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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 13526: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ASEC, SNAR, KJUS, MX, PHUM, CASC
SUBJECT: More Mass Graves Found in Tamaulipas: Body Total Now 81

REF: A) 11 MATAMOROS 146;

1. (SBU) Following the discovery of more mass graves (narcofoyas) in the San Fernando area April 7 and 8, the total count of bodies found since April 1, including those reported in ref tel, has reached 81 in 17 burial sites. Federal officials believe that the majority of the bodies belong to people kidnapped from public buses in the San Fernando area by Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO) members in recent weeks. Post has reports of at least two US citizens kidnapped from buses in this area during this period and is working with authorities to verify whether they are among the victims.

2. (SBU) Since ref tel, post has learned more about the investigation that lead to the discovery of the bodies. On March 19, according to officials, TCO members kidnapped 24 people from a public bus which originated in San Luis Potosi, heading north to the border...
city of Reynosa. On March 24 TCO members kidnapped 12 people from a
bus originating in Michoacan. Also on March 24, TCO members
kidnapped all 48 passengers off a bus driving from Guanajuato to
Reynosa. All three attacks occurred near San Fernando, Tamaulipas.

3. (SBU) According to federal officials, the families of the
Michoacan kidnapping victims reported the first March 24 bus
kidnapping to authorities in Michoacan and this prompted a Mexican
army (SEDENA) Special Operations investigation in San Fernando. On
April 1 SEDENA captured six presumed TCO members and liberated five
kidnapping victims. The five kidnapping victims came from Victoria
(one), Queretaro (three) and San Luis Potosi (one). The victims
reported that they had been in captivity for two weeks. Acting on
information obtained from the detainees and victims, on April 1
SEDENA located six mass grave sites in La Joya, a small community
north of San Fernando. The mass graves contained a total of 11
bodies. Officials estimate that the victims had been killed
approximately one month ago.

4. (SBU) On April 6 SEDENA forces captured another five presumed
TCO members and located two more mass grave sites about 30km from the
La Joya sites, containing a total of 48 bodies. Authorities estimate
that these victims were killed 7-10 days previously.

5. (SBU) On April 7 SEDENA forces rescued three kidnapping victims
and located two more mass grave sites containing a total of 13 bodies
killed 7-10 days previously. Also on April 7 SEDENA rescued three
people kidnapped from a bus originating in San Luis Potosi and
discovered one grave site containing a total of three bodies in the
Las Norias area south of San Fernando. On April 8 officials
discovered another six bodies in six graves in the same area. Of the
bodies discovered in Las Norias, four appear to have been dead for
approximately one month and five for more than a month.

6. (SBU) According to federal officials, the vast majority of the
remains appear to have been beaten to death. A small number had
bullet wounds. Official sources say they believe that many
individuals taken from buses have not been reported and authorities
are continuing to search the area for them or their remains. The 14
presumed TCO members are in Mexico City in the custody of the Office
of Special Investigations of Organized Crime (SIEDO).

7. (SBU) Comment: Federal officials say they believe that the Los
Zetas TCO is responsible for the killings. This is consistent with
local press coverage. Zeta-held towns have almost no newspaper
coverage of the discoveries, while in Matamoros, home to the rival
Gulf Cartel, local papers are running full front page stories about
the massacre. Federal officials, noting that many of the kidnapping
victims came from poor states where migration rates are high, believe
that the majority of the victims discovered were migrants heading to
the US who were intercepted en route and unable to pay what was
demanded of them.

BARKIN,