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H-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00 ITC-01 L-00 ARMY-00
MOFM-00 MOF-00 VCIE-00 NSAE-00 ISN-00 NSCE-00 OIC-00
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INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
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> 1.4(B),B1,B7(E),1.4(D)

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 000045

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/12
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PHUM, SNAR, ECON, KCRM, MX
SUBJECT: Tijuana Bilateral Assessment

REF: TIJUANA 1275; MEXICO 3468

CLASSIFIED BY: Carlos Pascual, Ambassador, DOS, EXEC; REASON: 1.4(B),
(D)

1. (SBU) SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS: One of the early fruits of the new
security policy coordination mechanism with Mexico has been an
agreement to focus our joint efforts on the border cities where the
most violence occurs and where the DTOs have carved out the
greatest operating space. As part of this effort an unprecedented
joint team representing all U.S. and Mexican law enforcement
agencies traveled to Tijuana and San Diego to conduct an assessment
of security and review opportunities for increased bilateral
cooperation. In its two-day visit the team came away with the
following key judgments:

-- Presidential focus: The joint assessment and increased
cooperation on the border is greatly helped by the express support
of President Calderon.

-- Mexican interagency coordination is improving both in Tijuana
and the DF, yet it is still too tied to personalities and
under-institutionalized.

> Classified by DAS, A/GIS, DoS on : 10/17/2013 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL
> ~ Reason:☐1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 01/11/2020

> REVIEW AUTHORITY: Adolph Eisner, Senior Reviewer

-- Judicial prosecutions lagging: Frustration in Tijuana is rising over the inability of the federal judiciary to produce convictions.

-- Social fabric strained: The recession, ineffective schools, and the transient nature of Tijuana's population work in the DTOs' favor. The GOM is not certain how to integrate Pillar IV (Build Strong and Resilient Communities) into its broader drug strategy and is still uncomfortable with NGOs.

-- Assistance requests modest: Mexican interlocutors identified discrete areas where they believe the USG can help: some technology, lots of intelligence sharing, limited equipment (armored cars, ballistic vests), training (aimed at managing police forces rather than how to do operations), and support to vetting processes.

-- State and local forces are critical [   ]: State and local law enforcement know their beat better than federal counterparts and must be included in the equation if public security is to improve. They are rich in manpower[   ]

B1
1.4(D)

-- Task force model: The San Diego meeting drove home the utility of the task force approach to investigations. The GOM will be receptive to exchanges and visits on this key model -- and perhaps also to detail more staff to task forces stateside.

-- Centrality of Control de Confianza: The importance of vetting and internal controls was made clear by U.S. entities and GOM officials accepted this premise.

-- Strategic communications: Both sides agreed that there is a crying need to change the perception of the outside world with regards to Tijuana, and to change the perception of the citizens of Tijuana about law and order. Public diplomacy efforts have been weak to date and must be a key part of any program.

2. (SBU) NEXT STEPS: We will wait to see what comes out of the assessment of Ciudad Juarez/El Paso and then develop an interim program to support the needs of the GOM in taking back the Tijuana and Juarez DTO corridors. We will have a preliminary joint plan to present to the Policy Coordination Group in late January and a more focused plan to present to the High Level Group in February. NAS and AID will conduct more detailed assessments by Training, Judicial, Civil Society, IT, and Control de Confianza program coordinators once the Juarez/El Paso assessment is completed, and begin to look at specific programs which could be quickly implemented. A critical first step will be to place a full-time program coordinator in each city to manage the emerging programs. END SUMMARY.

BILATERAL TEAM CONCEPT

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3. (SBU) High-level bilateral discussions over the past several

months have produced agreement to focus on targeted cooperation in frontline Mexican border cities. We have agreed to pilot new cooperative strategies initially in Tijuana/San Diego and Ciudad Juarez/El Paso. Our joint objective is to demonstrably degrade drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), decrease violence, recognize and disseminate current best practices, and build models readily applicable elsewhere in Mexico. The GOM has insisted that we approach the assessments in a balanced fashion with issues on both sides of the border acknowledged and factored in as we develop new programs.

4. (SBU) A GOM-USG bilateral assessment team, chaired by the Ambassador and CISEN Director General Valdes, traveled to Tijuana December 3 and San Diego December 4. The Mexican delegation was comprised of high-ranking representatives from _____ _____ The U.S. delegation included_____ _____. In both locations we focused on law enforcement in the morning and civil society in the afternoon. In setting the scene for the team, the Ambassador asked for particular focus on sharing best practice, relationships between the military and the three levels of government, and seeking ways to better use real-time intelligence to guide operations. Valdes emphasized co-responsibility in confronting a transnational threat running from Colombia to the U.S., noted the southbound flow of arms and cash, and underscored the direct interest of President Calderon in the endeavor.

1.4(D)
B1
B7(E)

TIJUANA SECURITY IMPROVING BUT FRAGILE

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5. (SBU) Baja California Norte Governor Jose Osuna Millan hosted the bilateral team December 3 in Tijuana. SEDENA and SEMAR regional commanders, state SSP, state PGR, Tijuana Public Security Secretary Julian Leyzaola, and representatives from the Governor's office participated in the discussions. The Governor's technical secretary led with a briefing on the situation on the ground. Baja California Norte beats the Mexican average on education, employment and GDP per capita but as a migrant entry point and an industrial city of working parents, its social fabric is strained. The proximate cause of the spike in violence was Mexican success against leaders of the Arellano Felix Organization (AFO), which splintered and saw Sinaloan rivals move in, sparking a fight to control border crossing routes. After a terrible 2008, violence in Baja California Norte state subsided somewhat in 2009, with Tijuana's share of Mexico's total killings dropping from 11% to 4%. High impact crimes including kidnapping, car theft, and homicide are down significantly. Yet the turnaround is not complete, and 40 police had died statewide through early November, close to the 49 officers lost in 2008. NOTE: Just after the bilateral team visit, a

truce between elements of the AFO disintegrated, unleashing a new wave of killings (ref A). END NOTE.

6. (SBU) Governor Osuna said Mexican forces had launched an offensive against the DTOs via the Baja California Coordination

Group (state and federal SSP, state preventative police (PEP), CISEN, SEDENA, SEMAR, state and federal PGR). He said his main effort was building up state government institutions. Control de confianza measures coupled with firings of corrupt cops were cleaning up the police corporations, with 83% of state and local operational police forces now vetted. [   ] with a continuous review process, there is less room for impunity and responsive performance over time is gaining public confidence.

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

7. (SBU) A single academy, Osuna said, now trains state and local police. 7,000 applicants applied in the last year but only 10% gained entrance. [   ] The Governor thanked USAID for support to the state's justice reforms and noted that he had signed cooperation agreements with 14 U.S. state attorneys general under a USAID-funded program to increase cooperation between Mexican and U.S. states. Baja California Norte, he said, will begin the transition from inquisitorial to accusatory trials in 2010 in the Mexicali judicial district. Other districts will follow after the appropriate training.

B1
1.4(B)
1.4(D)

8. (SBU) Further briefings were offered by the State Security Director, Municipal Security Chief Leyzaola, and SEDENA General Alfonso Duarte who oversees overall interagency coordination between the military and federal, state, and local forces. The GOM shifted a planned meeting away from the Unidad de Inteligencia Tactica Operativa (UNITO), a fusion center concept the GOM is implementing in multiple regions, either because the center is not yet up and running or for simple lack of space. [   ]

B1
1.4(D)

REQUIREMENTS AND REQUESTS

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9. (SBU) State-level SSP presented proposals to improve the performance of Mexican forces: better coordination of operations and information-sharing between Mexican agencies and cross-border, a more robust security force presence and better equipment for all forces, more drug treatment centers on both sides of the border, advance warning of repatriation to Mexico of prisoners freed from U.S. prisons, and U.S. notification of border incidents to the Mexican C4 (Command, Control, Communications, and Coordination) system in time for the Mexicans to react. The key ask from Municipal Dirctor Leyzaola was for equipment (primarily vests and armored cars), and training in professionalism and leadership.

10. (SBU) The Governor made limited appeals for USG assistance. He noted he had asked California Governor Schwarzenegger in an October meeting to share biometric data of prisoners being released and repatriated to Mexico, and for coordination at the point of

repatriation on the border. He suggested a road along the southern side of the border fence to facilitate patrols and positive control of the borderline. He spoke positively of a "culture of legality" in the U.S. and noted that the drug fight is not just about confronting the cartels but must include programs to prevent addiction in schools. Finally, he asked for help turning around

Mexico and Tijuana's perception problem, stating that Brazil is more violent than Mexico, Detroit is more violent than Tijuana, and California plays more narcocorridos than Mexican radio stations. He asserted that USG travel alerts that warn U.S. citizens not to visit Baja California severely damage tourism and the economy. A weak economy creates a fertile recruiting ground for the cartels. He asked for our help in turning around the image of Tijuana as a violent and unapproachable place.

C-4 CENTER A GLORIFIED CALL CENTER

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11. (SBU) The team visited Tijuana's C-4 center later in the day. The C-4 is primarily a call center for emergency calls and does not have a strong analytical component. It handles city 911 calls (5,200 per day), and includes federal police and military liaison officers with links to the SSP's countrywide Plataforma Mexico data base. A filtering overlay has reduced hoax calls from 50% to 30% of total volume and a center in Mexicali fields state-wide anonymous tip (denuncia) calls. The 911 and denuncia numbers both receive calls regularly from U.S.-based callers, which as of mid-2009 can be made from the U.S. toll-free. An SMS/text message-based add-on interface is planned for 2010.

SAN DIEGO LAW ENFORCEMENT SESSION

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12. (SBU) Acting U.S. Attorney Kevin Kelly hosted the December 4 meeting in San Diego, with participation by San Diego-based ICE, FBI, CBP/Border Patrol, DEA, ATF, San Diego Police Department (SDPD), Chula Vista Police Department, San Diego Sheriff's Department, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD), Joint Task Force-North, and the Mexican Consulate. The meeting moved thematically from U.S. federal interagency coordination to state and local law enforcement cross-border coordination, intelligence architecture and cross-border information sharing, cross border investigations, and ICE's Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST). DG Valdes remarked he had never seen such a profusion of USG partners for Mexican efforts, nor a cross-border law enforcement gathering on this scale.

U.S. Federal Interagency Coordination

13. (SBU) Kelly began with an outline of the Southern California region he represents: 141 miles of border, 6 Ports of Entry with many interstate transportation links, 7% of the U.S.-Mexico border but fully 60% of the border population. Drug caseloads Kelly said,

are up 60% in fiscal year 2009 and the district sees more drug
cases than California's three other districts combined. A
well-situated crossroads for trade, the San Diego area is also
suffering cartel creep, as pressure in Mexico pushes DTO leaders
and operations north across the border. In response, agencies in
the area have created numerous task forces to facilitate the
collection, analysis, and dissemination of information across
jurisdictions, agencies, and borders.

14. (SBU) Agencies also assign officers as border liaisons to work
with Mexican counterparts.

B7(E)

State and Local Law Enforcement Cross-Border Coordination

15. (SBU) SDPD briefed on programs to train local police in
Tijuana, Rosarito, and Ensenada using a train-the-trainer approach.
This kind of training on culture of lawfulness, community policing,
and intel-led operations creates channels for information-sharing
between SDPD and Mexican counterpart forces. SDPD reps also attend
the funerals of slain Tijuana police to build trust and show
support for their colleagues. The Los Angeles Police Department
(LAPD) runs one of the largest international police training sites
in the U.S. In addition to the skills imparted, these programs too
are a huge boost to trust and inter-operability.

Intelligence Architecture and Cross-Border Intel Sharing

16. (C)

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U.S.
participants agreed this is key, but added a note of caution that
intelligence alone will not turn things around. Intelligence is an
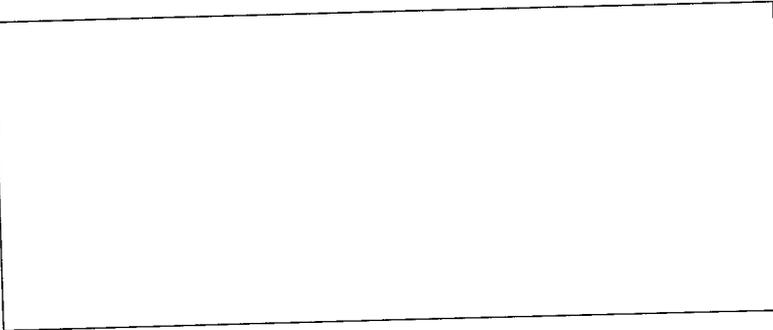input -- it does not direct operations and it does not reform
institutions.

Cross-Border Investigations

17. (SBU) The FBI field office described its approach to
cross-border violence cases (primarily kidnappings).

B7(E)

B7(E)

18. (SBU) Border Enforcement Security Task Force: The Mexican delegation specifically requested a briefing on ICE's Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST). BEST is the only task force in San Diego with an embedded Mexican official, a promising approach also in use at EPIC.

Closing Comments

19. (C) The Ambassador closed by drawing out a few key lessons. To address these law enforcement challenges requires multiple agencies with multiple talents. Task forces, as cross-cutting entities,

bridge jurisdictions and build trust. Intelligence and information collection function on several levels. In a rough cut, he laid out a continuum: community tips and information drawn from beat cops; tactical information derived from, for example, humint and judicial wiretaps; information on high value targets; and both intelligence and analysis on the operations of DTOs. Establishing such a framework on intelligence could also inform the architecture for sharing intelligence. Different aspects of intelligence sharing would require different protocols for sharing, disseminating and protecting information. He underscored that the issues covered in the day's discussion would only bear fruit when brought back to specific cases. The imperative to solve a case drives USG and the GOM to cooperate across the border and successful case establishes goodwill, durable communications channels, and an example for use in subsequent actions.

CIVIL SOCIETY SESSIONS OPEN A DOOR

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20. (SBU) The team met with academics and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in separate meetings at the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC) and the University of California-San Diego (UCSD). In Tijuana, the GOM organizers did not seem to understand the focus of Pillar IV. They brought in three academics working on immigration issues, who stressed that deportees are cannon fodder for the cartels and described GOM support to deportees. They said that unemployment in the state has tripled from two percent to seven percent in the economic downturn and is providing a boon to DTO recruiters, but did not have suggestions on how to turn the situation around.

21. (SBU) Former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Jeffrey Davidow presided

at the UCSD session, which was a much more varied and comprehensive exchange with NGO, business, and academic leaders. California NGOs and non-profits described their activities south of the border and speakers urged the GOM to strengthen NGOs rather than mistrust them. DG Valdes remarked that in the late 1990s, he was tasked with analyzing the "threat" from NGOs and came away with a strong appreciation for their ability to strengthen civil society. The Chamber of Commerce explained their efforts for several years have been on the Tijuana-San Diego metro area as one economic block. Chamber members include business people from both sides of the border, and their investment/trade promotion trips also represent both cities.

22. (SBU) COMMENT: This part of our evolving strategy has been the most uncomfortable for the GOM. Civil society organizations are often vocal in their criticism of the federal government, including the security strategy. What the GOM saw in San Diego was a strong and uniform support for Mexico. Academics, business, city and civil society leaders all echoed their interest in expanding cooperation in all sectors to the benefit of both sides. The message was "do not fear us, but let us be part of the solution to our common problems." END COMMENT.

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