



# ARIZONA



## COUNTER-TERRORISM INFORMATION CENTER

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### HIDTA Investigative Support Center

## Violence Situation-Arizona/Sonora Border

### Current Situation in Sonora, Mexico

Violence in Sonora, Mexico escalated within the past month as a result the ongoing battle between the Beltran family and Joaquin "Chapo" Guzman (Sinaloa Cartel), which began in February 2008 following the arrest of Alfredo Beltran-Leyva. Formerly embedded in the Sinaloa Cartel, the Beltran-Leyva family now believes Alfredo Beltran-Leyva was set up and left unprotected by Joaquin "Chapo" Guzman and Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada. Since Alfredo's arrest, the Beltran-Leyva family aligned themselves with the Juarez Cartel, headed by Vicente Carrillo. The Juarez and Sinaloa Cartels' struggle for control of the Chihuahua and Sonora drug corridors increased dramatically. Executions of police officials and cartel members occurred in Chihuahua and Sonora within the last three months. Concomitantly, the violence potential rose in the United States. Mexican law enforcement and cartel members seeking refuge in the United States increased the risk of killings on U.S. soil. Rumors indicate the cartels authorized their operatives in the U.S. to hunt down and kill cartel members who have defected.

During June and July, 2008, four Agua Prieta Police Department officers were killed. Several other officers sought asylum in the U.S. Within the past week, the following killings occurred in Nogales, Sonora; some targeted the Beltran-Leyva organization. On August 24, 2008, an armed group killed the second-in-charge of the Nogales branch of the Beltran-Leyva family and his daughter. On August 25, 2008, an armed group shot and killed a man while his children watched. On August 26, 2008, gunmen armed with AK-47 rifles and a .45 caliber weapon attempted to kidnap two people: one who resisted was killed; one was kidnapped. On August 28 or 29, 2008, three of four people killed were decapitated. The vehicle involved in these killings had an Arizona license plate. Also, on August 25, 2008, in Baviacora, Sonora, the commander of the Policia Estatal Investigadora (PEI) and his driver were ambushed and killed.

### Possible Impact (spillover) on the United States

To avoid possible violence in Mexico, drug traffickers and law enforcement officers may relocate family members into the U.S. with the following possible outcomes:

- Increased home invasions and homicides.

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- Family members possessing high-powered weapons in their vehicles.
- Intimidation of relocated cartel members and their families.
- Relocated cartel members may continue their operations in the United States.
- Mexican cartels may employ street gangs, including MS-13 and Barrio Azteca of El Paso, Texas, to carry out acts of violence against cartel members in the U.S.

#### **Possible Impact on Law Enforcement in the United States**

The Mexican military presence near the border may cause traffickers to use deadly force to push their loads into the U.S. with the following possible results:

- Threats against law enforcement officers and first responders.
- A rise in assaults against illegal aliens and rival cartel members.
- Shootouts near the border pose a threat to U.S. citizens and law enforcement because suspects can quickly exit Mexico and flee into the U.S.
- Cartels would gather intelligence on rival cartels and police enforcement activities in the United States.
- Transport of weapons and currency southbound in tractor trailers.

#### **Border Banditry**

Border banditry escalated along the southern Arizona border. Recent incidents indicate drug smugglers and bandits are more likely to conduct drug ripoffs at stash locations in the metropolitan Tucson and Phoenix areas. In the past, bandit groups usually limited their activities to remote locations. As ripoffs by rival smuggling groups increase, so does the potential for violence against U.S. law enforcement. Drug ripoff groups pose as law enforcement officers with false markings on vehicles, counterfeit uniforms and fake badges. Wary of ripoffs by rival groups masquerading as police, drug smugglers are more violent in protecting their loads from potential threat by authentic police officers. In the last two months, narcotic and illegal alien smugglers confronted and/or physically assaulted local, state and federal law enforcement.

#### **Indicators of Border Banditry**

- The majority of bandit cells conduct their operations south and west of Green Valley with access to I-19.

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- Bandit crews rove along state routes and county roads and lie-in-wait for loads.
- Many bandits encountered by law enforcement are from Sinaloa, particularly the towns of El Fuerte and Choix.
- Bandit crews carry sleeping bags, blankets, extra clothes, food, binoculars, weapons, radios, cell phones, etc., and often claim to be camping or hunting.
- Bandit crews operate in remote areas for three to ten days. Resupplies of food, water, etc., have been made by females associated with the organization.
- Bandit crews deployed into remote areas often dress in camouflage clothing or military-style fatigues, wear black face masks or bandanas over their faces when operational, and typically have a military-style haircut.
- Bandit crews often claim to live in Mesa, Arizona (home to known cartel members).
- Bandit crews stash weapons, including semi-automatic rifles/handguns, automatic rifles/handguns, shotguns, and knives in their vehicles, on their person, in nearby brush or in a scout/surveillance vehicle.
- Bandit crews use prepaid Motorola Boost phones for communications.
- Bandit crews, usually males, ages 20-27, travel in groups of three to five.

### Recommendations

U.S. law enforcement and first responders need to maintain a heightened awareness at all times.

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