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HX-HARARY SECURITY MEXICO INTELLIGENCE REPORT JUNE 2017

Overview

A report released by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) suggested that the conflict in Mexico is the second deadliest in the world; after Syria. Its figures of 23,000 killed in Mexico during 2016 compares to 49,700 in Syria. While it is indeed true that Mexico has become more violent since the mid-2000s, it is important to note that somewhere between 50% and 60% of those 23,000 homicides in 2016 were the result of organized crime, but the remaining ones were common-law homicides. This fact was emphasized by Mexican authorities after the release of the IISS report, and they emphasized that both Brazil and Venezuela consistently have higher homicide rates, and that Brazil normally records more than 50,000 homicides each year; far exceeding the number in Mexico. In fact, Mexico typically ranks 25th with regard to homicide rate per capita. Mexico's homicide rate is 16.4 per 100,000 residents, while Brazil is 25.2, Venezuela is 53.7, and Honduras is 90.4. In sum, while recognize that violence (and homicide in particular) is a serious problem in Mexico, this report compares apples to oranges and Mexican authorities were justified in their criticisms of it.

Also, this month a video surfaced that appeared to show a Mexican soldier executing a fuel thief at point-blank range following a gun battle near Palmarito, Puebla. The circumstances of this heavily edited video remain questionable. Obviously, from a legal standpoint and for purposes of national inquiry the video could be viewed as an embarrassment for the Mexican military. However, if the summary execution is indeed true it reflects the growing exhaustion and frustration of Mexican troops who have been on the front lines of the "War on Drugs" for almost a decade. This has been a growing sense of frustration that following daily protracted battles with sicarios (cartel gunmen), those that are apprehended are often back on the street within a few months. Ground troops are increasingly asking what is the point.

Attacks against Governmental Authority

There were at least 31 attacks directed at government authorities reported during May. This figure represents a significant drop from April, and it is the lowest number since October 2013. However, of particular concern was the high number of political assassinations. Preliminary data from June suggests a similar pattern; likely the result of the elections.

With regard to assassinations in May; there were six reported. In one case, a city council member was assassinated in Navolato, Sinaloa. Another city council member was gunned down in Pánuco, Veracruz. The municipal treasurer was kidnapped in Juchique de Ferrer, Veracruz. The municipal director of the *Comisión Municipal del Deporte* (Comude) was assassinated in Poza Rica, Veracruz. The director of the *Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del Estado* (ISSSTE) was kidnapped and murdered in Tehuacán, Puebla. A former federal deputy was ambushed and killed in Comitán, Chiapas.

There were also several incidents in which assailants either attempted to assassinate political leaders or they fired on their residences or vehicles. For example, the mayoral candidate with the *Partido del Trabajo* escaped injury during an armed attack in Chinameca, Veracruz. Gunmen fired on the homes of the PAN-PRD candidates for mayor in both Las Choapas and Cuitláhuac, Veracruz. Gunmen attempted to assassinate the PRI-PVEM candidate for mayor in Minatitlán, Veracruz.

While not a case of assassination, an activist with the *Partido Movimiento Regeneración Nacional* (Morena) killed a PRD party activist during a fight in Mixtla de Altamirano, Veracruz. Two other people were seriously injured during the shooting. A large group of gunmen detained and robbed 25 activists with a political group known as "*Contigo el cambio continua*" in San Juan Evangelista, Veracruz.



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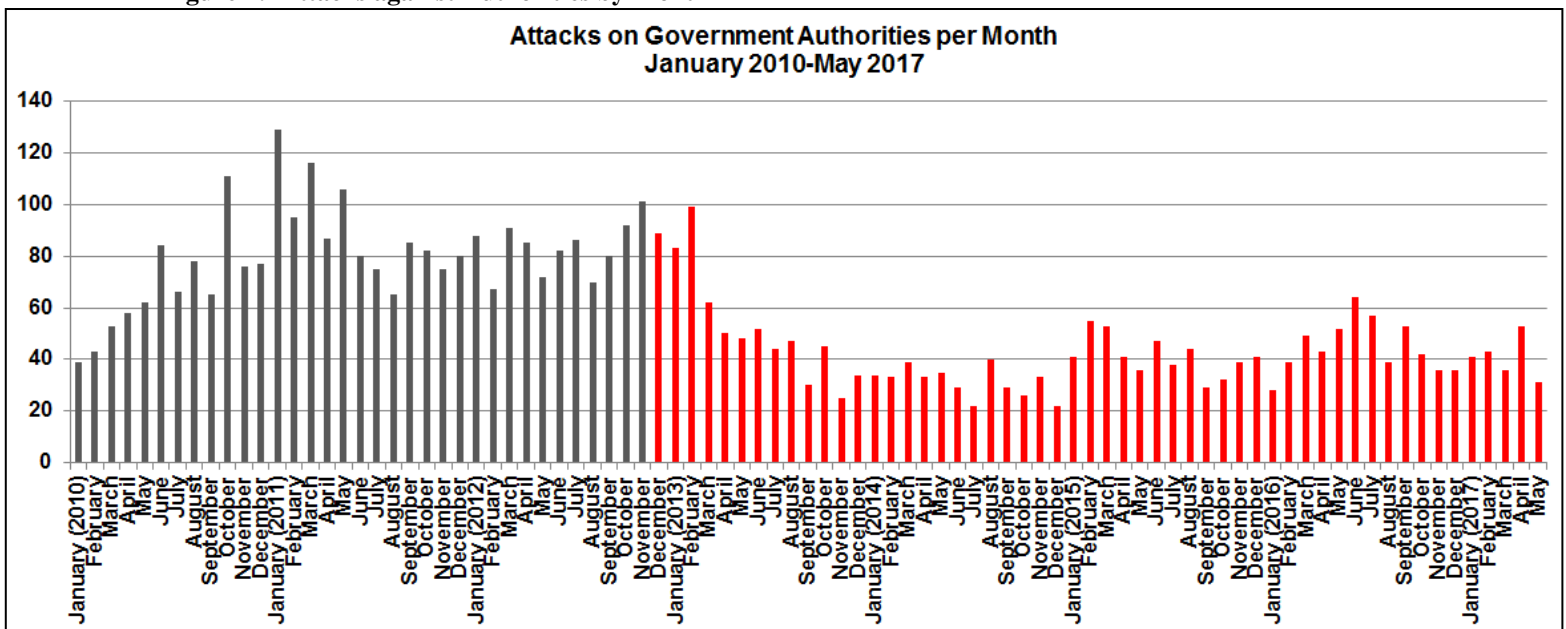
At least 16 police officers or soldiers were killed in attacks this month. Among the victims were 6 municipal chiefs of police. Chiefs were killed in Apaseo el Grande (Guanajuato), Huejuquilla El Alto (Jalisco), Álvaro Obregón (Oaxaca), and Tututepec de Melchor Ocampo (Oaxaca). Also, the municipal chief of police was kidnapped, murdered, and dismembered in Tixtla, Guerrero

Four army patrols were attacked in Baja California Sur, Sinaloa, and Tamaulipas (2). No federal police patrols were reported attacked this month. However, two state police patrols were attacked in Tamaulipas and Veracruz. Five municipal police patrols were attacked in Edomex, Ecatepec, Nuevo León, and Sinaloa. In one incident, five municipal police officers were killed in Ecatepec, Edomex. Also, a municipal police commander and his bodyguard were executed while sitting in their patrol vehicle in San Pedro Garza Garcia, Nuevo León. Also, a municipal police officer was killed when gunmen attacked a police station in Villa Ahumada, Chihuahua.

Other victims this month include the family members of political leaders or law enforcement personnel. For example, the son-in-law of the state prosecutor was murdered in San Luis Potosí. Several family members of the former municipal director of the public works department were kidnapped in Tuxpan, Veracruz. Also, the daughter of the former municipal director of tourism in the same city was kidnapped in a separate incident; she was later released following a multi-million peso ransom payment. The nephew of a municipal delegate was kidnapped in Delegación Iztapalapa of Mexico City. He was later rescued. The daughter of the PRI candidate for mayor was kidnapped in Tlaltetela, Veracruz. The daughter of a union leader (*Sindicato de Trabajadores Petroleros de la República Mexicana*, STPRM) was kidnapped in Las Choapas, Veracruz.

Attacks on journalists and the media continued this month as well. A journalist who founded *Ríodoce* was gunned down in Culiacán, Sinaloa. A local radio announcer was murdered in Tlaquiltenango, Morelos. The director of the *Semanario Regional Costeño* (newspaper) was injured during an armed attack in Autlán de Navarro, Jalisco. A reporter with the local TV news was kidnapped in Nueva Italia, Michoacán.

Figure 1: Attacks against Authorities by Month^{‡λ}



‡ Note: These figures should be considered minimum counts as numerous incidents are not reported by the media or government officials.

λ. President Peña Nieto took office on December 1, 2012 (columns in red).



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Geographic Pattern of Attacks

Attacks against authorities occurred across 15 states, and this figure is slightly higher than the monthly average for 2016. The states impacted this month were Baja California Sur, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Edomex, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Puebla, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz.

Table 1: States Hit Hardest by Attacks on Authorities

States	Number of Attacks
Veracruz	9
Sinaloa	5
Tamaulipas	3

Progress?

Mexican federal authorities reported the arrest of 8 regional leaders or key operatives of the major criminal organizations during May. This figure is similar to most months in 2016, but doubles that of April. Perhaps the most significant was the capture of Dámaso López “*El Licenciado*”, the presumed successor of Joaquín “*El Chapo*” Guzmán for the Sinaloa Cartel. Two regional leaders of the *Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación* (CJNG) were arrested. They were Héctor Alejandro G. “*El Leto*”, who was captured in Ixtlán de los Hervores (Michoacán), and José Luis “*N*”, a regional leader of the organization in Villahermosa, Tabasco. Three regional leaders of the Gulf cartel were captured in Guanajuato, Tamaulipas, and Zacatecas. Two leaders of the *Zetas* were arrested in Monterrey.

Federal authorities also arrested several government officials on corruption charges or for association with organized criminal groups. Panamanian authorities arrested Roberto Borge, the fugitive former governor of Quintana Roo. He had been accused of corruption and will be brought to Mexico to face charges. His arrest follows the capture last month of the two fugitive former governors of Tamaulipas and Veracruz.

The former *Comisario General de la Secretaría de Seguridad Pública* was arrested on aggravated kidnapping charges in San Andrés Tuxtla, Veracruz. Two municipal police commanders were arrested by state police for facilitating an armed attack by *sicarios* on police installations in Villa Ahumada, Chihuahua. Federal authorities arrested 45 individuals who had been impersonating municipal police in Zihuatanejo, Guerrero. Those in question were wearing official police uniforms, badges, and were armed.

Authorities reported the seizure of weapons and munitions caches at 5 separate locations across Michoacán, Sinaloa, and Tamaulipas (3 sites). Fragmentation grenades were seized at a site in Sinaloa and another one in Tamaulipas. Authorities seized a vehicle transporting more than 11,000 rounds of ammunition near Matamoros.

Street Battles (*Enfrentamientos*)

There were 40 street battles reported during May. This figure is slightly lower than the monthly average for 2016, and 19% lower than April. These incidents occurred across 13 states (Baja California Sur, Edomex, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Puebla, Sinaloa, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, and Zacatecas). The number of states impacted is right on par with the previous 16 months.

Four soldiers and six civilians were killed during a battle between *huachicoleros* (fuel thieves) in Quecholac, Puebla. Authorities in Reynosa reported that more than 40 people were killed during street battles during the first five days of the month. In one battle in that city, a stray bullet killed a taxi driver. Two children were injured and an adult were killed by stray gunfire during another battle in Reynosa the following week. A 15-year-old girl was killed by *sicarios* during a battle in Celaya, Guanajuato. A female bystander was critically injured by gunfire in a battle in Mocorito, Sinaloa.



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Table 2: States Hit Hardest by Street Battles

States	Number of Battles
Tamaulipas	13
Sinaloa	11
Veracruz	6

Hazardous Overland Travel

The most widely publicized incident with regard to public safety was undoubtedly the inhumane attack perpetrated against a family traveling along Highway 150D between Puebla and Mexico City. In that incident, the family stopped momentarily at about 3am to urinate by the side of the road near KM 98. Soon after two vehicles pulled over and several gunmen overpowered the man, they killed their two-year-old child, and then raped two female passengers. Federal police pursued the assailants into the nearby community of Santa María Moyotzingo. Authorities later paraded the alleged perpetrators in front of the media.

In another incident, while a bus driver stopped to check a mechanical problem gunmen entered a bus transporting 25 plainclothes and unarmed federal police officers from Acapulco to Mexico City. The assailants robbed the officers and fled.

There were other attacks against travelers reported this month as well. For example, a man was killed and a woman injured when gunmen attacked their vehicle near Pánuco, Veracruz. A family of four was intercepted and killed while driving near Gómez Palacio, Durango. Three school teachers were killed when gunmen fired into their vehicle in Concordia, Sinaloa. A woman was intercepted and kidnapped while driving near Huimanguillo, Tabasco.

Gunmen injured a bus driver as he drove his route in Boca del Río, Veracruz. In another incident, gunmen boarded a bus in route from Acayucan to Jáltipan de Morelos, Veracruz. They assaulted the money collector and eventually kidnapped the driver. Bus drivers were also killed in Tamaulipas (2), and Veracruz.

There have also been multiple reports of gunmen extorting travelers on Highway 40D between Reynosa (Tamaulipas) and Monterrey (Nuevo León). On two separate occasions the governor's office in Coahuila advised residents against traveling to Reynosa due to the insecurity.

Narcobloqueos (Illegal Street Blockades)

- May 3 - Reynosa, Tamaulipas
- May 5 - Matamoros, Tamaulipas
- May 5 - Reynosa, Tamaulipas
- May 18 - Nueva Italia, Michoacán

Violence

Official figures concerning the total number of homicide victims of organized crime is not yet available for May. However, preliminary assessments suggest the month will be similar to the last several months. Also, at least 43 people were killed in attacks on civilians in public venues such as restaurants, bars, small businesses, shopping areas, a car wash, two different soccer matches, and a beauty salon. There were 24 such attacks this month across Coahuila, Edomex, Mexico City, Morelos, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Veracruz, and Zacatecas. Most of these incidents were in Tamaulipas and Veracruz. In one incident, three people were killed (including a 5-year-old boy) when gunmen opened fire in a small store in Zacatecas. Also, four people were killed in a bar in Jiutepec, Morelos.



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Of particular concern has been the increased violence reported in Guanajuato over the last year. Indeed, Guanajuato reported the highest number of homicides in Mexico for the first four months of 2017 (see Table 3).

Table 3: Number of Homicides Reported from January to April 2017*

States	Number of Attacks
Guanajuato	1320
Edomex	1173
Veracruz	936
Michoacán	928
Guerrero	923

*Source: *Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Publica (SESNSP)*

Other victims this month include Miriam Rodríguez Martínez, the founder of *Colectivo de Personas Desaparecidas de San Fernando*. She was gunned down in San Fernando in Tamaulipas. Following the murder of her daughter in 2012, Ms. Rodríguez Martínez was instrumental in bringing international attention to violence perpetrated by organized crime groups in Mexico.

A U.S. citizen who operated an environmental organization was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered in Teocelo, Veracruz. Sources indicate that he had been active in the MORENA party and had undertaken several community organization actions that had irritated the local mayor (PRI party).

A professor with the *Universidad de Occidente y del Cobaes* was murdered in El Tamarindo, Sinaloa. Gunmen on a motorcycle gunned down a school teacher in front of his family in Papantla, Veracruz. School teachers were also murdered in Ecatepec (Edomex), Las Choapas (Veracruz), and Culiacán (Sinaloa). A Pemex employee was shot in a restaurant in Poza Rica, Veracruz. A cattle rancher was murdered in Yecuatla, Veracruz. Seven avocado workers were murdered in Ario de Rosales, Michoacán.

Also, the mass deposits of 139 victims' bodies were found at 54 different sites across 11 states (Edomex, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Michoacán, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Sinaloa, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz). Nineteen of these sites were in Veracruz. In one case, two bodies were hung from a bridge in Pénjamo, Guanajuato. At least 32 victims had been either decapitated or dismembered. For example, a 9-year-old and his 15-year-old brother were kidnapped in Nueva Ciudad Guerrero, Tamaulipas. The older brother was dismembered while the younger was released.

Also, in one particular case in San Rafael (Veracruz), despite photographic evidence of a locally-known *sicario* decapitating a victim, the local mayor orchestrated his release from police custody. This incident reflects some of the problems plaguing the formal justice system in so many areas of the country. Interestingly, the perpetrator was kidnapped and executed less than a week later.

Women and children continue to be targeted by organized crime groups. This month at least 43 women were killed across 12 states. Most of the female victims were in Tamaulipas and Veracruz.

As discussed in previous reports, organized criminal groups have heavily targeted taxi drivers. This month at least 11 drivers were reported murdered in Guanajuato, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz. Four taxi drivers were gunned down in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato. Two additional drivers were injured in a separate incident.

Selected Vigilante Incidents

- Reported in May - in one particular neighborhood of Ciudad Madero (Tamaulipas) residents have installed emergency call buttons to alert neighbors to suspicious activities.
- May 1 - in Delegación Cuauhtémoc of Mexico City an accused thief was beaten and had the words "for being a thief" carved into his stomach.



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- May 1 - two accused thieves were severely beaten by residents in Cárdenas, Tabasco.
- May 3 - an accused car thief was severely beaten in Puebla.
- May 3 - resident detained two burglars stealing from homes in Veracruz, Veracruz. They were later discovered to be off-duty state police officers.
- May 4 - a robber was detained by residents in Oaxaca, Oaxaca.
- May 4 - residents beat an accused robber in Xalapa, Veracruz.
- May 4 - three well-known extortionists were gunned down by an unknown assailant inside a market in Sonora.
- May 4 - two individuals were shot and killed while attempting to rob passengers on a bus in Naucalpan, Edomex. The vigilante also died in the incident.
- May 8 - an accused thief was tied to a post in San Martín Mexicapan, Oaxaca.
- May 11 - following an intense gun battle between *sicarios* and a local *autodefensa* group in San Miguel Totolapan (Guerrero) residents stacked and burned the bodies of the *sicarios*.
- May 14 - a bus driver who accidentally ran over and killed a young boy, was later kidnapped and murdered by the boy's father in Monterrey.
- May 19 - angry residents turned over two municipal police vehicles after local police released three accused thieves in Santa Ana Atzacan, Veracruz.
- May 24 - shoppers hogtied an individual who had broken several windows at a McDonald's in Reynosa, Tamaulipas.

Extortion, Kidnapping, and Armed Robbery

Extortion

There were 15 confirmed cases of fatal attacks related to extortion operations during May. This figure is similar to April, and is also on par with the monthly average for 2016. These incidents occurred in Coahuila, Oaxaca (3 incidents), Sonora, Tamaulipas (3), and Veracruz (7). The victims included the owners or employees of several bars, a car wash, a restaurant, and an auto parts store.

Kidnapping

During May authorities reported the disruption of 12 kidnapping operations. This figure matches most months in 2017. These operations were located in Edomex, Guerrero, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas (3 operations), and Veracruz (6). Six kidnap victims were rescued during the operation in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. Also, one of the kidnapping rings (in Tlalmanalco, Edomex) was responsible for kidnapping and sexually assaulting several women over the last few months.

There were also several reports of rescues or the release of victims following ransom payments. For example, a former mayor was released after 21 days of being kidnapped in Yauhtepec, Morelos. A businessman was released following a kidnapping in Poza Rica, Veracruz. Another businessman was released by his captors in Papantla, Veracruz. The owner of several Pemex stations was rescued by vigilantes in Tlalixtaquilla, Guerrero. A woman was released following a ransom payment of 500,000 pesos in Nanchital, Veracruz. A women's soccer coach was released after being kidnapped in Monterrey. The wife and son of an engineer were kidnapped and ransomed for one million pesos in Tuxpan, Veracruz.

There were also multiple reports of kidnappings this month. In one case, a well-known pediatrician was kidnapped in Ciudad Mendoza, Veracruz. Another physician was kidnapped while driving in Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz. A Pemex employee was kidnapped in Coatzacoalcos. Two cattle ranchers were kidnapped and murdered in Cosoleacaque, Veracruz. A commercial farmer was kidnapped in Tlapacoyan, Veracruz.

Two women, including a 17-year-old, were kidnapped, sexually assaulted, tortured, and murdered in San Juan Bautista Tuxtepec, Oaxaca. A college student was kidnapped while driving near Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua. Her body was later discovered nearby. A 15-year-old girl was kidnapped, sexually assaulted, and murdered in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. The same fate met two women in Tuxtepec (Oaxaca), and a young girl in Poza Rica (Veracruz). A young woman was kidnapped and dismembered in Amatlán, Veracruz. In another incident, gunmen killed a 17-year-old boy who unsuccessfully attempted to prevent them from kidnapping his younger sister in Poza



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Rica, Veracruz. In addition to these cases, there were dozens of other teenage girls who were reported missing across Mexico this month mostly in Veracruz.

Armed Robbery

Aside from the incidents of hijackings and armed robberies discussed in the travel section on page 4, there were numerous reports of armed robbery across Mexico this month. For example, gunmen ambushed and robbed a *Programa de Inclusión Social* (PROSPERA) truck transporting approximately one million pesos near Zaachila, Oaxaca. Gunmen attempted to rob the facilities of the *Comité de Gestión Social A.C. por la Atención y Respeto de los Derechos del Pueblo* (which is affiliated with the PRI party) in Nezahualcóyotl, Edomex. Two police officers were killed during the incident.

Cement and sugar shipments were stolen from several train cars in Los Mochis, Sinaloa. A truck hauling paper was hijacked in Tuxtepec, Oaxaca. Gunmen fired on a tractor-trailer traveling between Córdoba and Veracruz; causing it to lose control. A major truck hijacking ring operation was disrupted by authorities in Córdoba, Veracruz. Authorities also disrupted a truck hijacking ring that operate along the Oaxaca-Veracruz border region. Two stolen trucks were recovered in Minatitlán, Veracruz.

Authorities seized 16 fuel trailers being used by *huachicoleros* (fuel thieves) in Tlajomulco de Zúñiga, Jalisco. The following evening, gunmen overpowered security guards at an impound facility and stole back six of the trailers. *Huachicoleros* accidentally caused a gas pipeline to explode (temporarily closing Highway 15D) in Amozoc, Puebla.

A physician was killed during a carjacking in Zamora, Michoacán. A baker was shot and killed during a carjacking in Reynosa. A school teacher was shot and injured during a robbery outside her home in Veracruz. Several gunmen entered a bank and robbed 100,000 pesos from a woman who was about to make a deposit in Veracruz.

