpetrators due to the generalized climate of intimidation, which we will describe later on. It was therefore impossible to gain a clearer understanding of the logic and resources of extreme violence employed following certain massacres.

Despite these blank areas, our interviews and periodicals library research allowed us to gather enough information to be able to piece together a coherent history of what took place in La Laguna, beyond a doubt the most successful peace building experience in Mexico. In addition to helping us understand what took place in that zone of northeastern Mexico, the "Lagunero model" is undeniably an achievement that could be replicated in other regions nationwide.

Note: In Annex 1, we present a timeline of major events and figures. This provides a general panorama, acting as a framework for the La Laguna story.

¹ La estrategia de seguridad de la 4T, Seminario sobre Violencia y Paz, El Colegio de México, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QLnAEZBUv8>

² For the Chicago case, see Sergio Aguayo, *Mafias y carteles. Una historia del crimen organizado en Estados Unidos y México, 1920-2020* (manuscript); for the case of Sicily, Italy, see Rodrigo Peña González, *Order and Crime. Criminal Groups' Political Legitimacy in Michoacán and Sicily*, doctoral thesis [in process], Netherlands, History Institute, Univesrity of Leiden, 2019; and for the cases of Ciudad Juárez and Monterrey, véase Lucy Conger, "The Private Sector and Public Security: The Cases of Ciudad Juarez and Monterrey," Working Paper Series on Civic Engagement and Public Security in

Mexico, pp. 173-209, The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and University of San Diego, 2014.

2. Cartel Violence

Organized crime unfailingly resorts to violence. However, the modalities and intensities they choose depend on the bosses' personality, their business model, and confrontations with other bands and government forces. Let's begin with the most basic factor: why was there so much violence in La Laguna?

If geopolitics is destiny, then La Laguna possesses enormous strategic importance. A glance at a map allows us to easily appreciate the fact that La Laguna is the main node of communication between the Pacific coast and the border between northeastern Mexico and the United States. In order to travel by land from Culiacán to Ciudad Juárez, Nuevo Laredo or Reynosa, you have to pass through La Laguna. For a long time, the Juárez Cartel dominated this territory; Rafael Aguilar Guajardo and Amado Carrillo Fuentes both owned residences in La Laguna during the 1980s. When the alliance between the Juárez and Sinaloa Cartels dissolved at the start of the 21st century, Sinaloa took control. As Los Zetas began their expansion into several parts of Mexico, they decided to dispute said control, which led to a brutal war between both organizations.

Map 1

The importance of La Laguna in highway communications



Sources: Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transporte, "Mapa de los principales corredores carreteros", <http://www.sct.gob.mx/carreteras-v2/servicios/>, January 2020. We circled the zone surrounding La Laguna.

The Importance of La Laguna in highway communications

Longitudinal Highways

Baja California Transpeninsular Highway

Mexico City - Nogales with a route to Tijuana

Querétaro - Ciudad Juárez

Mexico City - Nuevo Laredo with a route to Piedras Negras

Veracruz - Monterrey with a route to Matamoros

Puebla - Oaxaca - Ciudad Hidalgo

Mexico - Puebla - Progreso

Yuctán Peninsular Highway

La Laguna

Capital

State Capital

Mexico City

Transversal Highways

Mazatlán - Matamoros

Manzanillo - Tampico with routes to Lázaro Cárdenas
Highlands
Mexico City - Tuxpan
Acapulco - Veracruz
Trans-Isthmic Circuit

The Metropolitan Area of La Laguna is formed by the municipalities of Torreón and Matamoros in Coahuila, and the municipalities of Gómez Palacio and Lerdo in Durango. These administrative divisions have made it difficult to fight organized crime, given that any strategy requires the combined willpower of governors, mayors, and federal authorities who belong to different political parties.

This obstacle was considered negligible, however, because for a long time the criminal groups—dedicated mostly to drug trafficking—had a tacit understanding with the authorities and society of La Laguna. There was an unwritten code regarding the use of violence: it would be employed solely to resolve differences between criminals: innocent civilians would be left in peace. These were the rules imposed by top Sinaloa bosses.

In the documentary *Clandestino*, David Beriain (a film director and journalist) interviewed a middle-management figure in El Cartel de Sinaloa who explained the rules set down by Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán: "respect for civilians... no stealing, no extortion, no hired killings, no kidnappings." These principles, the cartel member added with conviction, "will be respected as long as we live."³ One of the agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) who pursued El Chapo coincides that he had a "measured and circumspect" attitude, and that he was very careful with the use of force. "On multiple occasions, when his subordinates would inform him of an offense punishable by death, El Chapo would conduct his own investigation."⁴

These principles were also shared by Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada (also a leader of El Cartel de Sinaloa). In a recent book by investigative reporter Anabel Hernández, when "El Mayo, he kills, he kills, but [the members of this group are] incapable of acts of violence against the civilian population." According to his brother, some members of the band stole from the cartel. "Incredible as it may seem, El Mayo did not kill them. He only fired Peraza, and the others were ordered to restore the missing money. 'He's special.'"⁵

These opinions regarding "El Chapo" and Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada are counterbalanced by the fact that hitmen from their organization gunned down customers in certain bars of Torreón. Did they do this because those persons were affiliated with Los Zetas, or because the locale was owned by Los Zetas? We remain largely ignorant because, as we mentioned before, we were unable to consult judicial files which may include statements explaining the origin and logic of major violent episodes.

There was a consensus among those interviewed that the established order was altered by the arrival of Los Zetas to La Laguna. This organization practiced systemic brutality as part of its business model. The main characteristics of Los Zetas may be summarized as follows:

- a) A researcher from George Mason University, Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, has studied Los Zetas and claims that with their emergence, "violence increased to levels never seen before. Los Zetas tactics involved spectacular and sophisticated forms of killing, such as dismemberment, decapitation, and the dissolution of human remains in acid."⁶ Los Zetas created training camps to teach their hitmen how to use all kinds of weapons, combat techniques, interrogation and torture, as well as counterintelligence techniques and telecommunications.
- b) "Los Zetas," the researcher continues, "were also pioneers in the use of traditional mass media communications and social networks to publicize bloody scenes."⁷
- c) This led to "the militarization of other criminal groups."⁸ El Chapo created Los Pelones and Gente Nueva; Beltrán Leyva, created the Fuerzas Especiales de Arturo (FEDA); and Juárez, La Línea and La Familia.
- d) According to Guillermo Valdés Castellanos—who served as Director of the Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional, today the Centro Nacional de Inteligencia, or Cisen, from 2007 to 2011—" [First] Los Zetas afterwards, La Familia Michoacana popularized a change in the model for criminal activities, because in addition to drug trafficking. they dedicated themselves to extracting income from members of society through kidnapping and extortion," among other crimes.⁹ That is to say, "Los Zetas, in addition to elevating the level of violence and militarization of the organization, generated a second qualitative change,

which was the diversification of criminal markets."¹⁰

e) Valdés continues, "given the passivity of the State in slowing the evolution of organized crime, the cartels went one step further in the search for new profit and greater power and impunity: the capture and reconfiguration of public institutions such as Ayuntamientos with all of their budget, political, and police resources, and in some cases they accomplished this with state [and municipal] governments as well."¹¹

The result was an exacerbation and generalization of systemic brutality, the term that we believe best captures the essence of the Los Zetas phenomenon.

Los Zetas in La Laguna

Interviews and available materials have allowed us to explain the methods used by Los Zetas to fight for control of La Laguna with El Cartel de Sinaloa and El Cartel del Poniente. The latter was a local group that controlled a zone formed by the rolling hillsides that overlook La Laguna along the border with Durango. El Cartel de Poniente would end up forming an alliance with Sinaloa.

organized crime."¹³ As in the vast majority of cases, there has been no search for the missing: no truth, no justice, no reparations. Therefore, which criminal organization was responsible for these events is unknown; however, based on the dates and the municipal area, we tentatively believe Los Zetas were the masterminds.

The infiltration of the state apparatus, however, displayed a peculiar trait in La Laguna. In our analysis of Zeta control over the Piedras Negras prison, we explained the multiple purposes that were given to the penitentiary. It acted as headquarters, a refuge, a center of operations, and an extermination camp. La Laguna was different, because each cartel had its own state prison. Los Zetas ran the penitentiary located in Torreón, Coahuila, and the Cartel de Sinaloa ran the Gómez Palacio penitentiary in Durango. Gunmen from both groups left the comfort of their refuge to launch operations against the other side or to attack society at large. Durango is a special case, because they used official weapons and vehicles there.¹⁴ In both prisons, authorities turned a blind eye.

The National Penitentiary Supervision Diagnostics of the CNDH corresponding to 2011 and 2012 show the ungovernability of both prisons. The CNDH did not previously apply governability measurements. Once that changed, they took into account 51 different variables and set a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 was the best possible rating. These are, therefore, reliable studies. In both cases, the deterioration in governability is notable from 2011 to 2012, the years of the greatest surge in violence.

Figure 1

Governability in two Coahuila prisons

	Gómez Palacio Penitentiary		Torreón Penitentiary	
	General Rating	Governability	General Rating	Governability
2011	5.72	4.79	5.95	4.56
2012	5.14	2.81	4.33	3.26

Source: National Penitentiary Supervision Diagnostics of the CNDH, 2011 and 2012

Despite the grotesque nature of the arrangement (the State, paying for cartel headquarters!), state and federal authorities maintained their passivity and indifference. Nor did national and foreign media pay much attention to what was going on in La Laguna. This would start to change in 2011 due to a series of violent episodes as well as an in-depth, abrupt change in federal strategy, not to mention the arrival of Rubén Moreira to the governorship in December 2011; all events that are reviewed in the final sections of this book. For now, let us continue to explain the ways in which Los Zetas wielded violence.

Once they had infiltrated police forces, the next step for Los Zetas was to intimidate businesspeople and the mass media. The method here was similar: first, they would recruit members of the respective trade and then, use them to convey their messages. Governor Miguel Ángel Riquelme recalls that "there were even businesspeople who would take a message to other businesspeople. At a meeting, they would explain that [Los Zetas] were already here, what they were going to do, and whom they needed to report to." The current state governor experienced that era up close, bearing witness to the lightness with which Los Zetas were received. "We were able to realize how society began to blend in" with them, and how "some people—youths, businesspeople, public officials—boasted of their relationship with these groups of delinquents."¹⁵

A letter from Grupo Zeta to the business community

The following letter was sent in 2007 by Grupo Zeta (Fuerzas Especiales del Cartel del Golfo, F.E.C.G.) to a well-known attorney of La Laguna.

The addressees were businesspeople of Canacintra (Cámara Nacional de la

Industria de Transformación), GEL (Grupo Empresarial de La Laguna), and CLIP (Consejo Lagunero de la Iniciativa Privada). Together, they were the three most important entrepreneurial organizations at that time. We would like to highlight the following three aspects:¹⁶

- 1) Los Zetas see themselves as a business that arrived in La Laguna to "DO BUSINESS." "PERSONNEL FROM OUR COMPANY" will be sent to converse with the businesspeople. And they are warned that "ANY PERSON WHO HAS ILLICIT BUSINESS OUTSIDE OUR ORGANIZATION WILL BE HINDERED," —in other words, anyone doing business with El Cartel de Sinaloa or El Cartel del Poniente.
- 2) The compact disc is key. On it the chief of the Anti-Kidnapping Unit of La Laguna de Coahuila at the time, Enrique Ruiz Arévalo, appears in an image of his upper torso. His eyes are covered with a very wide band. He speaks of the alleged relations between businesspeople and El Cartel de Sinaloa; in all likelihood, he is saying whatever his captors instructed him to. He shows no signs of torture, however, he was never seen again. Ruiz Arévalo was a career police officer who got his start at the Dirección Federal de Seguridad. Later on, he worked at the United States Embassy, where he was trained. In the mid-1990s, he created a group within the Procuraduría de Coahuila with the support of businesspeople of La Laguna to combat a civilian kidnapping crisis. When Los Zetas arrived, they used him to send a message and to free themselves of a potential enemy.
- 3) The images of Ruiz Arévalo reinforce the intimidation included in the final paragraph. "ANY FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH SAID PETITION WILL HAVE IRREVERSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUR PERSON AND YOUR PARTNERS WITHIN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY."

22 DE MAYO DE 2007

A ROGADO [REDACTED] NOS DIRIJIMOS A TI PORQUE TENEMOS INFORMACIÓN PREVIA DE QUE TIENES RELACION ESTRECHA CON ALTOS FUNCIONARIOS Y EMPRESARIOS DE LA REGIÓN Y QUEREMOS QUE SEAS EL CONDUCTO PARA HACER DE SU CONOCIMIENTO LLAMESE EN ESTE CASO SOCIOS DE CANACINTRA, GEL, Y CLIP INFORMACIÓN CONTENIDA EN CD YA QUE DICHA INFORMACIÓN VA A INTERESAR TANTO A EMPRESARIOS COMO A LA SOCIEDAD EN GENERAL.

CON ESTO ACLARAREMOS QUE NOSOTROS, NO VENIMOS A ROBAR A NADIE SIMPLEMENTE VENIMOS A HACER NEGOCIO.

ACLARANDO QUE SERA MOLESTADA LA PERSONA QUE TENGA NEGOCIOS ILICITOS FUERA DE NUESTRA ORGANIZACIÓN.

ESTA ES UNA PETICIÓN DE CARACTER URGENTE E IRREVOCABLE.

EXIGIÉNDOLE REALICER LAS GESTIONES NECESARIAS PARA ENVIAR DICHO CD A LAS PERSONAS ANTES MENCIONADAS, TENIENDO COMO LIMITE DE PLAZO PARA LA CONCLUSIÓN, Y EJECUCIÓN DE DICHA PETICIÓN, EL DIA MIÉRCOLES 23 DE MAYO DEL 2007 A LAS 1200 HORAS.

ENTENDIÉNDOSE QUE POSTERIOR A LA EXHIBICIÓN DE DICHO CD SE LLEVARA A CABO REUNIÓN DE PERSONAL DE NUESTRA COMPAÑIA Y PERSONAS DEL SISTEMA EMPRENARIAL PARA LLEVAR ACUERDOS QUE PLANTEAREMOS EN SU MOMENTO, ASI COMO ACLARAR DUDAS E INQUIETUDES QUE TENGAN.

— SIN MAS POR EL MOMENTO SE LE INFORMA QUE CUALQUIER DESACATO ANTE DICHA PETICIÓN, TENDRA CONSECUENCIAS IRREVERSIBLES PARA CON SU PERSONA Y BUCIOS DEL SISTEMA EMPRENARIAL.

ATENTAMENTE
CARTEL DEL GOLFO
GRUPO 7

ESTERE UNIDAD 23 Mayo 9:00 hrs.



Once they were embedded, Los Zetas practiced pedagogical violence. They would kill a member of the guild in question in order to instill fear and be able to demand full obedience. Such was the logic behind the attempt against businessman Carlos Herrera in 2007¹⁷ and the murder of Eliseo Barrón,¹⁸ police reporter of *La Opinión-Milenio* in 2009 (an execution that has been attributed to Los Zetas, although their responsibility is not absolutely certain).

At the same time, they designed a strategy to terrorize the entire population. Armando Moreno (*Milenio Laguna*) speaks of them abducting eleven people in 2010, among them five young women. "They were cut into pieces, their hands, legs, arms scattered on busy thoroughfares. It was reported to us that a head was found tossed here and then another there, and another there; it was terrifying. And it wasn't so much to intimidate their adversaries, as to strike fear into the heart of society."¹⁹

El Cartel de Sinaloa and El Cartel del Poniente reacted, and battle lines were drawn. The dry Nazas riverbed became the border of confrontation starting in late 2006. Gunfights with multiple casualties became daily news. Gunmen from Los Zetas and El Cartel de Sinaloa crossed over into the state controlled by their rival. At night, the city streets were empty. To date, this continues to be a traumatic period for residents. Here, we enumerate some emblematic massacres. Note that, except for one, these were all perpetrated in Coahuila:

- January 31, 2010. Massacre of at least ten people in the Ferrie bar

(Coahuila).²⁰

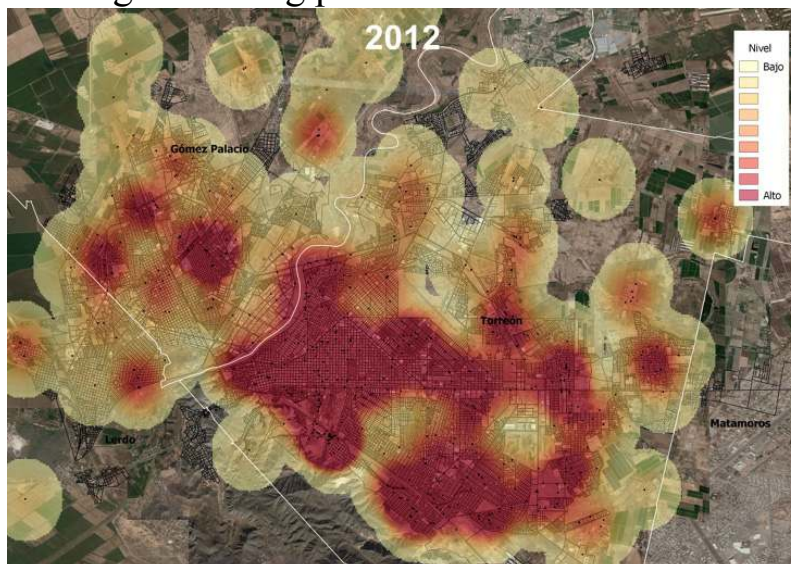
- February 1, 2010. Gunfire outside the Galerías Laguna shopping mall (Coahuila) with a total of eight dead.²¹
- May 14, 2010. Massacre of eight people in Las Juanas bar (Coahuila).²²
- June 26, 2010. Killing of at least nine people in a rehabilitation center in Gómez Palacio (Durango).²³
- July 18, 2010. Massacre of 17 people at the Quinta Italia Inn (Coahuila).²⁴
- August 20, 2011. Gunfight outside the TSM soccer stadium while a first division game was being broadcast nationwide (Coahuila).²⁵
- January 6, 2013. Massacre of seven people at the Tornado bar (Coahuila).²⁶

From 2008 to 2014, there were at least 3,941 homicides and 463 missing persons registered. We do not know how many of them belonged to criminal gangs and how many casualties were suffered on each side. Nor do we know who were innocent victims and who were alleged perpetrators. Lieutenant Adelaido Flores, who was chief of police in Torreón during those years, comments that in three or four years, there were around one hundred confrontations against security forces during which 35 police officers lost their lives, 5 disappeared, and 60 vehicles were destroyed.²⁷

The areas of confrontation can be clearly identified on this map of homicides in La Laguna hot zones during the peak of violence in 2012. Clearly, the area with the most violence was controlled by El Cartel del Poniente and encompassed most of the confrontations between all three criminal organizations, followed by the zone controlled by Los Zetas who, as we mentioned, wielded greater violence against the civilian population than El Cartel de Sinaloa.

Map 3

Homicides in La Laguna during peak violence in 2012



Source: Map created by the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna, based on data from INEGI, the Fiscalía del Estado de Coahuila, and the Fiscalía del Estado de Durango.

The enigma of the disappeared

In the figures and graphs that appear at the beginning of this text, a positive evolution of homicides and disappearances may be observed. The figures are reasonably reliable in the case of homicides. When it comes to missing persons, however, we enter into a gray area: we are just now beginning to get a sense of the true dimension of the magnitude of this tragedy.

Of the 2,151 persons missing in Coahuila according to data from the Cenapi,²⁸ 25.56% are from Torreón.²⁹ We insist, once again, that there are gaps in this investigation: we know little about Durango. It is simply impossible that in Torreón, 550 disappearances were registered from 2006 and 2017, and yet there were only 21 in Gómez Palacio and Lerdo during those same years (see Annex 2). This undercount will be corrected in time, hopefully by the Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas. At any rate, a pending issue in our line of investigation is the clarification of how many dead or missing persons belonged to cartels, how many were members of government forces, and how many were innocent civilians. These are important distinctions, given that disappearances and murders are among the most serious human rights violations.

According to the state Fiscalía, in all of Coahuila there are more than 87

clandestine crematory sites in 33 municipalities in a state with a total of 38.³⁰ This figure illustrates the magnitude of the systemic brutality. In 2015, with the start of the search for the missing on the ground by Grupo Vida (an organization created by the families of missing persons), clandestine crematory sites and extermination zones were discovered in La Laguna on the Coahuila side. By May 2019, Grupo Vida had already registered 24 sites that tested positive for bone remains and in 13 of them, their work continues (see Annex 3).

As in the case of the so-called Massacre of Allende, these extermination zones remained beyond the scope of national media attention until they were reported by the press years later. The Ejido Patrocinio is the largest extermination zone in the region (with 163 acres); tens of thousands of small bone shards have been located there. This received national media coverage in October 2016 when an op-ed column by Raymundo Riva Palacio was published.³¹ We will delve further into these clandestine crematory sites in a special section below.

All of this took place due to the absence of the State to a considerable degree. In the case of Coahuila, and for reasons that remain unclear, the administrations of Humberto Moreira (December 2005 to January 2011) and Jorge Torres (January to November 2011) displayed a great deal of passivity before the increasing presence of Los Zetas. There is talk of complicity with organized crime; however, these rumors have neither been corroborated or denied by the governments of Coahuila or the federal government. Jorge Torres was arrested in February 2019 by federal agents following an extradition request from the United States.³² He was sent across the border, where he stands accused of criminal association, money laundering, and bank fraud.³³ Word has it that he is already a DEA protected witness. The notable absence of investigation into the activities of high-level officials forms a very clear pattern.

³ "Plata o Plomo/Clandestino", Discovery Latinoamérica /Clandestino, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPJnYmACmE&t=60s> (see fragment at the minute: 01:00-01:30).

⁴ Andrew Hogan and Douglas Century, *Hunting El Chapo*, Kindle edition, downloaded in 2019, positions 1392 to 1395.

⁵ Anabel Hernández, *El traidor: El diario secreto del hijo del Mayo*, Kindle edition, Mexico, Grijalbo, positions 582 and 892.

6 G. Correa-Cabrera, (2018). *Los Zetas Inc.: La corporación delictiva que funciona como empresa transnacional*, Mexico, Planeta, p. 64.

7 *Ibidem*.

8 *Idem*, p. 66.

9 Guillermo Valdés, "La senda del crimen", *Nexos*, January 1, 2017, <https://www.nexos.com.mx/?p=30864>

10 Sergio Aguayo interview of Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, November 20, 2019.

11 Valdés, *Ibid*.

12 Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán, *El yugo zeta. Norte de Coahuila, 2010-2011*, Mexico, El Colegio de México, 2018.

13 Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Recomendación por Violaciones Graves 27VG/2019, October 23, 2019, <https://www.cndh.org.mx/documento/recomendacion-por-violaciones-graves-27vg2019>

14 "La masacre en Torreón, perpetrada por reos de Durango, afirma la PGR," *La Jornada*, July 20, 2010, <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2010/07/26/politica/007n1pol>

15 Javier Garza interview of Miguel Riquelme, governor of Coahuila, February 8, 2020.

16 The original spelling of the letter has not been changed.

17 "Sobrevive Herrera atentado", *El Siglo de Torreón*, May 14, 2007, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/275235.sobrevive-herrera-atentado.html>

18 "Descanse en paz Eliseo Barrón" (Ciro Gómez Leyva), *Milenio Multimedia*, YouTube, May 28, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6wePLNIA1k>

19 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Armando Moreno, May 13, 2019.

20 "Bar Ferrie, a siete años de la matanza", *El Siglo de Torreón*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/1308241.bar-ferrie-a-siete-anos-de-la-matanza.html>

21 "Confirman 8 muertos en balacera", *El Siglo de Torreón*, February 2, 2010, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/497862.confirman-8-muertos-en-balacera.html>

22 "Tiroteo en bar deja 8 muertos y 19 heridos en Torreón," *Vanguardia*, May 15, 2010, <https://vanguardia.com.mx/tiroteoenbardeja8muertosy19heridosentorreon-499314.html>

23 "Balean centro de rehabilitación," *El Siglo de Torreón*, June 27, 2010, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/535510.balean-centro-de-rehabilitacion.html>

24 "A 6 años de masacre en Torreón, la Quinta Inn sigue abandonada," *Vanguardia*, July 18, 2016, <https://vanguardia.com.mx/articulo/la-huella-sigue-intacta-6-anos-de-la-masacre-en-la-quinta-italia-inn-en-torreon>

25 "Se cumplen 4 años de la balacera a las afueras del tsm," *El Siglo de Torreón*, August 20, 2015, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/1144476.se-cumplen-4-anos-de-la-balacera-a-las-afueras-del-tsm.html>

26 "Ataque a 'Tornado' deja 7 muertos," *El Siglo de Torreón*, January 6, 2013, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/825829.ataque-a-tornado-deja-7-muertos.html>

27 Jacobo Dayán interview of Adelaido Flores, May 17, 2019.

28 Centro Nacional de Planeación, Análisis e Información para el combate a la

delincuencia de la pgr, at Gobierno de México, Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda, https://mxabierto.github.io/dashboard_cenapi/

29 Evaluation of the design for the new Registro Nacional de Personas Desaparecidas, Data Cívica, 2019 <https://registros-desaparecidos.datacivica.org/>

30 "Ubican 87 campos de exterminio," *Zócalo*, July 7, 2018, http://www.zocalo.com.mx/new_site/articulo/ubican-87-campos-de-exterminio

31 Raymundo Riva Palacio, "Campo de exterminio", *Eje Central*, October 3, 2016, <http://www.ejecentral.com.mx/campo-de-exterminio/>

32 "Agentes federales detienen a Jorge Torres, exgobernador interino de Coahuila," *Animal Político*, February 5, 2019, <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2019/02/jorge-torres-detenido-exgobernador-coahuila/>

33 "Extraditan a eu a Jorge Torres, exgobernador de Coahuila," *Aristegui Noticias*, October 29, 2019, <https://aristeguinoticias.com/2910/mexico/extraditan-a-eu-a-jorge-torres-exgobernador-de-coahuila/>

3. The Official Strategy.

To understand what took place in La Laguna, let us first imagine ourselves in the state of Coahuila when the Moreira brothers were in charge. Together, they governed for eleven years.

Humberto Moreira was state governor from December 1, 2005 to January 4, 2011. He left office in order to become national president of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional. He was replaced by Jorge Juan Torres López (January 4, 2011 to November 30, 2011). During that time, Los Zetas finished settling into the state. They originally came from Tamaulipas and at first, provided foot soldiers for El Cartel del Golfo. Once they succeeded in seizing total control over northern Coahuila, Saltillo became a safe sanctuary, and they challenged El Cartel de Sinaloa for control over La Laguna.

During the six-year administration of Rubén Moreira (December 1, 2011 to November 30, 2017), on the other hand, this passivity evaporated. Los Zetas were contained, beheaded, and scattered. In March of 2016, the governor at the time provided us with rare access to files documenting the presence of Los Zetas in the Cinco Manantiales region (notable municipalities include Piedras Negras, Nava, Sabinas, and Allende). A good working relationship was established with Governor Rubén Moreira. He kept his commitment to sharing files for our research, and the Seminar on Violence and Peace of El Colegio de México corresponded by scrupulously handling all materials. Our understanding allowed an approximation toward the truth that remains fairly uncommon in Mexico.

Rubén Moreira is a controversial figure. He is criticized for both the enormous public debt he left behind and his lack of accountability, and at the same time recognized for what he accomplished in terms of public safety. We held formal interviews and informal conversations with him. His version of events provided us with a panoramic view of the state government strategy, providing the necessary context for the peculiar case of La Laguna. In our final section, we will compare these stories to what happened on a federal level and the role played by El Cartel de Sinaloa and

the United States.

Rubén Moreira built his strategy by setting concrete objectives and pursuing them with a trail-and-error methodology. There was no detailed plan, but rather a dialectic oscillation between the general scenario and more specific issues, so that the policies being implemented could be gradually adjusted and corrected. He had the enormous strength wielded by the PRI over state and municipal political arenas in his favor, as well as certain changes in federal and U.S. strategies (variables that will be considered in the chapter entitled "The Downfall of Los Zetas").

When he ran for governor, he found "fairly poor indicators of public safety in all categories." One day he was "at a campaign meeting, and the audience failed to react." Then he uttered the phrase, "I will personally take charge of public safety," and they gave him a standing ovation. He took this promise seriously, and boastfully states today, "Yes, public safety can be recovered, but you have to put in a lot of time. During the first three years, I lived for it." According to him, from 2012 to 2014, he dedicated "80% of my time" to this issue.

He had various general objectives: to take back the Piedras Negras penitentiary, to respond to the case of Allende and its victims, to capture the brothers Miguel Ángel and Omar Treviño Morales (also known as Z40 and Z42), and to gain control over the situation in La Laguna. The importance of the Piedras Negras prison lay in the fact that it was the headquarters from which Los Zetas controlled the northern part of the state. Allende was a symbol of the absence of the State and the helplessness of cartel victims. And the brothers Z40 and Z42 were the heads of the cartel and exemplary in their impunity (they were captured in July of 2013 and in March of 2015, respectively). The current governor, Miguel Ángel Riquelme, assessed in an interview the importance of La Laguna in terms of violence: "it is one that affects indicators statewide." In other words, the "greater share of homicides took place in the La Laguna region."³⁴

Rubén Moreira also stressed that he knew he had to acquire knowledge in order to approach the goals he had set forth. "It is very important to understand what took place even though sometimes, you don't agree with the conclusions. If we don't know what happened, history will repeat itself." Through knowledge, he adds, "you gain a better knowledge of how to attack" such problems. Understanding local reality meant building

dialogues with diverse actors, four of which he mentioned at different times: other authorities, the business community, victims, and society at large. He identifies three stages in his decision-making method: "information, reflection, and policy building."

A central part of his strategy "was to work extensively with federal authorities." He received, he says, the "political backing of presidents both from the PAN (Felipe Calderón) and PRI (Enrique Peña Nieto). The level of violence demanded it." He traveled "constantly to the capital" and "on many occasions" visited Cisen and, of course, Sedena. He insists to the point of becoming repetitive that he "gradually learned during this process." He found both presidents to be receptive because of all the governors in Mexico, only he and Rodrigo Medina of Nuevo León chose to seriously take on the fight against organized crime. Also decisive was a strategic turning point that was described to us in detail by Guillermo Valdés (at the time, Director of the Cisen, the institution where policies against organized crime were assembled). During our conversation in 2009, Valdés explained:

We realized that we could not win the war. Consequently, we changed our objective to that of a reduction of violence and decided to go up against Los Zetas. Not only the leaders, but against the structure as well. That was the logic behind the desire to create six 'Centers to Merge Intelligence and Tactical Operations.' That is to say, we brought together information from all the agencies in Mexico and the United States.³⁵

In the end, only two of these Centers became operational; one in the capital and the other in Monterrey. We will revisit this subject later on.

Five years of the Rubén Moreira administration coincided with the presidency of Peña Nieto; this was a bonanza period.

We were greatly assisted by the administration of President Peña Nieto. In terms of security, I did very well; there was nothing I could not discuss with the Peña Nieto administration, nothing we couldn't do, and no information was kept from me.

Part of his success has to do with his personal relationship. "I believe that the Calderón administration trusted me. And I believe that among the Peña administration, there was not only trust and dialogue, but investment as well." The backing of Peña Nieto is exemplified by the "construction of

three military garrisons: Frontera, Coahuila; Piedras Negras and San Pedro, La Laguna." Mentioning these headquarters acts as a gateway toward going into greater detail regarding the implementation of strategy.

The size of the military facilities is an indicator of the importance granted to these regions. The most important one was that of San Pedro in La Laguna (3,200 troops) as mandated by geopolitics, followed by that of Monclova-Frontera with 700 troops and finally, the more modest Piedras Negras (300 troops). They also placed special emphasis on controlling the highway from Monterrey to Saltillo and the airports. That is to say, obstructing and if possible, impeding the transfer of troops and war provisions to Los Zetas.

Map 4

Headquarters built from 2012 to 2016 in Coahuila



Source: Aguayo and Dayán, based on a map by Esri.

In order to implement this strategy, they established a general division and an operational one. The former included the Consejo Estatal de Seguridad, which held sessions at least twice a year. "We met 22 times over my six-year administration," Rubén Moreira boasts. The Public Security System Law of Coahuila establishes the participation of seven representatives of civil society on that Council.³⁶ Later, meetings would be held of the Grupos de Coordinación de Operativos presided over by the governor. These were formed by federal, state, and some municipal authorities. "We held more or less 190 meetings. From these came hundreds of accords, thousands of operatives and we pushed the municipal administrations to repeat the exercise."

Miguel Ángel Riquelme was the municipal president of Torreón (2014-2017) and he confirms this:

From my first day in the Government of the Municipality of Torreón, I set up weekly Sunday meetings where we would analyze all of the statistics. Out of those meetings came all of the instructions that enabled us to define strategies in response to what had taken place the week before.³⁷

The contrast with what took place during the years of Humberto Moreira and Jorge Torres is notable. Eduardo Olmos, municipal president of Torreón from 2010 to 2013, comments in this regard: "the initial meetings [for

coordination] were summoned by Sedena, and there were attorney generals who would not sit down with a chief of police. At one of the meetings, an attorney general said, 'I won't sit down next to that man, he's a delinquent.' And this was during a public safety meeting!"³⁸ This comment explains the importance lent by Rubén Moreira to the recovery of police forces infiltrated by criminals.

Cleaning up police forces

The Rubén Moreira administration prioritized recovering control over police forces. "I discovered the importance of the police being subjected to control tests that determined trust. If they did not receive accreditation, they were separated" from their duties. No police officer could escape this type of examination. "As a result, the state police were reduced by half. And some municipal police failed to even show." Another relevant decision was for "state police to name the directors of the municipal police forces. It was the solution to a reality: mayors did not want to name chiefs of police, because criminals would blackmail them." To this end, unified command agreements were signed with 30 out of 38 municipalities.

We soon realized that we had to give the police officers a raise, because they were earning between four and six thousand pesos per month. We increased their entry salary to 17,000 pesos. By the way, another very important benefit for the police is Infonavit [a public housing administration agency]. We registered them with Infonavit during the administration of President Peña Nieto. It was a way to protect them from the risks they were running. We also granted a lifelong pension to the widows of troops from the Marines, the Army, or the Federal Police who died in Coahuila, and a pension to those who were incapacitated.

Finally, an elite police force was also created.

The GATES were created in 2011, during the previous administration. During my administration, we gave them better pay, social security and whatnot. Starting in 2016, it was called Fuerza Coahuila, and it was a group of police officers that had a good record for intervention.

When we mentioned the criticisms of human rights organisms to violations that were perpetrated, he responded, "I don't doubt that some

excesses may have been committed," but claimed that such cases were investigated and punished. This statement has been rejected by victims' groups in the state and by human rights organizations, which have documented various cases of various human rights violations which have mostly unpunished.³⁹

Attacking the criminal system

The administration of Rubén Moreira attacked criminal organizations by reducing their income and eroding their social and cultural foundations.

Different policies were grouped into various categories:

a) Cutting off the source of income

- i. Eradication of the slot machines installed by Los Zetas in grocery stores.
- ii. Avoiding the illegal sale of alcohol by modifying regulations. "At two in the morning, alcohol was no longer sold," and as is logical, all bars were required to close at that hour. This decision was probably facilitated by the fact that the former governor does not drink alcoholic beverages.
- iii. Shutting down casinos, because they paid extortion fees to delinquents. "They were closed due to a lack of municipal permits, or for violations to the alcohol system of sale, or for civil protection issues. And they lost all of their legal appeals. Then we changed the law. In truth, casinos in Mexico ought to be on the beaches, at tourist locations where they provide a service to people, but in an industrial city, there shouldn't be any."
- iv. Prohibition of cockfights and horse races, because they are used to launder money.
- v. Closing exotic dance establishments "due to the subject of human trafficking; but also because behind every dancer—and I say this with all due respect—there is a whole mafia that brought her there." Likewise, the advertisements of "prostitution in newspapers" were banned.
- vi. Shutdown of "*yonkes*" or junkyards. The decision was made "once we realized that they were stealing a lot of Nissan Tsurus. They weren't taking them out of town. They were stripping them and selling them at junkyards as automotive parts or as scrap metal."

- vii. "Install phone blocks at the penitentiaries or Ceresos (Centros de Readaptación Social)". These worked so well, that complaints began to be received from neighbors because "the cell phone blockers were so powerful at the penitentiaries that they would affect the surrounding neighborhoods; from one day to the next, the extortion came to an end."
- viii. Fighting the sale of fuel in public areas and auditing gas stations. Los Zetas earned considerable income in that area, because they owned a significant number of gas stations.
- ix. Demanding that all vehicles bear license plates.

b) Culture and society

"At the start of my administration," Rubén Moreira relates, "no one called them criminals, they called them 'the gentlemen,' 'the last letter guys,' 'those guys,' 'the bad guys,' and so on. That normalized and in a certain sense, legitimized them." In order to modify that culture, his administration took several steps.

- i. "Destroy altars to the Santa Muerte because as a figure, it allows someone to kill or do even worse, while morally justifying everything through prayer."
- ii. Put an end to the broadcasting of *narcocorrido* music on the radio. "The administration, all administrations, have or pay for publicity for all kinds of things. Well, if a radio station played *narcocorridos*, we would stop buying advertising from them."
- iii. Encourage crime reports. "The first thing was to make a recount of what kind of tools we had for statistics, to get people to report crimes. Statistics rebounded in 2012 because we had success in getting a lot of people to file a complaint. And to achieve this, the state's attorney visited places and we would ask police stations to inform us if someone had gone there to report a crime. People started to gain trust and filed more reports. That was the beginning."
- iv. "We were also concerned with creating jobs, promoting sports—we invested around 1000 million pesos in fields and courts—education, etcetera."

It is impossible for us to pinpoint the impact of each of these measures in

isolation. Doubtless, they worked in tandem with other factors and figures (among others, the turnaround in federal strategy). What we have been able to verify is that the figures of homicides and missing persons began to diminish at an accelerated rate.

For the now former governor, there was a breakthrough in the offensive launched against organized crime in October 2012 following the death of a nephew of Zetas 40 and 42. The leaders of organized crime reacted by killing one of Rubén's nephews and Humberto's son. Three days later, in an armed confrontation, Heriberto Lazcano, Z-3, the maximum leader of Los Zetas at the time, was killed (according to other sources, Lazcano is still alive.)⁴⁰ In our final section, we will contextualize this series of events within a broader panorama. For now, there is one verifiable fact: as of that week, the downfall of that particular criminal organization accelerated.

During our conversation, Rubén Moreira mentioned, without going into further detail, the importance of the role performed by La Laguna society in the reduction of violence (partly because we didn't ask, given that the objective was to understand the strategy followed by his administration). His secretary in charge of governance, Miguel Ángel Riquelme, did so:

As Secretary of Gobierno [for the Rubén Moreira administration], our initial meetings were held with the relatives or victims of forced disappearance or the victims of violence. These early encounters were very, very hostile, until a model of dialogue was composed that is now considered exemplary nationwide. They had to struggle a lot in order to change the way many institutions were acting, and that has to be recognized; they struggled a lot to change our judicial framework... between government and society, we have done what we were supposed to do.⁴¹

One of the central theses of the Seminar on Violence and Peace is the need to recognize the contributions of social organizations. It is a mistake to ignore them, because it limits our capacity to understand historic processes. We will dedicate the next few sections to them. Let's begin with the strategy of certain social actors and members of the business community in La Laguna.

³⁴ Javier Garza interview of Miguel Riquelme, *op. cit.*

35 Sergio Aguayo conversation with Guillermo Valdés during an academic seminar held at Oxford University, November 1, 2019.

36 The Council was provided over by the governor and was integrated by the president of the Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Estado, the head of the Comisión Estatal de Seguridad, the head of the Procuraduría, the head of the Procuraduría para Niños, Niñas y la Familia, the head of the Secretaría de Gobierno, the head of the Secretaría de Finanzas, the head of the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, the head of the Secretaría de Salud, the head of the Administración Fiscal General, a representative of the Congreso del Estado, the head of the Subsecretaría de Políticas Públicas e Información, seven representatives of civil society, one representative of the citizens' council of social outreach, municipal presidents, a delegate from the Procuraduría General de la República, the commander of the Sexta Zona Militar, and the commander of the Fuerzas Federales in the state,

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ret=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiMgOKhp f71AhVBIKwKHf8kDdgQFjACegQIBxAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.coahuilatranspar ente.gob.mx%2Fleyes%2Fdocumentos_leyes%2FLey%2520del%2520Sistema%2520de% 2520Seguridad%2520P%25C3%25BABlica%2520del%2520Estado%2520de%2520Coahu ila%2520de%2520Zaragoza%2520\(2\).doc&usg=AOvVaw0mJp0PGuwQ-5nma9KPo67](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ret=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiMgOKhp f71AhVBIKwKHf8kDdgQFjACegQIBxAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.coahuilatranspar ente.gob.mx%2Fleyes%2Fdocumentos_leyes%2FLey%2520del%2520Sistema%2520de% 2520Seguridad%2520P%25C3%25BABlica%2520del%2520Estado%2520de%2520Coahu ila%2520de%2520Zaragoza%2520(2).doc&usg=AOvVaw0mJp0PGuwQ-5nma9KPo67)

37 Interview of Miguel Riquelme, *op. cit.*

38 Javier Garza interview of Eduardo Olmos, June 6, 2019.

39 Federación Internacional por los Derechos Humanos, fidh, Mexico: Asesinatos, desapariciones y torturas en Coahuila de Zaragoza constituyen crímenes de lesa humanidad, <http://www.cmdpdh.org/publicaciones-pdf/cmdpdh-comunicacion-coahuila.pdf>

The major case of the Mando Especial de La Laguna will be approached in a later section, as an example of a petition made by the local business community.

40 Ricardo Raphael, *Hijo de la guerra*, Mexico, Seix Barral, 2019, pp. 404-407.

41 Javier Garza interview of Miguel Riquelme, *op. cit.*

4. Mass Media

The media perform fundamental tasks as private enterprises that, in theory, are able to reconcile the imperative of profit with a "social responsibility" to inform and educate the public objectively, while supervising government actions and identifying and promoting major themes for national debate. On a day-to-day basis, they build bridges of information between organized crime, government, and society.

Mass media and criminal organizations

Delinquents follow the media closely, because their interests and image are at stake. They attempt to seduce members of the press, coopting or silencing them in order to defend their business interests; they use them to send messages to other figures, all the while projecting an idealized—and false—image of their presence.

The arrival of Los Zetas upset an unwritten mutual tolerance between the media and delinquents. Los Zetas implemented the same method of penetration and intimidation they used with the police and the business community. First, they recruited reporters, putting them on their payroll. According to some witnesses, these reporters were paid between 8,000 and 12,000 pesos per month. Sandra Silva, an experienced journalist, explains: "the submersion of criminal groups in the press [was] key to the control of information."⁴²

The infiltrated reporters provided facts which were used to intimidate other journalists and media businesses. Arturo Aguilar (*La Opinión Milenio*) explains how, on any given day, he would receive an "invitation" from a "person who worked for a periodical" to talk with "them" (Los Zetas). The message was crystal clear: "you either went, or you went." Other reporters received the same message. Aguilar recalls what happened next:

They kept us at ease for an hour, handing out sodas. You already knew that they were going to "lay down the law." The one who was ostensibly

in charge of the arena chatted with us. He sent us greetings on the part of the boss [the manual of good manners in this guild requires constant invocation of the boss]. He said they were here to do business, that they didn't want any problems with the press but that they didn't want the press to cause them any problems, either. After talking to us, they showed off their weapons. One had his arm in a sling, he'd been shot, but his pistol was strapped to his waist. Another had a shotgun. There were six people.⁴³

Very soon, instructions started to arrive regarding what ought to be published, the proper way to do so, and of course, what needed to be left out. According to Armando Moreno (*Milenio Laguna*) "they took photos they wanted to see in the paper and left them at the security desk of the newspaper. Then they would call and say, 'hey, the photos are there, you need to run them.'"⁴⁴ The situation became more complicated when El Cartel de Sinaloa started to demand similar "courtesies". Arturo Aguilar sums up a generally widespread solution. "So as not to affect interests on either side, we sought out a middle ground."⁴⁵

The middle ground consisted of taking into account, among other factors, the sensitivity of the criminals. On one occasion, Arturo Aguilar received a telephone call; a Zeta commander wanted to convey his annoyance because a published news item claimed he had fled from a police chase. The commander clarified energetically, "We did not run away, we entered the fray. We got the job done. That's what we're here for. We know we might not walk away, because maybe our time is right now, maybe in a while, maybe tomorrow. That's our life. We don't run away."⁴⁶

Sandra Silva, a reporter for various media, expands on the semantic rules about how criminals were to be described: "They did not run away from a place, they withdrew;" they "were not delinquents, they were armed subjects." Los Zetas reinforced their argument by taking advantage of systemic and pedagogic brutality. The kidnapping and murder of *La Opinión-Milenio* reporter Eliseo Barrón in May 2009 has been attributed to Los Zetas.

In their dealings with the media, El Cartel de Sinaloa—according to another journalist who chose to remain anonymous—"was not as threatening as Los Zetas, but when they wanted to strike, they hit you

before you knew what was coming." In the end, they were after the same thing: regulating what was published in the media. Alejandro Hernández Pacheco (a Televisa cameraman who sought asylum in the United States) told us that when the story broke about El Cartel de Sinaloa control over the prison in Gómez Palacio, Durango, they sent the instruction to "tone down the balls of the Margarita Rojas story [Director of the Gómez Palacio Penitentiary]. They said we should let that story slide, that the business about Margarita shouldn't be aired."⁴⁷

On the other hand, the shootout at the *El Siglo de Torreón* building in August 2009 and November 2011 has been attributed to El Cartel del Poniente (allied to Sinaloa against Los Zetas), as well as the kidnapping of 4 employees from the same periodical in February 2013, not to mention attacks on the federal police who were guarding the building, one of whom caused the death of a pedestrian. In comparative terms, one might say Sinaloa wielded a more controlled form of brutality.

The media and the government

Those journalists who opted for some level of resistance did so while assuming the ongoing burden of their solitude. They knew it was suicide to seek the support of government agencies. Arturo Aguilar sums this up: "Many municipal, state, federal, or military agents switched sides. I no longer knew who to watch out for, the bad guys we knew about or the ones who remained unknown."⁴⁸

This perception of helplessness was accentuated by the fact that the Mechanism for Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists of the Secretaría de Gobernación "did not respond," according to Ricardo Mendoza, editorial director of *Vanguardia*, a newspaper edited in Saltillo, the Mechanism "was a joke." After an attack on *Vanguardia* "they had us go to Monterrey to take down our statements. Six months passed before we heard from them again. Then they called to tell us that they had come up with a panic button. That was it."⁴⁹

The solitude and unease were accentuated by their ignorance of the magnitude of the threat. They lacked a panoramic vision, a risk assessment that would take into consideration the evolution of hostilities in the remainder of Coahuila and the nation. The editorial director of *La Vanguardia de Saltillo* recalls that "no one had a handle on what was going

on." It was impossible. The information was fragmented and unreliable.⁵⁰

The federal government did possess a broader perspective and a good general understanding of the battlefields, but it did not share its knowledge and analysis with social figures (or at least not formally; in personal conversations, there was always some general or official who was willing to entrust evaluations and details to people they confided in). They justified this with the desire to avoid panic among the public and to cover up their own complicities and inefficacies. No matter what the cause, they were the "*ninis*" or "neither-nors"⁵¹ of helplessness and impunity: they neither protected nor informed. Wittingly or unwittingly, they became criminal accomplices.

The Resistance

The journalists who chose to resist mapped out risks on their own, designing entry and escape routes. Armando Moreno recalls: "There were times when I preferred not to go home and I slept in the car. If I did set foot in the house, I was in and out. I felt like they had broken in. I didn't trust anyone." He reduced the stress by watching cartoons or reading comics.

Despite their reputation for being selfish scoundrels, the journalists of La Laguna set an example in terms of solidarity. They would share experiences and information, and they accompanied one another whenever they could. They had a single objective: to get through the day-to-day and survive, hoping that one day, the violence would diminish. Moreno blurted out a phrase that sums up a widespread attitude: "You have to respect death; no egos."⁵²

They internalized the value of linguistic precision. In order to describe the criminals they resorted—as did the rest of the population—to neutral words: wrongdoers, mischief makers, bad guys, those guys, company men, the last letter crew, etcetera. They also incorporated unwritten codes and behavioral guides for the criminals. A journalist would "omit" in his notes "the make of a vehicle, because from the characteristics you'd know what group you were dealing with: Cherokees or Tsurus were Gómez Palacio guys [Sinaloa]. Rams, Lobos, Jettas, were from Torreón, Los Zetas. You got to know them."⁵³

When they were threatened, the reporters defended themselves by transferring to others the responsibility for handling a news item or by

censoring it. Aguilar tells of having said to one of them: "One moment, Sir! We are reporters, we answer to a boss. He's the one who decides, authorizes, modifies, takes out, puts in, determines whether something is published or not. Don't kill the messenger."⁵⁴

In summary, the unwritten commandments were: abstain from mocking or belittling the courage, honor, and dignity of the criminals; avoid providing excessive details regarding their names, methods, or business; get to know the particulars of each gang; avoid investigative journalism in cases of extreme violence; and act with the understanding that the authorities are in the service of the cartels. Javier Garza, editorial director of *El Siglo de Torreón* during those years, explains: "One matter of consensus among the journalists was that we would only publish what the authorities had already confirmed via a press bulletin, report or conference."⁵⁵

In the background, there was a disquieting presumption: if the government was infiltrated, then the information broadcast by its representatives would be reasonably acceptable to "them". They would also modify the content of news items, according to Garza:

[*El Siglo de Torreón*] adopted a very limited and basic way of informing about organized crime. We compensated this with stories that included criminal statistics, the increase in armed robberies, economic and social impact of violence, testimonials of those who lived in its shadow, and links between poverty, unemployment and crime.⁵⁶

The resistance was completed by creating circles of trust and self-protection. Garza explains this in the following fashion:

My inner circle was inside the copy room with people who went out on the streets, with other editors and the directors of the newspaper. I made decisions with them as to how, where, and with what headlines, copy, or images we would publish news items about violence.⁵⁷

Then came the relationship with the surrounding area, the capital, the rest of Mexico, and the international press.

Some media had formal editorial boards. When *Vanguardia* stopped reporting in Saltillo due to intimidation from Los Zetas, their editorial director, Ricardo Mendoza, told us of an exchange of opinions with a member of the editorial board in one of the bi-weekly meetings. As they

had stopped covering some news, "one of the board members rebuked us: 'This can't be, it's an embarrassment [that the editorial profile has been kidnapped]. If they asked me to participate in a march against crime, I would go, even if they told us they might fire into the crowd.'

"A newspaper director replied: 'If those same gunmen communicated with you and told you they were outside your home and that as you left to go to the march, they were going to mow you down and then go inside and kill your entire family, would you still go outside?'

"The dissident merely shrugged and fell silent. The meeting continued in a pleasantly uncomfortable fashion with other matters."⁵⁸

El Siglo de Torreón had no editorial board, but it did reach out to other social figures for the formulation of editorial decisions. Javier Garza describes it as follows:

One circle was with trusted friends in business circles, civil society organisms (CSOs) or politics. Through them, we tried to get a feel for what was being said and what our audiences expected to see. We also knew from them that what was being said about newspaper work, above all the criticism (partly true) that claimed we were not publishing everything that was going on.

Another group was of businesspeople, politicians, and CSO leaders who we would talk to now and then. Many of them sought us out to provide commentary. We also had contact with national media and international correspondents in order to more broadly broadcast the situation of the violence and thus, exert more pressure on the authorities.

An additional circle was that of the victims. There still was not much activism and the organizations had not yet been formed [during the 2007-2012 period], but there were victims who approached us to discuss what they had suffered: muggings, extortion, the murder of relatives or friends, kidnappings. They were few and far between, because the majority preferred to remain silent.

And then there were the constant talks with officials on the front lines: the commander of a military region, the delegate from the district attorney's office and the PGR, mayors and directors of public safety. With them, it was a matter of trying to obtain information about where the shit was hitting the fan and anticipating any threats that might

appear. Despite the fact that our coverage was harshly criticized, they never tried to impose any subject, focus, or headline on me. There was also a line that was kept open for emergency situations, especially with the regional military chief.

Garza concludes with a general reflection:

I never felt that it was a solitary endeavor, because I always felt the support of my bosses, colleagues, and friends. But there was one aspect I was unable to share with anyone: knowing that something might happen to someone because of an editorial decision I had made. I knew that choosing how to publish or headline a news item could cause harm or death to a colleague.⁵⁹

National and international media

Missing from this panorama is the role performed by national and international media. The capital ignored for some time the transcendence of different battle fronts in Coahuila and the particularities of its regions.

Although these stories need to be inserted into a broader context, we would like to close this section with a concrete incident.

Both criminals and state governors in rural Mexico follow news from the capital very closely. They appreciate the importance of headlines regarding, for example, the deployment of federal forces. One event that gained enormous visibility nationwide was the kidnapping of journalists that took place on July 26, 2010. The media were covering a mutiny at Gómez Palacio prison—controlled by El Cartel de Sinaloa—after learning that the inmates were venturing out to commit homicides in Torreón. This information, by the way, was made known thanks to a video posted on YouTube by Los Zetas of an interrogation of a Gómez Palacio police officer.

Gunmen from El Cartel de Sinaloa reacted by kidnapping Héctor Gordo, correspondent of the Televisa program *Punto de Partida* hosted by Denise Maerker; Alejandro Hernández, cameraman for Televisa-Laguna; and Javier Canales, cameraman for Multimedios Laguna. They demanded that Televisa and *Milenio-Multimedios* provide equitable media coverage. They requested a video be broadcast of the interrogation of a Torreón police office that revealed connections between Los Zetas and state officials of

Coahuila, including Governor Humberto Moreira.

The video was broadcast locally, but Televisa and *Milenio* refused to air it nationwide. On her program *Punto de Partida*, Denise Maerker denounced the impossibility of carrying out journalistic work under such conditions. She spoke of the kidnapping without providing details regarding the location and broadcast her program with a black screen.⁶⁰ There was a scandal, and the kidnapped journalists were quickly released. When this happened, Genaro García Luna, Secretary of Seguridad Pública at the time, gave a press conference to inform the public that the federal police had rescued the reporters. However, one of those who were kidnapped offered a very different version.

According to Alejandro Hernández, Televisa correspondent, the "bad guys put us out on the street [and] we started to walk [towards] where they indicated we would find the police". Then they left. Once they found the police, he added, "they wanted to record the rescue in order to take credit." He recalls sarcastically the statement by García Luna that it "was an operation where no shots were fired, and the criminals managed to escape." The journalist sets the record straight: "That was bullshit. That wasn't what happened, but I couldn't refute it because those guys were capable of anything."⁶¹

This happened in 2010, and the scandal caused by the kidnapping had an impact on the debate in the federal government, which was at a strategic turning point, on the verge of concentrating its forces in an all-out attack against Los Zetas. It was a reminder of the enormous influence of the mass media on public policy.

Social media

While we did confirm the importance of social media, it turned out to be impossible to establish its role with greater precision. It is important to recall that the wave of violence overlapped with the boom of Twitter and Facebook (indeed, Twitter was launched in 2006) and an increase in the proliferation of smartphones.

These were used by all of the players involved and, according to Javier Garza, "We started to note the phenomenon of people who believed a tweet or Facebook post without an identifiable source more than the reported and verified news items we were publishing."⁶² Like Tamaulipas and other

regions, some anonymous accounts emerged. On Twitter, @BadNewsLaguna and on Facebook, @CodigoRojoLaguna. It was one of the forms of resistance developed by La Laguna residents and was also used by the cartels as a means of communication. For now, we lack information that allows us to delve more deeply into this insufficiently researched aspect.

42 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Sandra Silva, May 15, 2019.

43 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Arturo Aguilar, *La Opinión-Milenio*, May 8, 2019.

44 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Armando Moreno, *Milenio Laguna*, May 13, 2019.

45 Arturo Aguilar, *op. cit.*

46 *Loc. cit.*

47 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Alejandro Hernández Pacheco, cameraman for *Televisa*, June 26, 2019.

48 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Arturo Aguilar, *La Opinión-Milenio*, May 8, 2019.

49 Sergio Aguayo interview of Ricardo Mendoza, *Vanguardia*, November 9, 2017.

50 *Loc. cit.*

51 * "Ninis" originally was a term used to designate the unemployed sector of the youth population (although it has since extended to other age groups). In Spanish, it was derived from a phrase used to describe someone who "neither studies, nor works", and it is similar to others used in Asia or the United States (for example, NEET: *not in employment, education or training*); its origins go back to the first decade of the 20th century.

52 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Armando Moreno, *Milenio Laguna*, May 13, 2019.

53 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Sandra Silva, freelance reporter, May 15, 2019.

54 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Arturo Aguilar, *La Opinión-Milenio*, May 8, 2019.

55 Sergio Aguayo interview of Javier Garza Ramos, former Assistant Editorial Director of *El Siglo de Torreón*, November 9, 2017.

56 Javier Garza Ramos, "Under Fire in Mexico", *ReVista Harvard Review of Latin America*, Journalism of the Americas (spring-summer, 2011), <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/under-fire-mexico> (consulted on November 10, 2019).

57 Javier Garza, email to Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán, December 2, 2019.

58 Ricardo Mendoza, Editorial Director of *Vanguardia* (May 2008-September 2017), "El día que Los Zetas soltaron sus demonios," Unpublished. Undated.

59 Javier Garza, e-mail... *op. cit.*

60 Denise Maerker Anucia Suspensión de Emisión de Punto de Partida, YouTube, July 29, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tD-WFaGoJdA>

61 Francisco Rodríguez interview of Alejandro Hernández Pacheco, cameraman for *Televisa*, June 26, 2019.

62 Javier Garza Ramos, e-mail to Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán, December 31, 2019.

5. The business community

When violent crime began to affect the state in different ways, businesspeople reacted in several manners: some avoided the subject, while others became criminal accomplices. And then there were those who set about finding solutions.

There were very powerful reasons to look the other way: the terror inspired by the criminals, who seemed omnipotent due to the protection the authorities granted them; the dependence on neglectful or complicit authorities who wished to conceal the truth; disorganization; and an interest in receiving kickbacks.

Businesspeople in Mexico who have opted to confront organized crime are subdivided into various categories. At both extremes are those who organize armed groups ("*guardias blancas*", or self-defense groups) and those who seek peaceful solutions through the support of existing institutions. The latter include the businesspeople of La Laguna. In order to better understand them, we have selected some of the events that accelerated business involvement in the fight against criminal violence.

The origins

On September 9, 2007, the magazine *Proceso* published a lengthy text about the strategy employed by Los Zetas of kidnapping businesspeople. "The most hard-hit zone," the article claimed, "is the La Laguna municipal area."⁶³ We will now reconstruct the business response based mostly on two interviews. One was given by Edna Jaime, director of México Evalúa; the other by Jorge Tello Peón, a La Laguna business consultant.⁶⁴

"In 2008-2009 a group of businesspeople decided to mobilize to promote security," Edna Jaime states. Alejandro Martí led the organizational efforts. "One businessperson summoned a businessperson from another region and thus, a fairly large group was brought together of businesspeople across the nation who wanted to find some kind of solution to the problem.

"México Evalúa was launched in 2009, and its first task was to generate a system of indicators to follow up on criminal phenomena." Its objective was

to "orient Mexican public opinion" about instances of insecurity. Instruments would be employed such as "citizen observatories backed by businesspeople" who would obtain, process and publicize information provided by the authorities and society at large. A notable trait of these observatories was that they refused to accept public resources.

According to Jaime, some businesspeople of La Laguna stand out for their independence, which she explains as follows: "they are businesspeople who are somehow globalized; they do not depend on their relationship to the governor, nor do they rely on local or state government to function. They do, however, require basic public services, but they owe them nothing beyond that, there is no rent-seeking."

Jorge Tello Peón accompanied the effort from the start. He was responsible for the business intelligence systems of Cementos Mexicanos (Cemex). From there, he actively participated in business efforts to address insecurity in Nuevo León and La Laguna, where he still provides consultation to a group of businesspeople. Tello provides a detailed vision of the evolution experienced by the participation of the business community.⁶⁵

The year was 2011:

One of the businesspeople who formed the so-called "Group of 10" in Monterrey is from La Laguna. He invited his friends from that region to a dinner party in Monterrey. I attended, and they asked me to tell them about what was being done in Nuevo León and how security had been improved statewide. In Torreón and La Laguna, things were truly dramatic.

From there came the invitation to participate and form a project for the group of La Laguna businesspeople. In the second half of 2011, there was an initial meeting at the home of one of them. Two governors were invited, or I ought to say all three, because the governor-elect was Rubén Moreira, but Jorge Torres was present as interim governor and Jorge Herrera had just taken possession in Durango. The project was laid out for all of them.

The main obstacle they faced was the political division of La Laguna into two states, seven municipal areas, two military regions, and two military zones. In the end, Tello and Jaime explain, three major projects were

achieved; the first two in tandem with the authorities and the third, with society at large:

- a) A metropolitan police force
- b) a metropolitan anti-kidnapping squad, and
- c) a civic association that would constantly provide follow-up for the issue based on official information.

One of the businesspeople interviewed during our research asked to remain anonymous. He explained that the original La Laguna group was formed by eight businesspeople joined together by a "rigorous examination of probity and political independence. We had to remain united because during the Humberto Moreira administration, we businesspeople exerted pressure separately without achieving absolutely anything."

There was a similar precedent in Coahuila. In 1996, businesspeople came together to create an anti-kidnapping group and requested support from the governor at the time, Rogelio Montemayor. They invited Enrique Ruiz Arévalo, a former federal police officer who was trained in the United States. Within a few years, the group had eradicated kidnapping and decided to dedicate its efforts to combatting drug dealers. We assume that Los Zetas identified him as a potentially dangerous enemy, because they abducted him. He went missing the day after the failed kidnapping attempt against businessman Carlos Herrera.

The Metropolitan Police Force

This initiative got off to a rough start due to the intervention of various federal, state, and municipal agencies. The businesspeople, through their consultants, found a formula in March 2013 and provided the necessary resources.

A meeting of the business community was called as a result of a series of violent acts —attacks against the Rebollo Mendoza family, who were mayors of Gómez Palacio (Ricardo from 2007 to 2009 and Rocío from 2010 to 2013); kidnappings of workers from *El Siglo de Torreón* and aggressions against the federal police officers who were standing guard at the newspaper. "Here it was decided," Tello explained, "to bring the subject before the Gabinete Nacional de Seguridad led by the Secretary of Gobernación, Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong." The cabinet, he added, "had

itinerant meetings." In one "meeting at La Laguna, both governors were present as well as the entire Gabinete Nacional de Seguridad." Also present were "businesspeople who expressed their concern, because the authorities had failed to come to an agreement." From there emerged the commitment to "form a Mando Especial led by the Secretaría de Defensa Nacional. It was—and continues to be—an atypical command, because since its creation, state and municipal police have been coordinated since then by a military officer appointed by the Secretaría de Defensa."

Their headquarters were built by the business community on a piece of land granted by the authorities. The businesspeople constructed and equipped the building. They then contributed a second vehicle for every one provided by the authorities, and so on with computers or whatever was required as they went along.

And so, the Metropolitan Police Force was born. "The command is held by a military officer, who coordinates with police from Coahuila, Durango, and the federal forces. The Sedena provides the intelligence required for ops."

The Special Command worked because it solved conflict-related issues that arose from the separate jurisdictions of different levels of government. The underlying concept was that of a "joint op" in which various agencies would act with a single objective and under a single command. In the words of Jorge Tello, "efficiency combined with legality and legitimacy."

There were, of course, all sorts of problems. One of these was the reaction of the criminal gangs, once they realized the negative implications of the Special Command. Such was the case of the disappearance and alleged murder of Jesús Castañeda, a representative of the business community and the man in charge of equipping the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Force.

The Anti-Kidnapping Squad

The second major project, the Unidad Metropolitana Anti-Secuestros, as Tello describes it, was "very satisfactory in terms of results." In his opinion, which was corroborated by other sources, one of the indicators of success has been the implementation of the accusatory penal system:

After it made progress in Durango, they decided they had better teach it to the people of Coahuila. This meant notable improvement in the measurable efficacy of the employment of *abridged trials*, which have succeeded in reducing the time spent meting out justice from one to two years (the average duration of an ordinary trial) to two or three months. The key lies in reviewing all of the evidence and carefully integrating the investigative files.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to obtain figures regarding kidnappings that took place before 2011. The relatives of victims chose not to file reports out of fear, and we are therefore unaware how many unknown persons disappeared in that region during the era of peak violence.⁶⁶ Even unofficial figures are not reliable, because the actual figure may be up to six times greater than the total number of reports.⁶⁷ One indicator of the seriousness of the problem was the disappearance in 2007 and 2008 of the two anti-kidnapping task force chiefs in Torreón.⁶⁸

The Civic Council of Laguna Institutions

According to Edna Jaime, "The first Observatory backed by México Evalúa was in La Laguna and the second, in Saltillo." They, in turn, took as their model "the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones de Nuevo León and their Centro de Inteligencia Ciudadana. It started out with a single person who continues to head this observatory, Marco Zamarripa, with a solid council of businesspeople willing to finance the experiment." In Jaime's opinion, Zamarripa is good "at doing numbers" and "at not allowing himself to be intimidated by the authorities."

The Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna, Jaime continues, built "indicators that go beyond crime statistics. These were the most innovative of all the observatories." Among other aspects, she mentions that they "began to geo-reference crime, to make heat maps, to elaborate the so-called hot zones." Currently "it is an observatory that in addition to matters of public safety deals with issues of public spending, public works." That is to say, it is both an institution that "demands accountability from the authorities" and a watchdog organization.⁶⁹

In contrast, the relationship between businesspeople and other social figures was very limited. The private sector preferred to focus on the construction of institutions and capacities centered on the reduction of

homicide and kidnappings. Perhaps because of a lack of dialogue, the victims' groups of the disappeared experienced this as a lack of interest or a slight. We will get back to this in our recommendations.

63 "El azote de los empresarios," *Proceso*, September 7, 2007.

<https://www.proceso.com.mx/92231/el-azote-de-los-empresarios/amp>

64 Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán interview of Edna Jaime, Director of México Evalúa, November 19, 2019.

65 Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán interview of Jorge Tello, Director of Madison Inteligencia, November 19, 2019.

66 Javier Garza, journalist, e-mail to Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán, December 5, 2019.

67 "Revelan plagios cifra negra," *El Siglo de Torreón*, April 4, 2013, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/856215.revelan-plagios-cifra-negra.html>

68 "Declaran 'ausente' a Enrique Ruiz Arévalo, 9 años después de su desaparición," *Vanguardia*, May 12, 2016, <https://vanguardia.com.mx/articulo/declaran-ausente-enrique-ruiz-arevalo-9-anos-despues-de-su-desaparicion> and "Confirman plagio del jefe antisequestros en Torreón, Coahuila," *Vanguardia*, July 16, 2008, http://wradio.com.mx/radio/2008/07/16/nacional/1216254420_633712.html

69 Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán interview of Edna Jaime, *op. cit.*, November 19, 2019.

6. The victims and their organizations

The systemic brutality of Los Zetas sought to terrorize the population in order to facilitate charging for protection money (*derecho de piso*) or kidnappings, to mug people and sell drugs and, in summary, to commit all kinds of crimes. Society had to be convinced of the futility of resistance, a credible argument given that the complicity of authorities was taken for granted.

One of the most aggressive ways to strike fear into the heart of society is the disappearance of a person. This method was already used by the New York mob in the 20th century when an act considered a wrongdoing was so great, the family also had to be punished. In Latin America, it was used for the first time by Guatemalan military officers in the 1960s and 70s, and later appropriated by authoritarian military regimes in the Southern Cone. In Mexico, it formed part of the government strategy to combat guerrilla fighters in the 1970s. All action triggers a subsequent reaction and, in La Laguna, as in the so-called Dirty War, there were victims' relatives who resisted by resorting to methods explored in previous decades by other families of the missing.

Individual and family work

The early years were particularly difficult for the relatives of those who were abducted by organized crime. They were forced to repeat the same ordeal suffered by their predecessors during the Mexican Dirty War.

The initial reactions came from persons and families who made the rounds at state and federal district attorney's offices, attempting to file reports that the authorities blocked on many occasions, discouraging them in order to dissimulate their own incapacity, complicity, and lack of willpower. They used arguments such as: the loved one "would turn up soon"; "she eloped with her boyfriend"; perhaps they were "up to something"; "take better care of your other children." They were searched for in hospitals, morgues, in the reception areas of official agencies or their headquarters, everywhere. Investigations were launched, witnesses interviewed, evidence gathered and numbers taken. They were tireless.

They began to exchange their stories and experiences. Little by little, the families got to know one another. They created organizations dedicated to consultation, accompaniment, and activism. Most of them were women who carried the photographs of their loved ones everywhere, as organizations had done during the Dirty War in Mexico (Comité ¡Eureka! or H.I.J.O.S.) or the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, among many other groups.

During those early years, they suffered social stigmatization, because a portion of society was "insensitive; they criminalized the missing and the families themselves." That's how Lourdes Herrera of Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Coahuila (Fuundec) remembers it.⁷⁰ Their main allies were communications media and religious groups.

Groups

Victims' groups were, together with businesspeople and the media, on the front lines of resistance against criminals. In the years of greatest violence, two groups emerged in La Laguna of relatives of the missing: Fuundec and Grupo Vida. It is very important to recall, once more, the enormous contrast with Durango, where no significant articulation of victims' relatives took place. Not until 2019 did Grupo Vida begin to work in that area. There are currently Durango residents who are members of the group. It is possible that within the next few years, we may learn with greater precision what has taken place in a state where the strong presence of El Cartel de Sinaloa is still felt.

The nucleus from which the movement of the missing spread was in Saltillo, Coahuila. The Fray Juan de Larios Diocese Center for Human Rights, of the Saltillo Diocese, was the first organization to accompany relatives and encourage them to work together in order to obtain better results in their search efforts.⁷¹ It would be more correct to say together as women, because the majority of those who mobilized have been female. In 2009, the Bishop Raúl Vera invited Blanca Martínez Bustos to coordinate efforts with regards to missing persons in Coahuila. They had already worked together in the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas (the very same that was once led by Bishop Samuel Ruiz). She became the first general director of the

organization.

Fuundec brought together families who came from other municipal areas and even other states whose relatives had gone missing in Coahuila. On December 19, 2009, twelve relatives invited the media to a press conference regarding the disappearance of people in Coahuila.⁷² During that first stage, the tasks of the group were divided into three regional structures: southeastern, based in Saltillo; Laguna, based in Torreón; and central, based in Mexico City. Over the first few years, there was no real response from the authorities or from the general public.

Fuundec created the methods later followed by other Mexican groups: outreach campaigns with data about the missing, lobbying the authorities, searches in the field and extermination zones, forums for analysis, proposals for legal recourse, consultation and accompaniment of the victims' families, creation of networks and alliances with groups from other states, as well as universities, civic organizations, and international organizations. Fuundec became one of the most solid organizations of its kind nationwide. In this regard, of course, the weight of the Diocese of Saltillo and the prestige of Bishop Raúl Vera were influential, but above all this was due to the efforts of the relatives of the disappeared.

Grupo Vida

The first organization originating in La Laguna was Víctimas por sus Derechos en Acción (Grupo Vida).

They began with the search for Silvia Stephanie Sánchez-Viesca Ortiz, who disappeared in November 2004. She was 16 years old, and in her photo one can appreciate all the freshness and sweetness of an adolescent. The head of the household, her mother Silvia Ortiz, mobilized the family immediately and started to hang posters and carry out marches, masses, and protests. Over the first few years, they were accompanied by relatives and friends, but as the violence increased, social support gradually waned. Silvia Ortiz recalls: "Most people started to withdraw; we were left with only the closest family members."⁷³

Silvia proudly adds, "We were stubborn and tenacious." They filed reports despite the obstacles they ran into, they took to the streets to search and post photographs, they gave interviews to the media, they organized marches and strikes. According to Óscar Sánchez (Grupo Vida), "the fundamental basis of the path taken by Grupo Vida and all of the victims was to go hand-in-hand with the Church and the press... we went to a lot of television stations, we appeared on emblematic programs."⁷⁴ He concludes by stating, "The media were really on board." The original families held their meetings at the Vicarage of San José and the Seminary of the Diocese of Torreón. Moreover, the seminarists themselves would fulfill their social service with them and provided support through spiritual guidance and mediation with the authorities. The opposite was true of the businesspeople. Óscar recalls that of the La Laguna businesspeople, despite having reached out to them, "they never responded [...] it makes me angry, it makes me feel ashamed."⁷⁵

One important moment was the Caravana del Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad, or MPJD. This Caravan reached Torreón in June 2011, midway through a particularly violent year. This mobilization wound up placing the agenda of victims on nationwide media. In April 2013, the organization Laguneros por la Paz, a group that emerged within the framework of that movement, organized a debate about the General Law for Victims.

When their searches did not bear fruit, they emulated the parents of the normal school students of Ayotzinapa and went out into the field to search for the remains of the missing themselves. They started in January 2015 and by May 2015, they had succeeded in identifying 24 positive sites (that is to say, with bone shards or fragments). They continued to work at 13 of these, the largest of which is Ejido Patrocinio.

Another activity the members of Grupo Vida focused on was petitioning the state government for the construction of a memorial to pay tribute to the victims of the La Laguna region. It was inaugurated in November 2017.⁷⁶

Relations between groups and state governments

The relationship between groups and the authorities has been complex and has displayed both discord and concordances that have allowed concrete steps to be taken in favor of the families of the missing.

There are two clearly distinct stages. During the Humberto Moreira administration things were difficult, given that "he didn't know what was going on in Coahuila. It was all new to him," according to Lourdes Herrera. "The first meeting was not held until September 2010", and he did not attend the following encounters, putting an end to any dialogue. Upon leaving his post as governor, Herrera states, Humberto Moreira left behind "major

unfinished business... the missing."⁷⁷ Rubén Moreira "was not immune to the subject" because he had already worked on human rights issues as a federal congressman. "He agreed to dialogue with a positive disposition, with political goodwill." It was not easy, and there were moments of major friction. Despite an improvement in relations, "we were unable to locate anyone," Herrera concludes.

One of the main achievements was the creation in September 2012 of the Grupo Autónomo de Trabajo (GAT), a meeting place between victims' organizations (initially FUUNDEC, Fray Juan de Larios) and the state government. Over the following years, Coahuila became a national example of the dialogue between victims and authorities, and for the creation of legislation and public policy.

In 2012, the Law of Prevention, Protection, Service and Assistance for Victims and Injured Parties of Crimes Defined as Trafficking of Persons in the State of Coahuila de Zaragoza; in 2013 the Programa Integral de Atención a Familiares de Personas Desaparecidas (Profade) was launched; in 2014 the Law for Victims for the State of Coahuila de Zaragoza, the Comisión Ejecutiva de Atención a Víctimas (of the same region) and the Law for the Declaration of Absence by Disappearance of Persons of the State of Coahuila de Zaragoza; and in 2016, the Law for the Localization, Recovery and Forensic Identification of Persons from the State of Coahuila de Zaragoza.

On the other hand, Grupo Vida succeeded in holding bi-monthly meetings with the authorities of Coahuila. Together with Governor Rubén Moreira Valdez, they handled general advances in individual cases and proposed needs and demands. Over the next few years, significant results were obtained, especially in the area of finding bone shards or fragments. They have become an example to the whole country in the area of field searches. We will revisit their pending agenda in our final recommendations.

Durango

Grupo Vida has started to work in the Durango zone of La Laguna. Óscar Sánchez comments that people from that state "are starting to approach (Grupo Vida) and file reports." The families of Durango were unorganized because "the authorities of Durango are far behind on the subject of missing persons [...] the majority were bullied into not filing reports [...] right now, they are starting to gain trust [...]. The group," he continues, "has nearly doubled in size in 2019 and negotiations with the Durango authorities have already begun."⁷⁸

In previous stages, the Seminar on Violence and Peace documented the history and evolution of Coahuila victims' organizations in-depth. For more information, consult our report *Formación y desarrollo de los colectivos de búsqueda de personas desaparecidas en Coahuila: lecciones para el futuro*, https://violenciaypaz.colmex.mx/assets/docs_pubs/original/29/Formacion_y_desarrollo_de_los_colectivos.pdf?1580251978

⁷⁰ Iván Corpus interview of Lourdes Herrera, February 2018.

⁷¹ Armando Ríos, "Raúl Vera recibe a familiares de desaparecidos, 'son víctimas de la indolencia del gobierno,'" *Vanguardia*, May 14, 2017, <https://www.vanguardia.com.mx/articulo/raul-vera-recibe-familiares-de-desaparecidos-son-victimas-de-la-indolencia-del-gobierno>

⁷² Leticia Espinoza, "Van 21 desaparecidos en Coahuila en el año; las familias claman justicia", *Zócalo de Saltillo*, December 20, 2011, http://www.zocalo.com.mx/new_site/articulo/van-21-desaparecidos-en-coahuila-en-el-ano-familias-claman-justicia

⁷³ Jacobo Dayán interview of Silvia Ortiz, May 15, 2019.

⁷⁴ Jacobo Dayán interview of Óscar Sánchez Viesca, May 14, 2019.

⁷⁵ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁶ "Inauguran memorial por desaparecidos en Torreón", *Vanguardia*, November 17, 2017, <https://vanguardia.com.mx/articulo/inauguran-memorial-por-desaparecidos-en-torreon-11>

⁷⁷ Iván Corpus a interview of Lourdes Herrera, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸ Jacobo Dayán interview of Óscar Sánchez Viesca, *op. cit.*

7. Clandestine cremation sites and extermination zones

The tragedy of the disappeared unmasks governmental indifference toward victims. This omission has been one of the most painful of all. One of the crudest examples of disdain is the revelation made by *The Washington Post* (in November 2012) regarding a list of over 26,000 missing persons covered up by the presidential administration of Felipe Calderón Hinojosa.⁷⁹ Given the indolence of the State, victims' organizations and media placed the issue on the national agenda. The creation of a Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas (and above all, the commission's report dated January 6, 2020) sheds light on the immensity of the tragedy.⁸⁰

In two previous reports (*En el desamparo* and *El yugo zeta*) we documented the existence in Coahuila of closed (the Piedras Negras prison) and open-air (La Laguna) extermination camps. In the latter region, as we have already stated, 24 open extermination zones have been located.

As part of a collaborative agreement between the government of Coahuila, the Academia Interamericana de Derechos Humanos and El Colegio de México, the Fiscalía de Coahuila provided us with copies of judicial files compiled by the Subprocuraduría de Personas Desaparecidas de Coahuila regarding searches carried out in conjunction with the federal police, Sedena, Grupo de Armas y Tácticas Especiales (Gatem), Fuerza Coahuila, and the municipal police of Torreón, among others. Moreover, Grupo Vida provided us access to their search registry. As shown in Annex 5, this material is very detailed and abundant.

Among other things, it confirms the importance of Grupo Vida's presence. The first judicial document regarding this subject is a declaration by its president, Silvia Ortiz, before the Fiscalía. There, she stated:

An unknown person who herds goats in the Ejido Patricinio of San Pedro, Coahuila told me that frequently on that plot of land "armed persons were seen aboard pick-ups who were transporting people in

order to deprive them of their lives." He also commented to me that "large drums were found lying where they had left them along the canal."⁸¹

The reference to drums confirms that the method used to eradicate bodies is identical to that documented in previous investigations regarding the northern region of the state. They brought in cadavers or living persons to be murdered on site. Then their remains were burned in 200-liter drums with diesel or gasoline and afterwards, tossed onto the ground.

Below, we salvage fragments of statements included in the judicial files that exemplify what took place at Ejido Patrocinio, the most extensive site of recovered remains (minor style adjustments have been made to facilitate reading; however, the essence remains the same).

At the Ejido Patrocinio you saw a lot of movement at all hours of the day, but mostly during the night. A lot of pick-ups and cars, recent models, entered with tinted glass and armed persons. It was rumored that the bad guys moved around there, that is to say, members of the Los Zetas cartel, in order to carry out their foul deeds. You would occasionally hear gunfire but because of the fear and the fact that we were experiencing a lot of insecurity, no one dared blow the whistle. In those years, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011, a lot of [neighbors] had to abandon their homes for fear they would receive some kind of threat.

Starting at eight in the evening, people would go indoors and turn a blind eye to whatever was going on.

The environment felt very heavy, with bad vibes, it was also rumored that out there in the vacant area they had people kidnapped and that there were always people standing guard so that the locals wouldn't go anywhere near there.⁸²

The testimonials of victims' groups confirm these statements. Silvia Ortiz sums it up with a single phrase: "Patrocinio was madness," "the goatherders, wood choppers, and cowboys are our best informants... pickups would arrive full of people, jammed full... then rising columns of smoke would be seen and people wouldn't come back out ... [on some occasions] there were 90 drums lined up."⁸³

María de la Luz López obtained the testimony of a relative who worked

near Patrocinio, and who told her: "There's a lot of killing going on, you can hear the moans and you can hear how they cry. The smell is awful... there were tremendous massacres day after day... thousands of burned bodies... they lined up the shoes, from little children... and the [locals] became accustomed to living that way."⁸⁴ It was methodical extermination, similar to that described in our two previous reports (*En el desamparo* and *El yugo zeta*).

There are bullet casings in the majority of these finds, confirming that some of the victims were executed on site. By the number of spent shells, mass executions may be inferred. At Ejido La Crisis, in the municipality of Matamoros, Coahuila, 456 casings were found.⁸⁵ As may be seen in Annex 5, when the quantity of fragments found is quite large, it turns out to be impossible to count them all and, instead, they are weighed. There are finds with thousands of bone fragments or thousands of grams. It is practically impossible to quantify them.

"One area with remains possessed 206 bones... the skeletal remains may be constituted by over 1000 bone fragments, therefore it is not possible to determine anthropologically how many individuals correspond to those fragments" that have been located.⁸⁶

The vast majority of the fragments found present high levels of combustion, which makes DNA extraction nearly impossible, as is indicated time and time again in the files listed in Annex 4:

The cadavers were exposed to intense fire for a very long time, leaving as a result carbonized and charred bone fragments that were later found.

This is not about fragments in graves, these are fragments that were left on the surface and due to the weather conditions [air and water] gradually sank in the first few centimeters [between 10 and 60 centimeters] where loose sand is found.

As traces of violence, charred bone fragments were located that had been deliberately carbonized in order to make the bodies disappear.⁸⁷

Parting from the information in the files and the search registries carried out by Grupo Vida, we composed a detailed graph with the finds at the main sites of clandestine cremation and extermination zones (see Annex 5).

There are incongruences in the registries that suggest a need to delve deeper into these investigations.

In the judicial texts, the Fiscalía does mention the work that remains to be done with the remains and fragments found thus far. For example, these finds ought to:

[...] be subject to an Anthropological Forensic examination by a laboratory to facilitate identification with a greater degree of certainty the origin, human or not [...] as well as a likely minimum number of individuals and any other identifying traits [or] artefacts and metallic shards that ought to be subject to crime lab investigation.⁸⁸

Despite this kind of recommendation, up until January 2020 the work has been done in few cases and with major time delays. While scarce, there are results: in the files, it is stated that positive identifications have been made of 29 or 30 men, 5 women, and 6 undetermined individuals. In only a single case was it possible to establish the victim's identity.

Deficiencies may also be observed. We find ourselves before a task to be completed in tandem with ongoing consultation with the families of the missing, but this has not always been the case. As Silvia Ortiz of Grupo Vida explains, the state district attorney's office has completed searches at Hacienda Las Colinas without inviting victims' organizations, nor were they notified of the results.

The process of search and observable identification in the files is chaotic and follows no clear protocol or order. Even the state attorney's office of Coahuila recognizes that 520 cadavers were buried in common graves without any DNA samples being taken.⁸⁹ Grupo Vida believes that samples were not taken from 800 bodies and has demanded their exhumation for posterior identification.

As for Durango, there was practically nothing there up until a few months ago in 2019, when Grupo Vida started to work with the state attorney's office and provide consultation for numerous relatives of the missing, including assistance in filing reports. Data regarding the missing included in Annex 2 are clear. The discrepancy in data between the Coahuila and Durango sections of La Laguna is so significant, that the most logical explanation is a lack of reports filed in Durango.

As has been amply documented, clandestine graves are being found

across the country. The Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda recognized that between 2006 and December 31, 2019, 3631 clandestine graves were reopened.⁹⁰ The largest is the one found on Colinas de Santa Fe in Veracruz (298 skulls and more than 22,900 bone fragments).⁹¹ The country finds itself in a serious forensic crisis: thousands of graves, over 30,000 unidentified bodies, and an enormous quantity of bone shards.⁹²

In the case of La Laguna, various of the clandestine burial and extermination sites occupy major tracts of land. The largest is Patrocinio, in San Pedro, Coahuila, followed by Estación Claudio, San Antonio del Alto, San Antonio de Gurza, Ejido El Venado, and Santa Elena, all of them in Coahuila. At the conclusion of this investigation, searches were beginning in Durango.

79 William Booth, "Mexico's Crime wave has left about 25,000 missing, government documents show," *The Washington Post*, Washington DC, November 29, 2012, The Americas Section, available at: (http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/mexicos-crime-wave-has-left-up-to-25000-missing-government-documents-show/2012/11/29/7ca4ee44-3a6a-11e2-9258-ac7c78d5c680_story.html).

80 "El país de las 2 mil fosas," 5° elemento, November 12, 2018, <https://quintoelab.org/project/el-pais-de-las-2-mil-fosas> "Lo que sabemos del 'tráiler de la muerte' de Jalisco," 5° elemento, September 20, 2018, <https://quintoelab.org/project/el-pais-de-las-2-mil-fosas> . A project specializing in this subject is "A dónde (lle)van (a) los desaparecidos", <https://adondevanlosdesaparecidos.org/>

81 File LI-SUBPNL-APP-062/2015.

82 Files LI-SUBPNL-APP-062/2015 y 002/SP/UIPNL/2017.

83 Jacobo Dayán interview of Silvia Ortiz, *op. cit.*

84 Jacobo Dayán interview of Lucy López, *op. cit.*

85 File LI-SUBPNL-APP-004/2015.

86 File LI-SUBPNL-APP-062/2015.

87 *Loc. cit.* and 002/SP/UIPNL/2017.

87 *Loc. cit.*

89 "Reconocen que enviaron 520 cadáveres a fosa común en Coahuila... sin tomarles el ADN", *Vanguardia*, July 18, 2018, <https://vanguardia.com.mx/articulo/reconocen-que-enviaron-520-cadaveres-fosa-comun-en-coahuila-sin-tomarles-el-adn>

90 Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas, Informe sobre fosas clandestinas y registro nacional de personas desaparecidas o no localizadas, January 6, 2020, <http://www.alejandroencinas.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/REGISTRODEPERSONASDESAPARECIDAS.pdf>

91 Jacobo Dayán, "La fosa más grande del país: Colinas de Santa Fe," *Aristegui noticias*, August 9, 2019, <https://aristeguinoticias.com/0908/mexico/la-fosa-mas-grande-del-pais->

[colinas-de-santa-fe-articulo/](#)

92 "En los Semefos hay 30 mil cadáveres sin identificar: CNDH," *La Jornada*, November 1, 2019, <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2019/11/01/politica/018n1pol>

8. The downfall of Los Zetas

In our previous sections, we explained the logic of the major figures involved. It remains to piece together the broader context, however. Only then will it become clear why we refer to the "reconquering" of La Laguna in quotation marks.

Coahuila is exceptional due to the rare coordination and convergence of government figures on all three levels. The government's willingness to listen and attend to the petitions of the business community and victims' organizations is equally notable. The former requested a metropolitan police force and that kidnapping be combatted; the latter asked for truth, justice, and specialized services. Both businesspeople and victims received support from the media, churches and civic state organisms, as well as from other parts of Mexico and abroad.

The business community of La Laguna was at a great advantage in having Jorge Tello Peón as a consultant. In addition to having gained the trust of the businesspeople in Nuevo León, he was an advisor to President Felipe Calderón. Thus, the foundation was laid for the exceptional nature of the Mando Especial created for La Laguna during the Enrique Peña Nieto administration: formally, the Sedena is in charge, but the Command is run by state police forces in both states, supported by the Policía Federal (previously) and the Guardia Nacional (at present).

In their public appearance at La Laguna, victims' organizations coincided more or less with the emergence in central Mexico of the Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad that visited Torreón during one of their caravans. Indeed, one of the Coahuila organizations (FUUNDEC) had already been operational for years and succeeded in becoming an avant-garde model for the rest of the country. With this in mind, let's create a timeline of events.

The major turning point

Around 2007, Los Zetas were already well positioned in Saltillo and the northern part of the state, and for some time they had been occupying

positions in Torreón, where they benefited from the protection of those who governed Coahuila. They launched a conquest of the local arena and took the people of La Laguna by surprise.

From 2008 to 2009, the violence in La Laguna received little attention, because there were more scandalous theaters of armed conflict in other parts of the country. The gunmen of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán had launched an offensive against the followers of the Beltrán Leyva brothers and their allies in Ciudad Juárez. This overlapped with the bloody rupture between El Cartel del Golfo and Los Zetas. And finally, there was the confrontation between Los Zetas and the Cartel de Sinaloa for control over the strategic La Laguna region. By 2011 and 2012, Torreón was already among the five most violent cities in the world.

Alejandro Hope was a Cisen official at the time. As he recalls:

In 2010, there was panic in government circles. The spike in violence and brutality was growing. A turning point was the massacre at San Fernando, Tamaulipas, in August 2010. What was to be done?⁹³

The director of that institution, Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, synthesizes the official response (in an interview). In 2010, the federal government redefined its strategy and gave priority to "guaranteeing the peace and safety of the population." This meant, according to him, "reducing violence instead of destroying drug trafficking or openly combatting their organization." In terms of the number of homicides, the most important confrontation was the one between El Chapo and the Beltrán Leyva brothers. However, "the violence that Los Zetas had wielded," in addition to causing "a lot of murders," had a greater effect on the population. Their business model included the extraction of "any profit that was to be had, no matter how small, through kidnapping, extortion, protection money, all kinds of robbery, etcetera. Then it was decided that we were going to take the fight to the most violent organization."⁹⁴

The Calderón administration concentrated initially on Tamaulipas due to the massacre of 72 migrants in San Fernando in August of 2010. "In less than three weeks," Valdés Castellanos recalls, "we had captured around 90% of those involved in the San Fernando massacre."⁹⁵ Coahuila entered their priorities the following year due to a series of events that we have placed in chronological order:

1. February 15, 2011. The leader of Los Zetas in San Luis Potosí, Sergio Mora Cortés, ordered the US agent of the United States Immigration Service and Customs Control (ICE), Jaime Zapata, executed. Another ICE agent, Víctor Ávila, was also wounded. This was a grave miscalculation. Washington demanded exemplary punishment.
2. The governments of Mexico and the United States responded to the provocation. In Saltillo, they captured Mora Cortés in a binational operative and within a couple of weeks, according to Ricardo Mendoza, Editorial Director of the *Vanguardia* of Saltillo at the time, 650 people were arrested in two countries and at least 12 million dollars and a miscellaneous arsenal were impounded.
3. On March 5, Pedro Toga Lara, also known as "Comandante Guacho", telephoned Armando Castilla, Director of *Vanguardia* of Saltillo. As he was in a meeting with the board of directors, he placed the call on speaker. In the message, "Comandante Guacho" warned them of the mood of Los Zetas and their reading of recent events: "Now you are really going to be fucked. No one can stop this. These motherfuckers betrayed us, and now everyone is going to die. They wanted a war, they've got one."⁹⁶

It was a declaration of hostilities against the Mexican State by a cartel that felt aggravated and betrayed by the authorities on all levels.

4. A few days later, a mole from Los Zetas in the Unidad de Investigaciones Sensibles of the Policía Federal informed the brothers Miguel Ángel and Omar Treviño Morales (Zeta bosses known as Z-40 and Z-42) that two commands from their organization had betrayed them by handing over the PIN numbers for their Blackberry telephones to the DEA. Furious, they ordered a revenge strike that left in its wake the execution of up to 300 people in Allende, Piedras Negras, and other municipalities of the region. Starting on March 18, 2011, the order was carried out. In numerical terms, it continues to be the largest massacre of the drug wars.⁹⁷

The northeastern region of Mexico became a battle field. The level of brutality escalated. In August 2011, there was a shootout at the Torreón stadium; on August 25, Los Zetas committed their worst public strike

against innocent civilians: 53 people died in the burning of the Casino Royale of Monterrey, 80 kilometers away from Saltillo.⁹⁸

Rubén Moreira took possession as governor in December 2011. During his campaign, he had made a commitment to fight the cartels. And he kept his promise. Felipe Calderón was grateful for this announcement because as the former president confided to General Luis Rodríguez Bucio during a 2015 interview for the military officer's doctoral thesis, "a lot of governors and municipal presidents did not want to [become] involved" in a confrontation against organized crime. They made their excuses, saying it was "federal jurisdiction".⁹⁹

Rubén Moreira received the backing of Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto. He was then able to deploy an integrated policy against Los Zetas as described in a previous section. The recovery by the state government of the Piedras Negras penitentiary (after a massive breakout) in September 2012¹⁰⁰ was notable, as well as the decision of the federal government to shut down that of Gómez Palacio, Durango, in late 2012 (following a confrontation and attempted prison break.)¹⁰¹ In a matter of months, two prisons that had acted as headquarters for organized crime were eliminated.

In Coahuila and other states, the federal government deployed new strategies. In addition to the coordination between various levels of government, their experiment was consolidated through the Centros de Fusión de Inteligencia y Operatividad. Guillermo Valdés, Director of the Cisen in those years, explained to us what these consisted of. Six Centers were planned in different regions, but only two were installed: one in Mexico City and another in Monterrey, dedicated to fighting Los Zetas. "All Mexican agencies that were involved in the fight against organized crime" participated, and all the available intelligence regarding a particular boss, arena, or event was gathered.

Then, gaps were filled in information regarding Los Zetas following so-called "24-hour cycles". The authorities executed joint operatives in order to "stop such and such a guy who operated in such a such a place, with the objective of being able to interrogate him and generate information, or arrest him in a safe house and get all the information." He adds, "these were operatives with a judicial warrant and so, instead of destroying everything, the Ministerio Público would use specialists to make an inventory of everything that was there so that the legal process in these cases would be

valid. The Cisen doubled all evidence. The information gave you clues about new links in the criminal chain and the next day, you had a new operative."¹⁰²

During a roundtable discussion organized by the Seminar on Violence and Peace on January 24, Guillermo Valdés complemented the above information:

The objective was not to [undo] the organization. The strategy was to go from bottom to top, grabbing onto the stakes, [and hence reducing] the capacities for violence and operation of the organization; preferably arresting the accountants, who had computers with a lot of information about the network of protection, the leaders of the local arena and the regional leaders.¹⁰³

In our final reflections, we will revisit the subject of Los Zetas protection networks.

The Centro de Fusión de Inteligencia y Operatividad installed in Monterrey opened its doors in 2011 and by 2012, it was already getting results, although we are unaware whether its findings were shared with the state government of Coahuila. In October, special forces working for the State killed a nephew of the Treviños (Z-40 and Z-42). Los Zetas responded by executing one of Humberto Moreira's sons: a nephew for a nephew. A few days later, in a confrontation with the Marina, Heriberto Lazcano "El Lazca", or Z-3, was killed (there are rumors that he was executed, and also rumors that he is still alive). In July 2013, Z-40 was arrested and in March of 2015, Z-42 was arrested (both of them in Nuevo León). Los Zetas had been beheaded.

Guillermo Valdés sums up those years. "Los Zetas, that extremely powerful and violent organization—that constructed a federation of criminal organizations— [...] was dismantled in four years, once the State set its mind to it."¹⁰⁴ Valdés recognizes the major role played by the United States, constantly providing intelligence and attacking head on the financing of Los Zetas in the United States.

In 2012-2013, Valdés recalls, "One of Treviño's brothers was arrested at a horse ranch in Kentucky. They also arrested in Texan cities the distributors of Los Zetas cocaine and told them, 'if you sell cocaine from Sinaloa, I won't arrest you, but if you sell for Los Zetas, I will arrest you.' What was

the message? That the Texas distributors said no thanks to Los Zetas coke, and then sales fell, which was an organizational blow to Los Zetas."¹⁰⁵

"Reconquering" La Laguna

La Laguna is a special case in Mexico. While Ciudad Juárez, Monterrey, Tijuana and other cities have experienced major setbacks, in La Laguna, advances have been maintained. Let's go over the idiosyncrasies of this region.

In "late 2012 and early 2013, La Laguna continues to be the most violent zone in the country," Javier Garza recalls. However, something was starting to change, although "we didn't know it at the time."¹⁰⁶ La Laguna was the first baptism by fire of the new Peña Nieto administration, and the circumstance turned out to be favorable, because the government was more than willing to commit to demonstrating it would be better than its predecessor and come to the aid of a PRIist governor. It didn't hurt that in that zone, all three levels of government belonged to the PRI. The resources for security flowed freely: a great deal was federal, while the rest came from state funds.

La Laguna became a priority; there was a budget for police reinforcement and, during the early years of the EPN administration, for prevention as well. This also explains why even the Army ceded in its habit of imposing its criteria. In the Mando Especial for La Laguna, Alejandro Hope comments, "Sedena took a step back so that the state police forces could take the lead. The military only provided intelligence."¹⁰⁷

Various residents of La Laguna detected a change. The former mayor of Torreón, Eduardo Olmos, explained to us that in "five or six months, the Mando Especial succeeded in penetrating the most rancid of structures of organized crime in order to remove figures that had resisted for years. That allowed them to dissolve some of the groups, while others moved out and the ones that remained were reduced to a bare minimum."¹⁰⁸ According to a report that the PGR made public in late 2013 regarding criminal bosses being arrested or cut down in the first year of the EPN administration, one-fourth (19 out of 69) were from La Laguna; in other words, it was a high priority region.¹⁰⁹

During this process, the role performed by organized society was fundamental. Businesspeople, the media, victims' organizations and

churches made public policy proposals to the government, and also demanded accountability. In a similar vein, we ought to include an intangible element: the collective identity of La Laguna residents. Javier Garza verbalizes this in the following manner:

An identity of independence, a feeling that things are earned by hard work. That also kindled a sense of solidarity and mutual aid. In La Laguna, philanthropy has flourished in ways that it hasn't, for example, in the capitals of Saltillo and Durango. While it is true that some sectors fell into permissiveness, easy money or illegality, others leveraged the tradition of industriousness, independence, and solidarity to "shut down the criminals."¹¹⁰

In the "reconquering" of La Laguna, government excesses were committed that national and international human rights organizations have catalogued as crimes against humanity.¹¹¹ This was an all-out war in which El Cartel de Sinaloa and the government had the same objective, although we have no evidence of an explicit agreement. It was a tacit understanding that appeared as an insinuation in conversations. One journalist who asked to remain anonymous in order to tell this story describes the persecution of a person who served Los Zetas. The federal police couldn't find him. After he was executed in his home, the journalist asked a military commander if "he had been killed by federal forces or El Chapo's men; he answered that it was 'El Chapo, but never mind, the important thing is that he was fucked.'" This kind of commentary indicates that the government and El Cartel de Sinaloa shared the same objective: to wipe out Los Zetas.¹¹²

A La Laguna police chief admitted, on the condition that his identity be protected, that "he received information from federal intelligence to 'execute' Los Zetas, given that on a state-municipal level they didn't have that information." He was asked "if that would be the equivalent of 'going hunting'," to which he tranquilly replied with a laconic, yet revealing "yes". Therefore, it is legitimate to consider the hypothesis of an implicit alliance between government forces and the gunmen of the Cartel de Sinaloa.

If we place these comments within the context of the recent arrest of Genaro García Luna, former head of the Procuraduría General de la República (2006-2012) for collaborating with the Cartel de Sinaloa, to what point did this alleged complicity influence the head of public security at a

time when the shift in strategy was taking place? After all, El Cartel de Sinaloa was one of the most interested parties in ending the Zeta threat, as well as its business model.

Los Zetas were scattered. Eduardo Guerrero, of Lantia Consultores, provides follow-up on the evolution of cartels and according to him, in January 2020 there were 26 criminal gangs of different sizes derived from Los Zetas; these have a presence in 12 states (see Annex 6), and they are organizations that are "antagonistic amongst themselves and without cohesion."¹¹³ This feeds into the belief that in La Laguna, criminal presence may be reactivated at any moment, leading us to the following conclusion: Los Zetas were thrown out of La Laguna, but the presence was restored of El Cartel de Sinaloa which, as we know, displays better treatment of the local population. That is why we must leave the term "reconquering" in quote marks.

It is by no means our intention to minimize or dismiss the achievements in La Laguna. Thanks to an alignment of factors and the determination of society on all three levels of government, a major reduction in high impact crimes became possible. Such crimes could not be totally eradicated, however, because there was an unwillingness to go up against the networks of business and government protection.

Javier Garza offers this final paragraph as a conclusion to the "reconquering" of La Laguna:

Organized crime existed, but it had been contained before violence broke out [unleashed by the arrival of Los Zetas]. Organized crime would remain while La Laguna continued to be a major territory for the logistics of drug trafficking. It has been since the 1970s and 80s, when Rafael Aguilar Guajardo and Amado Carrillo lived in Torreón. The high levels of violence broke out once two groups disputed the zone. When one of them (Los Zetas) was beaten back, one might say that things went back to the way they were before, although with one fundamental difference that we see everywhere: the social fabric was torn. We became more mistrustful, life became cheap (now anyone can resolve their differences through murder), and there was an increase in impunity.¹¹⁴

⁹³ Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán interview of Alejandro Hope, November 19, 2019.

- 94 Sergio Aguayo interview of Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, November 20, 2019.
- 95 *Loc. cit.*
- 96 Ricardo Mendoza, *op. cit.*
- 97 Ginger Thompson, "Anatomía de una masacre," *ProPublica* and *National Geographic*, June 12, 2017, <https://www.propublica.org/article/allende-zetas-cartel-masacre-y-la-dea>
- 98 This timeline was shared with us by Ricardo Mendoza who at the time was Editorial director of the newspaper *Vanguardia* of Saltillo, February 8, 2019.
- 99 Luis Rodríguez Bucio, *Participación de las fuerzas armadas en la estrategia de combate al narcotráfico del presidente Felipe Calderón Hinojosa*, Mexico, Semar/Centro de Estudios Superiores Navales, 2016, 294 pp. (doctoral thesis on national security and defense), pp. 148 and 200, respectively.
- 100 "Suman siete años de la fuga de 129 reos del penal de Piedras Negras," *El Siglo de Torreón*, September 17, 2019, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/1620401.suman-siete-anos-de-la-fuga-de-129-reos-del-penal-de-piedras-negras.html>
- 101 "Vacían el Cereso de Gómez Palacio," *Animal Político*, December 20, 2012, <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2012/12/vacian-el-cereso-de-gomez-palacio/>
- 102 Sergio Aguayo interview of Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, *op. cit.*
- 103 Guillermo Valdés Castellanos intervention during the roundtable discussion "El ocaso de los Zeta," Seminario sobre Violencia y Paz, El Colegio de México, January 24, 2020. The quote initiates at 1:24:05 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyOAKDuZ4NA&t=2412s>
- 104 Guillermo Valdés, "La senda del crimen," *op. cit.*
- 105 Sergio Aguayo interview of Guillermo Valdés Castellanos, *op. cit.*
- 106 Javier Garza, email to Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán, December 9, 2019.
- 107 Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán interview of Alejandro Hope, November 19, 2019.
- 108 Garza interview of Eduardo Olmos, June 6, 2019.
- 109 "La lista de 69 capas detenidos o abatidos en México," *Milenio*, December 19, 2013, <https://www.milenio.com/policia/lista-69-capos-detenidos-abatidos-mexico>
- 110 Javier Garza, email, *Ibid.*
- 111 Federación Internacional por los Derechos Humanos, FIDH, *op. cit.* and Open Society Justice Initiative, *Atrocidades innegables. Confrontando crímenes de lesa humanidad en México*, New York, 2016, <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/uploads/5d386d17-57aa-4b74-b896-43883af55574/undeniable-atrocities-esp-2nd-edition.pdf>
- 112 Anonymous source.
- 113 Lantia Consultores, "Los Zetas," November 9, 2019.
- 114 Javier Garza, email, December 9, 2019.

9. Lessons and challenges of the "reconquering"

We parted from two quantifiable and verifiable facts: starting in 2013, the number of homicides and disappearances fell thanks to public policies that emerged through a combination of deliberate actions and fortunate coincidences. There were three key factors in this process:

- a) persons and social groups who were willing to resist the violence and dialogue with the authorities. The main leadership originated among certain businesspeople and included a handful of relatives of victims. Their petitions were absorbed by the Mando Especial and through laws and programs created to attend to the problematics of missing persons;
- b) two governors, Rubén Moreira and Miguel Ángel Riquelme, took very seriously the defense of security and promotion of human rights. By making themselves responsible, they obtained the support of three presidents of the Republic and the mayors of La Laguna. Taking into account proposals from members of society helped forge a consensus; and,
- c) the strategic turnaround adopted by Felipe Calderón and maintained by Enrique Peña Nieto. They decided to attack Los Zetas, the criminal organization that resorted to systematic brutality against the civilian population. They installed in Monterrey a Centro de Fusión de Inteligencia y Operatividad, and they approved the creation of a Mando Especial for La Laguna. The administration of Andrés Manuel López Obrador has continued to support this special command.

This success story may be understood in three ways that are interrelated:

- a) as an unfinished "reconquering". It remains necessary to reinforce this success and to delve deeper;
- b) as a counterbalance to the excessively pessimistic narrative regarding the strength of organized crime in Mexico; and

c) as a model for other metropolitan areas. Further ahead we will sketch out a proposal for the Metropolitan Area of the Valley of Mexico (MAVM).

Below, we will approach four courses of action:

- 1) maintaining and, if possible, broadening the current levels of security;*
- 2) deepening the dialogue between the authorities and victims' organizations in order to provide an integral response;*
- 3) replicating the experiment of La Laguna and Coahuila in other urban centers; and*
- 4) assessing the relevance of social figures.*

1) Maintaining and, if possible, broadening the current levels of security.

In La Laguna, the necessary conditions exist to preserve and expand on current levels of security.

a) Miguel Ángel Riquelme, the governor of Coahuila, explained to us in an interview what had taken place during an encounter between the residents of La Laguna and the president of the Republic:

I attended [together with the Governor of Durango, José Rosas Aispuro (PAN), and a group of businesspeople] to ask the president [Andrés Manuel López Obrador] and his minister, Alfonso Durazo, to assess the continuity of the Mando Especial due to its results and because it has become, moreover, a model to follow within the confluence or convergence of two states that share the same regional or metropolitan area. [The petition was accepted immediately and] today, even the Guardia Nacional here in La Laguna provides reinforcement and support to the actions of the Mando Especial.¹¹⁵

b) This institutional arrangement is backed by the commitment of the municipal presidents of Torreón (Jorge Zermeño, PAN), Lerdo, (Homero Martínez, PRI) and Gómez Palacio (Marina Vitela, Morena); and

c) La Laguna continues to possess social capital as an asset, which was a

determining factor in the beheading and fragmentation of Los Zetas. Members of the business community maintained their autonomy, while the victims' organizations expanded their work to the Durango section of La Laguna and continue to lobby for a response to their demands; the media preserve their independence; and citizens' organizations continue generating information and excellent analyses. All that remains to be done is to incorporate La Laguna universities and research centers.

An improvement in the margins of security requires that the thorny matter of El Cartel de Sinaloa be taken into account as the silent protagonist of the anti-Zeta coalition. An eyewitness to these events, Javier Garza, recalls that the "operatives began to concentrate in places with a Los Zetas presence." He also recalls a phrase that he heard from the mouth of a high-ranking military officer, who said that the army would reinforce "combat against Los Zetas even if that implied neglecting the 'guys across the street'."¹¹⁶ We lack evidence to confirm whether there was an explicit pact between the authorities and El Cartel de Sinaloa, or rather a tacit understanding.

We qualify this story as the "reconquering" of La Laguna because:

- a) the Cartel de Sinaloa continues to be present in La Laguna;
- b) the atmosphere of impunity continues, given that its networks of economic sustainment and political protection were left intact;
- c) there are matters that remain to be dealt with as important as truth, justice, reparations, and the search for the missing; and,
- d) we have very little information regarding the Durango section of La Laguna. For this investigation, we made overtures to the government of Durango with the objective of obtaining information. None of these bore fruit. They failed to approve so much as a single petition, as minimal as authorizing the filming of the Gómez Palacio penitentiary (now remodeled as a public facility). We received neither authorization, nor any response. This represents a major information gap in our analysis.

Are the people of La Laguna—government and society—willing to coexist with El Cartel de Sinaloa and with the current level of violence for an indefinite period of time? For the time being the response is affirmative, for the following reasons:

- a) in March 2020, the federal government seems to have opted to leave El Cartel de Sinaloa in peace in order to concentrate on fighting the more violent cartels: Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG), Cartel de Santa Rosa de Lima, and Unión Tepito. that would explain the liberation of the son of "El Chapo" Guzmán and the extradition of the son of Nemesio Oseguera, "El Mencho," leader of the CJNG. On the other hand, they would seem to be following methodologies employed at the Centros de Fusión de Inteligencia y Operatividad;
- b) the human cost is relatively low in comparison with other cities. In 2018, La Laguna registered 121 deaths by homicide; Reynosa, 268; Celaya, 271, and Acapulco, 845;¹¹⁷ and,
- c) neither on a federal nor on a state level is there sufficient political willpower to implement extraordinary mechanisms of truth and justice in order to attack impunity and attend to the victims.

One consequence of this is the uncertainty we perceived during our interviews. The residents of La Laguna recognize there has been improvement, but they are doubtful as to the future; everyone knows about the setbacks experienced in Monterrey and Ciudad Juárez. In other words, will the criminal gangs continue to respect innocent civilians, or will new leadership or gangs appear that are hungry for a quick profit? If the latter holds true, the kidnappings, murders, disappearances and extortion will make a comeback.

That is why it seems recommendable to create programs that remove the foundations of social and political support for criminal gangs. One way of doing this is to dismantle the networks of political protection and corruption that allowed the Zeta boom and that may be supporting Sinaloa factions even today. The key question is, are the current federal and state administrations willing to embark on a program to attack Los Zetas protection networks?

In the roundtable discussion entitled "The downfall of Los Zetas", held on January 20, 2020 at El Colegio de México, Guillermo Valdés Castellanos mentioned the boundaries of the successful offensive against Los Zetas; the federal forces, he said, failed to dismantle "the structure of police protection", while the "actions against their financial foundation" did not reach the necessary level. This was due to a reality: the federal government

"did not have the capacity to advance any further."¹¹⁸

In our research on Coahuila, we were able to reconstruct the methods of infiltration and control over low- and mid-level municipal and state institutions. The judicial files always stopped short of establishing the accountability of top-level officials and businesspeople.

For example, those in Saltillo who directed the prisons of Coahuila knew that Los Zetas controlled the prisons of Piedras Negras and Torreón. Did they inform Humberto Moreira and Jorge Torres, the governor-elect and interim governor between 2005 and 2011? We do not know; we only know that a transfer of state resources was maintained for the operation of penitentiary centers in Coahuila.¹¹⁹ It was a direct subsidy to the criminal organization. The same was true in Durango with the Gómez Palacio prison.

In 2017, another indicator appeared. That year, Humberto Moreira and Felipe Calderón traded insults on social media. During this back and forth, the now former president issued the following statement regarding the former governor:

Everyone [...] the main ringleaders of Los Zetas [...] lived in Coahuila and when the Federal Government send in the Marina to fight them [...] I received a phone call from the former governor, Humberto Moreira, demanding to know why I was sending the Marina to Coahuila, when Coahuila had no sea.¹²⁰

Given this kind of statements, ought it not to be investigated who knew what and when? This points to a need to complete the investigation carried out thus far, establishing what took place during the years of violence in Saltillo and the carboniferous region, which would in turn provide us with a panoramic vision of what took place statewide.

1) Deepening the dialogue between the authorities and victims' organizations in order to provide an integral response

One act of elementary justice is to better attend to the families affected by violence. Setting up dialogue is insufficient. Results are required, and that means truth and justice through extraordinary mechanisms included in the proposals for transitional justice. The federation and the state government

could create a Truth Commission regarding human rights violations in Coahuila, with national and international backing.¹²¹ We have outlined some possible actions regarding missing persons and reparations, two priority issues for any eventual Truth Commission.

a) The missing

Victims' organizations and the nation as a whole need to know the precise number, identities, and fate of their missing. The perpetrators are a source of information that hopefully may be explored. In one of the judicial files we consulted, the district attorney showed photographs of missing persons to a person who had been detained:

They asked the person under arrest "if he had any more information to provide us with." He responded in the affirmative and said "he would give it to us" in exchange for "some kind of benefit to his sentence," given that the crime he was charged with had very harsh sentencing. With nothing further to add, we withdrew from said Penitentiary.¹²²

The Coahuila District Attorney's office was unable to offer him a plea bargain, as there is no clear way to interpret the benefits for collaboration described in the General Law for the Forced Disappearance of Persons, Disappearance Committed by Individuals, and of the Sistema Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas that was passed on November 17, 2017.

Article 33 of this law establishes that "the sanctions for the crime of the forced disappearance of persons foreseen by this Law may be diminished" and Article 161 gives the Sistema Nacional de Búsqueda the capacity to:

[...] propose and implement programs that provide incentives to citizens, *including those persons who are under arrest*, to provide information in their possession for the investigation of crimes described in the present Law, as well as for the location and rescue of Non-Located or Missing Persons.¹²³

Further interpretation of this text is needed in order to clearly establish the forms, allegations and mechanisms of implementation of a particular law as regards benefit through collaboration. The Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda and the government of Coahuila could agree with the Fiscalía General de la República on a pilot program to concede reductions in sentencing to

persons under arrest in exchange for information regarding the missing persons of Coahuila.

b) Reparations

One of the greatest challenges is to find new ways to attend to those persons who have been affected by criminal violence. The General Law for Victims guarantees integral reparations in keeping with international standards, but implementation has been difficult for two reasons:

- i) a Sistema Nacional de Víctimas exists, with the participation of different government agencies. Its task is to create programs that provide services in an integral manner: housing, education, health services and employment, among others. In reality, the various agencies involved have delegated this task to the Comisión Ejecutiva de Atención a Víctimas; and
- ii) given the impossibility of granting truth and justice, the CEAV gradually became a welfare agency. The new head, Mara Gómez, understood the importance of elaborating models of individual and collective reparations together with the victims and their organizations, while at the same time distancing themselves from the welfare vision that has characterized them. She faced stiff resistance and resigned soon after.

In order to transform the current focus, steps like the following must be taken:

- i) a national registry of missing persons that is public and verifiable, in order to be able to validate the information as it is reported so that the victims and their organizations may consult said registry in order to identify their cases;
- ii) a national registry of clandestine grave sites (including those created by State institutions, such as Tetelcingo and Jojutla in Morelos);
- iii) a registry of arrests;
- iv) a national forensic registry;
- v) a homologated protocol for the search of missing persons; and
- vi) a homologated protocol for exhumations of bodies from clandestine grave sites.

Coahuila presents suitable conditions for the Comisión Ejecutiva de Atención a Víctimas (CEAV) to coordinate with Comisión Ejecutiva Estatal de Atención a Víctimas, as well as with the Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda and its state correspondent, in order to establish innovative individual and collective reparations programs, as well as implement the registries and protocols mentioned above. Victims' organizations in the state have been constructive and have elaborated models of reparations and public policies geared toward integral reparations (the Declaration of Absence Law and the Integral Program of Attention to the Relatives of Missing Persons, among others). Some have already been implemented, but there is still a long ways to go.

1) Replicate the La Laguna and Coahuila experiment in other urban centers

An initial step toward establishing whether the La Laguna model may be replicated in another city would be to gain clarity regarding the three main protagonists: government institutions, criminal gangs, and all six social figures. Let's exemplify this exercise with what was accomplished by state institutions in La Laguna:

- a) it was an integral policy. The Mando Especial was shored up by a series of measures (prohibition of casinos, inhibiting the broadcasting of *narcocorridos*, reform of police forces, etcetera); and
- b) collaboration between various political forces. One party, the PRI, has held the threads of governability with the collaboration of officials from different parties.

The Mexico City Metropolitan Area (MCMA) could be a propitious arena to experiment with the creation of a special command because there is a single political party, Morena, with the capacity to take the lead.

The MCMA has two governors from the PRI (Estado de México and Hidalgo) and a head of government from Morena (Mexico City). It is comprised of 76 territorial and governing units: 16 mayorships (Mexico City), 59 municipal areas (Estado de México) and 1 municipality (Hidalgo). There is a population of nearly 21 million in a territory of 323,030 km².¹²⁴ Morena governs 44 units, PAN, 14, and PRI, seven. The rest are distributed among other parties and one independent municipality.

In the area of security, there are two possibilities:

- a) the "pure" La Laguna model. To start with, it seems unfeasible to establish a Mando Especial for a metropolis of this size; or
- b) experiments in suburban units that are smaller and more manageable. Strategic overlaps could be contemplated between agencies in both entities. One of the greater obstacles to cooperation between police forces and local security in general institutions are administrative barriers. Shared borders between of localities governed by the same political party opens up new possibilities of cooperation.

With this perspective, there are six mayorships in Mexico City that border with Estado de México municipalities governed by Morena:

- i) Miguel Hidalgo with Naucalpan de Juárez;
- ii) Azcapotzalco with Naucalpan de Juárez and Tlalnepantla de Baz;
- iii) Gustavo A. Madero with Tlalnepantla de Baz, Tultitlán, Ecatepec de Morelos;
- iv) Iztapalapa with La Paz and Valle de Chalco;
- v) Tláhuac with Valle de Chalco and Chalco; and
- vi) Milpa Alta with Chalco and Juchitepec.

One special case is the shared border between Gustavo A. Madero and Iztapalapa with Nezahualcóyotl, where the government declared itself independent after having triumphed under the banner of a coalition PRD-PAN-MC. Local government has had good results with a proximity police force.

We must leave for another occasion an outline of the organized crime syndicates, the six categories of social figures in the MCMA, and possible leadership roles.

2) Assessing the relevance of social figures

The case of Coahuila confirms once again the enormous importance of organized social participation, a factor that tends to be minimized in studies regarding organized crime. We enumerate, once more, the six categories of social figures present in the successful cases in Mexico and other countries: members of the business community, victims' organizations, media, civic

organizations, faith-based groups, and research centers.

These figures participate in a variegated manner due to the diversity of their origins, agendas, organizational cultures, and leadership. When they rally around risk assessment and are willing to commit to long-term projects, they gain the ability to dialogue with the authorities regarding the adoption of public policies that take their interests into account.

The greater the cohesion between these figures, the greater their efficaciousness. From this point of view, it would seem advisable that the people of La Laguna close the gap between communication and action among members of the business community and victims' organizations. It would be mutually beneficial to seek out points of convergence and a common agenda, because security and human rights form part of the same equation.

The efficaciousness of organized society depends on the quality of information and analysis. It is a mistake to rely on official versions. In recent history, the administrations of Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto remained silent regarding information as fundamental as the decision to prioritize the attack on Los Zetas. Hope recognizes that "it was never clarified that an in-depth strategic redefinition was being carried out for fear that the government would be accused of favoring El Cartel de Sinaloa."¹²⁵ However, the federal government doubtless did share this information with Governor Rubén Moreira and with major businesspeople (the role of Jorge Tello is fundamental). Those who were not in the know included the press, the victims, and the Church. It would be beneficial for government and society to share information and intelligence, but always to rely on their own analyses.

Grupo Vida, or FUUNDEC, like other organizations from Coahuila and the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna, could organize an itemized follow-up of four themes with media and local universities:

- i) the evolution of the government security strategy in the northeastern region of the country, Coahuila, and La Laguna;
- ii) the evolution of organized crime, particularly El Cartel de Sinaloa;
- iii) monitoring of the Mando Especial and statewide public human rights organizations; and,
- iv) the elaboration and revision of inventories regarding positive and

negative social capital.

So as not to replicate efforts, a minimal security agenda ought to be established and backed by agreements with public and private institutions from other jurisdictions.

In summary, Coahuila has the potential to become a laboratory where methods of containment of organized crime and the negative social capital that sustains it may be tested. It is also fertile ground for experimentation with mechanisms of truth and justice, and for the strengthening and construction of positive social capital.

The "reconquering" of La Laguna depends on many other factors. Two that are of particular importance are the government strategy against organized crime and the politics of the United States and other countries. We are immersed in a long and complex war that compels us to be modest in our goals. Under these circumstances, the people of La Laguna ought to recognize and incorporate the exceptional nature of their achievements, to preserve what has been attained, and be willing to share their experiences with other Mexican cities.

115 Javier Garza interview of the governor of Coahuila Miguel Ángel Riquelme, February 9, 2020.

116 Javier Garza, email to Sergio Aguayo and Jacobo Dayán, December 8, 2019.

117 Instituto Nacional de Geografía, Inegi, Mortalidad. Defunciones por homicidio, 2018,
<https://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/olap/proyectos/bd/continuas/mortalidad/defuncioneshom.asp?s=est>

118 Intervención de Guillermo Valdés Castellanos en la mesa redonda "El ocaso de los Zetas", Seminario sobre Violencia y Paz, El Colegio de México, January 24, 2020. The quote initiates at minute 1:24:05, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyOAKDuZ4NA&t=2412s>

119 Instituto Nacional de Geografía, Inegi, 2012, Censo Nacional de Gobierno, Seguridad Pública y Sistema Penitenciario Estatales, 2012, http://internet.contenidos.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/Productos/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/censos/justicia/2012/CNGSPSP2012VF/702825004011.pdf (consulted on October 17, 2017).

120 "Humberto Moreira y Felipe Calderón se enfrentaron con declaraciones," YouTube, video dated March 27, 2017, <https://youtu.be/rxHLDcmZJbY>

121 AA.VV., "Propuesta ciudadana para la construcción de una política sobre verdad, justicia y reparación a la víctimas de la violencia y de las violaciones a derechos humanos," Mexico, <http://cmdpdh.org/project/propuesta-ciudadana-para-la-construccion-de-una->

[política-sobre-verdad-justicia-y-reparacion-a-la-victimas-de-la-violencia-y-de-las-violaciones-a-derechos-humanos/](#)

122 File LI-SUBPNL-APP-062/2015.

123 Ley General en Materia de Desaparición Forzada de Personas, Desaparición Cometida por Particulares y del Sistema Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas. Texto vigente, Diario Oficial de la Federación, November 17, 2017, http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGMDFP_171117.pdf

124 *Delimitación de las zonas metropolitanas de México 2015*, Mexico, Sedatu/Conapo/Inegi, 2018, pp. 104-113.

125 Sergio Aguayo interview of Jacobo Dayán and Alejandro Hope, November 19, 2019.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

Principal events of violence and social resistance in La Laguna

September 2004	Ismael Hernández Deras (PRI) takes possession as Governor of Durango.
November 5, 2004	Disappearance of Silvia Stephanie Sánchez Viesca Ortiz. She is the first missing person in the region. Her relatives created Grupo Vida.
February 25, 2005	Kidnapping of Jesús Reyes Espino, "El Churro", an agent of the Ministerio Público Federal, in downtown Gómez Palacio, Durango. His body is found on March 2 in the rural zone of Lerdo wrapped in a blanket, his hands tied and his head blindfolded. On his body, a message reads: "We are going to fuck you up," signed by the Cartel del Golfo.
December 2005	Humberto Moreira becomes the Governor of Coahuila. He left his post in January, 2011 to become president of the PRI.
February 2, 2006	Óscar Arriola Márquez, leader of the Cartel de los Arriola, associated with the Cartel de Juárez, ¹²⁶ is arrested in the Campestre La Rosita district of Torreón.
October 2006	Two people are murdered in area bordering Torreón and Gómez (in the Nazas riverbed). One, a drug pusher who had just left a PGR arrest unit. The other person was his attorney. Two days later, the cadaver of the sister of the drug pusher is found in the municipality of Matamoros, Coahuila.
February 8, 2007	The bodies of four agents of what was at the time the Agencia Federal de Investigaciones (AFI) and SIEDO are found in a grave Gómez Palacio. The agents were likely murdered a year and a half earlier, when they were in La Laguna investigating organized crime. The find is publicized a day before President Felipe Calderón arrives in Torreón to a private event.

February 28, 2007	The disappearance is announced of marble business magnate Francisco León, who was candidate for senator of Durango for the PRD in the 2006 elections and a few weeks earlier, had announced he would run for mayor of Gómez Palacio.
2007	Operatives start in the region between the federal police and the Army.
January 2007	In Gómez Palacio, Jaime Meraz Martínez is murdered along with his wife, a son and a worker. Jaime was a leader of an organization of taxi drivers linked with drug trafficking.
March-April 2007	The authorities close the bridges between Torreón and Gómez Palacio in order to avoid the passage of cartels from one state to another and, in that way, to reduce the violence.
March 31, 2007	Two <i>ministeriales</i> , or investigative police officers, attempt to stop a car and are shot down by Los Zetas. Municipal police officers participate in the shootout. This is the first case in which Los Zetas penetration into the municipal police force becomes evident.
May 11, 2007	Funeral wreaths are sent to the Policía Estatal Preventiva and Policía Municipal de Torreón.
May 13, 2007	Attack on the businessman Carlos Herrera Araluce in Torreón. The same day, the body of Sabino Burciaga is found in the fourth stage of the Gómez Palacio Industrial Park dismembered and allegedly, with a letter Z formed by nails on his forehead. Sabino was related to Claro Burciaga, who worked with Sergio Villarreal "El Grande" (linked to the Cartel de Sinaloa).
May 14,	Enrique Ruiz Arévalo, head of the special anti-kidnapping

2007	squad, disappears in Torreón.
May 2007	Intimidating message from Los Zetas to businesspeople. Its full content has never been made public.
May-June 2007	Los Zetas launch a summons to reporters in order to "lay down the law."
February 18, 2008	Shootout in the Jardín de California district of Torreón.
July 2008	Military, marines, and federal forces are sent into the region: the Laguna Joint Operative.
July 14, 2008	Disappearance of Gerardo Valdés Segura, head of the special anti-kidnapping task force in Torreón who substituted Enrique Ruiz Arévalo.
September 8, 2008	Confrontation between federal and municipal police.
2009	The state corporation Grupo Élite is created (Coahuila).
May 2009	Eliseo Barrón, police reporter for <i>La Opinión-Milenio</i> , is murdered. He is the first journalist of La Laguna to be killed.
August 2009	The building of <i>El Siglo de Torreón</i> is fired upon.
December 2009	The civic organization Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Coahuila (FUUNDEC) is created with the support of the Centro Diocesano para los Derechos Humanos Fray Juan de Larios.

December 2009- January 2010	Rupture between Los Zetas and El Cartel del Golfo.
2010	Coahuila Model. Municipal police commands are assigned to retired military.
January 31, 2010	Massacre of at least ten people in the Ferrie Bar in Torreón.
February 1, 2010	Shootout at Galerías Laguna (Torreón) with a total of eight dead.
March 14, 2010	Massive strike of the Torreón police force. The entire police force is fired, around 900 officers.
May 14, 2010	Massacre of eight people at the Las Juanas Bar, Torreón.
June 26, 2010	Massacre of at least nine persons at a rehabilitation center in Gómez Palacio.
July 2010	Intervention of the Policía Federal.
July 18, 2010	Massacre of 17 people at the Quinta Italia Inn, Torreón.
July 26, 2010	Kidnapping of three journalists who were covering the riot at the Gómez Palacio penitentiary.
September 2010	Jorge Herrera Caldera becomes Governor of Durango.

2011	Grupo GATE (Grupo de Armas y Tácticas Especiales) is created in Coahuila. Specialized elite force to combat organized crime.
January 2011- November 2011	Jorge Torres López becomes interim Governor of Coahuila.
January 2011	Programa Sellamiento Nazas. Plan to reinforce vigilance on both sides of the Nazas River (Coahuila and Durango) and thus hamper the circulation of organized crime.
February 2011	Antennae of radio and TV stations located on the hilltop of Cristo de las Noas, Torreón are shot up. The engineer Rodolfo Ochoa Moreno, a technician who worked there, is murdered.
June 8, 2011	The Caravan of the Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad arrives in Torreón.
August 2011	Confrontation resulting in people wounded and killed following a police social event.
August 20, 2011	Shootout outside the TSM stadium.
October 2011	Programa Laguna Segura. Program for the coordination, deployment and operatives between the federation, Coahuila and Durango.
November 2011	A car is burned at the entrance and the offices of <i>El Siglo de Torreón</i> and the offices are attacked with gunfire.
December	Rubén Moreira becomes Governor of Coahuila.

2011- November 2017	
Late 2011	The headquarters of Seguridad Pública de Torreón are attacked with gunfire. Persecution, destruction of vehicles and barricades.
2011	Torreón is named one of the five most violent cities in the world.
January 2012	Program for Policía Metropolitana. A metropolitan police force is created with federal members as well as officers from both states.
February 2012	The Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna (CCI) is created.
September 2012	El Grupo Autónomo de Trabajo (GAT) gives rise to victims' organizations and the government of Coahuila working together.
November 2012	Congress passes the Coahuila Law for the prevention, protection, attention to victims and those affected by crimes in the area of human trafficking.
October 2012	Laguna Segura placed in charge of Sole Command. On the 3 rd of the same month Eduardo Moreira, son of Humberto, is murdered. On the 7 th , Heriberto Lazcano "Z-3" is killed in Progreso.
2012- 2013	The heads of public security in Gómez Palacio, Lerdo, Matamoros, and Francisco I. Madero are arrested and charged.

December 2012- January 2013	The federal government decides to close the penitentiary and remove the municipal police force of Gómez Palacio, leaving security in the hands of the federal police and the army.
2013	Grupo Gatem (Grupo de Armas y Tácticas Especiales) is created in Coahuila.
January 6, 2013	Massacre of several people at the Tornado Bar, Torreón.
February 2013	Kidnapping of five employees (who were later freed) and three armed attacks on subsequent days against the federal police standing guard at <i>El Siglo de Torreón</i> .
February 18, 2013	Four stores owned by Rebollo Mendoza are burned down, Ricardo and Rocío having been former mayors of Gómez Palacio. Three are located in Gómez Palacio and one in Torreón. A few days earlier, their home was attacked with gunfire.
May 10, 2013	Grupo Vida is created.
July 2013	Miguel Treviño "Z-40" is arrested in Anáhuac, Nuevo León.
December 2013	The Programa Integral de Atención a Familiares de Personas Desaparecidas is created in Coahuila (Profade).
May 2014	La Laguna Mando Especial. Laws for victims are passed in Coahuila and Durango.
July 2014	Law for the declaration of absence due to the disappearance of persons is passed in Coahuila.

October 9, 2014	Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, a.k.a. "El Viceroy" is arrested in Torreón.
January 2015	Grupo Vida launches the search for human remains.
March 2015	Omar Treviño "Z-42" is arrested in San Pedro Garza García, Nuevo León.
March 28, 2015	Grupo Vida finds the first human remains on Cerro Bola.
April 2015	Grupo Vida search begins at Patrocinio.
2016	Fuerza Coahuila is created (the name was given by the state police).
2016	Some families separated from Grupo Vida and form the Asociación Internacional de Búsqueda de Nuestros Desaparecidos.
September 2016	Inauguration of the José Rosas Aispuro administration in Durango.
October 2016	Patrocinio makes national news following the publication of a column by Raymundo Riva Palacio.
December 2016	Congress passes the Law for the localization, recovery, and forensic identification of persons in Coahuila.
November 17, 2017	The state government inaugurates a memorial commemorating the missing in Torreón.

December 2017	Inauguration of the Miguel Ángel Riquelme administration in Coahuila.
January 10, 2019	Ayuntamiento in Torreón inaugurates the memorial entitled "Where Are They" to commemorate female victims of abduction and femicide.
2019	Some families separate from FUUNDEC to form Búscame. Some families separate from the Asociación Internacional de Búsqueda de Nuestros Desaparecidos and form Voz que Clama. Families of the missing begin to join Grupo Vida in Durango, as a result of the work that was carried out by the organization in that state.

Source: Aguayo and Dayán

126 "PGR entrega a eu a capo del cártel de Juárez", El Siglo de Torreón, March 2, 2010, <https://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/amp/504850.pgr-entrega-a-eu-a-capo-del-cartel-de-juarez>

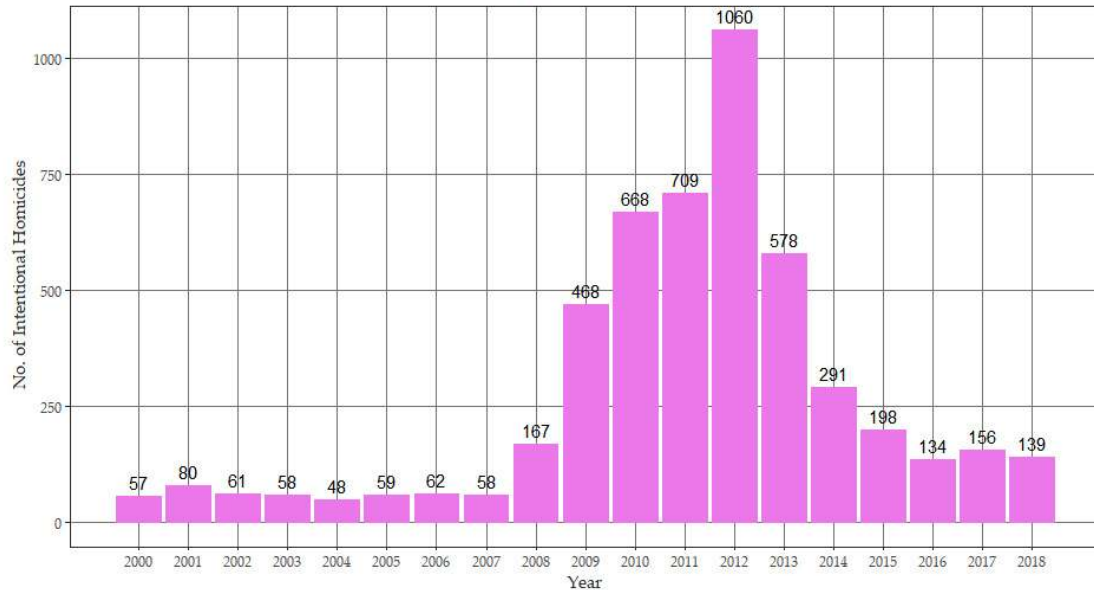
Annex 2

Tables of homicide and disappearances in La Laguna

La Laguna Metropolitan Area					
		Missing			
<i>Year</i>	<i>Homicides</i>	<i>Torreón</i>	<i>Gómez Palacio</i>	<i>Lerdo</i>	<i>Total Missing Persons</i>
2000	57				
2001	80				
2002	61				
2003	58				
2004	48				
2005	59				
2006	62	3			3
2007	58	19			19
2008	167	76		1	77
2009	468	118	3		121
2010	668	101			101
2011	709	71	7	1	79
2012	1060	25	3		28
2013	578	22			22
2014	291	33		2	35
2015	198	36	1		37
2016	134	33	1	1	35

2017	156	13	1		14
2018	139				
<i>Totals</i>	<i>5051</i>	<i>550</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>571</i>

Intentional Homicides in La Laguna



Source: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna, the INEGI database, and the Fiscalía del Estado de Durango. April 2019.

Homicides in La Laguna

Homicide Rates per 100,000 Residents in La Laguna



Source: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the database of the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna based on data from INEGI. Fiscalía del Estado de Coahuila. and Fiscalía del Estado de Durango. April 2019.

Missing Persons in La Laguna



Source: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the Data Cívica database, with information from the Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas (CNB), the CNB Historic Database Portal and the Centro Nacional de Planeación Análisis e información para el combate a la Delincuencia (CENAPI). https://mxabierto.github.io/dashboard_cenapi/. August 2019.

Rate of Missing Persons per 100,000 Residents in La Laguna



Municipal_Area	Population
Torreón	639,629
Lerdo	141,043
Gómez Palacio	327,985
Total	1,108,657

Source: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the database of Data Cívica, based on data from Centro Nacional de Planeación, Análisis e Información para el Combate a la Delincuencia (CENAPI). consultados en https://mxabierto.github.io/dashboard_cenapi/. August 2019.

Missing Persons in La Laguna



Source: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the database of Data Cívica, based on data from the Centro Nacional de Planeación, Análisis e Información para el Combate a la Delincuencia (CENAPI), https://mxabierto.github.io/dashboard_cenapi/ August, 2019.

Sources:

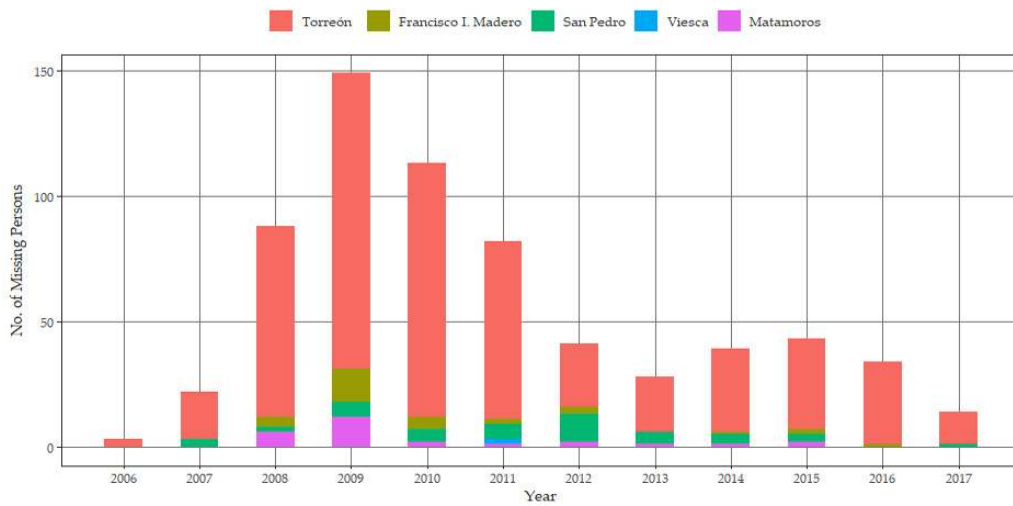
Homicides: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the database of the Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna based on data from Inegi, Fiscalía del Estado de Coahuila, and Fiscalía del Estado de Durango, April 2019.

Missing Persons: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the database of Data Cívica, based on data from the Centro Nacional de Planeación, Análisis e Información para el Combate a la Delincuencia (Cenapi), https://mxabierto.github.io/dashboard_cenapi/ August 2019.

Coahuila, municipal areas near Torreón						
	Missing persons					
<i>Year</i>	<i>Torreón</i>	<i>Francisco I. Madero</i>	<i>San Pedro</i>	<i>Viesca</i>	<i>Matamoros</i>	<i>Total Missing Persons</i>
2006	3					3
2007	19		3			22
2008	76	4	2		6	88
2009	118	13	6		12	149
2010	101	5	5		2	113

2011	71	2	6	2	1	82
2012	25	3	11		2	41
2013	22		5		1	28
2014	33	1	4		1	39
2015	36	2	3		2	43
2016	33	1				34
2017	13		1			14
2018						
<i>Totals</i>	<i>550</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>656</i>

Missing Persons in La Laguna



Source: Aguayo & Dayán, with information from the database of Data Cívica, with data from the Centro Nacional de Análisis e información para el Combate a la Delincuencia (CENAPI), https://mxabierto.github.io/dashboard_cenapi/, August 2019.

Annex 3

Sites testing positive for bone shards located by Grupo Vida

1. Panteón Municipal de Torreón
2. Cerro Bola
3. Ejido del Sol
4. Cerritos
5. San Salvador
6. Estación Claudio
7. La Rosita
8. Colonia Buenos Aires
9. Ejido El Venado
10. El Cantabro
11. Panteón del Ejido La Unión
12. Patrocinio
13. Jiménez, Durango
14. Caballo Blanco
15. Santa Elena
16. San Antonio de Gurza
17. Rancho Alegre
18. Santa Sofía
19. Ejido El Volcán
20. San Antonio del Alto
21. San Francisco Aguanaval
22. Ejido Flores Magón
23. Ejido Simón Bolívar
24. Cueva del Tabaco

Source: Archives and documents from Grupo Vida searches



Map of major extermination zones:
Source: Aguayo and Bayón based on Annex 4.

Annex 4

Files Reviewed

<i>Clandestine cremation site</i>	<i>Date File was Opened</i>	<i>File</i>
Estación Claudio	April 2015	A.P. 043/2015 bis
Ejido Patrocinio	April 2015	LI-SUBPNL-APP-062/2015
Ejido El Venado	June 2015	LII-SUBPNL-04/2015
Ejido San Antonio de Gurza	January 2017	001/SP/UIPNL/2017
Ejido Santa Elena	January 2017	C.I. 00002/SAN/UIPNL/2017
Ejido San Antonio del Alto	December 2017	C.I. 0044/TOR/UIPNL/2017

Annex 5

Major findings at clandestine cremation sites and extermination zones

Nomenclature:

BF: Bone Fragments

CBF: Charred Bone Fragments

DP: Dental

TF: Textile Fragments

<i>Date</i>	<i>Grupo Vida</i>	<i>Prosecutor's office</i>
Cerro Bola en Parras, Coahuila		
28/03/2015	3 sectioned skulls	3 incomplete skulls, 13 FO
Ejido El Venado in San Pedro, Coahuila		
06/06/2015		16 FO
16/07/2016		Various FO, 20 bullet casings, 4 anti-aircraft missiles
04/08/2016	Miscellaneous FO	Miscellaneous CBF, 68 BF and burned anatomical sequence
23/01/2018		1 bullet casing
03/02/2018	200 BF, 5 DP, 47 bullet casings and 4 metallic objects	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous bullet casings
08/02/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 27 DP, 9 metallic objects	394 grs. CBF and 29 DP
15/02/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 6 DP, 4 metallic objects	800 BF, 6 DP
16/02/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 3 DP, 3 metallic objects	400 BF, 3 DP

17/02/2018	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 5 metallic objects	800 BF
23/06/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 31 DP, 18 metallic objects	31 DP and 18 non-biological objects
Ejido Bolívar and Ejido Flores Magón in San Pedro, Coahuila		
13/07/2018	48 BF, 8 bullet casings	
Ejido El Volcán en San Pedro, Coahuila		
28/02/2015	Miscellaneous BF, bullet casings, 2 drums and various TF	
24/06/2017	38 BF, 19 bullet casings, 1 button, 1 coin and 5 TF	
13/09/2017	20 BF, 1 DP, 6 bullet casings and 2 non-biological fragments	
15/09/2017	20 BF, 1 DP, 6 bullet casings	
28/09/2017	1 DP, 3 bullet casings, 2 TF and 1 metallic object	
Estación Claudio en Viesca, Coahuila		
15/04/2015	1000 BF, 6 DP, 8 bullet casings	260 BF
11/08/2016	1000 BF, 6 DP, 8 bullet casings	
20/11/2016	1500 BF, 15 DP, 9 bullet casings	
10/12/2016	4000 BF, 25 DP, 5 bullet casings	4269 BF, 5 bullet casings
12/12/2016		690 BF, 11 DP, metallic objects

30/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, bullet casings	
22/03/2017	250 BF, 3 DP	
01/08/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, bullet casings	
07/10/2017	10000 BF, 27 DP, one fragment of adhesive fabric	607 gr. BF, 28 DP, 1 bullet casing, non-biological fragment
18/10/2017	5060 BF, 31 DP, 2 buttons	980 gr. BF, 10 gr. DP, 2 metallic pieces
19/10/2017	5000 BF, 17 DP	760 gr. BF, 20 DP
20/10/2017	2060 BF, 6 DP, 30 buttons	380 gr. BF, 6 DP
21/10/2017	300 BF, boot with bone shards, 3 DP, 5 bullet casings, 16 buttons	530 gr. BF, 1 DP, 6 bullet casings, 16 metallic fragments
27/10/2017	400 BF, 1 DP	
02/11/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 9 DP, 2 metallic objects	1330 BF, 8 DP
03/11/2017		520 BF
06/12/2017		1 BF
18/01/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 10 DP	
19/01/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 9 DP	
20/01/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 37 DP, 12 bullet casings, 1 metallic object	
14/06/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 12 DP	1100 BF, 2 DP
15/06/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 19 DP	
16/06/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 30 DP	

21/10/2018		2650 gr. BF, 27 DP, 18 metallic objects
23/11/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 13 DP	
25/11/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 6 DP, 2 TF	
28/11/2018	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	1131 BF, 51 DP, 1 bullet casing
Patrocinio en San Pedro, Coahuila		
25/04/2015	2 drums, 1 shoe and 4 pieces of textiles	
28/04/2015		55 BF, 1 DP, metallic handcuffs
21/11/2015	Miscellaneous BF, 1 bullet casing, miscellaneous TF and shoes	
05/03/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 1 bullet casing, various TF	
19/03/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
07/04/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, dozens of shoes and various TF	Miscellaneous CBF
08/10/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, dozens of shoes and various TF, 8 bullet casings	Miscellaneous CBF, 9 bullet casings
09/10/2016		1796 BF, 28 DP, 86 metallic pieces, 31 bullet casings, skirt, blouse
10/10/2016		17 bullet casings, pants, sweatpants, baseball cap

15/10/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, dozens of shoes and various TF	205 BF, 9 DP, 2 metallic pieces
16/10/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
23/11/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	68 BF, 2 dental prosthetics, 1 metallic piece, 1 handbag
24/11/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	218 BF, 3 DP
25/11/2016	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
29/11/2016		1603 BF
30/11/2016		522 BF
01/12/2016		1072 BF
02/12/2016		1000 BF
03/12/2016		227 BF, 3 DP, 1 piece of synthetic fiber
06/12/2016	70 BF	60 BF
07/12/2016		14 BF, 1 button
08/12/2016		21 BF
09/12/2016		85 BF
12/12/2016		85 BF, 1 button
14/12/2016		24 BF, 2 metallic pieces
15/12/2016		2 BF, 2 bullet casings
18/01/2017	3 BF	
19/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, miscellaneous TF	
20/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF,	

	miscellaneous DP	
25/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	1499 BF, 27 DP, 8 metallic pieces
27/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
01/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
03/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	332 BF
11/02/2017		864 BF, 6 DP
16/02/2017	11 BF	9 BF
22/02/2017	9 BF	Miscellaneous BF
23/02/2017	18 BF, 1 TF	Miscellaneous BF, skirt, button
24/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	92 BF, 3 DP
28/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
01/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	Miscellaneous garments
03/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	10 BF
14/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
15/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
16/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	Miscellaneous BF, 1 bullet casing, 2 buttons, 1 coin, cloth fragment, metal fragment
17/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	Miscellaneous BF

29/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
30/03/2017	7 BF	
05/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	109 BF
06/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	477 BF, 2DP, 4 pieces of textiles
07/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	162 BF, 2 DP
08/04/2017		107 BF, 2 DP, 2 bullet casings, 2 metallic pieces
03/05/2017	27 BF	
05/05/2017	95 BF	
10/05/2010	50 BF	
11/05/2017	25 BF	
18/05/2017	1 BF	
24/05/2017	2 BF	Miscellaneous BF
25/05/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 2 shoes and 4 non-biological objects	Miscellaneous BF
26/07/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
27/07/2017	150 BF, 3 DP, miscellaneous objects and one bullet casing	Miscellaneous BF
28/07/2017	100 BF, 2 DP, 1 bullet casing	Miscellaneous BF
30/08/2017	80 BF, 1 metallic object	
05/09/2017	50 BF, 1 DP, 7 bullet	Miscellaneous BF, 1 bullet

	casings	casing
19/09/2017	350 BF, 2 DP	
03/10/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	53 BF
04/10/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	700 BF
05/10/2017	300 BF, 4 metallic objects	Miscellaneous BF
12/10/2017	200 BF, 4 DP	Miscellaneous BF
13/10/2017	100 BF	Miscellaneous BF
22/11/2017	100 BF, 3 DP, various TF	
24/01/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 2 DP	
25/01/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 12 DP, 1 bullet casing, 2 TF	
26/01/2018	200 BF, 2 bullet casings	
27/01/2018	2000 BF, 4 DP, 4 bullet casings	964.5 gr BF, 20 DP
01/09/2018	14.5 gr BF, 1 DP	
San Antonio de Gurza in San Pedro, Coahuila		
07/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF, pieces of textiles, 1 shoe and various non-biological fragments	
12/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 1 shoe	2494 BF, 12 DP, 16 metallic fragments, 1 bullet casing, 3 projectiles, 7 TF, 1 sock, 1 fragment of shoe sole
14/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, various TF	
21/01/2017	10 BF, 1 bullet casing	12 BF, 7 CBF

04/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 15 metallic objects, 4 bullet casings, 1 button	366 BF
31/08/2017	1300 BF, 29 DP, 17 metallic objects, 1 bullet casing, 9 non-biological fragments	
01/09/2017	500 BF, 4 DP, 1 metallic object, 1 TF	
02/09/2017	1200 BF, 12 DP, 1 pair handcuffs, various bullet casings, 16 TF	
07/09/2017	100 BF, 6 DP	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous non-biological objects
16/09/2017	70 BF, 1 bullet casing	
10/11/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 4 metallic objects, various TF	500 BF, 40 DP, 5 non-biological objects
18/11/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, various metallic objects and textiles	
30/11/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 2 DP, 1 TF	
01/12/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 2 DP, 10 TF, 1 bullet casing	
01/02/2018	100 BF	100 BF
24/05/2018	80 BF, 1 DP	
25/05/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 3 DP	

07/06/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 2 DP, various metallic objects and textiles	
08/06/2017	1500 BF, 28 DP, 3 metallic objects, 6 pieces of textiles	
14/07/2018	60 BF, various TF	
San Antonio del Alto in Matamoros, Coahuila		
02/12/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 21 DP, 1 drum, various shoes, various TF, 3 metallic objects, 19 bullet casings	6000 BF, 21 DP, 1 metallic drum with orifices, 18 bullet casings, 1 anti-aircraft missile, 3 zippers, 3 buckles, plastic telephone card
11/01/2018		Miscellaneous CBF, 3 200-liter perforated metallic tanks
07/03/2018	250 BF, 4 DP, 6 bullet casings	
09/03/2018	250 BF, 2 DP, 4 bullet casings	
21/03/2018	200 BF, 3 DP, 3 bullet casings, 1 coin, 2 metallic fragments, 1 plastic shard	
22/03/2018	300 BF, 4 DP, 1 dental bridge, 16 bullet casings, 1 pair of handcuffs, 1 buckle, 1 medallion, various TF	
24/03/2018	7450 BF, 58 DP, 5 non-biological objects, 1 dental bridge, 7 bullet casings	
04/04/2018	120 BF, 6 DP, 2 bullet casings, 1 rivet	200 BF, 6 DP, 2 bullet casings, 1 rivet from pants
12/04/2018	130 BF, 3 DP, 4 bullet casings, 2 rivet	

13/04/2018	200 BF, 2 DP, 1 bullet casing	
18/04/2018	150 BF	
19/04/2018	500 BF, 5 DP	
21/04/2018	1500 BF, 23 DP, 2 dental crowns, 19 non-biological objects, plastic object	
31/05/2018	60 BF, 9 bullet casings	40 BF, 9 bullet casings
20/07/2018	38.7 gr BF, 1 bullet casing	
21/07/2018	249 gr BF, 4 bullet casings, 1 button, metallic object	
10/08/2018	49.5 gr BF, 1 bullet casing	
24/09/2018		9224 gr BF, 159 DP, 2 bridges with DP, 7 grams organic weave, 1 dental bridge
10/11/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 2 DP, 6 metallic objects	
30/11/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 9 DP, 7 metallic objects	
11/01/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 68 DP	Miscellaneous BF
12/01/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 36 DP	Miscellaneous BF
23/01/2019	105 gr BF, 9 DP, 1 bullet casing, 2 metallic objects	105 gr BF, 9 DP
24/01/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 39 DP, various soft tissues, 3 bullet casings	3000 gr BF, 39 DP, 5 grams charred soft tissue
06/02/2019	106 gr BF, 21 DP	
07/02/2019	1732 gr BF, 79 DP, 8 samples of soft tissue, 3 metallic objects	

08/02/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 10 DP, 1 prosthetic with BF, fragments of a necklace, 1 bullet casing, 13 metallic objects	
09/02/2019	390 gr BF, 25 DP, fragments of a necklace, 1 metallic object	
21/02/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 7 metallic objects	Metallic surgical prosthetics with charred organic remains
23/02/2019	Miscellaneous BF	
08/03/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 26 DP, 33 metallic objects	
09/03/2019	238 gr BF, 6 DP, 2 metallic objects, 3 bullet casings	
20/03/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 1 dental bridge	
21/03/2019	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
23/03/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 21 DP, 5 metallic objects	
01/04/2019	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP	
02/04/2019	Miscellaneous BF	
04/04/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 37 gr soft tissues, shoe fragments	
05/04/2019	Miscellaneous BF, 16 DP	
San Francisco Aguanaval in Matamoros, Coahuila		
21/07/2018	631 BF, 19 DP	
09/08/2018	Miscellaneous BF	

10/08/2018	136 gr BF, 3 DP	
11/08/2018	5000 gr BF, miscellaneous DP, 3 bullet casings, 2 rivets	
Santa Elena in San Pedro, Coahuila		
28/01/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 5 DP, 1 bullet casing, 5 non-biological objects	2112 CBF, 23 DP, piercing
02/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 1 TF, various non-biological objects	
08/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 3 DP, 43 metallic object, 3 bullet casings	4099 BF, 21 DP, 42 metallic fragments, 3 bullet casings, 1 leather tag
09/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 15 metallic object, 1 bullet casing	2971 BF, 33 DP, 14 metallic fragments
10/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 4 non-biological objects	912 BF, 6 DP, 4 metallic fragments
11/02/2017	Miscellaneous BF, various TF, 14 metallic objects	2378 BF, 53 DP, 19 metallic fragments
07/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 8 DP, 16 metallic objects, 2 bullet casings, non-biological objects	2588 BF, 28 DP, metallic objects
08/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 5 DP, 2 metallic objects, 3 non-biological objects	1153 BF, 6 DP, coin, metallic objects
09/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 35 DP, 1 bullet casing, 1 shoe, 15 metallic objects, 3 non-biological objects	3125 BF, 38 DP, metallic objects, shoe fragment

10/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 7 non-biological objects, 8 metallic objects, 1 bullet casing	3357 BF, 68 DP, metallic objects
11/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, biological tissues, metallic objects, 1 dental bridge	2549 BF, 37 DP, metallic objects
22/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 18 non-biological objects, 1 handcuffs	Miscellaneous BF, 62 DP, miscellaneous TF
24/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 1 TF, non-biological objects, 1 bullet casing	3735 BF, 66 DP, fragments of sharp objects, miscellaneous TF
25/03/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 27 DP, biological tissues, 2 shoes, various TF, 6 buttons, 8 metallic objects	2368 BF, 29 DP, soft tissue, fragments of sharp objects, miscellaneous TF
11/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 3 DP, 4 non-biological objects	500 BF, 3 DP, 4 metallic fragments, 1 fragment of cloth
12/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF	80 BF
13/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 10 DP, 17 non-biological objects	1000 BF, 7 DP, 15 metallic fragments, 1 hair fragment, 1 cloth fragment
14/04/2017		800 BF, 3 DP, 40 metallic fragments, 2 cloth fragments
21/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 2 DP, 7 metallic objects, 2 bullet casing, non-biological objects	600 BF, 3 DP, miscellaneous metallic fragments, 1 bullet casing, 1 bra hook, 4 buttons, fragments of cloth and plastic

26/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 18 DP, non-biological objects	800 BF, 15 DP, 30 non-biological fragments
27/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 11 DP, biological tissues samples, non-biological objects	1000 BF, 11 DP, 12 non- biological fragments
28/04/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 11 DP, 12 non-biological objects	500 BF, 11 DP, 14 non-biological fragments
06/05/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 15 DP, non-biological objects	
12/05/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 10 DP, non-biological objects, 1 bullet casing	
31/05/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 17 DP, 7 non-biological objects	
01/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 17 DP, 5 non-biological objects	
02/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 26 DP, 1 cell phone, non- biological objects	
06/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 3 DP, non-biological objects	
07/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 11 DP, non-biological objects	
08/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 16 DP, non-biological objects	
09/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 9 DP, non-biological objects	
10/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, non- biological objects	
15/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 9 DP,	

	non-biological objects	
16/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 17 DP, non-biological objects	
20/06/2017		Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous non-biological remains
21/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 2 DP, non-biological objects	
22/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 6 DP, non-biological objects	
23/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 1 DP, non-biological objects	
29/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 13 DP, 4 non-biological objects	
30/06/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 27 DP, 17 non-biological objects, 1 bullet casing	
01/07/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 6 metallic objects	
05/07/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 1 DP	
07/07/2017	8 BF, non-biological objects	
20/07/2017	20 BF, 3 DP, non- biological objects	Miscellaneous BF, non-biological remains
10/08/2017	150 BF, 8 metallic objects	60 gr BF, non-biological remains
11/08/2017	200 BF, 1 DP, 30 metallic objects	60 gr BF, 2 DP, non-biological remains
12/08/2017	700 BF, 11 DP, 25 metallic objects	290 gr BF, 10 DP, 170 gr metallic fragments
23/08/2017	500 BF, 8 DP, 1 metallic	220 gr BF, 8 DP, miscellaneous

	object, 2 non-biological objects, 1 textile object	non-biological remains
24/08/2017	250 BF, 9 DP, 1 metallic object, 1 non-biological object	80 gr BF, 9 DP, miscellaneous non-biological remains
29/08/2017	Miscellaneous BF, miscellaneous DP, 1 bullet casing	
06/09/2017	20 BF, 6 non-biological fragments	Miscellaneous BF, non-biological remains
08/11/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 3 DP	300 BF, 3 DP
23/11/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 9 DP	
24/11/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 1 can	
25/11/2017	Miscellaneous BF, 16 DP, 1 button	
28/02/2018	100 BF, 10 DP, 2 non-biological fragments	
16/05/2018	200 BF, 17 DP	
17/05/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 8 DP	
18/05/2018	Miscellaneous BF, 28 DP, 1 non-biological fragment	
16/08/2018	97.5 gr BF, 12 DP	

Sources: Isolated documents from the search files of Grupo Vida, May 15, 2019, and files from Annex 3.

Annex 6

Rifts in Los Zetas

Mexican criminal organizations in January 2020	
Number of cartels in Mexico	289
Fragmentation of Los Zetas	12

Rifts in Los Zetas		
<i>State</i>	<i>No. of rifts of Los Zetas by state</i>	<i>Groups</i>
Aguascalientes	2	Cártel del Noreste (Los Laredo), Los Talibanes
Chiapas	1	Unidentified Los Zetas spinoff
Coahuila	3	Cártel de La Laguna, Cartel del Noreste, Sangre Zeta
Hidalgo	1	Vieja Escuela Z (Los Zetas Vieja Escuela)
Nuevo León	2	Los Dorado, Cartel del Noreste
Puebla	2	El Bukanans (Zetas Sangre Nueva), La Negra
Quintana Roo	2	Los Zetas Vieja Escuela, Los Talibanes (CJNG)
San Luis Potosí	1	Cártel del Noreste
Tabasco	3	Grupo de Humberto Torres Camacho a.k.a. "Beto Coca", Los Zetas Vieja Escuela (gang of Sergio Enrique Calderón Quintanilla a.k.a. "El Cursi"), Los Talibanes

Tamaulipas	5	Cartel del Noreste, Los Zetas Vieja Escuela, Grupo Operativo Los Zetas-Grupo Operativo Z, Fuerzas Especiales Zetas, Sangre Zeta
Veracruz	3	Los Zetas Sangre Nueva, Cartel del Noreste, Los Zetas Vieja Escuela
Zacatecas	2	Cártel del Noreste, Los Talibanes

Presence in states			
	<i>Group</i>	<i>State presence (number of states)</i>	<i>States</i>
1	Cartel del Noreste	6	Aguascalientes, Coahuila, Nuevo León, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz
2	Los Zetas Vieja Escuela-Vieja Escuela Z	5	Hidalgo, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz
3	Zeta Sangre Nueva	4	Coahuila, Puebla, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz
4	Los Talibanes	4	Aguascalientes, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, and Zacatecas
5	Sangre Zeta	2	Coahuila and Tamaulipas
6	Cártel de La Laguna	1	Coahuila
7	Los Dorado	1	Nuevo León
8	Grupo Operativo Los Zetas-Grupo Operativo Z	1	Tamaulipas
9	La Negra	1	Puebla
10	Fuerzas Especiales	1	Tamaulipas

	Zeta		
11 and 12	Unidentified Los Zetas spinoffs (2)	2	Chiapas and Tabasco

Source: Lantia Consultores, "Los Zetas", January 17, 2020.

Annex 7

Requested files that were not made available

Coahuila

- File on the massacre at the Ferrie Bar on January 31, 2010.
- File on the shootout outside Galerías Laguna on February 1, 2010.
- File on the massacre at Las Juanas Bar on May 14, 2010.
- File on the massacre at the Quinta Italia Inn on July 18, 2010.
- File on the massacre of the Tornado Bar on January 6, 2013.
- File on the entry of Los Zeta in the Torreón Penitentiary (January 2009) to free nine prisoners and burn three kidnappers alive inside the prison.
- Files on other prison breakouts or serious incidents at the Torreón penitentiary

Durango.

- June 2010. Nine die in a shootout at the Gómez Palacio penitentiary.

Fiscalía General de la República.

- Gómez Palacio penitentiary. Investigations of former penitentiary directors Tomás Aspland Aguilera and Margarita Rojas Rodríguez from 2009 to 2010.
- August 2009. At the Gómez Palacio penitentiary, 20 prisoners died and 28 were injured due to a riot in which firearms were used between opposing gangs that sought control over the prison.
- January 2011. Riot inside prison 2 of Gómez Palacio, where 12 prisoners died.
- December 2012. Mass prison breakout attempt at Gómez Palacio where there was an exchange of gunfire between prison guards and inmates. The toll was 24 dead, 15 prisoners and nine guards. There were also nine injured.

GLOSSARY OF CARTELS, ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Academia Interamericana de Derechos Humanos de Coahuila	Interamerican Human Rights Academy of Coahuila
El Colegio de México	Mexico College

PUBLIC AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS

Agencia Federal de Investigaciones (AFI)	Federal Investigations Agency
Ayuntamiento	City or Town Council
Centros de Fusión de Inteligencia y Operatividad	Centers for Merging Intelligence and Operations
Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional (Cisen)	Center for National Security and Investigation
Centros de Readaptación Social (Ceresos)	Centers for Social Readaptation
Centro Nacional de Planeación, Análisis e Información para el Combate a la Delincuencia (Cenapi)	National Center of Planning, Analysis and Information for the Fight against Crime
Comisión Ejecutiva de Atención a Víctimas (CEAV)	Executive Commission for Attention to Victims
Comisión Nacional de Búsqueda de Personas (CNBP)	National Commission for the Search for Missing Persons

Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (cndh)	National Human Rights Commission
Consejo Estatal de Seguridad	State Security Council
Dirección Federal de Seguridad	Federal Security Division
Dirección de Seguridad Pública de Torreón	Torreón Public Security Division
Fiscalía del Estado de Durango	State District Attorney's Office of Durango
Fiscalía General de la República (fgr)	Attorney General's Office of the Republic
Fiscalía de personas desaparecidas de Coahuila	Missing Persons District Attorney's Office of Coahuila
Gabinete Nacional de Seguridad	National Security Cabinet
Grupo de Armas y de Tácticas Especiales (Gatem)	Special Tactics and Weapons Group
Grupos de Coordinación de Operativos	Operations Coordination Groups
Guardia Nacional	National Guard
Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda (Infonavit)	National Housing Fund Institute
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)	National Institute of Statistics and Geography
Mando Especial	Special Command
La Marina	Naval Forces and Marine Corps
Ministerio Público (MP)	Public Ministry
Partido de Acción Nacional	National Action Party
Partido Revolucionario Institucional	Institutional Revolutionary Party
Policía Federal	Federal Police
Policía Metropolitana	Metropolitan Police
Programa Integral de Atención a	Integral Service Program for

Familiares de Personas Desaparecidas (Profade)	Relatives of Missing Persons
Procuraduría General de Justicia (PGJ)	Attorney General's Justice Department
Programa Laguna Segura	Safe Laguna Program
Programa Sellamiento Nazas	Sealing off the Nazas River Program
Secretaría de Defensa Nacional (Sedena)	Department of National Defense
Secretaría de Gobernación	Department of the Interior
Secretaría de Seguridad y Protección Ciudadana	Department of Citizen Security and Protection
Sistema Nacional de Víctimas	National System for Victims
Subprocuraduría de Personas Desaparecidas de Coahuila	Missing Persons Division of the State District Attorney's Office of Coahuila
Unidad de Investigaciones Sensibles de la Policía Federal	Undercover Investigations Unit, Federal Police
Unidad Metropolitana Antisecuestros	Metropolitan Anti-Kidnapping Unit

PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Asociación Internacional de Búsqueda de Nuestros Desaparecidos	International Association for the Search for Our Missing Persons
Búscame	Search for Me
Cámara Nacional de la Industria de Transformación (Canacintra)	National Chamber of the Assembly Industry
Caravana del Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad (mpjd)	Caravan of the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity

Centro de Inteligencia Ciudadana	Citizen Intelligence Center
Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones Laguna	Civic Council of Laguna Institutions
Consejo Cívico de las Instituciones de Nuevo León	Civic Council of Nuevo León Institutions
Consejo Lagunero de la Iniciativa Privada	Lagunero Private Industrial Council
Consultoría Madison	Madison Consultancy
Data Cívica	Civic Data
Fuerza Coahuila	Coahuila Force
Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Coahuila (Fuundec)	Forces United for Our Disappeared in Coahuila
Gea Consultores	Gea Consultants
Grupo Autónomo de Trabajo (gat)	Autonomous Labor Group
Grupo Empresarial de La Laguna	La Laguna Business Group
Laguneros por la Paz	Laguneros for Peace
Lantia Consultores	Lantia Consultants
México Evalúa	Mexico Assesses
Participación Ciudadana 29	Citizen Participation 29
Víctimas por sus Derechos en Acción (Grupo Vida)	Victims for their Rights in Action (Grupo of Life)
Voz que Clama	Clamoring Voices

CARTELS

El Cartel del Golfo	The Gulf Cartel
El Cartel de Poniente	The Western Cartel
El Cartel de Sinaloa	The Sinaloa Cartel

La Familia	The Family
La Familia Michoacana	The Family from Michoacán
Fuerzas Especiales de Arturo	Arturo's Special Forces
Gente Nueva	New People
Juárez a La Línea	Juárez on the Line
Los Pelones	The Bald Guys
Los Zetas, or Grupo Zeta (Fuerzas Especiales del Cartel del Golfo, f.e.c.g.)	The Zetas, or Zetas Group (Gulf Cartel Special Forces)

Defeating Los Zetas: Organized crime, the State and organized society in La Laguna, Mexico, 2007-2014

Cover design: Rosalba Alvarado
Typography and typesetting: Nieves Danaé

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February 2021

The narrative regarding criminal violence in Mexico tends to highlight the negative, while minimizing success stories: this book is different. It explains the reasons why the region of La Laguna succeeded in reducing the statistics of homicides and missing persons and how it started to attend to the families of victims. There were two key factors: 1) federal, state, and local government pushing aside party differences in order to coordinate efforts, and 2) dialogue and response to the petitions of social actors. The result is the best security model in Mexico. In this investigation –based on files of regional searches for missing persons and dozens of interviews with officials from all three levels of government, victims, businesspeople, and members of civil society organizations and the press– their story is told.

Seminar on Violence and Peace, El Colegio de México
Project developed under the auspices
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