



MEXICO INSTITUTE

Plan Tamaulipas: A New Security Strategy for a Troubled State

**Christopher Wilson
Eugenio Weigend**

October 2014

Plan Tamaulipas: A New Security Strategy for a Troubled State

Recognizing that the situation in Tamaulipas had reached crisis levels, in May, 2014, Mexico's top security officials met with their state level counterparts in Tamaulipas to unveil a new security strategy. At the heart of the conflict between the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas, Tamaulipas suffers from high rates of violent crime, including the nation's highest for kidnapping, large-scale cases of migrant abuse, and extremely weak state and local level law enforcement institutions and governance. By sending significant additional resources to Tamaulipas, the federal government made a strong and much needed commitment to support efforts to restore public security in the state. This short report analyzes the new strategy, describes the challenging local context, and offers a few recommendations that could serve to strengthen the effort.

Plan Tamaulipas

On May 13 in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexican Secretary of the Interior Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong joined Tamaulipas Governor Egidio Torre Cantú to announce the launch of a new security strategy for the state. The plan builds on federal efforts in the state that were already underway, dividing the state into four regions and articulating three main goals: dismantling criminal groups operating in the state; closing the smuggling routes for drugs, money, guns and people; and strengthening local public security institutions, making them “sufficient, efficient, and reliable.”

Table 1: Principal Objectives of Plan Tamaulipas

1	Dismantle organized crime groups
2	Closing the routes of money, persons, drugs and arms
3	Guaranteeing effective, sufficient and reliable local security institutions

Plan Tamaulipas concentrates efforts in four areas of the state where much of the violence has taken place.¹ As shown in Map 1, these are: the border (frontera), the coast (costa), center (centro) and southern (sur) Tamaulipas. Notably absent from the strategy is a focus on cities like Nuevo Laredo, further up the U.S.-Mexico border, which have also experienced high levels of

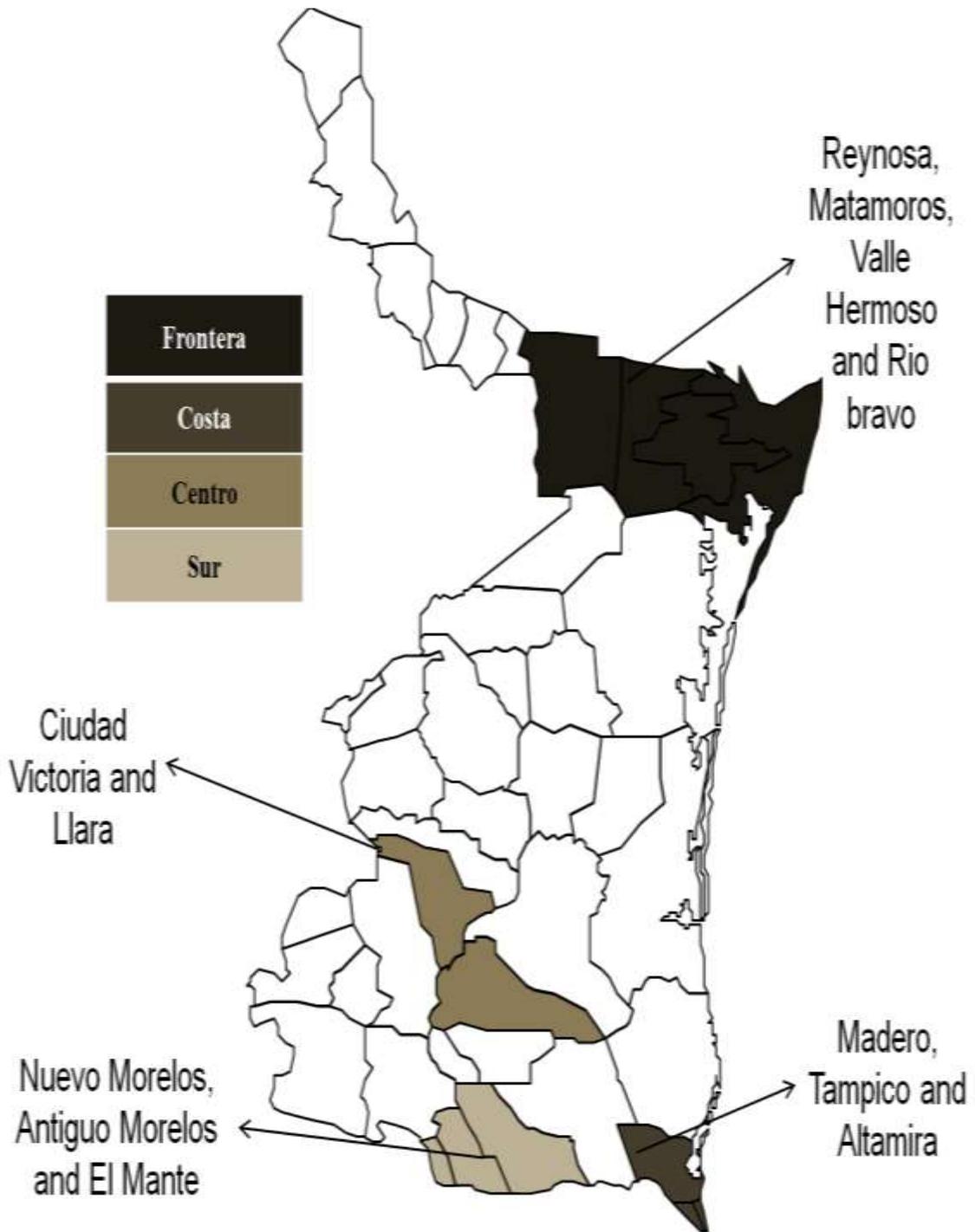
¹ El Universal (2014). “Lanza Osorio Chong plan de Seguridad para Tamaulipas.” Available at <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/2014/osorio-estrategia-seguridad--1010103.html>

violent crime. (Governor Torre Cantú has more recently begun describing Nuevo Laredo as a fifth “sub-zone” in the strategy.)² A commander from the Mexican Army (SEDENA) or Navy (SEMAR) will direct operations in each zone. In a similar manner, four special prosecutor offices will be created, one for each zone, and special emphasis will be placed on addressing kidnappings, which continue to grow and have profound effects on the state’s population, in terms of human cost, perception of public safety, and freedom in daily behavior.³

² La Verdad de Tamaulipas (2014), “Estrategia Tamaulipas mejor la seguridad.” Available at http://www.laverdad.com.mx/desplegar_noticia.php?seccion=LOCAL¬a=178258.

³ Ibid

Map 1: The Four Zones of Plan Tamaulipas



The first objective of the new strategy is to dismantle organized crime groups. To achieve this objective, additional army and navy forces will be deployed to the state. According to *Grupo Reforma* there will be 2,200 SEDENA members, 200 from SEMAR, 1,400 federal police and 300 from CISEN.⁴ They will provide 24 hour vigilance at airports, ports, borders and the state's main highways.⁵ Additional patrols will also take place in the urban areas of Reynosa, Tampico, Ciudad Victoria and Matamoros. Also, in order to prevent the movement of criminals and potentially violence into neighboring states, the governments of Nuevo Leon, Coahuila and San Luis Potosi have begun operation of *sellamiento*, or sealing off, in coordination with federal institutions.⁶ On June 2014 the Secretary of the Defense, General Salvador Cienfuegos and the governor of Nuevo Leon, Rodrigo Medina, agreed to increase the presence of military personal along the border with Tamaulipas in order to contain any negative effects of Plan Tamaulipas on the state of Nuevo Leon.⁷

The focus on dismantling organized criminal groups has much in common with the overall anti-crime strategy implemented by former President Felipe Calderón. While the effectiveness of that approach under President Calderón is still being debated, the resemblance between the two strategies has given rise to a line of critique from opposition parties in general and in particular former Calderón administration officials. For example, Roberto Gil Zuarth, a current National Action Party Senator and former Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry, argued, "They must recognize that in good measure the problem in Tamaulipas was aggravated because the model of containment [in place under the Calderón administration], that is, the permanent presence of the armed forces and federal forces in the state, was abandoned."⁸ According to this line of argument, the additional forces being sent through Plan Tamaulipas amount to little more than a rectification of their earlier removal. While the overall number of members of the Mexican Military involved in public security missions have declined during the Peña Nieto administration, and it seems likely that Tamaulipas experienced a decline in troop levels before

⁴ Jimenes, Benito (2014) "Van 5 mil federal a Tamaulipas." *Grupo Reforma*, available at <http://www.reforma.com/aplicaciones/articulo/default.aspx?id=253015>

⁵ Gonzalez, Hector (2014). "Militares asumen Plan Tamaulipas; Gubernacion anuncia Estrategia Anticrime." *Excelsior*, available at <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2014/05/14/959094>

⁶ Castellanos Teran, David (2014). "PGR, Sedena y Marina toman el control de la seguridad en Tamaulipas." *La Jornada*, available at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/05/27/politica/014n1pol>

⁷ *La Jornada* (2014). "Acuerdo para evitar en NL el efecto cucaracha." Available at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/06/04/politica/016n2pol>

⁸ Torres, Mauricio (2014). "PAN y PRD dudan del exito del Plan Federal de Seguridad para Tamaulipas." *CNN Mexico*. Available at <http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2014/05/15/pan-y-prd-dudan-del-exito-del-plan-federal-de-seguridad-para-tamaulipas>

additional forces were sent in with the new strategy, limitations in publicly available data preclude a full analysis of changes in federal deployment numbers to the state.⁹

Despite these criticisms, vigilance by SEDENA and SEMAR in different cities and strategic locations throughout Tamaulipas appears to be necessary and Plan Tamaulipas has already delivered important results. Since the implementation of the Plan, federal forces have captured eight out of 14 priority targeted members of criminal organizations, including Juan Rodrigues who was a top leader of the Gulf Cartel.¹⁰ Another successful operation was carried out by SEDENA and SEMAR in the municipality of El Mante, where three members of los Zetas were arrested.¹¹

The second objective consists of closing down the routes for drugs, money, persons and firearms.¹² To this end, SEDENA and SEMAR will be patrolling highways, airports, points of entry and ports.¹³ Vigilance will also take place in the main urban areas of Tamaulipas, which are Victoria, Tampico, Reynosa, Matamoros and El Mante.¹⁴ As decades of experience in border security and anti-drug trafficking efforts by the United States have demonstrated, stopping flows of illicit goods by focusing on interdiction but without addressing both supply and demand is at best very difficult and perhaps impossible.

Little is known regarding the exact tasks that the additional security forces will undertake as a part of Plan Tamaulipas to prevent smuggling, but officials have placed a strong focus on the generation and use of intelligence in the operations. Secretary Osorio Chong has stated that an increased use of inspection equipment at checkpoints will be used to combat human trafficking and smuggling.¹⁵ Simply doing more patrolling and administering security checkpoints is of limited value. The creation and use of reliable intelligence to guide operations is essential, and the success of the strategy will, in part, be determined by the efforts to fully integrate intelligence work into the efforts to stem the flow of illicit goods and

⁹ Castillo Garcia, David (2014). "Sedena asigna 35% menos soldados a combatir el crimen organizado." La Jornada, available at <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2014/04/19/politica/007n1pol>

¹⁰ CNN Mexico (2014). "Autoridades detienen al Objetivo Prioritario del Plan Tamaulipas." Available at <http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2014/06/18/autoridades-detienen-al-objetivo-prioritario-del-plan-para-tamaulipas>; and La Verdad de Tamaulipas, "Estrategia Tamaulipas mejor la seguridad," August 13, 2014, available at http://www.laverdad.com.mx/desplegar_noticia.php?seccion=LOCAL¬a=178258.

¹¹ IBID

¹² Animal Político (2014). "Contra la Inseguridad Dividen a Tamaulipas en cuatro Zonas." Available at <http://www.animalpolitico.com/2014/05/segob-presentara-nueva-estrategia-de-seguridad-en-tamaulipas/#axzz34WlfStES>

¹³ Gonzalez, Hector (2014). "Militares asumen Plan Tamaulipas; Gobernacion anuncia Estrategia Anticrime." Excelsior available at <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2014/05/14/959094>

¹⁴ Gonzalez, Hector (2014). "Militares asumen Plan Tamaulipas; Gobernacion anuncia Estrategia Anticrime." Excelsior available at <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2014/05/14/959094>

¹⁵ CNNMéxico, "Gobernación presenta nueva estrategia de seguridad para Tamaulipas," May 13, 2014, <http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2014/05/13/gobernacion-presenta-nueva-estrategia-de-seguridad-para-tamaulipas>.

dismantle criminal organizations. Crucially, the development of intelligence is largely dependent on the confidence of the population in their security institutions, since citizen crime reporting and the collection of witness accounts are among the best sources of information on criminal activities. This is an ongoing, long-term challenge for Mexico in general, and Tamaulipas in particular, and for this reason, the third goal of the strategy is critical and intimately linked to the first two.

The third objective consists in guaranteeing effective, sufficient and reliable local security institutions at both the state and municipal level. Given the challenges of pervasive corruption and profound criminal penetration of state and local security agencies and politics, this is both a vital and very difficult task. Authorities will work to improve coordination among the relevant agencies, strengthen preventive programs and increase vigilance at the state penitentiaries.¹⁶ This objective also includes the creation of the Institute for Police Training in order to carry out the evaluation of police members and prosecutors in order to ensure the reliability of local authorities.¹⁷ Finally, particular attention will be given to anonymous reporting of crimes, with public relations campaigns urging greater use of reporting hotlines and SEDENA taking over operations at the state's C-4 (Command, Control, Communications, Computers), where anonymous tips are received.¹⁸ Similar call-in lines have been used to good effect in other parts of Mexico in recent years, and it is hoped that the 088 lines in Tamaulipas will increase the flow of reliable intelligence to the authorities

¹⁶ El Universal (2014). "Lanza Osorio Chong plan de Seguridad para Tamaulipas." Available at <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/2014/osorio-estrategia-seguridad--1010103.html>

¹⁷ BBC News Latin America & the Caribbean (2014). "Mexico sets Security Plan for Violent Tamaulipas State." Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-27402388>

¹⁸ El Universal (2014). "Lanza Osorio Chong plan de Seguridad para Tamaulipas." Available at <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/2014/osorio-estrategia-seguridad--1010103.html>; and Elregio.com, "Asume SEDENA control en Tamaulipas al desaparecer la Ministerial," May 26, 2014, <http://elregio.com/nacional/92768-asume-sedena-control-en-tamaulipas-al-desaparecer-la-ministerial.html>.



“New phase of the Tamaulipas security strategy. Anonymous crime reporting.” This image, and others like it, have been circulated on social media by the state and federal governments.

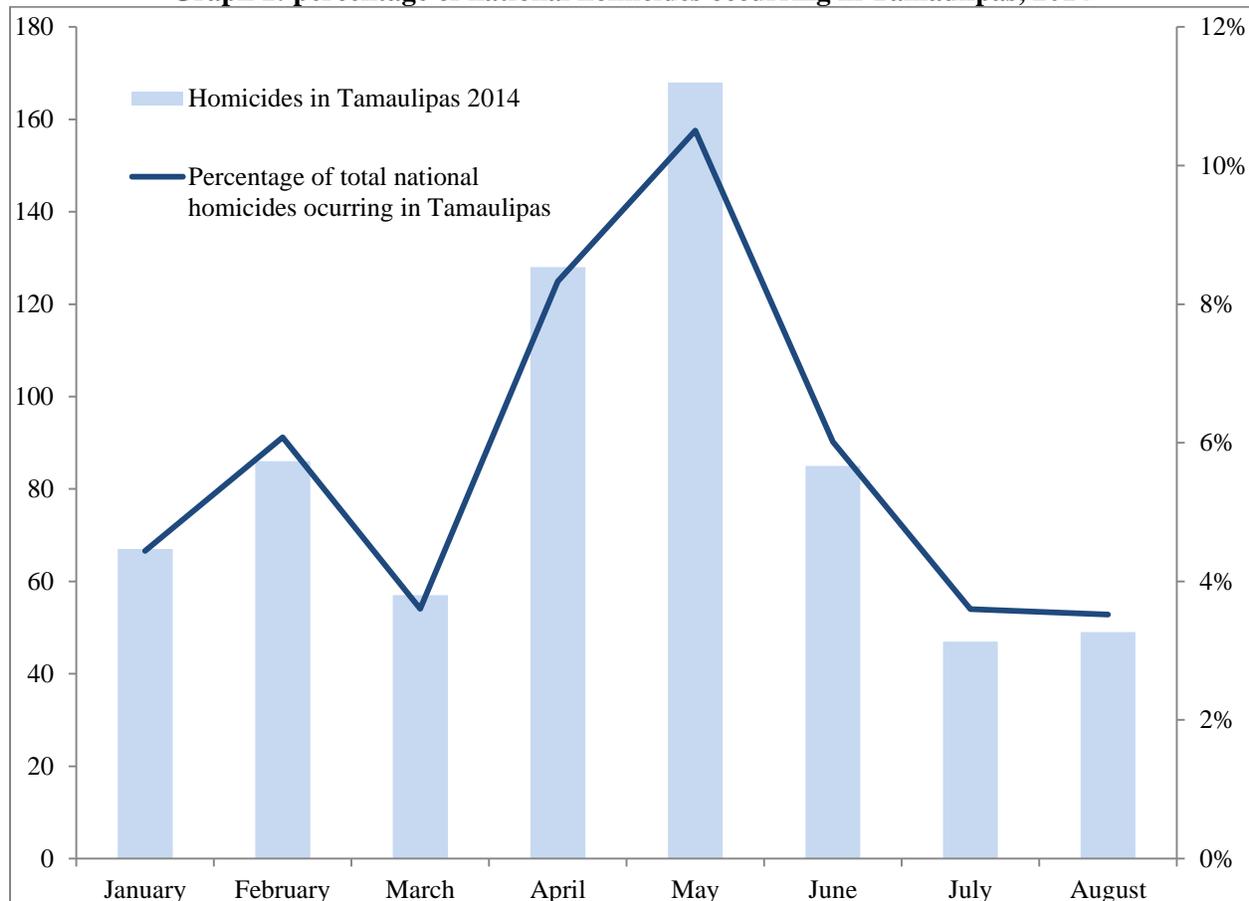
Overall, increasing the federal focus on the most violent regions in Tamaulipas is an important step forward, as is the special attention being placed on kidnappings. This crime has increased significantly in the past months and has proven to have a major impact on the quality of life of the general population, greatly increasing the general perception of insecurity and forcing major changes people’s daily routines. Finally, the increased participation of the SEDENA and SEMAR in anti-organized crime operations activities has led to some positive results. Whether or not the strategy is truly a success, however, will depend on converting short-term successes associated with a larger federal presence into long-term improvements in governance and policing that can withstand both the eventual drawdown of federal deployments and inevitable future flare-ups of conflicts within and among criminal organizations.

The Context

The state of Tamaulipas experienced a major increase in homicides between 2009 and 2010 (see Graph 2). This was mainly due to the separation of the Zetas from the Gulf Cartel in early 2010, which initiated a turf war, primarily in the states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon. In early 2013 there was a significant decrease in homicides in Tamaulipas, but unfortunately, the decline appears to have been driven by intra- and inter-organized crime group dynamics rather than an increase in state capacity to deter and prosecute crimes. As a result, the state has been unable to contain the most recent spike in homicides, which has in

large part been fueled by battles within a Gulf Cartel weakened and fragmented by years of war and the loss of senior leaders to arrests and killings. In the second quarter of 2014, the murder rate spiked back up to its 2010-2012, although it has since declined somewhat. This latest episode of soaring homicides demonstrates the continued vulnerability of the state to shifting dynamics in the landscape of organized crime.

Graph 1: percentage of national homicides occurring in Tamaulipas, 2014

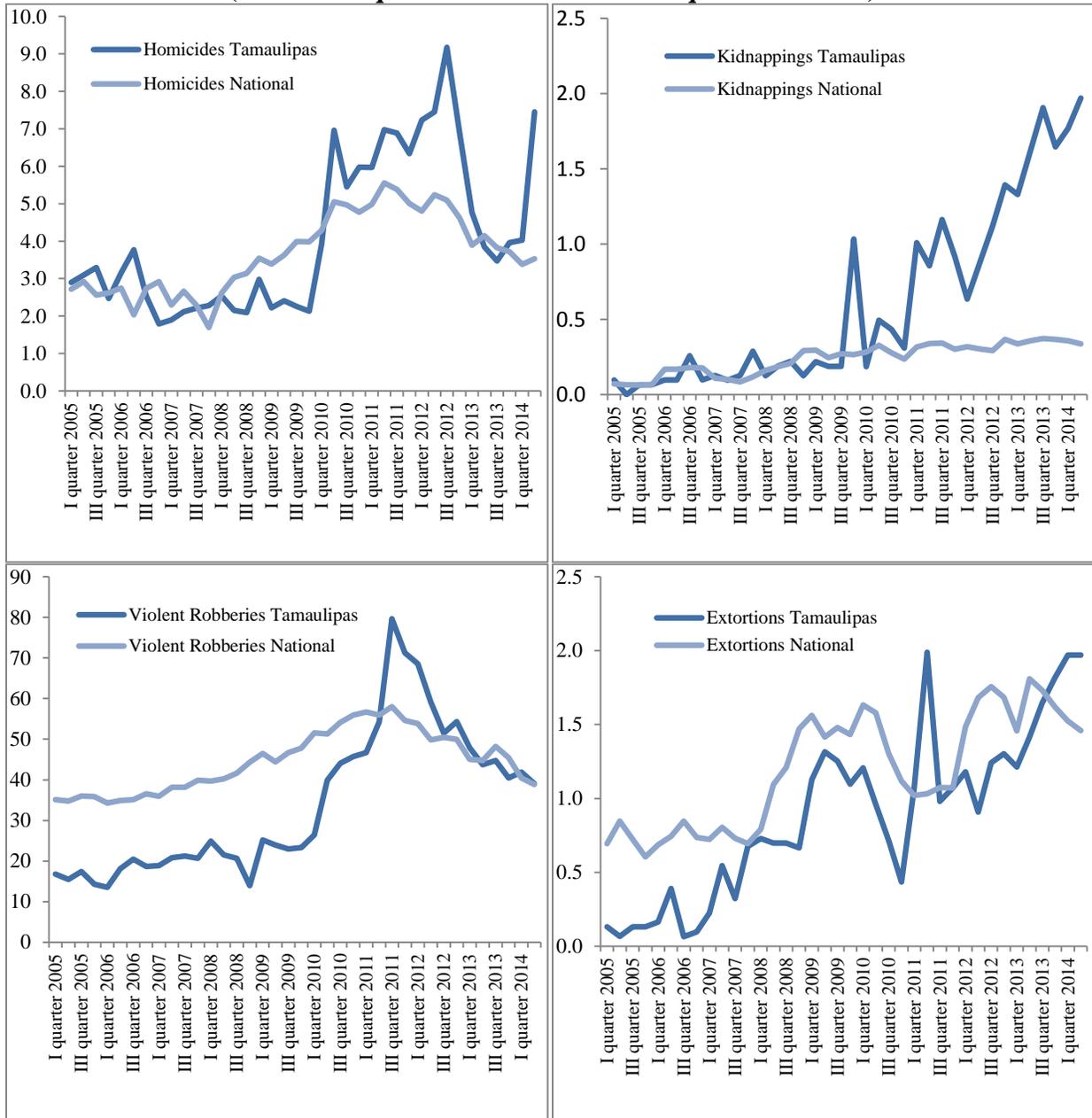


Source: Informe Víctimas de homicidios, secuestros y extorsión. Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (SNSP, 2014)

The high rates of violence caused by the fight among criminal organizations are reason enough for alarm, but for many in Tamaulipas, the much more concerning trend has been the increased targeting of civilians for kidnapping and extortion. Many initially attributed the tactics of preying on the local population (as opposed to focusing on transporting contraband) to the Zetas, a ruthless group that had originally served as the enforcers for the Gulf Cartel, which managed the drug trafficking side of the criminal business. To a lesser extent before the split, and increasingly after the break with the Gulf Cartel, the Zetas relied on a diverse set of income streams that included a large focus on kidnapping and extortion. Unfortunately, despite their purported origins with the Zetas, such tactics are now prevalent in both Zeta-dominated and

Gulf Cartel-dominated municipalities. The statewide growth in crimes targeting the civilian population is seen most clearly in the spike in kidnappings shown in Graph 2.

Graph 2: “High Impact” Crimes for every 100,000 citizens in Tamaulipas (From first quarter of 2005 to second quarter of 2014)



Source: Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (SNSP)¹⁹ with information from Consejo Nacional de la Población (CONAPO)²⁰

¹⁹ Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública. “Incidencia Delictiva Nacional y por Entidad Federativa”. Available at http://www.secretariadoejecutivosnsp.gob.mx/es/SecretariadoEjecutivo/Incidencia_Delictiva_Nacional_fuero_comun

Kidnappings, which are a particular focus of Plan Tamaulipas, presented a first increase at the end of 2009, a second one during 2010, and a steady rise since 2011. Reported kidnappings have also increased at the national level, driven in large part by abductions in states like Tamaulipas, which have kidnapping rates far above the national average. While the number of reported kidnappings in Tamaulipas is approximately 2.5 per 100,000 citizens, the national average is 0.4 for every 100,000 citizens.

Those who have been kidnapped and their family members are often quite reluctant to report the crime for fear of retaliation by the captors and lack of confidence in the competent authorities. As a result, the actual number of kidnappings in Tamaulipas is certainly much higher than the number officially reported to the authorities. The ENVIPE crime victimization survey (*Encuesta Nacional sobre Victimizacion y Percepcion de Inseguridad*, 2013) suggests as much, identifying approximately 89,000 kidnappings in Mexico in 2012, with 8,631 carried out in Tamaulipas alone.²¹ This estimate implies about 10% of kidnappings in Mexico take place in Tamaulipas, even though less than 3% of the national population resides in the state.²² Moreover, according to information from ENVIPE, there were 33,400 kidnappings where a victim was held for more than 24 hours in Mexico during 2012 and 16 percent occurred in Tamaulipas. Even more concerning is the rate per 100,000 citizens in which these types of crime occur. There were 29 cases per 100,000 citizens at a national level, but a full 157 per 100,000 in Tamaulipas.

Table 2: Kidnappings in Tamaulipas vs National levels

Tamaulipas Kidnappings	Total Reported Kidnappings (SNSP)	123	National Kidnappings	Total Reported Kidnappings (SNSP)	1,418
	Estimated Total Kidnappings (ENVIPE)	8,631		Estimated Total Kidnappings (ENVIPE)	89,089
	Estimated Total Kidnappings with Victim Held More Than 24 Hours (ENVIPE)	5,383		Estimated Total Kidnappings with Victim Held More Than 24 Hours (ENVIPE)	33,447
	Estimated Kidnappings per 100,000 Citizens (over 24 hours, ENVIPE)	157		Estimated Kidnappings per 100,000 Citizens (over 24 hours, ENVIPE)	29

²⁰ Consejo Nacional de Población. “Datos de Proyecciones” Available at http://www.conapo.gob.mx/es/CONAPO/Proyecciones_Datos

²¹ Note: SNSP reported kidnappings use a narrower definition of the crime than the ENVIPE victimization survey. The ENVIPE considers short-term kidnappings, often referred to as express kidnappings, while the SNSP numbers do not. Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía INEGI (2013). “Encuesta Nacional de Victimizacion y Percepcion sobre la Seguridad, ENVIPE.” Data base available at <http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/Proyectos/Encuestas/Hogares/regulares/envipe/envipe2013/default.aspx>

²² It is important to consider that the information provided by ENVIPE is through surveys carried out to the population. It is not a definite number.

U.S. citizens have often been considered less vulnerable to organized crime-related violence in Mexico, since this could lead to greater U.S. and Mexican government pressure on the criminal organizations responsible for such violence. Though there is not clear evidence that U.S. citizens are being targeted due to their nationality in Tamaulipas, there is growing evidence that U.S. citizens are not immune from criminal violence in the state. The U.S. Department of State experienced a 75% increase in reports of U.S. citizens being kidnapped in Tamaulipas between 2012 and 2013, as well as a further increase in the first half of 2014.²³ Throughout Mexico, approximately 70 kidnappings of U.S. citizens were reported to the U.S. Embassy and consulates between January and June of 2014.²⁴

Finally, reported extortions rose sharply after 2008, at the beginning of 2011 and most recently again at the beginning of 2013. During the second quarter of 2014 the number of extortions has continued to increase and has surpassed the national average. While there were 1.5 extortions per 100,000 citizens at a national level, Tamaulipas presented a rate of 2 per 100,000 citizens.

Overall, high impact crimes in Tamaulipas are significantly above the national average and are on the rise, particularly in the municipalities of Reynosa and Tampico in recent months.²⁵ The perception of insecurity is similarly troubling. Some 84 percent of citizens in Tamaulipas perceived their state as insecure compared to the national figure of 67 percent. Only the states of Morelos, Guerrero, Mexico and Zacatecas presented higher numbers.²⁶ According to the ENVIPE victimization survey 2013, 75 percent of the population in Tamaulipas said they went out less at night and 58 percent said they had reduced travel by highway. Both crime rates and the impact of those crimes on the population justify the prioritization of Tamaulipas in the federal agenda.

Furthermore, with 16 official border crossing points, it is important to note that Tamaulipas is the state in Mexico with the highest number of ports of entry to the United States. Particularly important in this regard is the World Trade Bridge at Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, which serves as the conduit for approximately 40% of all U.S.-Mexico commerce. The large volume of legal cross-border traffic provides cover for hidden illicit traffic, whether it is drugs going north or firearms and cash moving south. The state is also an important crossing point for unauthorized migrants, particularly for Central Americans, both because of the state's physical proximity to Central America (compared to other Mexican states bordering the

²³ U.S. Department of State, Mexico Travel Warning, (with information from two different versions of 2014 warning) <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/mexico-travel-warning.html>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Gonzalez, Hector (2014). "Reynosa vive otra jornada violenta; enfrentamientos dejan 9 muertos en Tamaulipas." *Excelsior Especiales*. Disponible en <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2014/05/10/958445>

²⁶ Encuesta Nacional de Victimización y Percepción sobre Seguridad Pública 2013. Disponible en <http://www.inegi.org.mx/est/contenidos/proyectos/encuestas/hogares/regulares/envipe/default.aspx>

U.S.A.) and the numerous population centers across the river in Texas, which provide cover and potential stash houses. Criminal groups both facilitate and prey on migrants moving through the state, whether heading north into the United States or being repatriated south. In 2010, a particularly horrific example was discovered in the municipality of San Fernando, where the bodies of 72 migrants were discovered.²⁷

Table 3 illustrates that drug production crimes are not a challenge for Tamaulipas, as the majority of production related crimes occur in state like Michoacán, Sinaloa and Jalisco, or outside of Mexico. However, transportation of drugs is very common in Tamaulipas. According to information from SNSP for every 100,000 citizens in Tamaulipas there are 9 crimes related to drug trafficking while the national average is 1.6.

Table 3: Drug related crimes per 100,000 inhabitants

	Tamaulipas	National Average
Crimes related to production	0	27
Crimes related to trafficking	9	1.6

Source: Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública (SNSP)

Information from the SEDENA shows that Tamaulipas is the state where the highest number of firearms has been confiscated in recent years.²⁸ As shown in Graph 3, SEDENA confiscated around 320 firearms per 100,000 citizens during 2011, many more than any other state. In 2011, firearm confiscations by SEDENA represented 80% of all federal firearm confiscations, which suggests the high rate of SEDENA confiscations in Tamaulipas is not simply a reflection of a large military presence in the state. Furthermore, Goodman and Marizco have documented the Houston-Nuevo Laredo-Reynosa corridor as one of the main routes of firearms entering Mexico from the United States.²⁹ Overall, firearms availability reduces the cost of confrontation and increases the expected gains from diversifying into other crimes such as robberies and kidnappings. Addressing firearms trafficking into Tamaulipas could prove to be an important way to reduce violent crime. According to both Goodman and Marizco and the report *#No+Armas#Nomoreguns*,³⁰ the majority of firearms that enter Mexico originate in Texas. A useful addition to Plan Tamaulipas would be to increase coordination with federal, state and local authorities in Texas in order to stem the illegal flow of weapons.

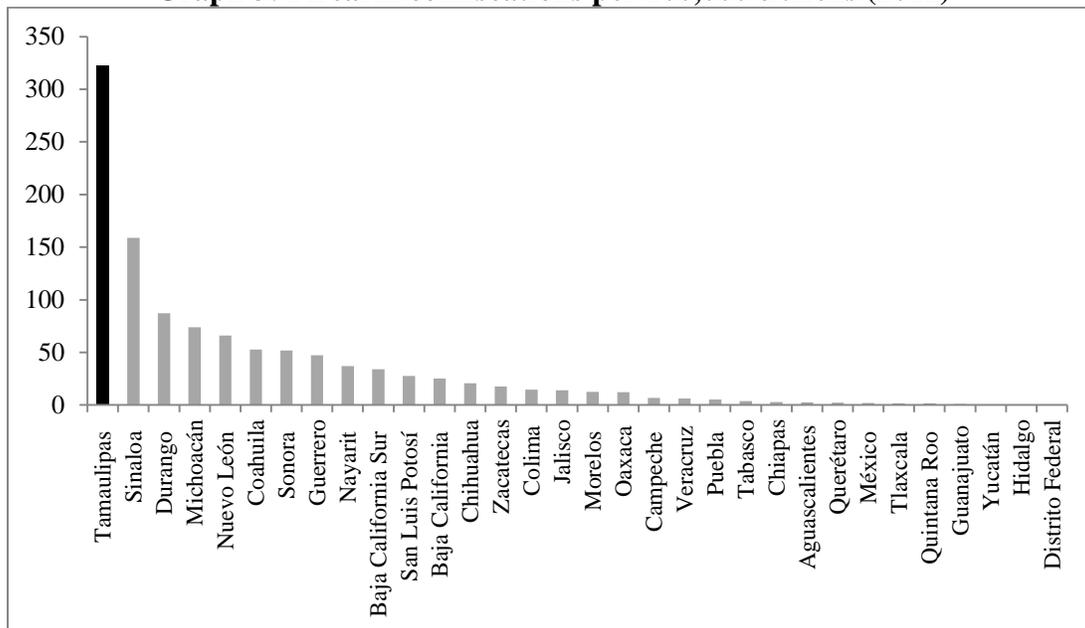
²⁷ Illif, Laurence (2013). “Mexico Soldier free 165 Kidnapped Migrants.” *The Wall Street Journal*. Available at <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324299104578529761586118202>

²⁸ Information obtained through a report from IFAI requested by David Perez Esparza on April 2013

²⁹ Goodman, C and Marizco, M (2011). “US Firearm Trafficking to Mexico: New Data and Insights Illuminate Key Trends and Challenges.”

³⁰ *#No+Armas #Nomoreguns* is a report made by Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad, International Fellowship for Reconciliation, Global Exchange and Instituto para la Seguridad y la Democracia. Available at <http://insyde.org.mx/informe-noarmas-nomoreguns/>

Graph 3: Firearm confiscations per 100,000 citizens (2011)



Source: Elaborated based on information from SEDENA requested through an IFAI report by David Perez Esparza on April 2013 and population by CONAPO

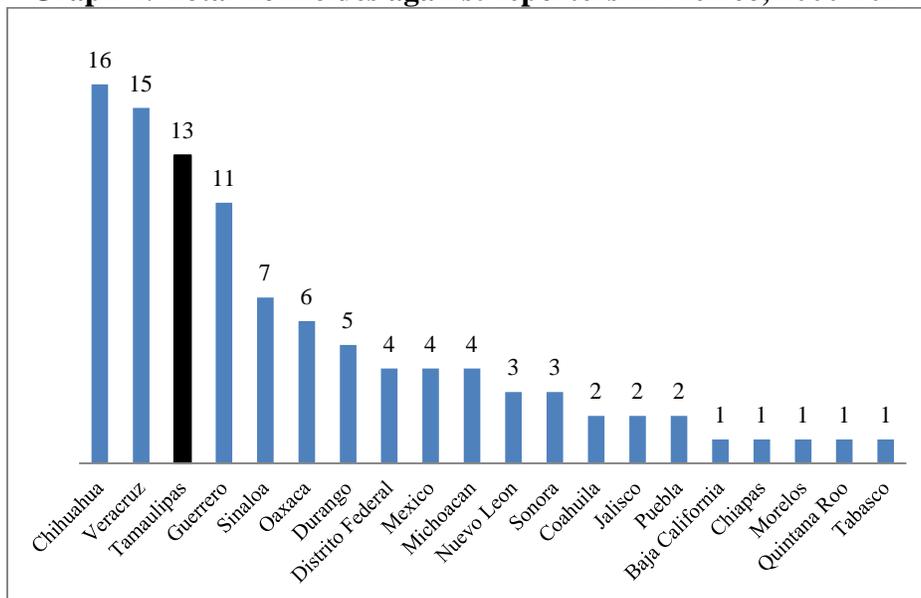
As described above, the public security challenges being faced by the state of Tamaulipas are made possible, in large part, by the illegal flows of people, drugs and firearms. In this regard, the second objective of Plan Tamaulipas is essential.

A second category of challenges, perhaps even more important than the illicit flows although certainly not unrelated to them, has to do with governance and policing. Tamaulipas is one of just nine states in Mexico that have been governed by a single party, the PRI, for the last eighty-some years. While the federal government and the majority of states have experienced changes in party leadership over the past 25 years, a handful of states, including Tamaulipas, have not been subject to the accountability brought through democratic transitions of power. Even absent the airing of dirty laundry that such transitions can facilitate, numerous allegations of corruption have emerged regarding the state's former leaders. Indeed, the three most recent governors of Tamaulipas have, at some point, been under investigation by the Mexican federal government.³¹ One of them, Tomás Yarrington, has been indicted for various forms of organized crime-related corruption by the U.S. Government, and another, Eugenio Hernández, has been

³¹ Associated Press, "Mexico investigating 3 former governors," *The Brownsville Herald*, January 31, 2012, http://www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/us_world/article_8cdc37fb-fcfd-53ee9http://www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/us_world/article_8cdc37fb-fcfd-53ee-963f-ee786c1668f9.html63f-ee786c1668f9.html.

allegedly linked to organized crime by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.³² The Yarrington indictment points to a broader pattern of collusion between criminal groups, state officials, and security forces, documenting the ongoing payment of large bribes by criminal groups to elected officials in order to “continue their illegal business with little or no interference from police authorities.”³³ Hand in hand with bribes from organized crime come threats, and there are numerous cases in which mayors and public security officials, including the brother of the current governor, have come under attack by criminal groups. This combination of limited democratic accountability, collusion between officials and organized crime, and intimidation of officials by organized crime has severely limited the effectiveness of the state public security apparatus.

Graph 4: Total homicides against reporters in Mexico, 2000-2014



Source: Fiscalía Especial para Atención de Delitos Cometidos contra la Libertad de Expresion (FEADLE, 2014).

Like transitions of power from one party to another, the presence of a strong and independent press increases the likelihood that government corruption will be exposed, which acts as a disincentive to future acts of corruption. When functioning properly, the press also calls attention to the challenges being faced by society, such as exposing the full impact of public insecurity. In the case of Tamaulipas, unfortunately, the press has been largely unable to fulfill these vital democratic functions. According to information

³² The Gov. Yarrington indictment was unsealed on Dec. 12, 2013 (<http://www.ice.gov/doclib/news/releases/2013/131202brownville.pdf>), and the allegations regarding Gov. Hernández were made during a separate hearing in Dec. 2013 (<http://www.expressnews.com/news/us-world/border-mexico/article/Feds-say-another-Mexican-governor-took-bribes-5596655.php?cmpid=twitter-premium&t=63c372cafb6a5efc77>).

³³ Indictment available at link in above footnote.

from Mexico's special prosecutor for crimes against journalists (*Fiscalia Especial para Atencion de Delitos Cometidos contra la Libertad de Expresion*),³⁴ Tamaulipas is the third state with the highest number of murdered journalists. Additionally, along with Michoacan and Veracruz, Tamaulipas is the state with the highest number of disappeared journalists. This, in part, can explain why strong federal intervention has been so slow to come to Tamaulipas, and protecting the press remains an important challenge in the process of protecting society and government from the pressures of organized crime.

In addition to being an issue of accountability and professionalism versus corruption, the problem of policing in Tamaulipas is also a question of numbers. As of 2010, Tamaulipas had 1,976 state police members and 5,457 municipal police.³⁵ This is approximately 230 total police per 100,000 citizens in the state, while the national average for 2010 was 314 per 100,000 citizens. This made Tamaulipas, a state under significant criminal stress due to its prime smuggling location along the U.S.-Mexico border, among the least policed states in Mexico, ranked 26 out of 32 subnational entities.³⁶

Since 2010, the number of police in the state has declined, with several cities either unilaterally deciding to disband the local police force due to deep penetration by organized crime or pulling the municipal police off the street as a part of the (slow and still ongoing) process to transition to a single state-wide police force. In effect, municipal police forces have disappeared, although some are still being paid even though they are not patrolling the streets since they have not been properly vetted and trained in order to join the state police.³⁷ For example, in 2011, the municipal police force of Nuevo Laredo was disarmed and taken off the streets by the Mexican military, losing 600 police officers.³⁸ Reynosa was left with only 104 municipal police officers to become state police after the rest did not pass the vetting process.³⁹ As a result of this and other issues with the local police, Reynosa dropped from having more than 700 police in 2011 to having just over one hundred non-federal police in 2013.⁴⁰ In April of 2013, Tamaulipas officially made the transition to the *Mando Único Policial*, the single state police force, effectively eliminating all

³⁴ Fiscalia Especial para Atencion de Delitos Cometidos contra la Libertad de Expresion (FEADLE, 2014). Procuraduria General de la Republica. Avialable at <http://www.pgr.gob.mx/Combate%20a%20la%20Delincuencia/Documentos/Delitos%20Federales/FPeriodistas/acuerdos/ESTADISTICAS%20JUNIO%202014-totales.pdf>

³⁵ Subsecretaria de Tecnologias de la Informacion (2010). "Reporte de Elementos Activos del Personal de Seguridad Publica y Privada, October 31st 2010." *Secretaria de Seguridad Publica*.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ CNN Mexico (2013). "La Ausencia de Policias hace más vulnerable a Matamoros, Tamaulipas." Available at <http://mexico.cnn.com/nacional/2013/11/05/la-ausencia-de-policias-hace-mas-vulnerable-a-matamoros-tamaulipas>

³⁸ López, Primitivo (2014). "Nuevo Laredo ya tiene Nueva Policía." Hoy Tamaulipas. Available at <http://www.hoytamaulipas.net/notas/97093/Nuevo-Laredo-ya-tiene-nueva-Policia-Municipal.html>

³⁹ Loya, Julio (2013). "Inicia Proceso de Liquidación Reynosa." El Universal. Available at <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/estados/2013/impreso/inicia-proceso-de-liquidacion-de-uniformados-en-reynosa-92316.html>

⁴⁰ Ibid.

remaining municipal police forces.⁴¹ At that point, there were only 650 non-military state police, a number that has since increased to approximately 2,000.⁴²

Some sources suggest that the process of creating the state police was tainted from the start, and as a part of Plan Tamaulipas, the federal government has taken it upon itself to re-vet the entire force (in addition to setting a goal of having 6,000 state police officers). With approximately half the number of state and local police operating in 2014 compared to the already low numbers in 2010, Tamaulipas has developed a major need for and perhaps a major dependence on federal security forces to fill the gap. The creation of a state police force with sufficient numbers, well-vetted officers, and strong protections from criminal penetration will be a fundamental factor in achieving public security for the state of Tamaulipas.

Map 2: Percentage of police force evaluated (2014)



Source: SNSP

According to information from *Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH)*,⁴³ Tamaulipas ranks last among Mexico's states in terms of governability inside its prison institutions. The score for

⁴¹ Primitivo López, "Mando Único llega a Tamaulipas, desaparece Policía Municipal," Televisa, April 11, 2013, <http://noticierostelevisa.esmas.com/estados/583070/mando-nico-llega-tamaulipas-desaparece-policia-municipal/>.

⁴² El Mañana, "Avalan mil 600 agentes para Policía Acreditada," December 31, 2012, http://www.elmanana.com/diario/noticia/victoria/tamaulipas/avalan_mil_600_agentes_para_policia_acreditada/1914223; Milenio, "Regresan 247 policías estatales a Tamaulipas," http://www.milenio.com/region/Regresan-policias-estatales-Tamaulipas-evaluaciones_0_343165925.html.

⁴³ *Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos Mexico* (2012). *Diagnostico Nacional de Supervision Penitenciaria 2012*. Available at http://www.cndh.org.mx/sites/all/fuentes/documentos/programas/DNSP_2012.pdf

Tamaulipas, on a scale of one (lowest) to ten (highest), was 3.65, while the national score was 5.68. The CNDH suggests the most important conditions to address in Tamaulipas's penitentiary system are:

- Better protocols for transportation and reception of inmates;
- Increasing the number of security guards;
- The consistent implementation of internal sanctions for disciplinary reasons;
- The elimination of special privileges and the possession of illegal substances by inmates;
- The elimination of prostitution, addressing the control of inmates by other inmates
- And eliminating extortion by guards and inmates.

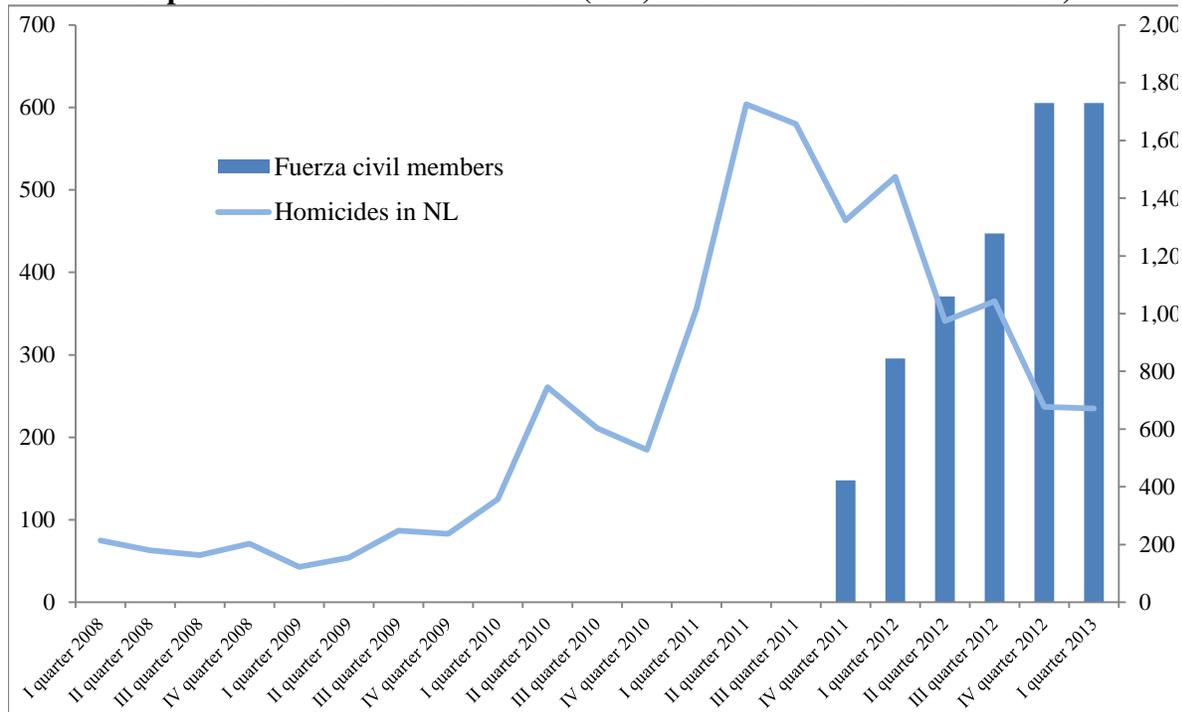
The Role of Civil Society and Community Resilience: Examples from Monterrey and Ciudad Juarez

Restoring security and public safety in Mexico requires not only an effective government response but also the participation of civilians and the private sector. Civil groups can play an important role in holding government accountable, and civilians are, through crime and suspicious activity reporting, probably the most important source of intelligence and evidence for the public security institutions. When functioning properly, a virtuous cycle is created, with government providing public security by preventing and solving crimes, and society responding by giving the government more and better information about criminal behavior. Unfortunately, throughout much of Mexico, the cycle is broken. Public confidence in police and judges is extremely low, and clearly much work is needed to professionalize these institutions so they become trustworthy. Interestingly, though, the mistrust is mutual. Police surveys in Mexico have shown that few cops believe that society cooperates with them to prevent crimes.

Strong civil engagement and organization builds resilient communities able to withstand and respond to criminal pressures, with society working in coordination and collaboration with government. Government is therefore strengthened by adopting policies that promote civic engagement. This approach encompasses a broad range of specific programs and policies, and the Wilson Center's Mexico Institute and the University of San Diego's Justice in Mexico Project recently published a book, *Building Resilient Communities in Mexico*, which examines several cases of civic responses to crime and violence, identifying successes, challenges, and opportunities. Among the cities studied were Monterrey and Ciudad Juarez, each of which point toward important conclusions relevant to the case of Tamaulipas.

In Nuevo Leon, the creation of the new state police force, *the Fuerza Civil*, was an important joint effort between civil society, the private sector, universities and the government to re-design and build the new police force. Six important companies in Monterrey contributed by providing high executives in the fields of marketing, logistics, sales, and human resources to plan and execute the project. Meetings were held daily involving the participation from staff from state institutions: Procuraduría, la Secretaría de Seguridad Pública estatal y la Secretaría General de Gobierno. Additionally, universities like Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey and Universidad de Monterrey supported with research and administrative staff to develop training programs.** While there were certainly multiple causes, the decline in homicides during the first trimester of 2013, coincided with and was probably in part derived from the development and growth of the *Fuerza Civil*.

Graph 5: Member of Fuerza Civil (Bar) and homicides in Nuevo Leon)



Source: SNSP and Secretariado Ejecutivo del Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública; Fuerza Civil; Diarios de circulación local y nacional

Another important example was illustrated in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua. As the situation of violence escalated, there were numerous civil responses. An important example, documented by Lucy Conger in the aforementioned book, came at the end of 2008 when numerous doctors organized a march to protest insecurity. Another group that was formed around the same time was *Juarenses por la Paz* (JPP). In addition, newspaper editor (Oscar Cantu) organized a meeting with academics, business leaders and organizers and lead to the formation of the Juarez Observatory. As civil demands increased, President Calderon created “*Todos somos Juarez*,” which institutionalized collaboration between civil society and government and put in place 160 measures to reduce crime.

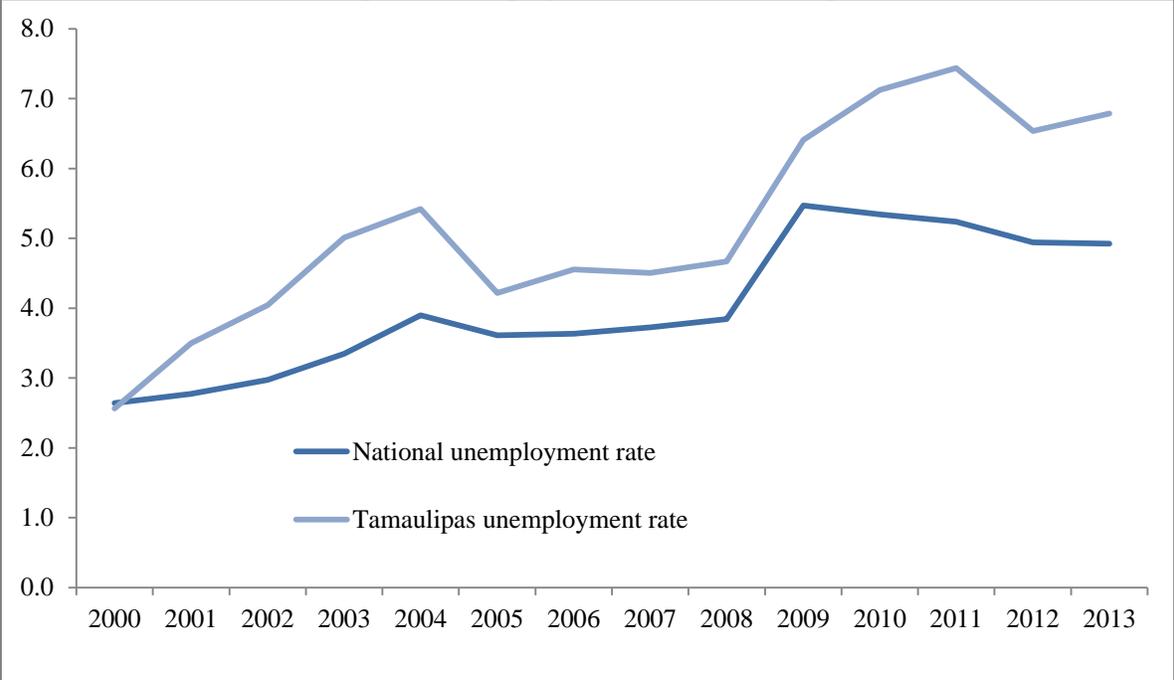
The role of the private and academic sectors along with community organizations was fundamental for Nuevo Leon and Chihuahua. The broad-based activation of these sectors was able to foment a reformation of the cycle of distrust between civil society and government, leading to more collaborative and effective anti-crime efforts, as well as greater government accountability. The challenge for Tamaulipas becomes how to get these sectors and the general population involved in the creation of better security forces, governance, and on overall community building in the context of a state with a highly dispersed population, very limited bases of organized civil society, and fear of persecution by criminal groups.

*Source for public opinion and police polling data: Eds. David A. Shirk, Duncan Wood, and Eric L. Olson, *Building Resilient Communities in Mexico: Civic Responses to Crime and Violence*, Washington, DC: Wilson Center and University of San Diego, 2014.

** Pérez Esparza, D. and Sánchez Santana, A. (2014). “¿Qué le pasó a Monterrey? Análisis de una crisis urbana de inseguridad a través al duelo colectivo”. *Regions & Cohesion Journal* (Berghahn Journals). To be published: Winter. Vol 4 (issue 3).

Additionally, it is important to consider other characteristics that differentiate Tamaulipas from other similar border states. Population density appears to play a significant role in the violence and the capacity of the state to react. Tamaulipas’s population is highly dispersed across the state and the municipalities in Tamaulipas are not highly populated. The largest city is Reynosa with approximately 600,000 inhabitants and 18 percent of the total state population. This becomes relevant as larger populated cities allow for better organization and community building. For example, Nuevo Leon has 88 percent of its population concentrated in Monterrey’s metropolitan area⁴⁴ and the community’s participation as well as the concentration of efforts became fundamental in the creation of its newly created police force. Ciudad Juarez offers another example in which civil society and private sector involvement based in a large urban area (a population of 1,332,131)⁴⁵ played a key role in improving public security conditions. Such civic responses have thus far proven difficult to take root in the relatively smaller communities of Tamaulipas, in which organized crime appears to have a firmer grip and possibly has more information on the activities of a broad range of actors throughout society.

Graph 6: Unemployment rate in Tamaulipas



Source: INEGI, Banco de información Económica (BIE)⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Information from Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (2014). Mexico en Cifras. Available at <http://www3.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/mexicocifras/default.aspx?e=19>

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. “Tasas de ocupación, desocupación y subocupación” Banco de Información Económica. Disponible en <http://www.inegi.org.mx/sistemas/bie/>

Finally, issues of economic development and opportunities are crucial. According to the 2013 ENVIPE victimization survey, the population in Tamaulipas perceives unemployment as the number one cause of insecurity in the State, and indeed unemployment in Tamaulipas, at 5.8%, is significantly higher than the national average (4.5%). Matthew Ingram has recently published quantitative research demonstrating that economic inactivity in Mexican municipalities has a direct positive effect on crimes in neighboring municipalities.⁴⁷ In other words, when there is high unemployment in a given municipality, it is likely that crime will increase in neighboring areas. Additionally, Levitt argues that unemployment reduces opportunity costs to crime and thus increases crimes.⁴⁸

Another vital aspect of community building is education. Ingram's research has also shown that education has a protective effect against violence. Communities with better educational outcomes are less likely to experience high rates of violent crime.⁴⁹ Tamaulipas is near the national average in terms of the percentage of its population with primary education and its scores on math and science are actually above average, but nonetheless ample space exists to increase educational opportunities in a targeted way as a tool of crime reduction and prevention.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As a key node in illicit trafficking networks moving drugs, guns, migrants and money between the United States and Mexico, Tamaulipas has long been exposed to extremely high levels of criminal pressures. Those forces erupt into periodic waves of crisis-level criminal violence, as has happened in different parts of state on several occasions throughout the past decade. Tamaulipas's weak state and local level institutions, along with its very limited degree of community organization and self-censored press, severely limits its ability to resist and respond to both the crisis conditions and underlying challenges of governance, economic development, and social inclusion. In recent years, the challenges associated with being host to a major trafficking corridor have transformed, with innocent civilians increasingly becoming the target of kidnapping and extortion schemes.

The state clearly needs the enhanced federal attention and support of Plan Tamaulipas. The increased presence of federal forces, along with their specific missions and focus on intelligence work, is all vital to fill in the policing gaps that are both a perennial issue in the state and have been exacerbated during the

⁴⁷ Ingram, Matthew (2014). "Community Resilience to Violence: Local Schools, Regional Economics, and Homicides in Mexico's Municipalities." In *Building Resilient Communities in Mexico* (pp 25 to 62).

⁴⁸ Levitt, S. (2004). "Understanding Why Crime Fell in the 1990s: Four Factors that Explain the Decline and Six that do not." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 18, No. 1 pp 163-190

⁴⁹ Ingram, Matthew (2014). "Community Resilience to Violence: Local Schools, Regional Economics, and Homicides in Mexico's Municipalities." In *Building Resilient Communities in Mexico* (pp 25 to 62).

transition to the single state police. The challenge, from the perspective of federal intervention, lies in creating something more than a stop-gap, temporary measure. Alejandro Hope, a security analyst at the Mexican think tank IMCO, has argued that such federal actions can create dependence and weaken incentives for state governments to improve their own public security institutions.⁵⁰ In addition to helping temporarily meet the state's need for additional and reliable police forces, the federal government must take strong action to facilitate, and if necessary require, improvements in local governance and policing.

The fact that the federal government is currently under PRI leadership could help in this regard, since the same officials can influence events in Tamaulipas both through the official levers of power as well as through formal and informal intra-party mechanisms. Of great importance will be the quality of candidates for state and local elected office, in particular the candidates for governor in 2016.

Plan Tamaulipas rightly focuses on the issue of reducing flows of firearms, drugs and migrants, and the increased vigilance of strategic nodes and corridors has the potential to improve conditions. Given the international nature of these flows, Plan Tamaulipas may be strengthened by the incorporation of a dimension of regional coordination. With the vast majority of drugs that pass through Tamaulipas heading to the United States and the vast majority of firearms entering Tamaulipas through the state of Texas, simultaneous and coordinated operations between Mexican officials and state and federal law enforcement in Texas could increase the effectiveness of efforts inside Tamaulipas.

Largely absent from the security strategy is a focus on civil society, social inclusion, economic development and protection of the press. As demonstrated in the cases of Ciudad Juarez and Monterrey, described above, and others documented in the recent Wilson Center study, *Building Resilient Communities in Mexico: Civic Responses to Crime and Violence* (2014), the involvement of civil society, including the private sector as well as academics and community organizers, is crucial. However, it may be difficult to facilitate the organization of these groups within the state, given the fear of being threatened or even killed that many face when discussing public security issues in public spaces. In this regard, the participation of external organizations and institutions may be a key element. Under the rubric of Plan Tamaulipas, government and non-governmental organizations could facilitate the creation of a series of meetings for private companies, academics, community organizers and regular citizens, both inside and outside of Tamaulipas (in order to lessen fear of participation), perhaps in cities like Monterrey or even north of the border in cities like McAllen, or Laredo. Included within Plan Tamaulipas have been efforts to promote crime reporting by citizens. Such efforts are important, but they are more likely to

⁵⁰ Hope, Alejandro (2014). "La Enfermedad Tamaulipeca." El Universal. Available at <http://m.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/articulistas/2014/05/70140.html>

succeed if complemented by a broader strategy of engagement and cooperation between government and civil society.

Furthermore, the inclusion of a strategy to improve economic and educational opportunities would strengthen the current security strategy. Research by Matthew Ingram and others cited above clearly demonstrates the links between economic and educational outcomes, on the one hand, and public security outcomes, on the other. The research suggests educational initiatives can be effectively focused at any level: municipal, state, or national. Economic development as a crime reduction tool, however, must take a regional approach given that economic inactivity in neighboring communities can cause an increase of crime. This suggests that Plan Tamaulipas, a state-focused initiative with federal support, could be an appropriate vehicle to pilot job creation programs designed specifically to reduce levels of crime.

Advances have been made in recent years in Mexico's legal framework for the protection of journalists, notably the federalization of crimes involving attacks on the press, but on the ground in states like Tamaulipas impunity still reigns for organized crime groups seeking to silence those who would report on issues of crime, violence and corruption. A missing component of Plan Tamaulipas is a program to protect threatened journalists and prosecute those who threaten them.

In conclusion, Plan Tamaulipas is an important step toward addressing public security challenges in the state. Nonetheless, to be effective in the medium to long term the program will need to be supplemented or strengthened to ensure that increased federal resources can eventually be replaced by professional and trustworthy state law enforcement authorities. Institution building, in this sense, means not only building a trustworthy police force and other law enforcement agencies but also creating the mechanisms of transparency and accountability necessary to preserve the integrity of the force in the face of major pressure from organized crime. Internal units are needed to do ongoing vetting, investigate allegations of corruption or abuse, and, if appropriate, prosecute the offenders. Of course, law enforcement agencies are only able to be effective when political leaders support and guide them to uphold the rule of law without exceptions, which is most likely to happen when government is open to the public eye and accountable to public demands. Government must find ways to engage the public and press as partners. Given the currently weak state of the press and civil society, and given the pressures they face when attempting to report and respond to organized crime, the federal and state government will need to support and protect journalists and non-governmental organizations so that they can function as full partners in the process of recovering public security and building the rule of law. While Plan Tamaulipas is, as it should be, a Mexican designed and run effort, given the inescapably regional dimension of illicit trafficking operations and the interest of the United States to have a strong and prosperous state along its border, increased

coordination and collaboration between the two governments in a way targeted to address public security concerns in Tamaulipas would increase the plan's effectiveness.