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Mexico Intelligence Report for August 2019

Date of Report: September 17, 2019

Overview

The most widely-reported incident of violence this month was undoubtedly the massacre of at least 29 people at a bar/strip club in Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz. Media reported that gunmen stormed into the bar, blocked some of the doors and set fire to the establishment in retribution for un-met extortion demands. The incident also caught the attention of the international media and was an embarrassment to the López Obrador administration. More importantly, it demonstrates the inefficacy and outright corruption of officials in Veracruz, and elsewhere in Mexico. After being lulled into a sense of complacency for the last several years, the failures of public safety in Mexico became even more obvious with this incident. Also, with 2993 felony homicides, July was the second most violent month in Mexico. Once the figures for August are released we will see what that month was really like. Interestingly, USA Today recently reported the top ten cities in the world with regard to homicide rates. Tijuana was number one with 100 homicides per 100,000 residents. Acapulco was second, followed by Caracas (Venezuela), Ciudad Victoria, Ciudad Juárez, and Irapuato.

Attacks against Governmental Authority

There were at least 42 attacks directed at governmental authorities reported during August. This figure is similar to the last few months. Of special significance was the elevated number of assassinations. There were 8 such incidents reported this month. For example, gunmen intercepted and killed the mayor as she was driving in San José Estancia Grande, Oaxaca. The regional director of the *Coordinación Estatal de Protección Civil* (CEPCO) who was riding with her was also killed. The director of the *Actividades Comerciales Industriales y Espectáculos Públicos* of Zihuatanejo was gunned down in a restaurant. A municipal official was murdered in Huajuapán de León, Oaxaca. A municipal official was gunned down in San Baltazar Chichicápam, Oaxaca. A former mayor was murdered in Aquila, Michoacán. A former municipal official was killed in Villagrán, Guanajuato. A former candidate for local deputy was murdered in Chilapa, Guerrero.

There were also several incidents in which assailants attacked political leaders or they fired on their residences or vehicles. For example, shots were fired at a vehicle transporting an official with the Tamaulipas state health department as he traveled along Highway 97 between Reynosa and San Fernando, Tamaulipas. A municipal official was injured during an attack while driving in Chapala, Jalisco. Gunmen fired on the home of a municipal official in Taxco, Guerrero.

At least 15 soldiers, marines, or police officers were killed in attacks this month. Among the victims was the newly-appointed chief of police in Empalme, Sonora. Another chief of police and his bodyguard were killed during an ambush in Tepatitlán, Jalisco. Two army patrols were attacked in Tamaulipas. Three federal police patrols were attacked in Jalisco and Tamaulipas. In one incident, a Federal police officer was killed during an attack in Miguel Alemán, Tamaulipas. Eight state police patrols were attacked in Guanajuato, Michoacán, Morelos, Oaxaca, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas (3 patrols). Two state police officers were killed during an attack in Jiutepec, Morelos. One officer died in an attack in Yuriria, Guanajuato. Gunmen ambushed a state police patrol near Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. In another incident, state police sought refuge on the army base after being attacked by *sicarios* (cartel gunmen) in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas. Two municipal police patrols were reported attacked this month in Guanajuato and Veracruz. In one case, several municipal police officers were injured during an attack in San Miguel Octopan, Guanajuato.

There were also numerous attacks on fixed targets this month. For example, shots were fired at the offices of the *Fiscalía General del Estado* in Colima, Colima. Five inmates were killed when gunmen attacked a police station in Valle de Santiago, Guanajuato. A battle occurred when gunmen attacked the municipal palace in Mazatlán, Sinaloa. Several truckloads of gunmen fired on the PRI party offices in Chamula, Chiapas. The building was also torched. An



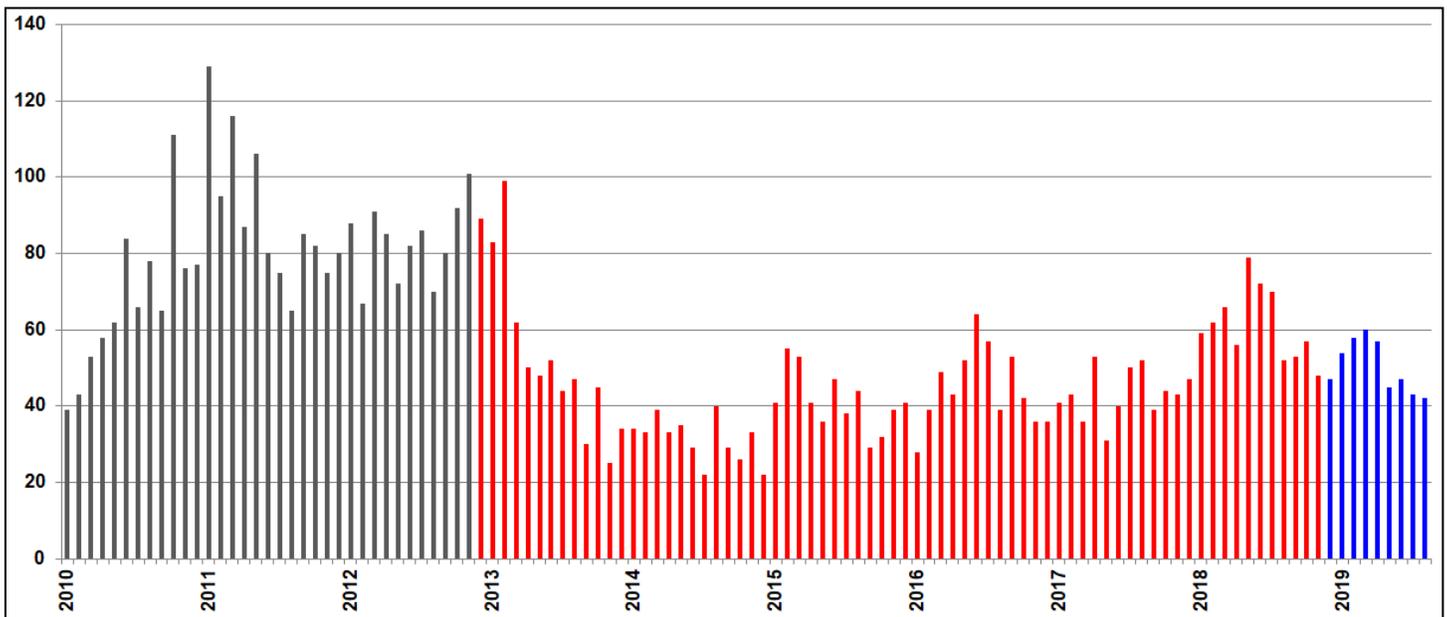
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officer was killed and several were injured when gunmen attacked a hotel being used as a bivouac by state police in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.

There were also nine additional fatal attacks on authorities across Edomex, Guerrero, Michoacán, Morelos, Sonora, Tlaxcala, and Veracruz. For example, an army colonel was gunned down in Ziracuaretiro, Michoacán. A police commander was kidnapped in Temixco, Morelos. Finally, gunmen stole four rifles from the *Guardia Nacional* in Ixtenco, Tlaxcala.

There were several attacks on journalists and the media this month as well. In one incident, an editor was gunned down in Guerrero. A reporter was murdered in Actopan, Veracruz. A journalist was killed in Cacalotepec, Edomex. The director of *Canal 28* was chased and threatened by several assailants in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. In fact, fourteen journalists or media personnel have been killed thus far in 2019. The incidents have occurred in Baja California, Guerrero, Morelos, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz.

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 López Obrador took office on December 1, 2018 (columns in blue).

Geographic Pattern of Attacks

Attacks against authorities occurred across 14 states, and this figure is similar to most months of 2018. The states impacted this month were Chiapas, Colima, Edomex, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz. Shots were also fired at U.S. Border Patrol agents patrolling the U.S. side of the border near Río Bravo, Tamaulipas. The *Cartel del Norte* has also threatened Pemex stations which provide fuel to law enforcement and military vehicles in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.

Table 1: States Hit Hardest by Attacks on Authorities

State	Number of Attacks
Tamaulipas	9
Guerrero	5
Guanajuato	4



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Oaxaca	4
Jalisco	3
Michoacán	3

Progress?

Mexican federal authorities reported the arrest or death of four regional leaders or key operatives of the major criminal organizations during August. More specifically, two were apprehended by the authorities and two were killed by rivals. For example, Martín Arzola Ortega “*El 53*” or “*El Negro*”, an original founder of the *Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación* (CJNG), was gunned down in a restaurant in Zapopan, Jalisco. Meanwhile, “*El Rifle*”, a regional leader of *Los Viagras* for Apatzingán, was killed in an ambush.

With regard to those who were captured, the most significant was Edgar H. “*El Caimán*”, a regional leader of the *Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación* (CJNG), was apprehended in San Luis Potosí. Also, Carlos Hugo, a regional leader of the *Familia Michoacana*, was captured in Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes.

Several government officials were arrested on corruption charges or for association with organized criminal groups. For example, the chief of police and three soldiers were arrested for illegally transporting several thousand rounds of ammunition in Villa Corona, Jalisco. Two police officers were arrested on homicide charges in Huatusco, Veracruz. Six federal police officers were charged with homicide in Morelia, Michoacán. State police also killed a former chief of municipal police in Mixtla, Veracruz. The state police were attempting to detain him for killing the mayor.

Authorities reported the seizure of weapons and munitions caches at six separate locations across Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Sonora, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz. The army seized a grenade launcher and other weapons in Petatlán, Guerrero. Also, A M203 grenade launcher was seized in Chilapa, Guerrero. A fragmentation grenade was seized in Tingüindín, Michoacán. The army seized a 50-caliber rifle following a battle in Reynosa, Tamaulipas. State police seized a radio repeater station belonging to the Gulf Cartel in Matamoros, Tamaulipas.

Street Battles (*Enfrentamientos*)

There were 44 street battles reported during August. This figure is the highest since March. These incidents occurred in 11 states (Chihuahua, Coahuila, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Sinaloa, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz). *Sicarios* killed two people in a small business, then fought a battle with municipal police in San Francisco del Rincón, Guanajuato. Five police officers were injured during the incident. A 10-year-old girl was injured by a stray bullet during a street battle in Matamoros, Tamaulipas.

Table 2: States Hit Hardest by Street Battles

State	Number of Battles
Tamaulipas	18
Veracruz	10
Guanajuato	4
Michoacán	4

Hazardous Overland Travel

There are continued reports of armed highway robberies and other violence in Tamaulipas and Veracruz. For example, two engineers were murdered while driving near San Juan Evangelista, Veracruz. Three people were killed when shots were fired into their vehicle near Tuxpan, Veracruz. Two people were killed (including a baby) when shots were fired into their vehicle in San Ciro de Acosta, San Luis Potosí. Motorists also reported tree trunks which had been laid across Highway 150 near Orizaba, Veracruz. There were media reports of gunmen blocking Highway 2 near Reynosa (Tamaulipas) and robbing travelers and transport vehicles.

Bus passengers were also targeted by armed robbers. For example, students and professors of the *Universidad Tecnológica del Centro de Veracruz* (UTCV) were robbed while traveling on a commercial bus near Yanga,



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Veracruz. A passenger was injured when shots were fired into a bus as it traveled along Highway 2 near Ciudad Camargo, Tamaulipas. Assailants used machetes to rob passengers on a bus in Guadalajara, Jalisco.

Violence

At least 82 people were killed in attacks on civilians in public venues such as restaurants, bars, small businesses, shopping areas, repair shops, a barber shop, and other venues. This is the highest number of victims since April, while the actual number of attacks (27) was on par with most months of 2019. These incidents occurred in 9 states (Baja California, Edomex, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Morelos, Nuevo León, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Veracruz).

Aside from the aforementioned attack on a bar in Coatzacoalcos, there were several other bar attacks. For example, eight people were killed and three were injured during an attack on a bar in Irapuato, Guanajuato. A few days later, three people were killed and several were injured during an attack on another bar in the same city. Six people were killed by assailants in a drug rehabilitation center in Manzanillo, Sinaloa. Three women were killed when *sicarios* attacked a *tortillería* in Celaya, Guanajuato. Two additional *tortillerías* were also attacked. The victims had recently been involved in a public protest against extortion of local businesses. A woman was injured when gunmen opened fire in a beauty salon in Guadalajara, Jalisco.

In addition to attacks on public venues, hundreds of people were kidnapped and murdered, with their bodies strewn across the Mexican landscape. The mass deposits of 247 victims' bodies were found at 74 different sites across 22 states (Baja California, Chihuahua, Edomex, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Mexico City, Michoacán, Morelos, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz).

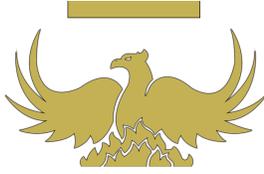
In one case, two bodies were hung from a bridge in Villagrán, Guanajuato. Nineteen bodies were left in public venues (including many hung from bridges) in Uruapan, Michoacán. A few days later three more bodies were hung from bridges in northern Michoacán. Three people were hung from bridges in Ciudad de Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua. Two of the victims were females.

At least 50 of these victims had been decapitated or dismembered. These incidents occurred in 13 states (Chihuahua, Coahuila, Edomex, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz).

At least 89 women and children were targeted by organized crime groups across 20 states. Most of the female victims were in Veracruz. In one case, a woman was gunned down on a street in Coatepec, Veracruz. Two women were kidnapped and executed in Ciénega de Flores, Nuevo León. A woman was injured with two bullets when she was attacked in a market in San Andrés Tuxtla, Veracruz.

Families were also attacked in their homes. For example, three girls and a man were killed when gunmen opened fire in their residence in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Assailants killed a woman inside her home in Tuxpan, Veracruz. A woman was injured during an attack on her home in Temascal, Oaxaca. Three people were killed inside a residence in Tijuana. Two people were injured by gunmen inside their home in Sayula de Alemán, Veracruz. Assailants killed five people in a home in Tecate, Baja California. Two people were killed during a home invasion in Veracruz, Veracruz. A 3-year-old girl was killed during an attack on her home in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Three people were killed in a similar attack in Acapulco, Guerrero. Six people were murdered in a residence in Zamora, Michoacán. Gunmen stormed a residence and killed a pregnant teenager in Taxco, Guerrero. Four people were killed in an attack on a home in Celaya, Guanajuato. Assailants entered a residence and then tortured and decapitated a young woman in Uruapan, Michoacán. Her father and brother were later shot by assailants at her funeral. Four people (including a baby) were injured during attack on their residence in Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz.

Other victims this month include a physician in Puebla. An attorney was gunned down on a street in Córdoba, Veracruz. Gunmen killed an attorney in San Juan Evangelista, Veracruz. The former Canadian Cónsul was murdered inside his apartment in Cancún, Quintana Roo. An employee of the *Comisión Nacional de Derechos*



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Humanos (CNDH) was gunned down in Valle de Bravo, Edomex. An environmental activist was murdered in Palenque, Chiapas. The owner of a Pemex franchise and hardware store was intercepted and killed in Tlacolula, Oaxaca. A cattle rancher was murdered in Minatitlan, Veracruz. A Pemex worker was murdered in Agua Dulce, Veracruz. A Pemex worker was executed near Chinameca, Veracruz. A priest was murdered in Santa Adelaida, Tamaulipas. A pastor was gunned down inside a church in Tlalixtac, Oaxaca. Assailants intercepted and killed the driver of a hearse as he refueled at a Pemex station in Uruapan, Michoacán. Gunmen entered a hospital and killed a patient in Tres Ríos, Sinaloa. Gunmen forcibly removed two people from a bar and executed them in front of the establishment in Cosoleacaque, Veracruz. Gunmen used heavy equipment to destroy several homes in the small community of Santa Teresa in Coyuca de Catalán, Guerrero. Three people were killed when gunmen attacked several homes in San Marcial Ozolotepec, Oaxaca.

This month at least 12 drivers were reported murdered in Oaxaca (3 killed), Quintana Roo, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz (8 killed). A regional leader of a taxi drivers' union was murdered in Puerto Morelos, Quintana Roo. A *concesionaria* of a taxi service was kidnapped in Río Blanco, Veracruz. Taxi drivers burned a police vehicle during a protest against the recent death of a driver in Huatusco, Veracruz.

Selected Vigilante Incidents

- August 8 - residents detained and turned over two accused robbers to the police in Veracruz, Veracruz.
- August 8 - Residents lynched seven accused kidnappers in Cohuecan, Puebla. The individuals had escaped a police pursuit and were detained by several hundred residents who proceeded to beat them to death, hang several from trees, and burn the bodies. Two of them were lynched in front of the police station.
- August 27 - Residents threw an accused robber from the roof of a building in Apodaca, Nuevo León.
- August 31 - an accused robber was beaten and tied to a tree by residents in Nicolás Romero, Edomex.

Extortion, Kidnapping, and Armed Robbery

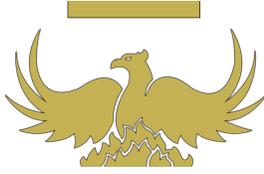
Extortion

There were 17 cases of fatal attacks related to extortion operations during August. This is the highest number of incidents since August 2018. These incidents occurred in seven states; Baja California, Edomex, Guanajuato (2 incidents), Morelos (2 incidents), San Luis Potosí, Sonora, and Veracruz (9 incidents). The owner, employees, or patrons of bars, small stores, and repair shops were killed during these incidents. The bar massacre in Coatzacoalcos being the most obvious example. In addition to these attacks there were several threatening acts as well. For example, shots were fired into several small businesses for lack of extortion payments in Emiliano Zapata, Morelos.

Kidnapping

During August, authorities reported the disruption of three kidnapping operations. This figure represents a decline from previous months. These operations were located in Edomex, Jalisco, and Tamaulipas.

In addition to the abovementioned operations, there were numerous reports of police rescues of kidnap victims. For example, marines rescued the regional director of the *Comisión Federal de Electricidad* (CFE) who had been kidnapped in Guanajuato. Officials of the *Fiscalía de Secuestros y Delitos de Alto Impacto* (FISDAI) rescued a student who had been kidnapped in Atzitzihuacán, Puebla. State police rescued a 16-year-old girl who had been kidnapped for a month in Veracruz. State police rescued a victim in Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Another victim was rescued by state police in Reynosa. State police rescued three people being held in Zapopan, Jalisco. Five cadavers were found at the scene. State police rescued two people in Nanchital, Veracruz. One of the victims was the son of a local union leader. Marines rescued an individual in Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz. A Spanish medic was kidnapped in Mexico City. He was later rescued by police in Temamatla, Edomex. The kidnapping operation is typical of those in the area in that they kidnap people in Mexico City and transport them to Edomex. Four suspected kidnappers were killed by state police during a battle in Reynosa, Tamaulipas. In another incident, a victim escaped his captors in Orizaba, Veracruz. The owner of a taxi company narrowly escaped an attempted kidnapping in Veracruz.



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In other cases, the condition of the victim is still unknown. For example, a physician was kidnapped in Córdoba, Veracruz. A businessman was kidnapped in Río Blanco, Veracruz. A priest working with the pro-immigrant *Casa del Migrante AMAR* was kidnapped in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas.

Other victims were subsequently killed by their captors. For example, the director of the *Centro de Bachillerato Tecnológico Industrial y de Servicios* (CETIS 146) was kidnapped and murdered in Río Blanco, Veracruz. A firefighter was kidnapped and subsequently murdered in San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora. A hotel manager was kidnapped and murdered in Ciudad Valles, San Luis Potosí. A woman who worked for Coca Cola was kidnapped off a street in Río Blanco, Veracruz. Her body was later discovered.

There have been continued reports of young women and girls being kidnapped. In one case, assailants intercepted and kidnapped a young woman when she was driving in central Irapuato, Guanajuato. A young woman was kidnapped off a street in Córdoba, Veracruz. A young woman was kidnapped and murdered in Santa Cruz Alpuyecá, Puebla. The same fate met a 19-year-old woman in Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca. Another young woman was kidnapped and murdered in San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosí. A teenage girl was kidnapped, sexually assaulted, and murdered in Veracruz.

Armed Robbery

State police recovered a stolen truck using GPS data in Reynosa, Tamaulipas. Gunmen fired on a truck as it traveled along Highway 150 between Puebla and Veracruz. A driver was injured during an attempted robbery of a fuel truck in Oaxaca, Oaxaca. Gunmen robbed 50 million pesos of coins from the *Casa de Moneda* in Mexico City. At least four banks were robbed in Guerrero and Veracruz. Several people were injured by bank robbers in Chilpancingo, Guerrero. Several ATMs were stolen in Guanajuato and Veracruz.

Finally, an attorney was killed during an armed robbery in Cárdenas, Tabasco. Two people were killed during an apparent robbery of their home in Martínez de la Torre, Veracruz. A woman was killed when members of the *Antorcha Campesina* (political organization) attacked an aid distribution center in Los Reyes La Paz, Edomex.

See map below.

