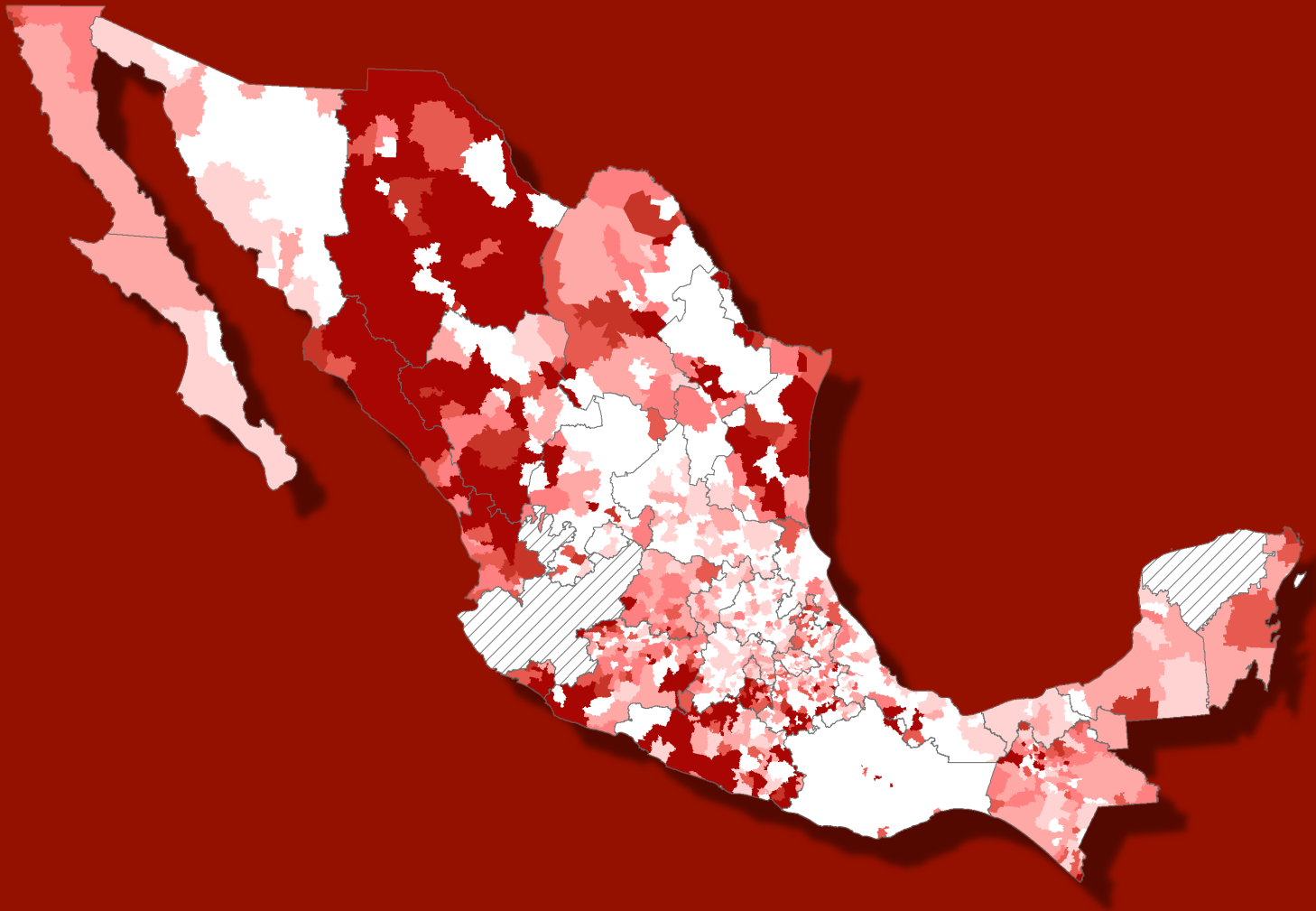


Drug Violence in Mexico

Data and Analysis Through 2012



SPECIAL REPORT

By Cory Molzahn, Octavio Rodriguez Ferreira, and David A. Shirk



Trans-Border Institute

Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies

University of San Diego

February 2013

About the Trans-Border Institute:

Founded in 1994, the Trans-Border Institute (TBI) is dedicated to promoting understanding, cooperation, and dialogue between the United States and Mexico. As part of the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego, the institute conducts cutting-edge, policy-focused research; promotes public education and debate through distinguished guest speakers, roundtables, conferences, and public commentary on current events; and works directly with policy makers and stakeholders working to improve U.S.-Mexico relations and life along the border.

About the Report:

This report was prepared for the Trans-Border Institute's Justice in Mexico Project (www.justiceinmexico.org). Since 2002, this project has been a focal point for research, scholarly interchange, and policy engagement to address the challenges and opportunities for the rule of law in Mexico. The research for this report has been made possible over the last year by the generous support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. This report was released on February 6, 2013. This report does not represent the views of the University of San Diego, the Trans-Border Institute, or its sponsoring organizations.

Copyright Justice in Mexico Project, 2013.

ISBN-10: 978-0-9835674-6-2

ISBN-13: 0983567468

Trans-Border Institute
University of San Diego
5998 Alcalá Park,
San Diego, CA 92103
www.sandiego.edu/tbi

Drug Violence in Mexico

Data and Analysis Through 2012

SPECIAL REPORT

Cory Molzahn, Octavio Rodríguez, and David A. Shirk

Trans-Border Institute

Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies

University of San Diego



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iii
LIST OF ACRONYMS	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. BACKGROUND	3
III. “DRUG VIOLENCE”: DEFINITIONS, DATA, AND METHODOLOGIES	6
A. Defining the Problem	6
B. Data and Methodological Concerns	8
1. Government Data on Homicide	8
2. Organized-Crime-Style Homicides	9
3. Analytical and Methodological Concerns	10
IV. FINDINGS: DRUG VIOLENCE IN MEXICO	11
A. Elevated Overall Levels of Homicide	11
B. Organized-crime-style Homicides Represent a Significant Share of Homicides	13
B. Recent Shift in the Trajectory of Violence	16
C. Shifting Geographic Patterns of Violence	20
1. Distribution of Overall Homicides	20
2. Distribution of Organized-Crime-Style Homicides	22
3. New Local Centers of Violence	26
4. Analysis of Geographic Trends	27
D. Victim Characteristics	28
1. General Population	29
2. Mayors	29
3. Journalists	29
4. Police and Military Personnel	31
III. ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENTS IN 2012	32
A. Major Arrests and Seizures	33
B. The Proliferation of Organized-Crime Groups	37
C. Changing of the Guard: President Enrique Peña Nieto Takes Office	38
IV. CONCLUSIONS	39

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1: National Homicide Rates in Selected Latin American Countries in 2010 (per 100,000 inhabitants)</i>	4
<i>Figure 2: Total Homicides in Selected Neighboring Countries, 1995-2011</i>	5
<i>Figure 3: Homicide Rate in Mexico, 1995-2011</i>	5
<i>Figure 4: Homicides in Mexico, 1990 to 2011</i>	12
<i>Figure 5: Comparison of All Homicide and Organized Crime Homicide Tallies, 1990 through 2012</i>	15
<i>Figure 6: Reforma Tallies for Weekly Organized-Crime-Style Homicides, 2006-2012</i>	17
<i>Figure 7: Municipal Level Maps of Deaths By Homicide, 2006 through 2011</i>	21
<i>Figure 8: Municipal Level Homicide Maps, January through September 2012</i>	22
<i>Figure 9: Reforma Organized-Crime-Style Homicide Map, Jan-Nov 2012</i>	23
<i>Figure 10: Milenio Organized-Crime-Style Homicide Map, Jan-Dec 2012</i>	23
<i>Figure 11: Justice in Mexico Tally of Journalists and Media-Support Workers Killed in Mexico, 2006-2012</i>	30
<i>Figure 12: Journalists and Media-Support Workers Killed in Mexico, 2000-2012</i>	30
<i>Figure 13: Mexican Law Enforcement and Military Personnel Victims of Organized-Crime-Style Killings, January 2008 through November 2012</i>	31
<i>Figure 14: Mexican Army and Navy Budgets, 1996-2012</i>	33
<i>Figure 15: Arrests for Drug-Related Offenses, 1988 through 2011</i>	34

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1: Comparing Criteria for Classifying Homicides Linked to Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime</i>	11
<i>Table 2: Overall Homicides by Presidential Administration</i>	13
<i>Table 3: Comparison of Homicide and Organized-crime-style Homicide Tallies, 2005 through 2011</i>	16
<i>Table 4: Percent Change in Homicides and Organized-Crime-Style Homicides, 2007-2012</i>	17
<i>Table 5: Mass Gravesites (Narcofosas), 2010-2012</i>	19
<i>Table 6: Comparing Official State-Level Homicide Data and Independent Tallies of Organized-Crime-Style Homicides, January through November 2012</i>	25
<i>Table 7: Total Number and Rate (Per 100K) of Overall Homicides by Municipality, 2007-2012</i>	26

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFO	Arellano Felix Organization, an organized crime group from Tijuana
AK-type	Avtomat Kalashnikova, assault rifle used by organized crime groups. Ex: AK-47
AR-type	Assault rifle typically used by organized crime groups, Ex: AR-15
BC Sur	Baja California Sur, a state in western Mexico
BLO	Beltran Leyva Organization, an organized crime group
CDG	Cartel del Golfo (Gulf Cartel), an organized crime group
CENAPI	Centro Nacional de Planeación, Análisis e Información Para el Combate a la Delincuencia (Mexican National Center for Planning, Analysis and Information for Combating Crime)
CIDA	Cartel Independiente de Acapulco (Independent Cartel of Acapulco), an organized crime group
CIDE	Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, a Mexican center for teaching and research in the Social Sciences
CISEN	Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional (Mexican Intelligence Agency)
CJNG	Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación, an organized crime group
CNDH	Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (Mexican National Human Rights Commission)
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CPS	Cartel del Pacífico Sur (South Pacific Cartel), an organized crime group
CSN	Consejo de Seguridad Nacional (Mexican National Security Council)
DEA	United States Drug Enforcement Agency
DTO	Drug Trafficking Organization
Edomex	Estado de México, a state in central Mexico
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (Mexican State Statistics Agency)
KTO	Knights Templar Organization, a short-lived organized crime group
LFM	La Familia Michoacana, an organized crime group
OCG	Organized Crime Group
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party, a Mexican political party)
PGR	Procuraduría General de la República (Mexican Attorney General's Office)
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolution Party, a Mexican political party)
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, a Mexican political party)
SEDENA	Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (Mexican Secretary of Defense, Army and Air Force)
SEGOB	Secretaría de Gobernación (Interior Ministry), replaced SSP
SEMAR	Secretaría de Marina (Mexican Secretary of the Navy)
SNSP	Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (Mexican National Security System)
SSP	Secretaria de Seguridad Publica (Public Security Ministry), replaced by SEGOB
TBI	Trans-Border Institute
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
U.S.	United States
USA	United States of America

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Violence is lower in Mexico than elsewhere in Latin America, but has risen dramatically.** While levels of violence are relatively lower in Mexico than elsewhere in Latin American countries, elevated homicide rates have been a serious problem in recent years. While Mexico's 2010 homicide rate of 23.7 was slightly below the region's average of approximately 25.9 per 100,000, up nearly threefold from 8.1 in 2007. The number of homicides grew from 8,867 in 2007 to 27,199 in 2011. No other country in the Western Hemisphere has seen such a large increase in the number of homicides over the last five years.
- **While homicides were declined till the mid-2000s, they grew dramatically after 2007.** Under presidents Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) and Vicente Fox (2000-2006), the number of homicides declined significantly. Under Zedillo, the Mexican statistics agency INEGI documented a fairly steady decline from 15,839 homicides in 1994 to 10,737 in 2000. Under Fox, the number of homicides continued to fall to 9,329 in 2004 and then increased to 10,452 by 2006. Under President Calderón (2006-2012), the number of homicides documented by INEGI actually declined to 8,867 in 2007 before climbing to 27,213 in 2011, an average annual increase of 24%.
- **Depending on the data source, violence either leveled off or declined somewhat in 2012.** While INEGI's more comprehensive estimate is not available for 2012, preliminary data from Mexico's National Security System (SNSP) suggests that the total number of intentional homicides in 2012 dropped by as much as 8.5%. At the time of this report, SNSP's tally of all intentional homicides in 2012 was 20,050, down from 22,480 in 2011. Based on these data, the authors project that the total number of homicides in 2012 dipped to somewhere between 20,000 and 25,000 homicides.
- **Mexico's recent violence is largely attributable to drug trafficking and organized crime.** A large part of the sudden increase in violence in Mexico is attributable to drug trafficking and organized-crime groups. Tallies compiled independently by media organizations in Mexico suggest that as many as 45% to 60% of all intentional homicides in 2012 bore characteristics typical of organized-crime groups, including the use of high-caliber automatic weapons, torture, dismemberment, and explicit messages involving organized-crime groups. The Mexican newspaper *Reforma* put the figure at 9,577 organized-crime-style homicides in 2012, while *Milenio* reported 12,390 for the year.
- **There has been a notable shift in the geographic distribution and dispersion of violence.** In 2012 drug trafficking- and organized-crime-style homicides were most concentrated in the central and eastern border region, as well as in central Pacific coast states on the mainland. While there is a need for more data in order to compare 2012 with previous years, it does appear that the geographic dispersion of violence may have diminished significantly from 2011 to 2012, as the number of municipalities free from violence increased by 16% to at least 1,556. Even taking into consideration the geographic dispersion of homicides in recent years, the worst violence has remained concentrated in fewer than 10% of Mexico's 2,457 municipalities.

- **President Felipe Calderón focused on arrests of several major drug traffickers in 2012.** During Calderón’s term, total drug arrests soared further to a peak of 36,332 in 2012, more than triple the rate of arrests at the outset of the Fox administration. In 2012, Mexican authorities targeted Gulf Cartel leader Mario “M-1” Cárdenas Guillén (arrested) and Ezequiel Antonio “Tony Tormenta” Cárdenas Guillén (arrested), and Jorge Eduardo “*El Cas*” Costilla Sánchez (arrested); Los Zetas leaders Mauricio “El Amarillo” Guizar Cárdenas (arrested), Oscar , “Z-42” Omar Treviño Morales (arrested), Iván “Z-50” Velázquez Caballero (arrested), and Heriberto “El Lazca” Lazcano Lazcano (killed); Jesus Gutiérrez Guzmán (arrested in Spain), the cousin of Sinaloa Cartel leader Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera; as well as high-ranking military personnel linked to the Beltrán Leyva Organization.
- **Dismantling organized-crime groups has contributed to splintering of these networks.** The Mexican government’s efforts to dismantle the leadership of certain criminal organizations has contributed to a splintering of drug-trafficking networks, greater overall violence, and a more diffuse distribution of violence to different areas throughout the country. Some experts say that destroying leadership within cartels is not having a positive effect in the fight against drug trafficking and violence. They argue that while the arrest of top cartel bosses disrupts their operations, new leaders emerge and networks are reconfigured, often through conflicts within and between organized-crime groups.
- **Mexico’s new president, Enrique Peña Nieto, envisions significant changes in security.** Mr. Peña Nieto declared that his security strategy will abandon the Calderón administration’s heavy dependence on military deployments and its focus on dismantling organized-crime groups. Instead, Mr. Peña Nieto pledged to place greater emphasis on crime prevention and violence reduction, making it clear that he no longer wishes to prioritize bringing down drug cartel leaders as his predecessor did. Mr. Peña Nieto also reconfigured Mexico’s security agencies, dismantling the Public Security Ministry (*Secretaría de Seguridad Pública, SSP*) and announcing the creation of a 10,000-person National Gendarmerie and a unified police command system at the state level.

Drug Violence in Mexico

Data and Analysis Through 2012

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the problem of crime and violence has been a major preoccupation for both policymakers and ordinary people in Mexico, and a shared concern for the U.S. government and its citizens. Daily headlines describe shocking developments, including execution-style killings, assassinations of politicians and journalists, and mass graves. Making sense of this violence is often challenging because of sensationalistic media reporting, widespread preconceptions, a lack of access to reliable statistical information, and an overabundance of divergent and often questionable data on the topic. The result is that there are many misconceptions about the magnitude, nature, and implications of drug violence in Mexico.

Since 2007, the Justice in Mexico Project based at the University of San Diego's Trans-Border Institute has conducted research to establish a better understanding of the patterns of crime and violence associated with drug trafficking and organized crime. To make sense of rising drug-related violence, the Institute released its first special report in early 2010, and has issued similar reports each year since to compile the latest available data and analysis to evaluate these challenges. These reports have been especially intended to inform a U.S. audience, since news media coverage of Mexico in the United States tends to be fleeting and gravitates toward sporadic, sensationalistic incidents rather than broader and longer-term trends.

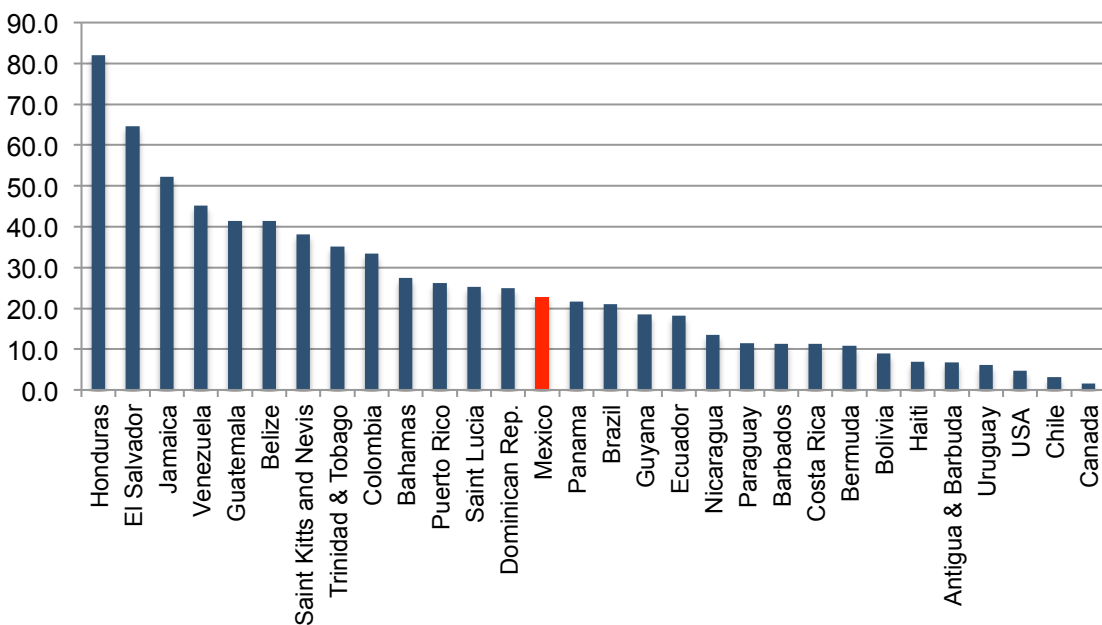
As the fourth report in this series, this study builds on past findings to provide new insights on Mexico's recent security situation. The authors draw on the latest available data from multiple sources, with a primary emphasis on the final year of the administration of Mexican President Felipe Calderón (2006-2012). President Calderón made combatting organized crime a central focus of his administration. Partly because of the destabilizing effects that these efforts had on organized crime networks, violence continued to escalate to unprecedented levels for Mexico during his term. Presently, there is considerable uncertainty about what to expect under Mexico's new president, Enrique Peña Nieto, who took office in December 2012. The authors therefore also examine the implications of recent developments for Mr. Peña Nieto, as well as the early outlines of his administration's security strategy.

II. BACKGROUND

Mexico's security situation has arguably attracted a disproportionate amount of attention and concern in international media and policy circles compared to other countries in Latin America. Homicide rates, one of the most commonly used indicators for comparing levels of violence, are much higher elsewhere in Latin America. With over 80 homicides per 100,000 people, Honduras has

nearly four times as many murders per capita as Mexico. Guatemala’s homicide rate is nearly twice the rate in Mexico. Colombia—often lauded for having effectively restored its domestic security situation—has one and a half times the homicide rate of Mexico (See Figure 1). Yet, in 2012, the New York Times featured 15 articles on violence in Mexico, compared with just three on Honduras, two on Guatemala, and two on Colombia. Many Mexican officials and citizens find this attention to the security situation in their country to be excessive and frustrating. Certainly, there is much more to Mexico than its recent violence: Mexico has one of the world’s largest economies, a fascinating culture, and beautiful tourist destinations.

Figure 1: National Homicide Rates in Selected Latin American Countries in 2010 (per 100,000 inhabitants)



SOURCE: UNODC, Intentional homicide, count and rate per 100,000 population (1995 - 2011).

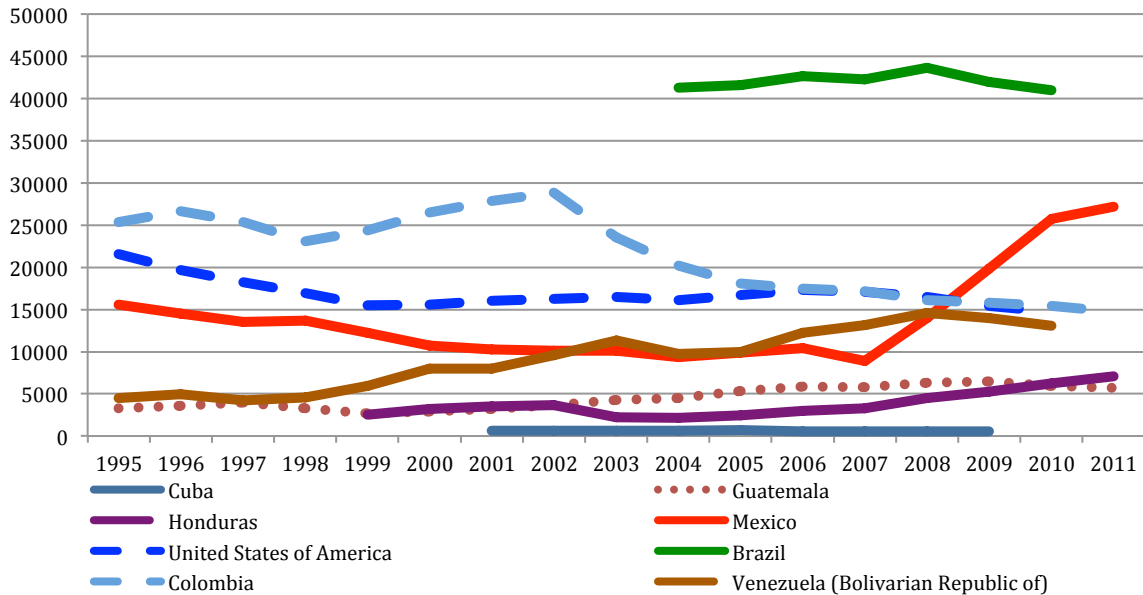
The relatively high degree of attention to Mexico’s security situation can be explained partly by its close proximity and ties to the United States. There is an enormous volume of trade between the two countries, with nearly \$460 billion in 2011. Mexico is the primary international destination for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, and approximately half of all U.S. citizens living abroad reside in Mexico. Thus, it is not surprising that overall attention to what happens in Mexico is far greater than it is for other countries in Latin America. Attention to Mexico’s problems of crime and violence probably also reflects and reinforces negative opinions and stereotypes that are pervasive in the United States and elsewhere. According to a 2012 Gallup poll, only about half of U.S. citizens have favorable opinions toward Mexico, which ranks 10th in U.S. favorability ratings toward other countries (the ninth country, Greece, had 62% favorability).¹

Yet, Mexico also stands out on security issues because the rate and number of homicides occurring there has escalated quite dramatically in recent years, reversing a multi-decade downward trend. Indeed, historical data suggest that homicide rates have been falling in Mexico from the 1930s until

¹ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/152735/americans-give-record-high-ratings-several-allies.aspx>

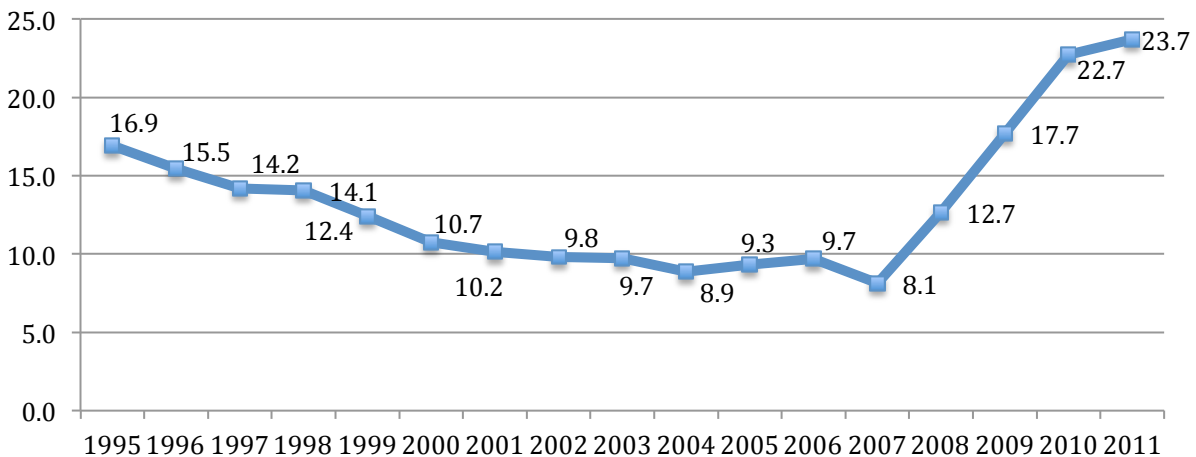
the mid-2000s, when they began to climb sharply from 8.1 homicides per 100,000 in 2007 to per 100,000 in 2011. While Mexico's 2010 homicide rate of 23.7 was slightly below the region's average of approximately 25.9 per 100,000, up nearly threefold from 8.1 in 2007. The number of homicides grew from 8,867 in 2007 to 27,199 in 2011. No other country in the Western Hemisphere has seen such a large increase in the number of homicides over the last five years.²

Figure 2: Total Homicides in Selected Neighboring Countries, 1995-2011



SOURCE: UNODC, Intentional homicide, count and rate per 100,000 population (1995 - 2011).

Figure 3: Homicide Rate in Mexico, 1995-2011



SOURCE: UNODC, Intentional homicide, count and rate per 100,000 population (1995 - 2011).

² It is important to note that homicide rates have risen even more significantly in Honduras and El Salvador, which both have much higher rates than Mexico. The reference here is to total lives lost, which has been more dramatic in Mexico in part because it is a much larger country.

A large part of this sudden increase in violence in Mexico is attributable to drug-trafficking and organized-crime groups. Such groups have a long-standing presence in Mexico, since the roots of smuggling in Mexico stretch back to the earliest days of alcohol and drug prohibition in the 1920s and 1930s. Drug smuggling became dramatically more profitable and well consolidated as Mexico became a major transit point for the trafficking of cocaine from Colombia to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. With the fall of Colombia’s major drug-trafficking organizations, Mexican networks came to dominate the business by the late 1980s. Moreover, thanks to a lack of market competition, there was relatively little violent conflict among these groups until the late 1990s. However, in the wake of Mexican government efforts to topple major drug traffickers in the early 2000s, a series of internal power struggles and clashes among competing trafficking organizations followed.

Over the last several years, the accumulated toll of this violence has been the loss of tens of thousands of lives, and the problem has become a central preoccupation for both government officials and ordinary citizens. This report examines the problem of drug violence in substantial detail, drawing on over five years of data gathering and research, as well as the latest available data from a variety of sources. Below, we consider the empirical and methodological challenges in attempting to define and measure “drug-related” or “organized crime-related” violence as a specific phenomenon, and identify the data sources used in this report.

III. “DRUG VIOLENCE”: DEFINITIONS, DATA, AND METHODOLOGIES

Before examining recent trends in Mexico’s violence, it is important to discuss a number of conceptual and methodological concerns. In this section, we consider the problem of defining drug-related and organized crime-related homicides as a phenomenon that is distinct from other forms of violence. We also discuss the specific sources of data that are available to analyze this type of violence, and the limits of these data.

A. Defining the Problem

While the terms “drug violence” and “drug-related homicides” are widely used in the media and in the popular understanding of Mexico’s recent security challenges, there is no formal definition of these concepts in Mexican criminal law. Historically, Mexican law has made few formal distinctions among different types of homicide. The most common charges at the federal and state level are intentional homicide (*homicidio doloso*) and unintentional manslaughter (*homicidio culposo*). In July 2012, modifications were made to Article 325 of the Federal Criminal Code—and various state codes throughout the country—to establish “femicide” as a modality of homicide when is committed for reasons of gender. Any further attempt to categorize a particular homicide or group of homicides falls outside of the statutory classifications established under Mexican law. Labeling homicides by other characteristics therefore depends on some degree of subjective interpretation, particularly when the base definitions for a given classification are unclear. For example, while the concept of “intra-family violence” might seem rather straightforward, there may be multiple and competing notions of what constitutes a homicide that occurs within a “family.” If a person is killed by their domestic partner, does that constitute “intra-family” violence? If someone is killed by an ex-spouse, is that still violence within the “family”? If someone is killed by a fourth cousin that they never met,

should that case be considered one of “intra-family violence” or merely a random coincidence among strangers?

Similarly, although government officials, scholars, and media sources make common references to terms like “drug violence,” “narco-violence,” “cartel-related violence,” “drug-war violence,” “organized- crime-related violence,” etc., there are significant problems that arise when trying to catalogue and measure such violence. Efforts to focus narrowly on drug-trafficking-related violence are problematic because the activities of drug traffickers have diversified significantly into other areas of organized crime. Meanwhile, the very definition of “organized crime” is itself much debated among scholars and experts: the term is used interchangeably to describe an affiliation, a lifestyle, and a type of crime.³ Moreover, the scale, scope, complexity, and purpose of “organized-crime groups,” or OCGs, varies widely, from neighborhood-based associations (e.g., “gangs”) to smugglers (e.g., drug-trafficking organizations, DTOs) to sophisticated financial conspiracies (e.g., “white-collar crime”).

In Mexico, these conceptual ambiguities are somewhat alleviated by the existence of a formal legal definition of organized crime. Since 1996, Mexico’s constitution has formally defined organized crime (*delincuencia organizada*) as “a de facto organization of three or more persons, [existing] in permanent or recurring form to commit crimes, according to the terms of the relevant area of the law.” The concept exists also in the Federal Criminal Code (*Código Penal Federal*) and Mexico’s federal legislature has also established special legislation to address organized crime through the Federal Law Against Organized Crime (*Ley Federal Contra la Delincuencia Organizada*).⁴ Similarly, there are legal statutes that characterize and define drug trafficking as a specific form of organized crime.

Hence, in Mexico, at least, there is a legal basis for labeling homicides that are related to organized crime activities as “organized crime killings.” However, establishing a connection can be rather difficult. To fall within the legal categories described above, any crime or individual associated with organized crime must first be prosecuted and the perpetrators found guilty. Unfortunately, criminal investigations on homicide take a considerable amount of time, and often go unresolved in Mexico, so there may be no charges or conviction—that is, no legal basis—upon which to base the connection to organized crime. As a result, often no formal legal determination can be made in a particular case. All of this leaves virtually any discussion of the violence attributable to “drug trafficking” or “organized crime” in Mexico open to subjective interpretation and unsubstantiated allegations.

Despite all of these definitional and epistemological concerns, it is also impossible to ignore the extraordinary nature of the violence that Mexico has recently experienced, or the role that DTOs and OCGs have played in it. The kinds of homicides associated with these groups have very distinctive characteristics that merit close analysis. Such groups use specific types of weapons, specific tactics (e.g., targeted assassinations, street gun battles, etc.), extreme forms of violence (e.g., torture, dismemberment, and decapitation), explicit messages to authorities and each other (e.g., notes, signs, and banners), and public displays of violence intended to spread fear (e.g., bodies hanging from bridges). The labels applied to such homicides are arguably less important than the fact that these killings have a high degree of visibility and the appearance of OCG involvement,

³ For example, see: Michael D. Maltz, “On Defining ‘Organized Crime’: The Development of a Definition and a Typology,” *Crime & Delinquency* 1976 22: 338.

⁴ <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/101.pdf>

contributing to a sense of fear in the general population. Arguably, the sense of fear caused by such high-profile, gangland-style homicides is one of the reasons why Mexico's violence has attracted such intense international attention, despite its comparatively "moderate" homicide rate.

There is value in attempting to isolate and study such violence because of the very significant role that drug-trafficking organizations and other organized-crime groups currently play in the manufacturing of violence in Mexico. Regardless of what labels are applied, these phenomena require close and careful analysis to understand the magnitude of the problem, as well as the particular patterns and possible solutions. Moreover, it is also worth noting the important role that drug trafficking, in particular, plays in the manufacturing of high-profile, high-impact violence in Mexico. While OCGs are a pervasive problem in Mexico, DTOs are easily the most significant source of such violence. Thus, for the past several years, the Justice in Mexico project has monitored and analyzed the specific kind of violence associated with DTOs using several different sources of data, which we examine below.

B. Data and Methodological Concerns

Because of the seriousness of the crime, homicide is one of the most frequently referenced measures of violence around the world. Compared with other violent crimes, like assault, robbery, rape, or kidnapping, homicide has a relatively high rate of reporting, in part because it is difficult to conceal. Even in Mexico, where there is a high degree of criminal impunity—with fewer than 25% of crimes reported, and just 2% of all crimes punished—homicides are more likely to be reported, investigated, and punished than other forms of violent crimes. Hence, homicide data provide an important measure of Mexico's recent violence. In addition, there are both government and independent sources that have attempted to monitor and tally organized-crime-style homicides in recent years. We examine both sources of data and several methodological concerns below.

1. Government Data on Homicide

Official data on homicides in Mexico are available from two sources. First, public-health records filed by coroners' offices can be used to identify cases where the cause of death was unnatural, including cases of gunshot wounds, stabbings, lacerations, etc. While all datasets have limitations, the most consistent, complete, and reliable source of information in Mexico is the autonomous government statistics agency, INEGI, which provides data on death by homicide and other forms of violent crime. A second source of data on homicide comes from criminal investigations by law enforcement to establish a formal determination of criminal wrongdoing, and the subsequent conviction and sentencing of suspects charged with these crimes. The National Public Security System, SNSP, compiles and reports data on cases involving homicide that are identified by law enforcement. Beginning in 2012, SNSP began reporting these data midyear to provide more timely access to information. There is a noticeable variance between public-health and law-enforcement homicide statistics. This appears to be attributable mainly to different timing and methodologies by which cases are classified. Still, data from the two sources are closely correlated and offer fairly consistent measures of the trends in overall homicide. Hence, they provide important points of reference for this report.

2. Organized-Crime-Style Homicides

Neither of the two official sources on homicide statistics identifies whether there is a connection to organized crime in a particular case. However, both government and independent sources have attempted to do so by examining other variables associated with a given crime. For example, characteristic signs of possible organized crime involvement in a homicide might include the fact that the victim was carrying an illegal weapon, was transporting drugs, had been abducted, was killed in a particular fashion, or was under investigation for organized crime activities. These kinds of details are available to criminal investigators and analysts and are compiled within the SNSP (e.g., CISEN, CENAPI, SSP, SEDENA, SEMAR, and Gobernación).⁵

Obtaining these data on organized-crime-style homicides from the Mexican government has been problematic. In 2009, the Trans-Border Institute filed four formal “access to information” requests and made numerous requests to the Mexican government to obtain data on drug-related violence. The government denied these requests on the grounds that no such data existed, despite the fact that figures from the Mexican Attorney General’s Office (PGR) on drug-related homicides from 2000–2008 had been reported previously by Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission (CNDH).⁶ Then, in January 2010 and January 2011, under pressure from media organizations, civic groups, and the government’s autonomous transparency agency, Mexican authorities released new data on the number and location of the drug- and organized crime-related homicides tracked internally by the government from December 1, 2006 through September 2011. More recently, in November 2012, the Mexican government announced that it would no longer release any data on organized crime-related killings, on the grounds that this kind of violence is not codified by law and is too difficult to compile.

Because of the difficulties involved in obtaining official government information on homicides that are linked to drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime, several media sources and researchers have attempted to do so on their own. These independent monitoring efforts generally involve identifying and recording homicide cases reported by authorities and media sources, and then isolating those cases that bear characteristics typical of drug-trafficking and organized-crime groups. This typically requires sustained, labor-intensive data collection efforts, which necessitate a high degree of organizational capacity. It also necessarily involves a certain degree of independent judgment in determining the characteristics and contextual circumstances that will be used to identify the possible involvement of organized crime.

Mexican media organizations with national coverage have been the most consistent, comprehensive, and reliable in such monitoring efforts. Among these, the Mexico City-based newspaper *Reforma* has been the primary source of data on drug-related violence referenced by the Justice in Mexico Project of the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego over the last several years. *Reforma* has a large, national pool of correspondents who monitor and report the number of drug-related killings by state in their respective jurisdictions on a weekly basis. Unlike many other sources, *Reforma* also

⁵ According to Mexican security expert Viridiana Ríos, who worked with the office of the Mexican president on analyzing these data, during the Calderón administration the compilation of these data was coordinated by the Technical Secretary for the National Security Council (CSN).

⁶ Moloeznik, Marcos Pablo (2009). “The Militarization of Public Security and the Role of the Military in Mexico,” in Robert A. Donnelly and David A. Shirk (eds.), *Police and Public Security in Mexico*, San Diego: Trans-Border Institute, University of San Diego, 2012.

maintains a tally of victims by gender and by signs of torture, and also tracks the number of police and military personnel reportedly killed. Since *Reforma*'s data are not made available after the original date of publication, the Justice in Mexico Project began tracking and re-reporting these data in late 2007. While *Reforma* faithfully reported these data publicly throughout the Calderón administration, its reporting stopped abruptly and without explanation in December 2012. *Reforma* has not responded to multiple inquiries by the authors regarding its decision not to continue reporting these data. In the absence of further information from *Reforma*, this report incorporates recent reporting from other media outlets, notably *Milenio*, as a secondary source of information.

Finally, it is important to note that several organizations and independent researchers have attempted to develop other datasets and tallies of violence in Mexico. Some of these tallies have been done by monitoring media outlets for high profile DTO- and OCG-style homicides, while other efforts have been made to use web-based analytical tools and algorithms to detect the frequency of references to incidents of violence. Over the past two years, the authors have worked with dozens of research associates, university students, and volunteers to document and classify high-profile homicides that bear characteristics linked to organized crime. These include cases reported both by the media and the government, typically involving certain types of weapons, markings, and messages declaring organized crime affiliations, etc. These efforts have been conducted using an online data-gathering portal to report individual cases. Each case is reviewed and vetted before being incorporated into the Justice in Mexico organized-crime-style homicide victims dataset. This dataset currently includes more than 3,000 victims, including over 1,500 identified by name and other individual characteristics (e.g., gender, age, narco-messages, etc.). This dataset is available on the Justice in Mexico Project website and provided a richly detailed sample for the analysis in this report (<http://justiceinmexico.org/resources-2/vvm/>).

3. Analytical and Methodological Concerns

For the analytical purposes of this report, the available data have some significant limitations. First of all, there is no dataset that spans the time period and levels of analysis that are of interest. While data on overall homicides are available at the municipal level, they are not yet available for all of 2012 and it is unclear when they will become available, since INEGI homicide data have not typically been reported on a fixed schedule.⁷ At the time of this report, INEGI homicide figures were available for all years at the municipal level from 1990 through 2011. Meanwhile, SNSP figures on homicide are available starting in 1997 and through part of 2012. This past year, SNSP reported overall homicides on a monthly basis through September 2012, when it abruptly stopped doing so. Finally, monthly data on organized-crime-style homicides at the state level are available from independent sources from 2006 through 2012, while SNSP's municipal level data on organized-crime-style homicides run only from December 2006 through September 2011. The lack of continuity and timeliness in data collection efforts over time makes it necessary to rely on different sources and occasional inferential projections to address different questions.

In terms of methodological concerns, there are also questions regarding the methods for identifying and categorizing cases of drug-trafficking and organized crime homicides. As discussed in detail above, efforts to do so are largely based on the identification of symptoms that presuppose organized crime activity. Violence perpetrated by drug-trafficking and organized-crime groups

⁷ In some cases, it has taken several years for INEGI to update its homicide figures.

frequently makes use of specific types of weapons (high-caliber, assault-type weapons), specific tactics (targeted assassinations, street gun battles, etc.), extreme displays of cruelty (torture, dismemberment, and decapitation), and explicit messages to authorities and each other (often called “narco-messages”). Hence, SNSP and *Reforma* tallies of DTO- and OCG-style homicides draw on quite similar criteria in the process of gathering their data. (See Table 1).

Table 1: Comparing Criteria for Classifying Homicides Linked to Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime

Mexican Government: “Organized crime Homicides”	<i>Reforma</i> : “Narco-Executions” (Narcoejecuciones)
1. Victim killed by high-caliber or automatic firearm typical of OCGs (e.g., .50 caliber, AK- & AR-type)	1. Victim killed by high-caliber or automatic firearm typical of OCGs (e.g., .50-caliber, AK- & AR-type)
2. Signs of torture, decapitation, or dismemberment	2. Signs of torture, decapitation, or dismemberment
3. Body was wrapped in blankets (<i>cobijas</i>), taped, or gagged	3. Execution-style and mass-casualty shootings
4. Killed at specific location, or in a vehicle	4. Indicative markings, written messages, or unusual configurations of the body
5. Killed by OCG within penitentiary	5. Presence of large quantities of illicit drugs, cash or weapons
6. Special circumstances (e.g., narco-message (“ <i>narcomensaje</i> ”); victim alleged OCG member; abducted [<i>levanton</i>], ambushed, or chased)	6. Official reports explicitly indicting involvement in organized crime

Finally, there are also data gaps that leave large unanswered questions about the nature and victims of violence, especially with regard to drug-trafficking and organized-crime-style homicide. Government data reported to the public exclude finer details commonly used to understand violent crime, such as the time of death, gender, and occupation of victims. While *Reforma* reports data on gender and on military and police personnel, its data do not identify other relevant factors, such as the age, occupation, and time of death of the victims. These data gaps leave officials, experts, and the public with an incomplete picture of DTO- and OCG-style violence, making it difficult to diagnose the problem and prescribe solutions. For example, one common hypothesis is that youth gangs and disaffected youths are major contributors to Mexico’s recent violence, but this is not clearly proven based on available data. While they provide only a sample of such violence, independent datasets like the one compiled by the Trans-Border Institute help fill the gap to provide more detailed insights into victim characteristics and other aspects of DTO- and OCG-style violence.

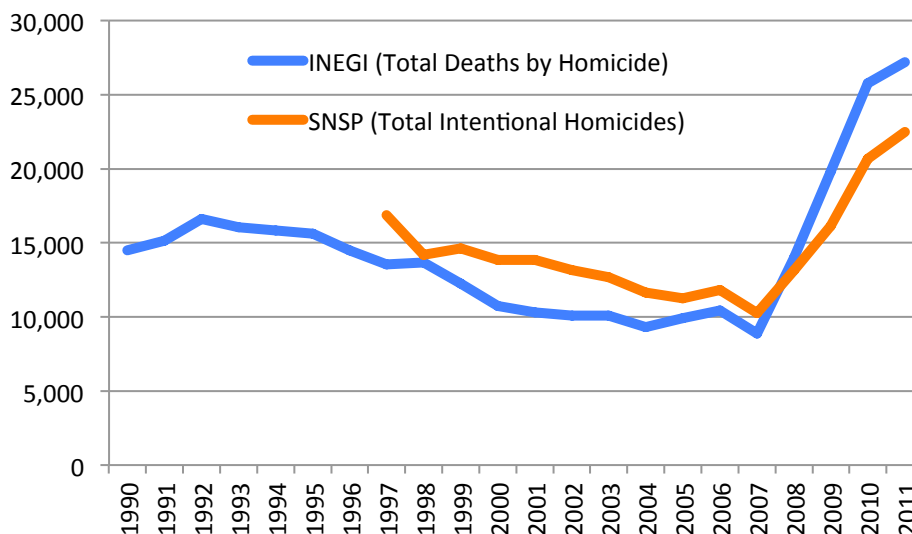
IV. FINDINGS: DRUG VIOLENCE IN MEXICO

A. Elevated Overall Levels of Homicide

The first and most obvious observation is that homicide levels in Mexico spiked dramatically in recent years. While there are noticeable differences in the figures reported by different sources, all official and independent tallies exhibited a sharp increase in overall homicides after 2007. The trajectory of violence continued to rise sharply until 2011, when it appeared to level off significantly.

To examine this trend, we look first to the total number of deaths by homicide, as reported by INEGI, which has the longest-available time series for this measure (See Figure 4). There is a noticeable statistical discrepancy between INEGI and SNSP data, due to the different systems for recording homicides within these two agencies.⁸ However, the general trends identified by both sources are closely correlated.⁹

Figure 4: Homicides in Mexico, 1990 to 2011



Sources: INEGI and SNSP.

Over the terms of presidents Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) and Vicente Fox (2000-2006), the number of overall homicides documented by INEGI declined significantly. At the peak in 1992, INEGI registered 16,594 homicides, but by the end of the Fox administration in 2006 this figure dropped more than 38% to 10,452 homicides. In total, under Zedillo, INEGI documented 80,311 homicides, with an average of 13,385 people killed per year, or more than 36 people per day, from 1995 through 2000.¹⁰ The average annual decline in homicides over the course of the Zedillo administration was 6.2%. Under Fox, the number documented by INEGI was 60,162 homicides, with an average of 10,027 people killed per year, or more than 27 people per day, from 2001 to 2006. That represents an average annual decline of 0.3% in homicides during the Fox administration. (See Table 2).

⁸ The key source of the discrepancy is that homicides are identified by different means and reported at different times. Coroners' reports are based on autopsies conducted at the time that a body is found, and are reported for that calendar year. Hence, a person killed the year before, or even a decade ago, will be registered in the year of the autopsy. Law-enforcement efforts to document homicides generally reflect the calendar year in which a formal charge of homicide was levied. SNSP data may also include homicides that were not identified through a coroner's examination.

⁹ The statistical correlation in the years where the two data sets overlap (1997 to 2011) produces a Pearson's coefficient of .934, which suggests a very strong relationship between the two variables being measured.

¹⁰ Mexico's six-year presidential terms are inaugurated on December 1st, so the years presented here are missing data from the first month in office and include data from one month after their term began.

Table 2: Overall Homicides by Presidential Administration

	Zedillo (1995-2000)	Fox (2001-2006)	Calderón (2007-2012*)
INEGI Homicides	80,311	60,162	120,000
SNSP Homicides	n.a.	74,398	103,247

* Note: This table includes a projection for INEGI for the year 2012 (in red), assuming a maximum 8.5 percent decline, equivalent to the rate of decline observed by SNSP. (See footnote 11).

Under President Calderón (2006-2012), the number of overall homicides annually increased more than two and a half times from 10,452 in 2006 to 27,213 in 2011, according to INEGI figures. While INEGI data were unavailable for 2012 at the time of this report, during the first five full years of Calderón’s term—from 2007 through 2011— INEGI reported 95,646 people killed, an average of 19,129 per year, or more than 50 people per day. By these measures, there was a 24% average annual increase in overall homicides during the Calderón administration.

As noted above, SNSP’s homicide data differ somewhat from INEGI’s. Preliminary data from SNSP for 2012 indicate that there were at least 20,560 overall homicides in 2012, which would constitute a decline of 8.5% compared with its tally of 22,480 in 2011. Using SNSP to project INEGI figures, we estimate that the total number of homicides INEGI will report will fall between 23,000 and 27,000 in 2012. Using either measure, the authors estimate that the total number of homicides during the Calderón administration was likely around 120,000 to 125,000 people killed, depending on whether INEGI or SNSP data are used.¹¹

B. Organized-crime-style Homicides Represent a Significant Share of Homicides

Violence involving drug trafficking and organized crime appears to be the main driver of the increase in homicides in recent years. Both official and independent sources that monitor organized-crime-style homicides identified substantial increases that were closely correlated to the increases in overall homicide documented by INEGI and SNSP.¹² OCG-style killings were relatively limited in the early 2000s but grew from 1,080 in 2001 to 2,221 in 2006, according to Mexico’s human rights ombudsman, CNDH, which reported a total of 8,901 drug-related homicides during that period, based on data supplied by the PGR (See Figure 5).¹³

¹¹ The estimate for INEGI includes data for overall homicides reported from 2007 to 2011, and assumes an 8.5% decline from 2011 to 2012 based on the trend found using SNSP’s preliminary data as of January 20, 2013. This is a conservative estimate, so the total number of INEGI homicides may be higher than this. Given that SNSP’s preliminary figures were still missing data from municipalities in several states makes it likely that the decline in homicide in 2012 was not as great as we estimate here.

¹² There was a strong correlation (.986 or higher) between overall homicide documented by INEGI and SNSP and the OCG-style homicides documented by *Reforma* and *Milenio*.

¹³ Marcos Pablo Moloeznik, “The Militarization of Public Security in Mexico,” *Police and Public Security in Mexico*, Robert A. Donnelly and David A. Shirk (eds.), San Diego: Trans-Border Institute; University Readers, 2009. CNDH data had a strong (.815) correlation to the number of homicides reported by INEGI for the same years, but surprisingly no significant correlation (-.006) to SNSP data for homicides reported during the same years. The 36% increase in OCG-style killings reported by CNDH in 2004 and the 25% increase in 2005 were accompanied by increases of 6.3% and 5.4% in overall homicides documented by INEGI for those years. Meanwhile, the doubling of OCG-style killings

Beginning in 2007, news-media organizations began to monitor organized-crime-style homicides independently from government sources. *Reforma* began reporting weekly data on organized-crime-style homicides at the state level in 2006, but stopped reporting these figures regularly in November 2012. *Milenio* periodically reported annualized data on organized crime killings aggregated at the national level from 2007 through 2012, and provided monthly data on organized-crime-style homicides at the state level from January to December 2012.

At the close of 2012, *Reforma* reported that it had identified 9,744 organized-crime-style homicides nationwide for the year.¹⁴ This figure includes 167 disputed cases in the state of Chiapas.¹⁵ No state level data was available from *Reforma* for the month of December. *Milenio* reported 12,390 organized-crime-style homicides for the year. All told, *Reforma* and *Milenio* estimate the number of organized-crime-style “executions” (*ejecuciones*) from 2007 to 2012 at 47,509 and 54,047 people, respectively. Put differently, available estimates of organized-crime-style homicides help to account for around 45,000 or 55,000 killings over the course of the Calderón administration, depending on the source (See Figure 5).¹⁶

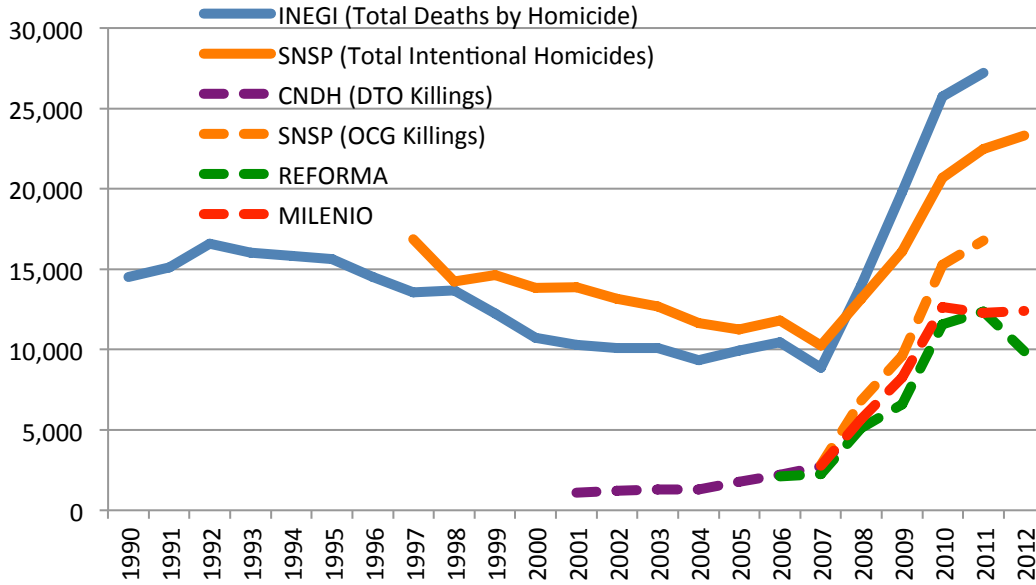
reported by CNDH from 2,712 in 2007 to 5,585 in 2008 was accompanied by a 58% overall increase in overall homicides documented by INEGI for that year.

¹⁴ From January 2012 through the end of November 2012, *Reforma* reported state-level figures for a total of 9,158 organized-crime-style “executions” (*ejecuciones*). While *Reforma* did not report any state level data for December 2012, it reported a total of 755 organized-crime-style killings nationwide for that month. In March 2012, *Reforma* included in its tally 167 corpses that were reportedly found in a 50-year-old mass grave in the state of Chiapas, which have remained in *Reforma*’s tally as if they were drug-trafficking- or organized-crime-style killings. The authors exclude these from tallies used in this report, and calculate *Reforma*’s annual total at 9,746.

¹⁵ *Reforma*’s tally includes nationwide figures reported for December 2012, combined with state-level data that the newspaper reported from January through November. *Reforma*’s tally also includes 167 bodies found in a mass gravesite near the Guatemalan border in the state of Chiapas in March 2012. These corpses appear to be at least 50 years old, and press reports suggested a possible connection to the Guatemalan civil war that began in the 1950s. For later calculations, we exclude these 167 corpses. Reuters, “Mass grave in southern Mexico yields 167 bodies,” March 10, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/10/us-mexico-massgrave-idUSBRE8290HU20120310>

¹⁶ Ideally, the Mexican government will clarify this issue by releasing its latest data on organized-crime-style homicides. However, formal requests to SNSP for this information in preparation for this report have been unsuccessful.

Figure 5: Comparison of All Homicide and Organized Crime Homicide Tallies, 1990 through 2012



SNSP has refused to release its data on organized-crime-style homicides beyond September 2011. However, the 47,453 organized-crime-style homicides reported by SNSP from January 2007 through September 2011 tended to be about 24% greater than the tally reported by *Reforma*. Based on this tendency, the authors estimate that the total SNSP tally of organized-crime-style homicides would likely be around 12,000 for 2012 and between 60,000 and 65,000 for the entire Calderón administration.¹⁷ Since there was a modest 1.8% decline in overall homicide in the 15 years preceding the Calderón period, OCG-style killings appear to explain nearly the entire increase in homicides during this administration.¹⁸ Determining the approximate proportion of homicides that result from organized-crime-style violence is complicated. The answer depends upon which sources are used to calculate each figure (See Table 3).

¹⁷ The authors' exact estimate, based on projections using *Reforma's* data, is that the likely total SNSP would have reported by the end of 2012 would be around 12,082 for the year and around 63,642 for the length of the Calderón administration.

¹⁸ The average rate of decline in overall homicides from 1990 to 2006 was 1.8%, despite Mexico's growing population. Had homicides continued to decline at this rate they would have been expected to fall to around 7,951 homicides by 2012.

Table 3: Comparison of Homicide and Organized-crime-style Homicide Tallies, 2005 through 2011

	INEGI (Total)	SNSP (Total)	SNSP (OCG)	(% OF INEGI)	(% OF SNSP)	Reforma OCG	(% OF INEGI)	(% OF SNSP)	Milenio OCG	(% OF INEGI)	(% OF SNSP)
2005	9,921	11,255	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
2006	10,452	11,806	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,108	20.2%	17.9%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
2007	8,867	10,253	2,826	31.9%	27.6%	2,267	25.6%	22.1%	2,773	31.3%	27.0%
2008	14,006	13,155	6,837	48.8%	52.0%	5,129	36.6%	39.0%	5,661	40.4%	43.0%
2009	19,803	16,118	9,614	48.5%	59.6%	6,587	33.3%	40.9%	8,281	41.8%	51.4%
2010	25,757	20,681	15,273	59.3%	73.9%	11,583	45.0%	56.0%	12,658	49.1%	61.2%
2011	27,213	22,480	16,800	61.7%	74.7%	12,366	45.4%	55.0%	12,284	45.1%	54.6%
2012	n.a.	20,560	12,083	n.a.	58.8%	9,744	n.a.	47.4%	12,390	n.a.	60.3%
TOTAL	116,019	126,308	63,433	54.7%	57.8%	49,784	34.3%	39.7%	54,047	46.6%	42.8%

Note: This table includes the authors' estimates for SNSP organized-crime-style homicides in red, based on the average difference between SNSP and *Reforma* tallies of organized-crime-style homicides over time. All other figures are as reported by each source. The green columns indicate the percentage of all intentional homicides, depending on the source.

For example, using INEGI's figures for overall homicides, the 2,108 organized-crime-style homicides *Reforma* reported in 2006 constituted 20.2% of total intentional homicides. However, using SNSP's figures, *Reforma's* tally constituted 17.9% of total intentional homicides in that year. Likewise, the 12,366 organized-crime-style homicides *Reforma* reported in 2011 represented 45.4% of the 27,213 homicides that INEGI reported and 55% of the 22,480 homicides that SNSP reported in that year. *Reforma* offers the most conservative estimate of the overall proportion of all homicides involving organized-crime-style violence, placing this somewhere between 30 and 40%. The largest estimate of the proportion of violence resulting from organized crime comes from comparing SNSP data on all intentional homicides against SNSP's data on organized-crime-style homicides, suggesting that the range is somewhere between 50 and 60% (reaching as high as 75% of all homicides in 2011). *Milenio* falls between these two sources, estimating that organized-crime-style homicides represented somewhere between 40 and 50% of all homicides. Regardless of disagreements over the exact proportions, there is no doubt that organized-crime-style killings represented a major share of all homicides in Mexico in recent years.

B. Recent Shift in the Trajectory of Violence

Perhaps the most notable and important trend in the last year has been the slowdown in drug- and organized crime-related homicides, which has corresponded to a similar shift in overall homicides. In late 2011, the Justice in Mexico project began to report a shift in the trajectory of DTO- and OCG-related violence, based on data collected from *Reforma* newspaper.¹⁹ This trend continued over the course of 2012, as the number of organized-crime-style homicides *Reforma* reported dropped significantly. According to *Reforma's* data, drug-related homicides increased six-fold between 2006 and 2011, from 2,108 to 12,284. Comparing 2012 with 2011, organized-crime-style homicides fell over 21%, to 8,989 killings in 2012 (See Table 4). Using *Reforma's* figures as a basis for projecting

¹⁹ See: "Shifting Sands: Mexico's Changing Drug War," *The Economist*, November 26, 2011. <http://www.economist.com/node/21540289>

SNSP tallies of organized crime-related homicides, the authors estimate that the Mexican government's tally would show a roughly 28.1% decline in 2012, based on past correlations between the two data sources noted above. Unfortunately, the Mexican government has opted to stop releasing official data on organized crime group style homicides, so the estimates for the remainder of 2011 and 2012 cannot be confirmed.

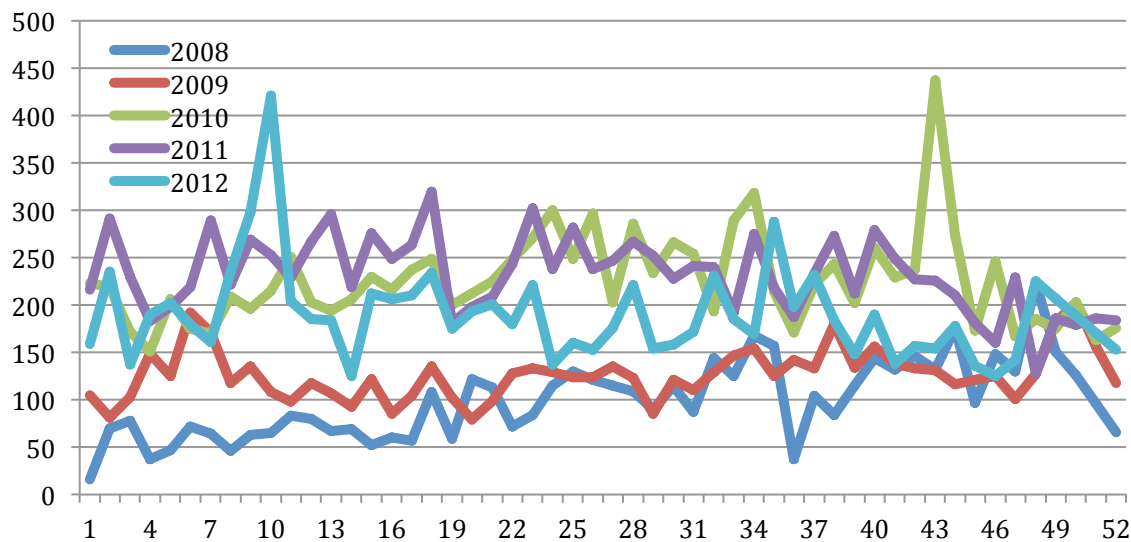
Table 4: Percent Change in Homicides and Organized-Crime-Style Homicides, 2007-2012

YEAR	INEGI Overall Homicides	SNSP	SNSP-OCG Organized-Crime Group-Style Homicides	REFORMA	MILENIO
2007	-15.2%	-13.2%	n.a.	7.5%	n.a.
2008	58.0%	28.3%	141.9%	126.2%	104.1%
2009	41.4%	22.5%	40.6%	28.4%	46.3%
2010	30.1%	28.3%	58.9%	75.8%	52.9%
2011	5.7%	8.7%	10.0%*	6.8%	-3.0%
2012	n.a.	3.7%*	-28.1%*	-21.2%	0.9%
AVERAGE	24.0%	14.9%	80.5%	37.3%	40.2%

Note: SNSP figures come from preliminary data released in January 2013. Figures (*) with an asterisk are based on estimates: SNSP OCG-style homicide figures for the final quarter of 2011 and all of 2012 are based on correlations with *Reforma* data (SNSP-OCG figures have on average exceeded *Reforma*'s by about 24%).

Also, since *Reforma* is the only independent source that has reported weekly figures on organized-crime-style homicides in recent years; the representation of its data in Figure 6 is useful in illustrating different monthly patterns across several years (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Reforma Tallies for Weekly Organized-Crime-Style Homicides, 2006-2012



Source: Reforma. Projections for final four weeks of 2012 based on linear trend model developed by Topher McDougal.

Other tallies suggest that violence did not fall, but merely leveled off. In 2012, the newsmagazine *Milenio* reported 12,390 organized-crime-style homicides, significantly more than *Reforma* and a less than one percent increase from the 12,284 organized-crime-style homicides *Milenio* reported for 2011.²⁰ Even the very minor increase in violence reported by *Milenio* appears to confirm a significant shift in the rate of violence over the last two years. Thus, depending on the source, both overall homicide and organized-crime-style homicides grew dramatically from 2007 to 2010, but leveled off or declined substantially in 2011 and 2012.

Whether overall homicides have actually declined or merely leveled off, the slowdown raises important questions about the effectiveness of data-gathering efforts in the context of changing patterns of violence. Revelations of mass graves and large numbers of missing persons in the last two years suggest that many homicides go undetected by both official and independent data-gathering efforts. In 2011, for example, at least 177 bodies were identified in Mexico's largest mass gravesite, located in the town of San Fernando in the northeastern border state of Tamaulipas; most of the victims were killed by blunt instruments, and most appeared to be migrants and travelers passing through the state. With dozens of smaller gravesites discovered throughout northern Mexico, this may suggest a shift in tactics among organized-crime groups to different means of obtaining revenue and lower-profile methods of killing. Competition and conflict over territorial control for drug trafficking may provide strong incentives for organized-crime groups to send violent signals to authorities and rivals. However, as some Mexican organized-crime groups are now increasingly seeking revenue by preying on "non-combatants," such as Central American migrants, they appear to be less interested in advertising their handiwork to authorities and to each other, and more interested in evading detection and confrontation.

²⁰ The number of OCG-style killings that *Milenio* reported each year from 2007 through 2012 was on average about 11% higher than the number reported by *Reforma*. However, the variance between the two sources has fluctuated greatly from year to year. Some years the variance was as great as 25% (2009), while in other years (2011) the two sources reported almost identical tallies. It is difficult to say which of the two sources has the more accurate methodology, though *Reforma's* has been more regularly reported and more consistent in matching trends documented by government figures.

Table 5: Mass Gravesites (Narcofosas), 2010-2012

DISCOVERED	STATE	MUNICIPALITY	# VICTIMS
5/28/10	Guerrero	Taxco	55
6/30/10	Nuevo Leon	Benito Juárez	13
7/21/10	Nuevo Leon	Benito Juárez	51
4/13/11	Sinaloa	Ahome	13
4/24/11	Tamaulipas	San Fernando	177
6/1/11	Coahuila	Piedras Negras	n/a
12/27/11	Nuevo Leon	Linares	8
2/9/12	Veracruz	Acayucan	15
6/7/12	Quintana Roo	Cancún	6
7/9/12	Michoacán	Charo	2
7/9/12	Michoacán	Juárez	4
9/12/12	Guerrero	Acapulco	33
10/23/12	Colima	Tecomán	5
11/3/12	Tamaulipas	Gómez Farías	11
11/19/12	Guerrero	Eduardo Neri	10
11/27/12	Chihuahua	Ciudad Juárez	19
11/28/12	Guerrero	Acapulco	10
Various	Durango	Various	332
		TOTAL	764

More data on missing persons and mass graves are needed to determine whether these have a significant effect in explaining the above-noted shift in the trajectory of reported homicides. Certainly, it would require a very high number of missing persons —perhaps 5,000 to 10,000 in a given year—to sustain the same rate of growth in homicides in 2011 or 2012 as in previous years. While certainly conceivable, there is currently insufficient evidence to support this hypothesis. One of the most widely cited estimates of missing persons in Mexico comes from a database released in December 2012 by Propuesta Cívica, a Mexico City-based non-governmental organization, which unveiled a list of more than 20,000 persons who went missing from 2006 through 2012.²¹ This is far greater than the number reported by official sources. In early 2012, Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) indicated that there were 5,397 cases of people reported missing and a total of 8,898 unidentified dead persons from 2006 to April 2011.²² While these are relatively high numbers, they are not sufficient to sustain double-digit percentage increases in the number of homicides in Mexico.

In short, available evidence suggests that there has indeed been a significant slowdown in homicides and organized-crime-style killings over the last two years. The main question that remains is whether

²¹ The *Propuesta Cívica* database is reportedly based on a “secret” list obtained from the PGR, and contains the names of 20,851 persons who went missing from December 2006 through November 2012, including over 1,200 children below the age of 11. Listed among the disappeared are an estimated 7,137 people from Mexico City, one of the places that have registered the fewest organized-crime-related homicides. Anabel Hernández, “Supera los 25 mil, la lista secreta de desaparecidos,” *El Diario*, December 29, 2012. http://diario.mx/Nacional/2012-12-29_86eda41c/supera-los-25-mil-la-lista-secreta-de-desaparecidos/

²² “Crean Registro Nacional de Personas Desaparecidas en México,” *Univisión*, <http://noticias.univision.com/mexico/noticias/article/2012-03-06/registro-nacional-personas-desaparecidas-mexico#axzz2IWamm1iR>

violence is in decline or has reached a plateau. Here more data will likely become available from both INEGI and SNSP to provide complete official homicide figures for all of 2012. For INEGI, this is more difficult to judge due to the absence of midyear data upon which to base an estimate. However, our current projections suggest that any decline in overall homicides reported by SNSP for 2012 will be fairly modest (less than 5%), and it is very possible that 2012 was a “break-even” year when compared with 2011.

C. Shifting Geographic Patterns of Violence

Here this report focuses on the geographic distribution of violence, using the data on homicides and organized crime-related homicides available at the municipal and state levels, respectively. Among the main findings, while the distribution of homicides has grown over the last several years, it appears to have receded somewhat in 2012, based on preliminary government data. Also, new local centers of violence have emerged, though not at the levels of intensity previously seen elsewhere.

1. Distribution of Overall Homicides

As noted earlier, government data on the overall number of homicides are available at the municipal level only through September 2012 as reported by SNSP. The maps in Figure 7 illustrate the geographic distribution of all homicides by municipality from 2006 through 2011, as reported by INEGI. Because INEGI data were not available for 2012 at the time that this report was released in February 2013, we rely on the most recent homicide data available from SNSP in Figure 8. These SNSP data include all municipalities (excluding the states of Jalisco and Yucatán) for the period from January through September 2012.²³

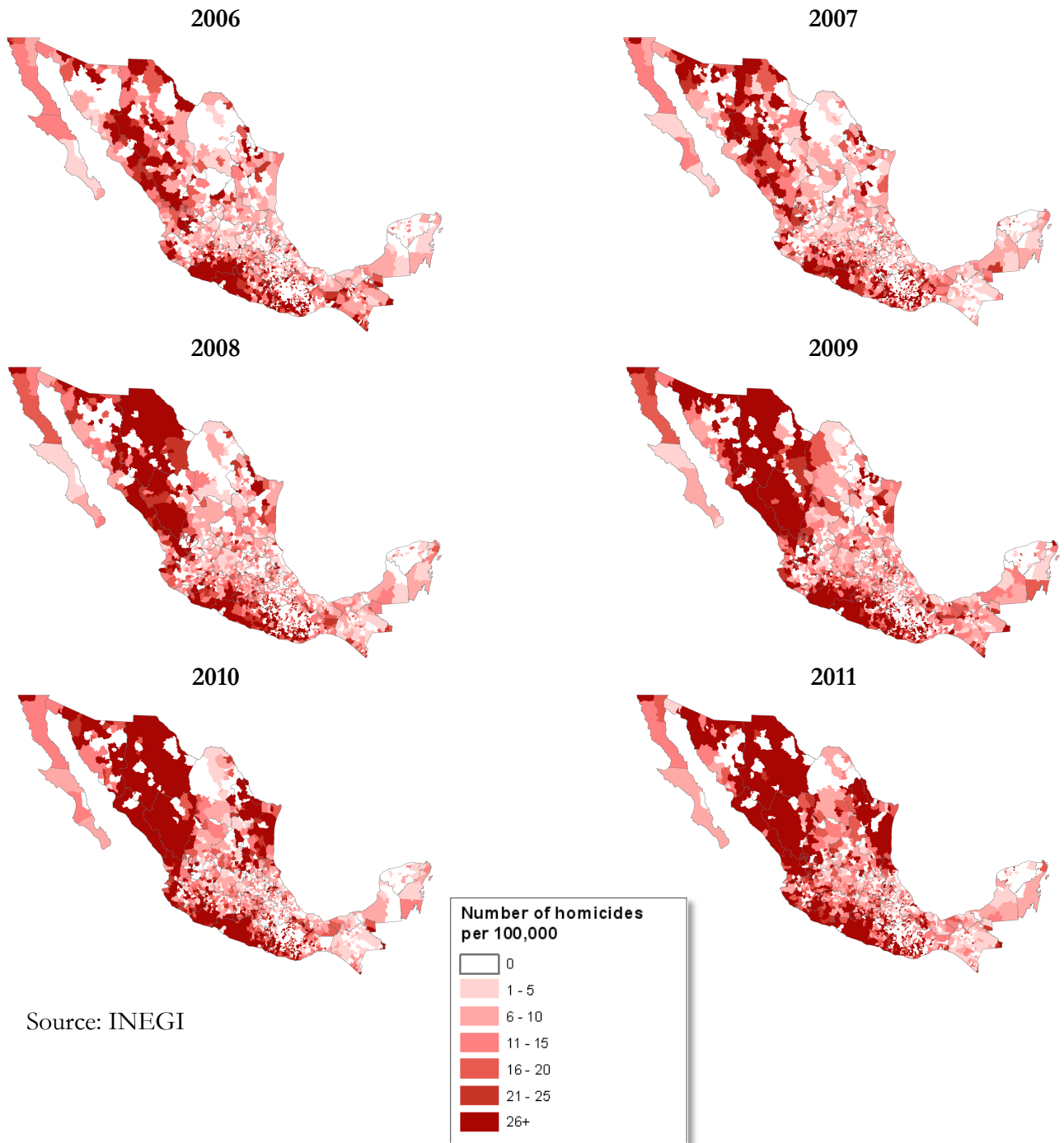
The most obvious pattern illustrated by these data is the geographic proliferation of homicides over the course of the last several years. At the outset of the Calderón administration, in 2007, there were 1,876 municipalities with no reported homicides, but the number of municipalities free of such violence diminished more than 28% to 1,337 by 2011. Meanwhile, the number of municipalities with 25 or more annual homicides grew from 50 in 2007 to 240 in 2011. This geographic dispersion of violence, discussed in past reports by the Trans-Border Institute, has been attributed mainly to the proliferation of conflicts and internal disputes among drug-trafficking organizations. In 2012, however, excluding the 232 municipalities in Jalisco (126) and Yucatán (106), the proportion of municipalities free from violence increased 16% to at least 1,556 and the number with more than 25 homicides decreased more than 25% to 178. While there is a clear need for more data in order to compare 2012 with previous years, it does appear that the geographic dispersion of violence may have diminished significantly from 2011 to 2012.

A second point is that, even taking into consideration the geographic dispersion of homicides, the worst violence has remained concentrated in fewer than 10% of Mexico’s 2,457 municipalities. During the first three years of the Calderón administration, the primary locations affected by this violence were found in the northwest (in the states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, and

²³ For 2011, SNSP reported 1,976 homicides in Jalisco and 166 in Yucatán. Thus, we expect that SNSP is missing approximately 1,500 homicides for the period from January to September 2006, and approximately 2,000 for the entire year.

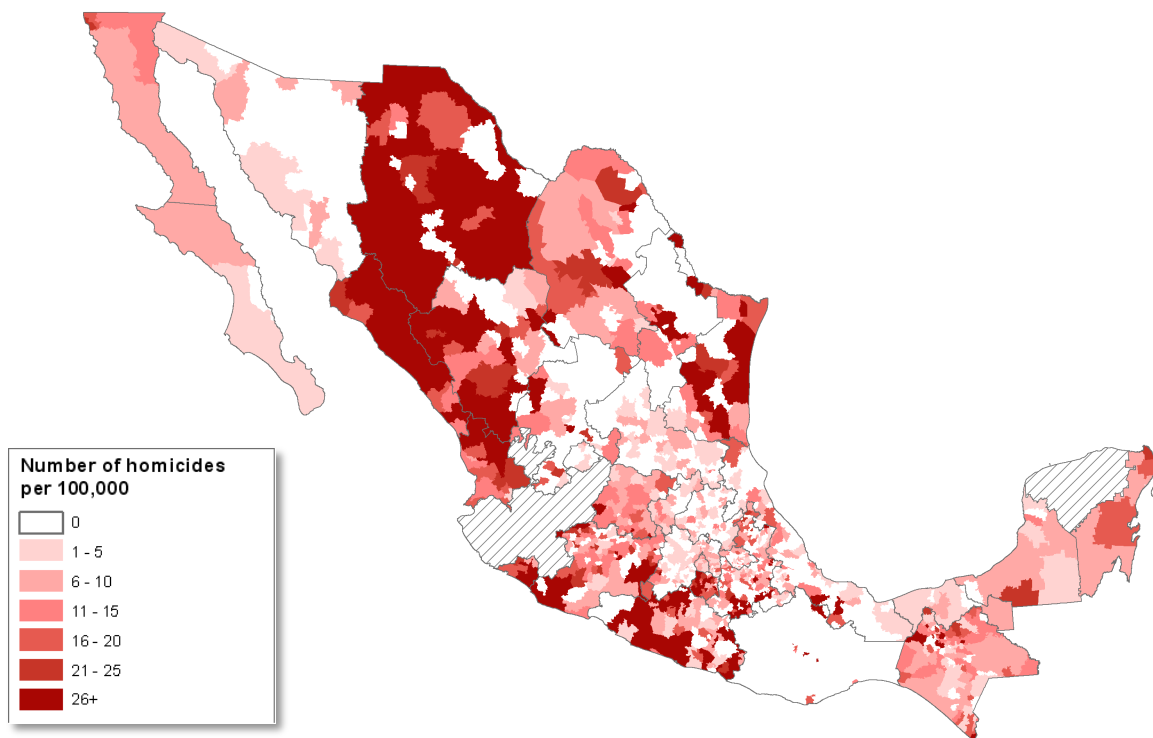
Sinaloa) and along the southern Pacific coast (in the states of Michoacán and Guerrero). Over the last three years, elevated levels of homicide continued in these areas but also spread to Mexico's northeast and, to a lesser extent, the southeast. Also, despite the overall concentration of violence, there were significantly lower levels of violence in the northwest in recent years, which we discuss in more detail below.

Figure 7: Municipal Level Maps of Deaths By Homicide, 2006 through 2011



Source: INEGI

Figure 8: Municipal Level Homicide Maps, January through September 2012



Source: SNSP. Note that data were unavailable for municipalities in Jalisco and Yucatán.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that violence has diminished in certain areas in 2011 and 2012, particularly as the number of homicides fell in key states in northern Mexico, including Baja California, Sonora, and Chihuahua. However, these decreases were significantly, though not totally, offset by increases in homicides elsewhere in the country, notably Colima, Guerrero, and Nuevo León. We discuss these geographic shifts in violence in greater detail below.

2. Distribution of Organized-Crime-Style Homicides

In previous years, this report relied on municipal-level data for organized-crime-style homicides reported by SNSP, but these data have not been available since September 2011. For this reason, this discussion focuses on the available data at the state level, referencing both *Reforma* and *Milenio* because of the significant difference between them. As noted above, in 2012, *Reforma* reported a total of 9,746 executions (*ejecuciones*), a roughly 21% reduction compared with the 11,631 reported for the same period the year before.

Figure 9 illustrates the trend in organized-crime-style killings at the state level, as reported by *Reforma* from January through November 2012.

Figure 10 presents *Milenio*'s tallies for the same year from January through December. Both maps corroborate the general national level trends identified above, illustrating that there is a significant correlation between increases in overall homicides and the number of DTO- and OCG-style homicides identified by news-media organizations, lending credibility to the accuracy and value of these independent monitoring efforts. Disaggregating these data to show patterns at the municipal level would likely provide a similar picture to the one described by overall homicide data.

Figure 9: *Reforma* Organized-Crime-Style Homicide Map, Jan-Nov 2012

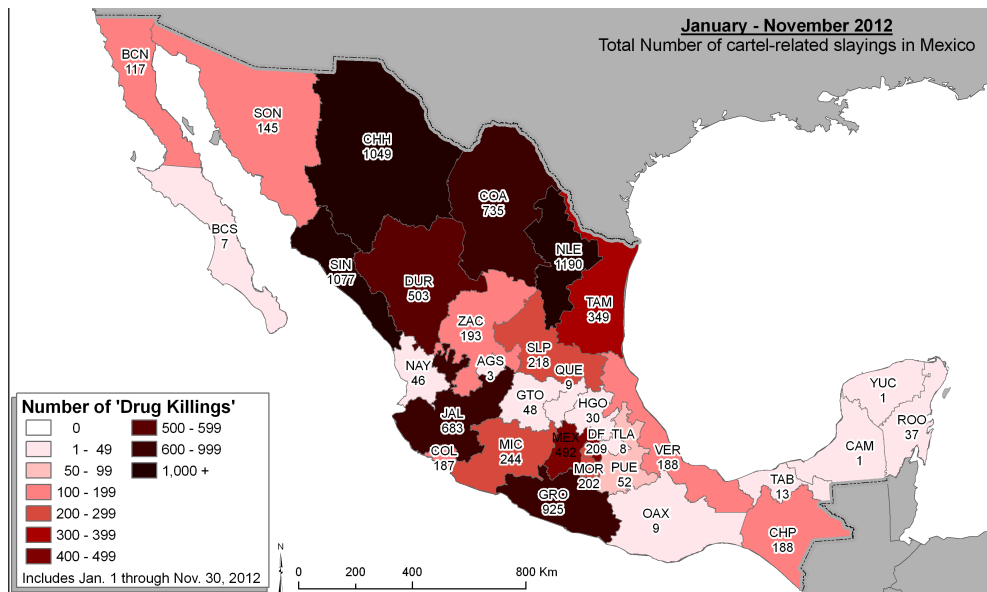
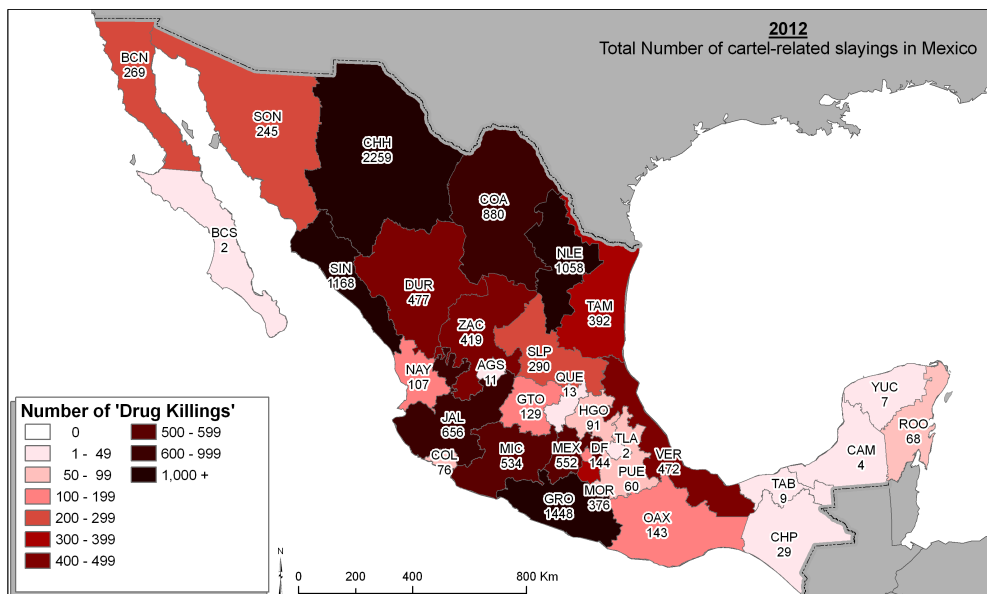


Figure 10: *Milenio* Organized-Crime-Style Homicide Map, Jan-Dec 2012



The general pattern illustrated in both Figure 9 and Figure 10 is that in 2012 drug-trafficking- and organized-crime-style homicides were most concentrated in the central and eastern border regions, as well as in central Pacific coast states on the mainland. According to *Reforma's* data, from January through November 2012, five states—Sinaloa (1,077), Chihuahua (1,049), Nuevo León (1,190), Guerrero (925), and Coahuila (735)—accounted for over half of organized-crime-style killings nationwide. *Milenio's* tallies for the top five states differed: Chihuahua (2,137), Guerrero (1,408), Sinaloa (1,089), Nuevo León (1,014), and Coahuila (775). Except for Chihuahua and Guerrero, there is a close correlation between the estimates of

Reforma and *Milenio*. Again, it is unclear why *Milenio*'s estimates are so much higher in Chihuahua and Guerrero.

Three of the five most-violent states were located along the U.S.-Mexico border, which, combined with *Reforma*'s totals for the other three border states—Baja California (117), Sonora (145), and Tamaulipas (349)—accounted for nearly 40% of organized-crime-style killings nationwide. That said, Coahuila and Nuevo León were the only border states that registered significant increases in OCG-style killings in 2012, though it is difficult to determine the true level of violence in Tamaulipas, a state where reporting is severely constrained by threats against journalists.

Meanwhile, along the Pacific coast, the states of Sinaloa, Jalisco, and Guerrero were the major centers of organized-crime-style violence. These states host major drug transit routes, and organized-crime groups have been active in these areas for many years. It is worth noting that both Sinaloa and Guerrero experienced a significant decrease in violence in 2012—possibly more than one-third—according to *Reforma*'s tallies. The Pacific coastal state of Jalisco also experienced a modest decline (less than 10%) compared with 2011.

Looking more closely at the data, however, there are some noticeable problems with the data reported at the state level by both government and by independent media sources. Table 6 offers a comparison of SNSP homicide data to *Reforma* and *Milenio* data reported in 2012 at the state level. Because of the unavailability of state-level data from *Reforma* for December 2012, calculating the proportion of total intentional homicides that were attributable to organized crime at the state level requires comparisons based on the first eleven months of the year.

Table 6: Comparing Official State-Level Homicide Data and Independent Tallies of Organized-Crime-Style Homicides, January through November 2012

State	SNSP (Jan-Nov)	Reforma (Jan-Nov)	% OCG Reforma	Milenio (Jan-Nov)	% OCG Milenio
Aguascalientes	41	3	7.3%	10	24.4%
Baja California	543	117	21.5%	265	48.8%
BC Sur	32	7	21.9%	2	6.3%
Campeche	61	1	1.6%	4	6.6%
Chiapas	507	19	3.7%	25	4.9%
Chihuahua	1,897	1,049	55.3%	2,137	112.7%
Coahuila	713	735	103.1%	775	108.7%
Colima	248	187	75.4%	70	28.2%
Distrito Federal	703	209	29.7%	140	19.9%
Durango	544	503	92.5%	432	79.4%
Edomex	1,110	492	44.3%	505	45.5%
Guanajuato	734	48	6.5%	88	12.0%
Guerrero	2,112	925	43.8%	1,408	66.7%
Hidalgo	75	30	40.0%	50	66.7%
Jalisco	1,077	683	63.4%	631	58.6%
Michoacan	716	244	34.1%	497	69.4%
Morelos	797	202	25.3%	335	42.0%
Nayarit	232	46	19.8%	66	28.4%
Nuevo León	1,370	1,190	86.9%	1,014	74.0%
Oaxaca	434	9	2.1%	102	23.5%
Puebla	597	52	8.7%	17	2.8%
Querétaro	104	9	8.7%	13	12.5%
Quintana Roo	233	37	15.9%	66	28.3%
San Luis Potosi	353	218	61.8%	237	67.1%
Sinaloa	1,350	1,077	79.8%	1,089	80.7%
Sonora	455	145	31.9%	231	50.8%
Tabasco	117	13	11.1%	9	7.7%
Tamaulipas	645	349	54.1%	367	56.9%
Tlaxcala	50	8	16.0%	2	4.0%
Veracruz	639	188	29.4%	448	70.1%
Yucatán	37	1	2.7%	7	18.9%
Zacatecas	173	193	111.6%	366	211.6%
NATIONAL:	18,699	8,989	48.1%	12,390	66.3%

Note: State level data from *Reforma* are unavailable for December 2012, so this comparison includes only data from all noted sources from January to November 2012. The authors exclude 167 homicides reported by *Reforma* in the state of Chiapas because of the unclear origins of these corpses. Data from SNSP are preliminary figures reported in January 2013. The green columns indicate the percentage of all intentional homicides using SNSP data.

What stands out most strikingly in Table 6 are the three instances in which the tally of organized-crime-style homicides by *Reforma* and/or *Milenio* is greater than the tally of *all* intentional homicides by SNSP. For example, *Milenio* somehow identified twice as many organized-crime-style homicides (366) in Zacatecas as the total number of homicides identified by Mexican authorities (173), while *Reforma* identified slightly more organized-crime-style homicides than authorities did for all homicides (193). One plausible explanation is the fact that SNSP’s data, which are preliminary, do not represent a full and final tally for those states. Another plausible explanation is that news-media sources are overestimating their tallies for those states by counting all homicides as organized-crime-style killings. Indeed, given that SNSP registered a total of 2,490 overall homicides in the state of Chihuahua, *Milenio*’s count appears to assume that virtually all homicides in that state showed signs of organized crime. Whatever the issue, there are clearly questions that need to be addressed by either official or independent sources.

3. New Local Centers of Violence

From 2008 through 2011, the largest share of violence was concentrated in Ciudad Juárez. When the violence hit its peak there in 2010, Ciudad Juárez accounted for more than one out of 10 registered homicides in Mexico and nearly a third of organized-crime-style homicides documented by the Mexican government. However, in 2011, the relative share of homicides and OCG-style killings in Ciudad Juárez diminished, as violence spread elsewhere. According to SNSP, overall homicides dropped from 2,738 in 2010 to 1,460 in 2011. From 2011 to 2012, Ciudad Juárez saw a continued decline in overall homicides, from 1,460 to 656. As a result, for the first time since 2008 the border city was displaced from its unenviable position as the municipality registering the most homicides nationwide. (See Table 7).

Table 7: Total Number and Rate (Per 100K) of Overall Homicides by Municipality, 2007-2012

#	Name	2007	Rate	City	2008	Rate	City	2009	Rate
1	Culiacán	249	30	Juárez	1332	101	Juárez	2230	168
2	Tijuana	176	12	Tijuana	614	41	Culiacán	476	56
3	Juárez	136	10	Culiacán	576	69	Chihuahua	414	51
4	Monterrey	67	6	Chihuahua	301	38	Tijuana	399	26
5	Acapulco	65	9	Nogales	102	49	Gómez Palacio	230	71
6	Uruapan	57	19	Durango	99	18	Acapulco	150	19
7	Iztapalapa	40	2	Mazatlán	79	19	Torreón	135	22
8	Morelia	35	5	Navolato	78	58	Nogales	123	57
9	Chilpancingo	32	14	Acapulco	70	9	Navolato	118	87
10	Hermosillo	31	4	Rosarito	68	81	Durango	115	20

#	City	2010	Rate	City	2011	Rate	City	2012	Rate
1	Juárez	2738	206	Juárez	1460	110	Acapulco	1170	148
2	Chihuahua	670	82	Acapulco	1008	128	Juárez	656	49
3	Culiacán	587	68	Monterrey	700	62	Monterrey	551	49
4	Tijuana	472	30	Culiacán	649	76	Culiacán	549	64
5	Acapulco	370	47	Chihuahua	554	68	Torreón	462	72
6	Mazatlán	320	73	Torreón	455	71	Chihuahua	367	45
7	Torreón	316	49	Tijuana	418	27	Nuevo Laredo	288	75
8	Gómez Palacio	277	84	Ecatepec	325	20	Tijuana	332	21
9	Tepic	230	61	Mazatlán	307	70	Cuernavaca	270	74
10	Nogales	196	89	Guadalupe	254	38	León	179	12

Source: SNSP.

Instead, that title went to the resort city of Acapulco in 2012. Over the last six years, Acapulco saw a dramatic increase in the number of overall homicides occurring there. In 2008, with 70 homicides, Acapulco was ranked ninth nationwide. The number of homicides in Acapulco grew to 150 in 2009, 370 in 2010, 1,008 in 2011, and 1,170 in 2012, gradually increasing the city's ranking for overall homicides. That said, the number and rate of homicides in Acapulco is significantly lower than that experienced in Ciudad Juárez in recent years, and appeared to plateau over the last year. Indeed, Acapulco's 2012 homicide rate of 148 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants was well below the 208 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants registered in Ciudad Juárez in 2010, the worst year for that city. Authorities attributed the decreasing cartel violence in Acapulco over the last year to Operation "Guerrero Seguro," launched late in 2011.

Meanwhile, three other major cities experienced similarly large and rapid increases in overall homicides in recent years: Monterrey, Torreón, and Nuevo Laredo. An industrial and financial hub in the northern border state of Nuevo León, Monterrey had 22 homicides in 2009, but this number grew to 179 in 2010 and 700 in 2011, before falling to 551 in 2012. Torreón, the largest city in the neighboring state of Coahuila, experienced 316 homicides in 2010, 455 in 2011, and 462 in 2012. Meanwhile, the border city of Nuevo Laredo saw a sharp increase to 288 homicides in 2012, up from the 123 homicides that occurred there the year before.

4. Analysis of Geographic Trends

The changing geography of violence documented both through overall homicide data and DTO- and OCG-style homicides has much to do with the fact that the main perpetrators and conflicts have shifted over time. The dramatic surge in violence from 2008 through 2010 played out among specific organizations operating in particular geographic regions. In northwestern Mexico, the Tijuana-based organized crime group headed by Arellano Felix family faced newfound competition from a splinter group headed by Teodoro García Simental, allegedly affiliated with the Sinaloa Cartel. In the north-central corridor through Ciudad Juárez, in the Mexican border state of Chihuahua, the organized crime group headed by the Carrillo Fuentes family also faced competition from the Sinaloa Cartel. Third, in northeastern Mexico, a falling out between the Gulf Cartel and its former enforcers, the Zetas, led to a surge in violence in the Gulf Coast region. Finally, in Central Mexico, clashes involving other splinter groups—notably the Beltrán Leyva organization (BLO), La

Familia Michoacana (LFM), and the Knights Templar organization (KTO)— produced heightened levels of violence due to both internal and external conflicts.

In 2011 and 2012, there was a significant geographic shift in violence. In northwestern and north-central Mexico, rates of homicide and organized crime-related violence subsided dramatically. While important law enforcement and security efforts no doubt explain some part of this decline, the ability of the Sinaloa Cartel to consolidate its power in the northern states of Baja California, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Chihuahua appears to be the major factor. For example, according to *Reforma*, the state of Chihuahua averaged just over 65 *ejecuciones* per week during the second half of 2010, primarily attributed to a turf war between the Sinaloa and Juárez cartels. In 2011, the weekly average for Chihuahua slowed to around 40 in the first half of the year, and 35 in the second half, a decline that some attributed to successful municipal-police reform in Ciudad Juárez—the epicenter of the violence in the state—while others argued that the Sinaloa cartel and its local gangs of enforcers and drug dealers had effectively won the contest over the Juárez cartel.

Meanwhile, violence surged dramatically in northeastern and central Mexico, particularly as the Zetas began to expand their operational territory, but also as they suffered infighting and arrests in 2012, bringing high levels of violence to states such as Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Veracruz. In mid-2012, Zeta operative Miguel Angel Treviño Morales, also known as “Z-40,” reportedly sought to wrest control from the organization’s founder, Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano, known as “*El Lazca*.” This produced a conflict among supporters of Treviño and Lazcano. Treviño emerged as the undisputed head of the organization after the Mexican Navy (SEMAR) shot and killed Lazcano during a random chase and shootout in the municipality of Progreso, in the northern state of Coahuila on Sunday, October 7. Other allies of Lazcano were arrested in separate incidents, including Iván (“*El Talibán*”) Velázquez Caballero in September and Salvador Alfonso (“*La Ardilla*”) Martínez, a top regional leader, in October.

In short, overall patterns of violence appear to be directly related to shifting dynamics within and among major organized-crime groups, and particularly drug-trafficking organizations. The splintering and reconfiguration of such groups over the last several years has resulted in violent conflicts over control of territory, leadership succession, and other aspects of the illicit drug trade. What remains to be seen is whether the level and intensity of violence that accompanied these conflicts in Chihuahua will be sufficient to sustain renewed increases in homicides over the coming year. Current evidence suggests that violence will continue to be pervasive, but far more geographically dispersed and at significantly lower levels.

D. Victim Characteristics

While the sheer number of organized-crime-style homicides has leveled off or declined during 2012, the nature of violence has also changed significant ways over the last year. According to *Reforma*’s data, the rate at which victims showed signs of torture rose dramatically in 2012, up to 13.8% of all *ejecuciones*, as compared with 8.7% in 2011, and roughly 8% in the years 2008 through 2010. The percentage of bodies left with a “narco-message” directed to government officials or rival cartels rose to 8.5%, from roughly 7% in the years 2009-2011 and just 4.6% in 2008. The decapitation of victims rose slightly to 4.8% of all cases in 2011, up from 2.8% in 2008-2009 and 3.4% in 2010. In 2012, the percentage of victims decapitated rose again to 5.7%. These numbers suggest that, while the overall number of *ejecuciones* declined in 2012 from the previous two years, criminal organizations

stepped up the brutality of their killings, likely in an attempt to intimidate rival cartels and public-security forces.

1. General Population

Using an original dataset compiling more than 3,052 individual cases of organized-crime-style homicides that occurred from 2006 through 2012, the authors analyzed a variety of victim characteristics and circumstances surrounding these homicides. That dataset, titled the Violence and Victims Monitor, provides a useful sample of the kind of violence perpetrated by organized-crime groups. Of the available information, the authors found that the vast majority of victims were men, with just 9% of the victims identified as female. More surprising, the average age of the victims was 32 years, contradicting widespread assumptions that organized crime violence is perpetrated by uneducated, unemployed, and disaffected youths.

Also, of the 3,052 homicide cases identified in our sample, there were over 500 victims whose corpses were accompanied by some kind of message. Since many of these were mass killings, the total number of unique messages was 161. While the content of some messages was not identified by the report, many of these unique messages mentioned a particular organized crime group: 20 overt references to the Zetas or its members, 20 overt references to the La Familia Organization or its members, eight overt references to the Sinaloa Cartel or its members, and just three overt references to the Gulf Cartel organization or its members.

2. Mayors

The Violence and Victims Monitor dataset included 45 mayors and former mayors killed from 2006 through 2012, with characteristics bearing signs of organized crime. Beginning with the murder of Walter Herrera Ramírez, mayor of Huimanguillo, Tabasco, and member of the Democratic Revolution Party (Partido de la Revolución Democrática, PRD), in November 2006, there were killings of mayors throughout the Calderón administration. Assassination totals reached their peaks in both 2010 and 2011, with 14 and 10 deaths, respectively. In 2012, eight mayors and ex-mayors were killed, with the last such killing in the Calderón administration being the late-November murder of María Santos Gorrostieta, the former mayor of Tiquicheo, Michoacán. Pablo Pintor Hernández, former mayor of Ciudad del Maíz, in the state of San Luis Potosí on December 16, became the first of such killings on the administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto.

The Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) has suffered the most losses of elected officials with around 18, followed by the National Action Party (Partido Acción Nacional, PAN), and the PRD. According to *Proceso*, the most dangerous states for heads of municipalities are Michoacán, Oaxaca, Nuevo León, Guerrero and Durango, the latter of which has seen the highest number of assassinations in the past six years.

3. Journalists

Amid the recent violence, dozens of reporters and media workers have been killed or disappeared, making Mexico one of the world's most dangerous places for journalists. The various organizations

tallying homicides involving journalists in Mexico use different criteria for tallying and classifying this violence, since motives are often difficult to confirm. For example, one of the most respected sources, the Committee to Protect Journalists, only includes cases where violence was confirmed in relation to the journalist's profession. From 1992 through 2012, CPJ reported that there were 28 confirmed cases, 38 unconfirmed cases, and four media-support workers killed in Mexico. For 2012, the CPJ lists one confirmed case and five where the motive was unconfirmed.

Using somewhat broader criteria, the Justice in Mexico organized-crime-style homicide victims dataset identified 74 journalists and media-support workers who were killed between 2006 and 2012. This tally included journalists and media-support workers employed with a recognized news organization at the time of their deaths, as well as independent, free-lance, and former journalists and media-support workers (See Figure 11).

Figure 11: Justice in Mexico Tally of Journalists and Media-Support Workers Killed in Mexico, 2006-2012

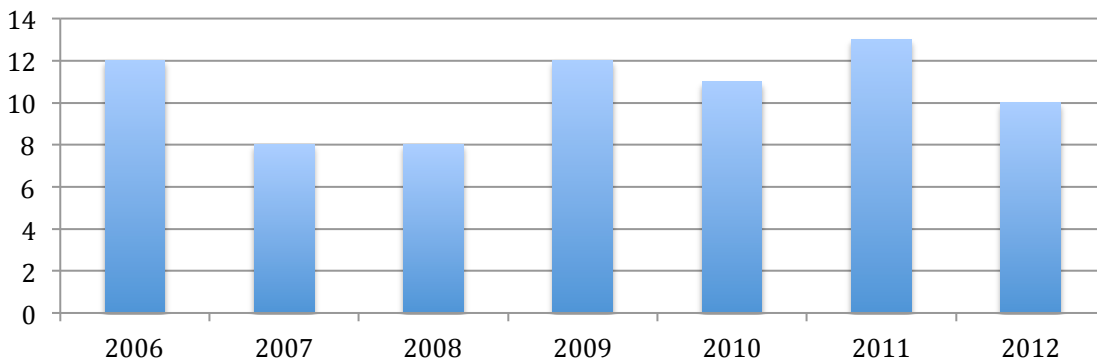
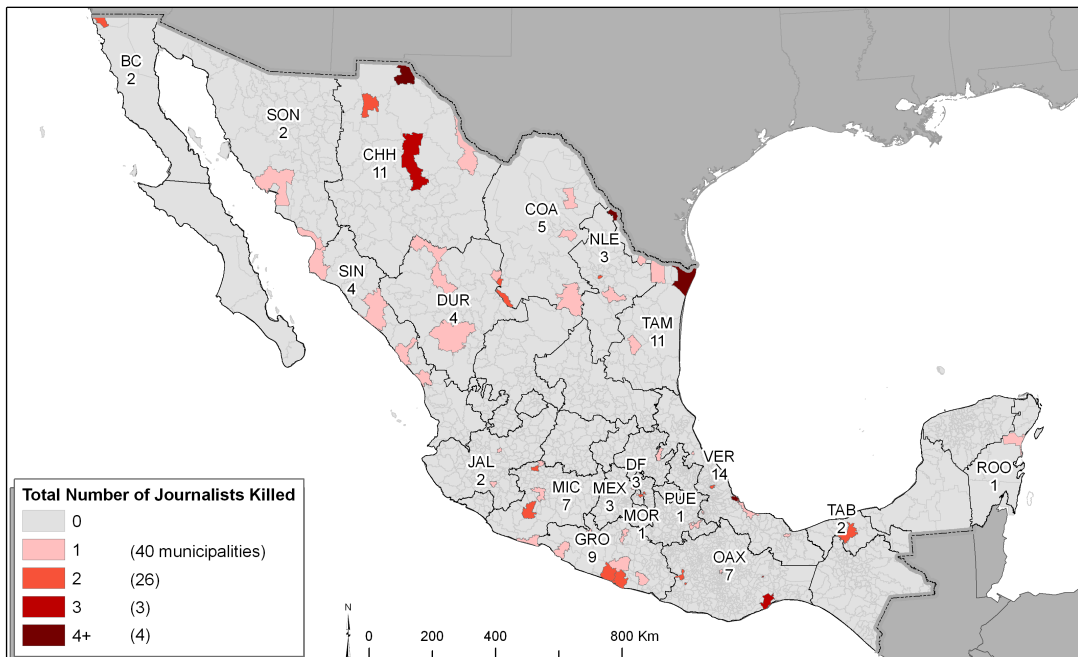


Figure 12: Journalists and Media-Support Workers Killed in Mexico, 2000-2012

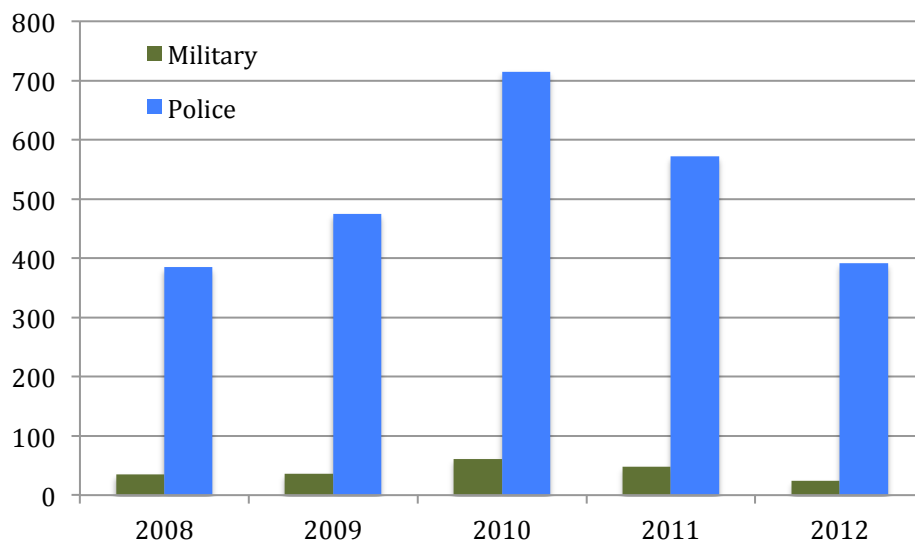


According to the Justice in Mexico tally, on average, at least 10 members of the media were killed throughout the last seven years, with a total of 10 killed in 2012, including: José Aguilar López (Michoacán) Víctor Manuel Báez (Veracruz), Arturo Barajas López (Michoacán), Gabriel Hugué Córdova (Veracruz), Guillermo Luna Varela (Veracruz), Regina Martínez Pérez (Veracruz), Rene Orta Salgado (Morelos), Esteban Rodríguez (Veracruz), Marco Antonio Ávila García (Sonora), and Adrián Silva Moreno (Puebla). Nine of the ten victims in 2012 were men, at least six reportedly showed signs of torture, and at least five were reported to have been dismembered. Four of the journalists were killed in the state of Veracruz, while two were killed in Michoacán, and one each was killed in Morelos, Puebla, and Sonora.

4. Police and Military Personnel

Over the last several years, hundreds of police officers and dozens of military personnel have been killed in the line of duty. However, the latest available information suggests that Mexico’s recent violence resulted in significantly fewer police and military casualties. According to *Reforma* newspaper, between January and November 2012, 392 police officers and 24 military personnel were victims of organized-crime-style killings.²⁴ In 2011, the same figures stood at 572 police officers and 48 military personnel, while the previous year stood at 715 police officers and 61 military personnel. *Reforma*’s data on police and military victims are unavailable prior to 2008. (See Figure 13).

Figure 13: Mexican Law Enforcement and Military Personnel Victims of Organized-Crime-Style Killings, January 2008 through November 2012



All told, *Reforma* reported that 2,539 police officers and 204 military personnel were victims of organized-crime-style violence. The ratio was fairly consistent with police being killed as much as 12 times than military personnel between 2008 and 2011. In 2012 the ratio grew to 16-to-1, despite

²⁴ Projecting at a constant rate through the end of 2012, there were perhaps 425-430 police and 25-27 military victims of organized-crime-style homicides throughout the entire year.

declining numbers, perhaps suggesting that military personnel have become even less likely to be targeted, relative to police.

Using the Justice in Mexico dataset comprising 3,056 cases of OCG-style individual homicides, the authors were able to identify the specific incidents involving 418 federal, state, and local law enforcement personnel and 52 military personnel. This dataset provides only a sample of cases and details were not available in every case. Of the law enforcement personnel, 293 were local police (70%), 71 were members of the Federal Police (17%), 16 were members of the AFI (4%), and the remainder comprised agents from various federal and state law enforcement agencies. The dataset included law enforcement casualties in all 31 states and the Federal District, with the largest number of victims identified in the dataset in Chihuahua (58), Sinaloa (53), Michoacán (40), Nuevo León (32), and Guerrero (31). Torture was identified in 29 cases, decapitation in 15, and dismemberment in 10 cases.

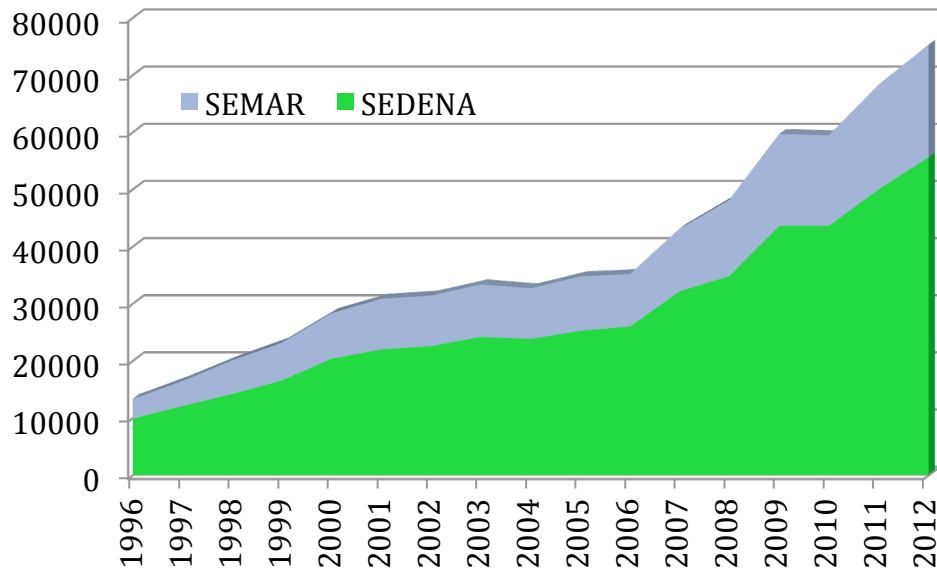
Of the 52 military personnel in the dataset, two were killed in Baja California, nine in Chihuahua, four in Coahuila, one in the Federal District, 11 in Guerrero, six in Michoacán, one in Morelos, one in Nayarit, four in Nuevo León, three in Quintana Roo, seven in Sinaloa, one in Sonora, one in Tamaulipas, and one in Veracruz. Military casualties tended to be killed in direct confrontation with organized-crime groups, though the use of torture was identified in 14 cases and dismemberment in four cases.

According to both *Reforma's* figures and the authors' dataset, it appears that 2010 was the peak of violence targeting these government personnel, as was also the case for mayors. This seems to be consistent with the above-noted findings on the slowdown in organized-crime-style violence documented by certain sources. In part, the declining number of police and military casualties may also reflect the withdrawal of federal forces from the provision of domestic security in key areas over the last two years, such as the state of Chihuahua. However, the primary casualties among government personnel in Mexico are local police officers.

III. ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENTS IN 2012

The year 2012 marked the end of the six-year term of President Felipe Calderón, who was both lauded for his administration's unprecedented assault on organized-crime groups and criticized for the loss of human life that accompanied this fight. From the beginning of his presidency, President Calderón made security a primary focus of his administration by doubling national-security budgets and deploying tens of thousands of federal forces to the states most impacted by violence between drug-trafficking organizations. While the military has played a prominent role in counter-drug efforts for decades, the growing budgets for the Mexican Army (SEDENA) and Navy (SEMAR) in recent years illustrate the dramatic increase in the role for the military during Calderón's term. In 2012, these budgets reached an all-time high.

Figure 14: Mexican Army and Navy Budgets, 1996-2012

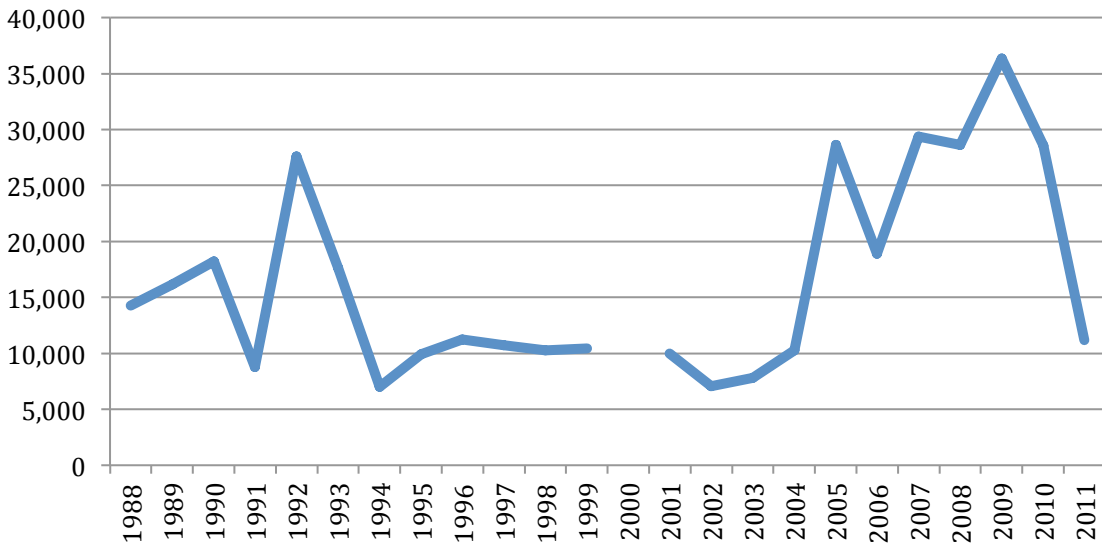


Calderón’s emphasis on security reflected the fact that he took office in a time of trouble and uncertainty for Mexico, following his narrow victory in the highly controversial July 2006 election that severely divided the nation. Over the course of his term, Calderón made extraordinary efforts to arrest major drug traffickers, though the above-noted increases in violence, the proliferation of organized-crime groups, and continued drug production and trafficking tainted these successes. Ultimately, dissatisfaction with the Calderón administration led Mexican voters to vote his party out of office in 2012, bringing a new president and a new agenda for security efforts in Mexico looking forward. These trends are discussed in more detail below.

A. Major Arrests and Seizures

The Fox administration made a major push to arrest drug traffickers early in his administration. In 2002, the Fox administration arrested cartel boss Benjamín Arellano Félix shortly after his brother, Ramón, was killed by police in Sinaloa. Later, in 2003, federal forces arrested Gulf cartel boss Osiel Cárdenas and top lieutenant Adán Medrano Rodríguez. These high-level arrests were followed by a significant increase in overall arrests during Fox’s term, peaking at 28,651 arrests in 2005. These efforts also significantly altered the balance of power among the cartels, contributing to intense conflict, growing levels of violence, and a splintering of organized-crime groups. During Calderón’s term, total drug arrests soared further to a peak of 36,332 in 2009, more than triple the rate of arrests at the outset of the Fox administration. Toward the end of his term, however, drug-related arrests declined dramatically, falling to just 11,197 in 2011. (See Figure 15) Nonetheless, in 2012, the Calderón administration made several notable arrests against drug-trafficking and organized-crime groups.

Figure 15: Arrests for Drug-Related Offenses, 1988 through 2011



Jalisco New Generation Cartel Arrests: In March 2012, SEDENA captured Erick (“El 85”) Valencia Salazar and Otoniel (“Tony Montana”) Mendoza, the alleged leader and second-in-charge of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación, CJNG), respectively. SEDENA confirmed that they conducted a precise operation in Zapopan—the wealthiest municipality of the Metropolitan Zone of Guadalajara—in the state of Jalisco, where the two leaders of CJNG were captured. According to the information provided by SEDENA, upon the Army’s arrival at the scene, a group of gunmen opened fire and launched grenades. After entering the dwelling, the military arrested the alleged leaders of the CJNG and seized more than 30 firearms, fragmentation grenades, and ammunition. After the operation, a series of shootings and blockades occurred in the streets and highways of Guadalajara and surrounding areas. The roads were blocked with buses, some of which were burned. The governor of Jalisco, Emilio González Márquez, reported later in the day that 25 vehicles were burned at 16 different points of the state, 11 within the metropolitan area of Guadalajara. Authorities detained 16 people apparently involved in the incidents, two of them minors.

Sinaloa Cartel Arrests: In August, Mexico’s powerful Sinaloa Cartel suffered the arrest of four of its members—Jesús Gutiérrez Guzmán, Rafael Humberto Celaya Valenzuela, Samuel Zazueta Valenzuela, and Jesús Gonzalo Palazuelos Soto—in Spain in connection to an intercepted cocaine shipment that authorities seized in late July. The boat carried 373 kilograms of cocaine, and was stopped at the Spanish Port of Algeciras after having departed from Brazil. Just two weeks later, police arrested the four individuals near a hotel in Madrid, Spain. One of the suspects, Gutiérrez Guzmán, was reported to be the cousin of Sinaloa Cartel leader Joaquín (“El Chapo”) Guzmán Loera, whom the U.S. Treasury Department named as the world’s most-powerful drug dealer in January 2012.

Gulf Cartel Arrests: In September, the Mexican Navy (Secretaría de Marina Armada de México, SEMAR) captured both Mario (“M-1”) Cárdenas Guillén, alleged leader of the Gulf Cartel, through a special operation in Altamira, Tamaulipas. Cárdenas was found in possession of weapons, ammunition and drugs, all of which were sized by Navy personnel and handed over, along with

Cárdenas, to prosecutors at the Attorney General's Office (PGR) in Mexico City. The alleged drug trafficker, also known as "*El Gordo*," is part of the "historic leadership" of the CDG: his brother Osiel led the organization until his capture by the Mexican military in 2003 and subsequent extradition to the United States in 2007, where he now remains serving a 25-year prison sentence. Antonio Ezequiel ("Tony Tormenta"), the brother of Mario and Osiel, took over after the latter's capture, and led the organization until he was shot and killed by Mexican soldiers in 2010. In the meantime, Mario had been in prison for previous charges of drug trafficking from 1995 to 2007, being held at a prison in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, and then transferred to the Puente Grande Federal Prison 2 in Jalisco, where it was believed he helped his brothers on the outside run the CDG. Mario teamed up with his brother Tony Tormenta after his release in 2007.

The CDG was originally founded by Juan Nepomuceno Guerra in the 1970s, and later led by Juan García Ábrego, who was arrested in 1996 and extradited to the United States, at which point Osiel took control of cartel. Nearly 15 years later, following Tony Tormenta's death in 2010, the organization divided into two factions—one led by Jorge Eduardo ("El Coss") Costilla Sánchez, 41, and the other by Mario, whose group was known as "Los Rojos" and was in charge of executing rival cartel members and recovering the CDG's lost territory. Days after Mario's arrest, Costilla was also detained by a 30-person SEMAR team who found him hiding in a house in the neighborhood of Lomas de Rosales, in Tampico, Tamaulipas. Two days later, Colombian National Police captured Andrés Vieda Duque, considered the primary South American link for the CDG. These developments appeared to deal a fatal blow to the CDG, which was already struggling in recent years. Following an internal dispute in 2010, the CDG became locked in a conflict with the Zetas in northeastern Mexico for territorial control and trafficking routes, which significantly diminished the power of the CDG.

Zetas Arrests: In July, Mexican authorities arrested Zetas lieutenant, Mauricio ("El Amarillo") Guizar Cárdenas who was the group's regional leader in southeast Mexico. Members of the Mexican Navy (Secretaría de Marina, SEMAR) arrested Guizar in Puebla as part of a takedown that also led to the seizure of a rocket launcher, 20 grenades, a machine gun, a pistol, and crystal meth. El Amarillo allegedly worked directly for Zetas' leader Oscar Omar ("Z-42") Treviño Morales, who leads the organized crime group alongside brother Miguel Ángel ("Z-40") Treviño Morales. U.S. officials arrested Oscar and Miguel's other brother, José, in June as they brought down an extensive money-laundering scheme that involved the Zetas funneling organized crime proceeds through a horse racing operation in Oklahoma.

In September, SEMAR captured Iván Velázquez Cabellero (42), also known as "Z-50" and "El Talibán," who was considered to be the third-in-command of the Zetas Cartel. Mexican authorities offered a 30-million-peso reward (\$2.34 million USD) for any information regarding the capture of Velázquez, as he was one of the most-wanted criminals in Mexico. SEMAR arrested Velázquez along with two of his partners in a residence in the state capital, San Luis Potosí. Reports indicate that during the apprehension, the criminals used high-powered weapons of U.S. origin; no injuries were reported. SEMAR presented Velázquez to the media along with the confiscated weapons and drugs. According to SEMAR spokesperson José Luis Vergara, Velázquez directed the Zetas' operation in the states of Aguascalientes, Coahuila, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas.

The Zetas experienced friction recently as cartel leadership shifted. Miguel Angel Treviño Morales, also known as "Z-40," reportedly usurped control from founder and former leader Heriberto

Lazcano. Velázquez Cabellero allegedly disapproved of Treviño's power grab and openly challenged his leadership claim, a power struggle that publicly manifested itself when 14 bodies were discovered in a vehicle in San Luis Potosí in August 2012. A survivor of the brutal attack claimed that he and the 14 men were followers of Velázquez Cabellero, and that Treviño was responsible for the murders.

Through videos on the Internet and *narcomantas* (narco-banners) displayed in northeastern Mexican cities, Velázquez Cabellero publicly accused Treviño of betraying his lieutenants and delivering them to the authorities. SEMAR spokesman Vergara said he believed that Velázquez Cabellero, after the disagreement with Treviño, was seeking an alliance with the Gulf Cartel (Cartel del Golfo, CDG). The CDG recently experienced blows to its leadership, as bosses Jorge Eduardo ("El Coss") Costilla Sánchez and Mario ("M-1") Cárdenas Guillén were apprehended this month. According to the U-T San Diego newspaper, much of the recent violence in the region can be attributed to the Zetas infighting, as well as the ongoing rivalry between the Zetas and the CDG.

In October, SEMAR agents shot and killed Lazcano during a shootout in the municipality of Progreso in the northern state of Coahuila. Navy personnel were reportedly driving near a baseball stadium where they noticed suspicious-looking men inside a vehicle. When the Navy agents tried to stop them, the suspects attempted to escape and opened fire against the SEMAR vehicle using both guns and grenades; one Navy participant was reportedly injured. The Navy team managed to stop the vehicle and killed Mario Alberto Rodríguez, the driver, as two other men attempted to flee on foot while still shooting at the officers. One of them escaped, while the other, who was later identified as El Lazca, was killed. This killing followed the successful capture of Salvador Alfonso ("La Ardilla") Martínez, noted above, on October 8, by the Mexican Navy. Martínez is accused of killing hundreds, including Colorado native David Michael Hartley while he was jet skiing in Falcon Lake, and the officer investigating Harley's death.

Corruption Arrests: In May, three Mexican Army generals were arrested by the PGR and were accused of having ties to the Beltrán Leyva cartel. General Tomás Ángeles Dauahare, a former assistant secretary of the Army (Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, SEDENA), was accused of accepting bribes from Édgar Valdez Villarreal ("La Barbie") in exchange for providing protection for the Beltrán Leyva cartel. Brigadier General Roberto Dawe González was also arrested in connection with the same alleged crimes. Two days later, the Mexican Army arrested retired General Ricardo Escorcia Vargas, who was named as assistant administrative and logistical director of the Army General Staff (Subjefe Administrativo y Logístico del Estado Mayor de la Defensa) in December 2007. While these were the first criminal charges brought against him, he was removed from his post as head of the 24th Military Zone (*24 Zona Militar*) on December 31, 2007, three days after a plane carrying a shipment of cocaine belonging to the Beltrán Leyva cartel landed unimpeded at the Morelos airport, despite security forces having been alerted by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). These arrests highlighted the increased use of protected witnesses in testifying against drug-trafficking organizations and the public servants working with them. However, the January 2013 announcement by the PGR that its evidence is not strong enough to hold up in court drew renewed criticisms that Mexican prosecutors have not been effective in the fight against organized crime.

B. The Proliferation of Organized-Crime Groups

The Mexican government's efforts to dismantle the leadership of certain criminal organizations has contributed to a splintering of drug-trafficking networks, greater overall violence, and a more diffuse distribution of violence to different areas throughout the country. There are several emblematic cases, though the earliest major arrests targeted organizations operating along the northern border. Following the arrest Benjamín Arellano Felix, head of the Tijuana-based Arellano Felix Organization (AFO), this organization suffered internal divisions and an eventual split by Teodoro García Simental, who branched off to start his own outfit, allegedly with the support of the Sinaloa Cartel. The resulting violence peaked in 2008 and culminated in García Simental's arrest in 2010. Meanwhile, along Mexico's northeastern border, the arrest of Gulf Cartel leader Osiel Cárdenas in 2003 led to an eventual rift between the CDG and their former enforcers, the Zetas, bringing dramatic episodes of violence to formerly tranquil cities such as Monterrey and Torreón.

In central Mexico, the killing of Arturo "*El Barbas*" Beltrán Leyva, in December 2009 provoked a split within the Beltrán Leyva Organization (BLO) and led to the creation of two rival factions. One faction was headed by Arturo's sibling, Héctor "*El H*" Beltrán Leyva, and the other was headed by U.S. citizen Edgar "*La Barbie*" Valdés Villareal. In March 2010, Sergio "*El Grande*" Villareal Barragán, a lieutenant for "*El H*," broke with Valdés and created the South Pacific Cartel (Cartel del Pacífico Sur, CPS). Then in August 2010, *La Barbie* was detained and his group further split and created two new rival organizations, the first being the Independent Cartel of Acapulco (Cartel Independiente de Acapulco, CIDA) in November 2010 led by Carlos Antonio "*El Melón*" Barragán Hernández, and Moises "*El Coreano*" Montero Álvarez, who was arrested in August 2011. The second organization created was *La Barredora*, led by Heder Jair "*El Cremas*" Sosa Carvajal, and Christian Arturo "*El Chris*" Hernández Tarín, who was arrested in October 2011.

While the CPS seems to have been eliminated—with its principal leaders arrested, "*El Grande*" in September 2010 and Julio Jesús "*El Negro Radilla*" Radilla Hernández in May 2011—and the CIDA weakened, with "*El Coreano*" arrested, *La Barredora* was considered to be on the rise despite the arrest of Hernández Tarín. However, on the morning of February 10, 2012, Jonathan Martínez Santos, thought to be the second-in-command and operative leader of *La Barredora*, was detained in Acapulco, which was considered to be a big blow to the organization. The CPS and *La Barredora* are currently fighting for control of Acapulco, which, along with the whole state of Guerrero in general, experienced a dramatic spike in drug-related violence over the past two years. The state saw more than 1,500 homicides last year, 50% more than it did in 2010.

The Sinaloa Cartel, arguably the most powerful criminal organization in Mexico, has also experienced some schisms. With the capture of important lieutenants—Oscar Orlando Nava Valencia, "*El Lobo*," in October 2009 and Juan Carlos Nava Valencia, "*El Tigre*," in May 2010—the group commanded by Ignacio "*Nacho*" Coronel started to have internal divisions. From the Sinaloa Cartel, the group known as The Resistance ("*La Resistencia*") emerged from Nacho Coronel's faction in June 2010, led by Ramiro "*Molca*" Pozos González, operating in the states of Jalisco and Michoacán. In July 2010, Nacho Coronel was killed by the Army, leading to the emergence of a new group in August 2010 called the Jalisco Cartel "New Generation" (*Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación*, CJNG). The Resistance has been weakened because of its dispute with CJNG and also by the arrest of one of its leaders in February of 2011, Victor Manuel "*Papirín*" Torres García. CJNG, on the other hand, appears to be growing in influence in Jalisco and has moved to Veracruz through an

offshoot that calls itself “*Mata Zetas*” (Zeta Killers) and maintains an open fight against the Zetas. The CJNG also has disputes with The Resistance and *La Familia Michoacana*. Like Guerrero, Veracruz experienced an increase in drug-related violence by the middle of 2011, making the total number of killings nearly 350, whereas in 2010 it was closer to 50.

With the killing of the founder and leader of *La Familia Michoacana*, Nazario “*El Chayo*” Moreno González, in December of 2010, the organization split into two groups, one commanded by José de Jesús Méndez Vargas, also known as “*El Chango Méndez*,” that kept the name and principles of LFM, and the other led by Servando Gómez Martínez, “*La Tuta*,” that call themselves the Knights Templar (*Los Caballeros Templarios*), which went public later in March 2011. With the capture of Méndez Vargas in June 2011, LFM was all but dismantled, while the Knights Templar continues to compete for influence in Michoacán in disputes with LFM and the Zetas. Gómez Martínez now shares command of the Knights Templar with Enrique Plancarte Solís, also known as “*Quique Plancarte*.” Michoacán also experienced an increase in violence last year, although not as dramatic as in Veracruz or Guerrero.

The Calderón administration viewed these arrests as critical to its “kingpin” strategy, which sought to destroying the upper leadership of major organized-crime groups and break their organizations into “smaller, more manageable” pieces for law enforcement to tackle. However, this “kingpin” strategy of appears to have instigated or exacerbated violent conflicts among these organizations. The arrest of top organized crime bosses disrupts their operations temporarily, but eventually new leaders emerge and networks are reconfigured, often through violent conflicts within the organized crime group or as a result of competition from rival organizations eager to expand their operations. The result has been the internal fracturing of certain organizations—which has generated smaller, more volatile organized-crime groups in some areas—and the consolidation and strengthening of others, notably the Sinaloa Cartel.

C. Changing of the Guard: President Enrique Peña Nieto Takes Office

In July 2012, Mexico elected a new president, Enrique Peña Nieto, who took office December 1. Mr. Peña Nieto hails from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which governed Mexico without interruption for over seven decades until it lost the presidency in 2000. The PRI’s fall from grace owed largely to public frustration with poor governance and political corruption, including the now well-documented collusion of high-level PRI government officials with major drug traffickers. Yet, 12 years later, voters restored the PRI to power in large part because of dissatisfaction with the grave security problems that developed from 2000 to 2012 under presidents Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón, both from the National Action Party, the PRI’s longtime political opposition.

Prior to taking office, Mr. Peña Nieto announced in November 2012 an initiative to dismantle the Public Security Ministry (Secretaría de Seguridad Pública, SSP)—created by Fox shortly after he took office in December 2000—placing all relevant agencies under the Interior Ministry (Secretaría de Gobernación, SEGOB). On November 22, 2012, the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Mexico’s Congress, approved the Peña Nieto-backed measure with broad support. The initiative was later approved by the Mexican Senate on January 3, 2013, reforming the Public Federal Administration Law, dissolving SSP, and officially transferring its powers to SEGOB. These changes constitute a major departure from the two previous administrations with regard to police reform.

For better security coordination among government agencies, Mr. Peña Nieto has instructed SEGOB to oversee the creation of a new network, the System of Coordination and Cooperation (*Sistema de Coordinación y Cooperación*), which will divide the nation into five regions—Northwest, Northeast, West, Central, and Southeast. Within each zone, officials from SEGOB, the National Secretary of Defense (*Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, SEDENA*), the Secretary of the Navy (*Secretaría de Marina, Semar*), and the PGR will share responsibilities in an effort to better handle security situations that arise in each designated region.

In January 2012, Mr. Peña Nieto gave a clear message regarding the direction that his presidency will follow on security policy when he unveiled the “Pact for Mexico” (*Pacto por México*), an agreement signed along with representatives from Mexico’s major political parties. The Pact—a 34-page itemized list of policies and reforms—set forth proposals in several areas related to security and justice issues, particularly focusing on reducing homicides, kidnapping and extortion. The Pact outlined steps to establish a 10,000-person National Gendarmerie and a unified police command system at the state level.

From the outset of his term, Mr. Peña Nieto declared that his security strategy will abandon the Calderón administration’s heavy dependence on military deployments and its focus on dismantling organized-crime groups. Instead, Mr. Peña Nieto pledged to place greater emphasis on crime prevention and violence reduction, making it clear that he no longer wishes to prioritize bringing down drug cartel leaders as his predecessor did. The Peña Nieto administration has also attempted to shift attention away from Mexico’s security situation in order to focus on economic issues.

All of these things may indeed bring reductions in the levels of violence, helping to allay fears about violence among investors, tourists, and members of the public. This would be a welcome development, of course. For the present, however, this report shows that violence remains a serious issue in several places in Mexico, and there is a need for sustained monitoring and reporting on the problem.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

While levels of violence are relatively lower in Mexico than elsewhere in Latin American countries, elevated homicide rates have been a serious problem in recent years. Mexico’s homicide rate is slightly below the region’s average, but has increased dramatically in recent years, reversing a long-term decline. It will likely take at least a few more years for violence to return to those lower levels. Continued monitoring of trends in homicide will be important for this reason.

Still, based on available data, it does appear that violence leveled off or declined significantly in 2012. There has also been a shift in the geographic distribution and dispersion of violence, with homicides now most concentrated in the central and eastern border region, as well as in central Pacific coast states. Fortunately, the dispersion of violence appears to have diminished significantly from 2011 to 2012, and the worst violence has remained relatively concentrated in a few specific locations.

As this report also shows, a large part of the recent increase in violence in Mexico is attributable to drug-trafficking and organized-crime groups. According to the independently compiled tallies cited in this report, as many as 45% to 60% of all intentional homicides in 2012 bore characteristics

typical of organized-crime groups. However, there is a considerable variance across different sources monitoring these kinds of homicides, and the Mexican government could help to better inform the public by providing greater transparency and consistency in reporting on the particular kind of violence that is at the center of the country's current security crisis.

Until recently, Mexican government agencies and independent monitoring organizations reporting on homicide trends have made a tremendous effort to provide timely information to the public. Unfortunately, the Mexican government has recently chosen to limit access to information on the problem of violence precisely when it is most needed monitor and evaluate progress.

In 2012, Mexican authorities arrested or killed several major organized crime bosses. In previous years, such efforts have contributed to a splintering of drug-trafficking networks and greater overall violence. Thus, it remains to be seen whether the final push by the Calderón administration to weed out organized crime has succeeded, or whether the Peña Nieto administration will face continued tremors of violence and a reconfiguring of organized crime networks in the coming year.

Mr. Peña Nieto's declaratory strategy of reducing the country's dependence on the military, restructuring the civilian security apparatus, and focusing on citizen security echoes the recommendations of many security experts over the last few years. However, because of the prior record of drug corruption among PRI officials, there is some skepticism about whether Mr. Peña Nieto's strategy is sincere and, if so, whether he can actually improve the integrity of Mexican law-enforcement and security institutions.

About the Authors:

Cory Molzahn is an instructor of Spanish in the International Spanish Academy in the Bellevue School District in Bellevue, Washington. For the past five years, he has been a research associate with the Trans-Border Institute's Justice in Mexico Project at the University of San Diego. In this capacity, he compiles and authors the project's monthly news report, which monitors developments in law and order, government accountability and transparency, and access to justice in Mexico for a listserv of over 700 academics, experts, and government officials. The Justice in Mexico Monitor is free to subscribers and available for download at: www.justiceinmexico.org. He is currently pursuing a master's degree at the Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies at the University of California, San Diego.

Octavio Rodríguez Ferreira is the Coordinator of the Security and Rule of Law Program at the University of San Diego's Trans-Border Institute (TBI). He received his law degree at the School of Law at the Universidad Panamericana in Aguascalientes and has studied Mexican law procedure and human rights at Universidad Panamericana and Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha in Spain, respectively. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Universidad Panamericana. He has worked as chief of the Public Law Academy and full-time professor at Universidad Panamericana and as a legal adviser for governmental offices in Mexico regarding human rights and agrarian law. He has written six studies on Mexican policing and judicial reform, and is co-editor of a book regarding the reform to the criminal-justice system in Mexico.

David A. Shirk is the director of the Trans-Border Institute and associate professor of political science at the University of San Diego. Dr. Shirk received his B.A. in International Studies at Lock Haven University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of California, San Diego. He was a Ralph Bunch Minority Scholar in 1992, a fellow at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies in 1998-99 and 2001-2003, and a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington, D.C. in 2009-10. His recent publications include: *Armed with Impunity: Curbing Military Human Rights Abuses in Mexico*, co-authored with Catherine Daly and Kimberly Heinle (San Diego, CA: Trans-Border Institute, 2012); *La Reforma Judicial en México*, ed. with Octavio Rodríguez (San Diego, CA: Trans-Border Institute, 2012); and *Contemporary Mexican Politics*, (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008 & 2011).

Acknowledgements:

This report would not be possible without the sponsorship of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation over the past year. Portions of this report stem from research presented in briefings for the Center of Excellence in Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice in Mexico City, the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Información (INEGI), the Lannan Foundation, the National Intelligence University, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). In the past year, the Trans-Border Institute also partnered with the Guggenheim Foundation to host a seminar for group of graduate students at advanced stages of their doctoral research to examine the latest data and analysis on drug violence in Mexico. The authors are deeply indebted to the colleagues and various sponsoring organizations that contributed valuable insights to this report through these exchanges. All maps were produced by TBI research associate Theresa Firestone. The authors are very grateful for the comments and recommendations provided by John Bailey, Roderic Camp, Chris Kyle, Topher McDougal, Eric Olson, Viridiana Ríos, Margaret Serrano, Melissa Wagoner, and Joel Wallman, as well as the research assistance and support provided by Peter Ferrari and Lorena Quezada. The authors are solely responsible for any errors, omissions, and opinions found in the report.



www.justiceinmexico.org