

# A War of Many Victims: The Cartel Crises in Mexico

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## *LeBarón and Langford Massacre*

“Women and children were  
massacred, burnt alive. Mothers  
were screaming for the fire to stop.”

–Alex LeBarón,  
interviewed by The Sun

-(Top pictures by CBS News, bottom by Mexico News Daily )



# Who They Are

## Definitions

- Drug Cartel
  - “Cartel formed to control the production and distribution of narcotic drugs”
    - Princeton Lexicon of English
- TCO
  - Trans-national Criminal Organization
    - DHS
- (Pictures by InSight Crime & La Verdad, respectively)

## Sinaloa Federation



## Cartel CNJG



# Geographical context

October, 2022

## Fast Facts

- Since 2006, the Cartels and the Mexican State have been engaged in an **asymmetric, multi-pronged war**  
–Council on Foreign Relations
- As of 2018, **at least 20% of Mexico under direct Cartel control**, with the rest under heavy Cartel-based influence  
–CIA report
- All Cartels seek ways to **extract wealth** from local territories even as they attempt to **establish smuggling routes** into U.S
- (Map by Global Guardian)



# *What They Do*

## **Revenue Generation**

- Human trafficking
- Weapons trafficking
- Drug production and smuggling
- Money laundering
- Theft
- Extortion
- Ransom
- Murder-for-hire

## **Tactics**

- Propaganda campaigns
- Bribery
- Ambushes & assassinations
- Bombings
- Road check-points
- Trench warfare
- IED mines
- Drone strikes
- Operating improvised armored vehicles
- Besieging and blockading major cities

# Battle of Culiacán

- October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019
- Mexican authorities attempt to arrest high-ranking Sinaloa Cartel leader Ovidio Guzman, son of 'El Chapo' Guzman
- Over 700 Sinaloa fighters besieged city, set up road blocks, patrolled streets, held hostage local military personnel's family members
- Mexican President forced to release Guzman
- (Pictures by The Arizona Republic)



Foto: Especial



## Second Battle of Culiacán

- January 5<sup>th</sup>—14<sup>th</sup>, 2023
- **Over 3,000 soldiers** sent to implement capture of Ovidio Guzman, which was successful
- Multiple government aircraft were **shot down** and seven security force members—including a Colonel—were killed in the fighting, with 21 wounded
- (Picture by The Guardian)



# *To label or not to label?*

## *The FTO Debate*

### **Pro-FTO Arguments**

- Mexican Cartels meet the State Department definition
- Designation makes prosecution and legal countermeasures easier

### **Anti-FTO Arguments**

- May open door to U.S. military involvement
- Cartels do not meet actual definition of what a terrorist group is





**Who is right?**

**What is the best response?**

That question is ultimately up to you, the voter!

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