

CRIMINAL INSURGENCIES IN MEXICO AND THE AMERICAS

THE GANGS AND CARTELS WAGE WAR



EDITED BY ROBERT J. BUNKER

ROUTLEDGE

Criminal Insurgencies in Mexico and the Americas

The Gangs and Cartels Wage War

Edited by
Robert J. Bunker



First published 2013
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2013 Taylor & Francis

This book is a reproduction of *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 22, issue 4. The Publisher requests to those authors who may be citing this book to state, also, the bibliographical details of the special issue on which the book was based.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN13: 978-0-415-53344-7 (HB)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-53375-1 (PB)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Taylor & Francis Books

Publisher's Note

The publisher would like to make readers aware that the chapters in this book may be referred to as articles as they are identical to the articles published in the special issue. The publisher accepts responsibility for any inconsistencies that may have arisen in the course of preparing this volume for print.



Criminal Insurgencies in Mexico and the Americas

In recent years, the south-western border of the United States has come under increasing pressure from the activities of Mexican narco-insurgents. These insurgents have developed rapidly from beginnings as nebulous gangs into networked cartels that have exposed the porosity of the border. These cartels declare no allegiance to any nation and are engaging in asymmetrical warfare against sovereign states throughout Mexico and in Central America. Within such states, de facto political control is shifting to the cartels in the 'areas of impunity' that have emerged.

This book addresses these concerns and focuses on the criminal insurgencies being waged by the gangs and cartels. It is divided into sections on theory, Mexico, and the Americas and contains a number of introductory essays pertaining to this premier security threat to the United States and her allies in the region. Topics covered include criminal and spiritual insurgency, cartel weapons, corruption, feral cities, Los Zetas, politicized gangs, and threat analysis in Central America.

This work will be a valuable resource to scholars in the fields of regional security, criminal justice and American Studies. It will be of great benefit to military and civil policymakers and practitioners in the areas of law enforcement and counternarcotics.

It has been published previously as a special issue of *Small Wars and Insurgencies*.

Robert J. Bunker is an epochal warfare studies scholar and security consultant. Past associations include the Counter-OPFOR Corporation, University of Southern California, FBI Academy (as Futurist in Residence), National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center–West, and the Los Angeles Terrorism Early Warning Group.

In Memoriam

Graham Hall Turbiville, Jr

September 9, 1942 – April 24, 2012

Notes on contributors

Malcolm Beith is a freelance journalist and author of *The Last Narco* (Grove Press, 2010) – about the life of Joaquin ‘El Chapo’ Guzmán Loera – the undisputed leader of the Sinaloa Cartel. He is fluent in Spanish, lived in Mexico from 2007 to 2009, and has been tracking news stories in *El Universal*, *Reforma*, and *La Jornada* for years concerning allegations of ties between the Mexican political parties and the Sinaloa Cartel. While based in Mexico City, he regularly traveled to the hills of Sinaloa, Michoacan, and Ciudad Juarez to conduct field research; he also visited several penitentiaries throughout the country to talk to drug traffickers. He has extensive contacts throughout Mexican officialdom; and regularly visits Mexico to update his reporting on the drug war. He wrote about the drug war regularly for *Newsweek*, and since the publication of *The Last Narco*, he has written pieces on the drug war for *Foreign Policy Magazine*, *The Sunday Times*, *National Catholic Reporter*, *World Politics Review*, *The Sun* (UK), *Nogales International*, *FHM magazine*, *High Times*, and *The Australian*.

Robert J. Bunker is an epochal warfare studies scholar and security consultant focusing on non-state opposing force research, analysis, and defeat strategies. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the Claremont Graduate University, five other university degrees, and has both undertaken and provided counter-terrorism related training. He has over 200 publications including numerous edited works, booklets, chapters, and articles in policy, law enforcement, and military venues. Past associations include the Counter-OPFOR Corporation, University of Southern California, FBI Academy (as Futurist in Residence), National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center–West, and the Los Angeles Terrorism Early Warning Group. Recent publications include *Red Teams and Counterterrorism Training* (University of Oklahoma Press 2011) with Steve Sloan and the edited work *Narcos Over the Border: Gangs, Cartels and Mercenaries* (Routledge, 2011).

Steven S. Dudley is the co-director of InSight, a new non-profit initiative with offices in Bogotá and Washington DC that monitors organized crime in the Americas. He is the former Bureau Chief of *The Miami Herald* in the Andean Region and the author of *Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia* (Routledge, 2004). Dudley has also reported from Mexico, Haiti, Brazil, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Miami for National Public Radio, the BBC, and *The Washington Post*, among others. In addition to his work at InSight, he has done a documentary film on the life and career of a lawyer who defends Colombian drug traffickers and paramilitaries, and he has written policy briefs for the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars and the International Crisis Group. Mr Dudley has a BA in Latin American History from Cornell University and an MA in Latin American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. He has won numerous journalism prizes and was awarded the prestigious Knight Fellowship at Stanford University in 2007.

David A. Kuhn provides specialized law enforcement and first responder training throughout the United States, focusing on terrorism incident response and threat mitigation. He is a recognized authority in the area of military standoff weapons, MANPADS (Man-Portable Air Defense Systems), and forensic analysis of areas where such weapons or explosives have been deployed. He is senior consultant and author for Jane's Information Group on terrorism response; unconventional weapons response, military standoff weapons, and critical infrastructure protection and has co-authored a number of Jane's Response Handbooks. Mr Kuhn regularly provides technical assistance to EOD units in the areas of terrorist IED construction, IED analysis, and special training scenarios. He has also provided advanced training to more than 54 US law enforcement agencies including police department Special Response Teams (SRT), EOD units, FBI, DOD, DOJ, US Secret Service, US Marshal's Service, TSA (Transportation Security Administration), US Coast Guard, and US Customs since 1999.

Samuel Logan is the Managing Director of Southern Pulse, a field-based professional services firm focused on Latin America. Mr Logan holds an MA from the Monterrey Institute of International Studies, where he focused on black markets. From 1998 to 2009, Mr Logan lived and worked in Latin America as an investigative journalist, reporting on security, energy, politics, economics, organized crime, terrorism, and black markets in the region. He is the author of *This is for the Mara Salvatrucha: Inside the MS-13, America's Most Violent Gang* (Hyperion, 2009), and is currently working on a nonfiction narrative about Mexico's Los Zetas criminal organization. The book he co-authored with George Grayson just published, *The Executioner's Men: Los Zetas, Rogue Soldiers, Criminal*

Entrepreneurs, and the Shadow State They Created (Transaction Publishers, 2012).

Max Manwaring is a Professor of Military Strategy at the US Army War College, a retired army colonel, and holds a PhD from the University of Illinois. He writes extensively on violent non-state actors such as insurgents, gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and private armies and has held the General Douglas MacArthur Chair of Research at the USAWC. His most recent article is ‘Three Lessons from Contemporary Challenges to Security,’ *PRISM*, June 2011. He is the author of *Gangs, Pseudo Militias, and other Modern Mercenaries: New Dynamics in Uncomfortable Wars* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), *Insurgency, Terrorism, and Crime* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), and author and editor of numerous other works.

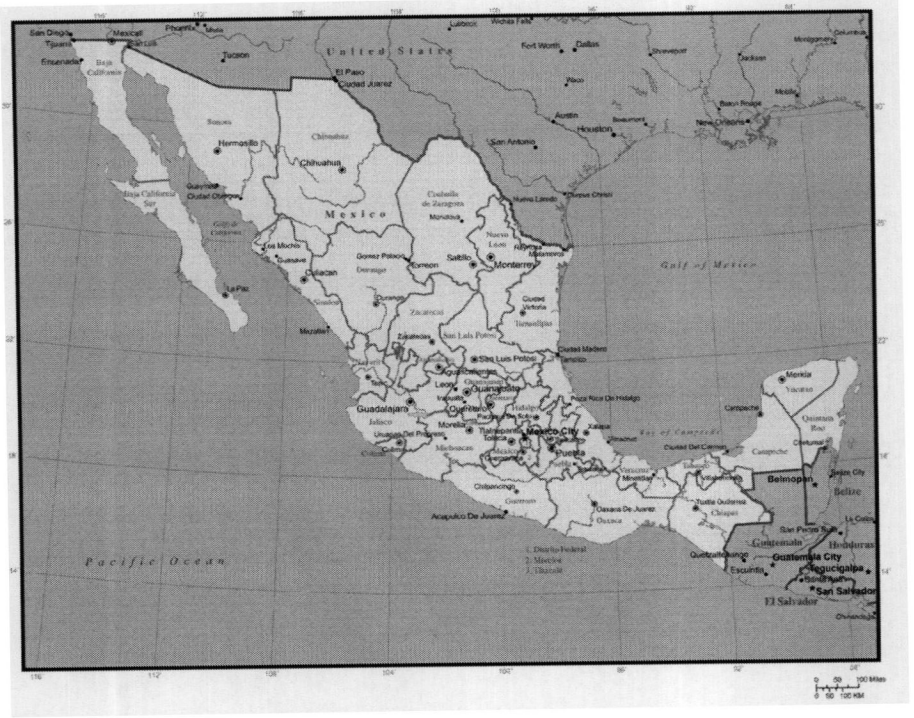
Paul B. Rich is co-editor of *Small Wars and Insurgencies*. He has degrees from the Universities of Sussex, York and Warwick and has taught at the Universities of Bristol and Melbourne. He has written extensively on insurgency and counterinsurgency in international relations as well as the politics of Southern Africa. He recently co-edited the *Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, published by Routledge in 2012 and is currently at work on a project on the Congo and Central Africa entitled ‘Mines, Mercenaries and Warlords: The Decolonisation of the Congo and the Crisis of African Statehood, 1960–65’.

John P. Sullivan is a career Police Officer. He currently serves as a Lieutenant with the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department. He is also a senior research fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies on Terrorism (CAST), a member of the advisory board of Southern Pulse Networked Intelligence, and a member of the research group on Netwars and Peacenet at the Institute of Global Studies (Institut d’Etudes Mondiales) at the Fondation Maison des sciences de l’homme in Paris. He is co-editor of *Countering Terrorism and WMD: Creating a Global Counter-Terrorism Network* (Routledge, 2006) and *Global Biosecurity: Threats and Responses* (Routledge, 2010). He holds a BA in Government from the College of William and Mary and an MA in Urban Affairs and Policy Analysis from the New School for Social Research. His current research focus is the impact of transnational organized crime on sovereignty in Mexico and elsewhere.

Graham H. Turbiville, Jr was a Senior Consultant and Researcher for Courage Service, Inc., McLean, Virginia (a Centra Technology Company), addressing Department of Defense and intelligence community programs dealing with cultural and geographic assessments in several areas of the world; a senior consultant for the Tribal Analysis Center, Leesburg, Virginia, producing history-based assessments of tribal/clan societies in contemporary war and conflict; and an Associate Fellow with the US Special Operations Command/ Joint Special Operations University (USSOCOM/

JSOU). Earlier, Dr Turbiville served 30 years in intelligence community analytical and leadership positions at the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Department of the Army. These included as director/chief of long-range and current intelligence offices and directorates, director of a Joint Reserve Intelligence Center, and other assignments dealing with foreign combined arms, security, and special operations forces.

Tom Durell-Young is Program Manager, Europe, of the Center for Civil-Military Relations, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. Dr. Young also holds the position of Staff Consultant at the RAND Corporation (Santa Monica) where he works on teams examining national defense and political-military issues. Prior to taking these positions in March 2000, he was a Research Professor at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College for 12 years. In 1999, he was the inaugural Eisenhower Fellow at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy, Breda, the Netherlands. He holds a PhD and *Certificat des Etudes supérieures* in International Economics and Policy from the *Institut universitaire de Hautes Etudes internationales, Université de Genève* (Geneva, Switzerland), is a 1990 graduate of the U.S. Army War College (Carlisle Barracks, PA) and holds an MA with Great Distinction from the School of Advanced International Studies, the Johns Hopkins University (Bologna / Washington, DC). Since 1989, he has been the North American editor of *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (London) and has been on the editorial boards of the PfP Consortium's *Connections*, *Australian Army Journal* (Canberra), and *Defense and Security Analysis* (Lancaster, UK).



Map of Mexico

Contents

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	ix
<i>Map of Mexico</i>	xiii
Editor's note <i>Robert J. Bunker</i>	1
Foreword <i>Paul B. Rich and Tom Durell-Young</i>	3
Preface: Los Zetas and a new barbarism <i>Samuel Logan</i>	5
1. Grand strategic overview: epochal change and new realities for the United States <i>Robert J. Bunker</i>	15
Part 1: Theory	
2. Rethinking insurgency: criminality, spirituality, and societal warfare in the Americas <i>John P. Sullivan and Robert J. Bunker</i>	29
3. Integrating feral cities and third phase cartels/third generation gangs research: the rise of criminal (narco) city networks and BlackFor <i>Robert J. Bunker and John P. Sullivan</i>	51
Part 2: Mexico	
4. A broken Mexico: allegations of collusion between the Sinaloa cartel and Mexican political parties <i>Malcolm Beith</i>	74
5. Just where do Mexican cartel weapons come from? <i>David A. Kuhn and Robert J. Bunker</i>	94

CONTENTS

6. Silver over the border: US law enforcement corruption on the Southwest Border <i>Graham H. Turbiville, Jr</i>	122
Part 3: The Americas	
7. Security, stability and sovereignty challenges of politicized gangs and insurgents in the Americas <i>Max Manwaring</i>	147
8. Central America besieged: cartel and maras country threat analysis <i>Steven S. Dudley</i>	177
<i>Index</i>	201

Editor's note

This research project on 'Criminal Insurgencies in Mexico and the Americas: The Gangs and Cartels Wage War' commenced in the fall of 2010 and was completed in late summer of 2011. Its publication is meant to be a companion work to the earlier 'Narcos Over the Border: Gangs, Cartels, and Mercenaries' research project published by Routledge in 2010 and 2011 first as a special journal issue of *Small Wars & Insurgencies* and then as an edited book for wider dissemination. I would like to sincerely thank Dr Paul B. Rich in his support for the publication of the many original contributions found within these works and for his early acceptance of the significance of the criminal insurgencies taking place in Mexico and within other regions where the Mexican cartels had extended their influence.

This project has immensely benefited from the participation of Malcolm Beith, Steven S. Dudley, David A. Kuhn, Samuel Logan, Max G. Manwaring, John P. Sullivan, and Graham H. Turbiville, Jr. An editor could not ask for a more professional team of scholars and professionals with which to engage in such an endeavor. Quite a few of them were also involved in the initial research project, and for their participation in both of these projects I give them thanks. The research team represents a unique grouping of senior scholars and younger professionals – up and rising stars – many of whom have spent considerable time in Latin America engaged in field research over the years. This work benefits from such deep cultural expertise, the Spanish skills of many of its contributors, and the mix of essays ranging from the more theoretical to the more applied in their intent. I would also like to thank my wife, Pamela L. Bunker, a scholar in her own right, for providing draft support and along with the rest of my family members for the many sacrifices that I have asked from them as I have been engaged in coordinating and seeing this research project through to its completion.

While much of the United States is still unaware of the activities of the cartels and gangs in Mexico, Central America, and even inside our own borders, works such as this one help to educate scholars and laypersons alike and also influence US public and policy perspectives. I, for one, was contacted a few weeks ago by a representative of the US Western Hemisphere Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to provide testimony about whether it was appropriate to label what was taking place in Mexico as an insurgency. My answer, of course, is that it most certainly is. Whether this hearing or my testimony will come to fruition is unknown – but what this means is that works such as this one do have real world policy importance and help to make a difference as sovereign governments begin to wake up to the reality of the new and emerging forms of cartel and gang

derived insurgency and organized criminality making themselves known in the early decades of the twenty-first century. Such cartel and gang activities go way beyond simple law and order concerns of domestic policing and must now be recognized as national security threats to Mexico and a host of other nations in the Americas.

As this research project is now almost complete, a couple of burning issues of concern should be discussed. The first issue is that the editor and the many contributors have made every attempt to be proactive and timely in their writings. The situation in Mexico and Central America is evolving and mutating at such a rapid rate that I fear that we may be too conservative in some of our writings and that the analysis provided has become highly perishable. The intent of this research project is to provide unbiased scholarship (as much as is reasonably possible) based upon the empirical facts and information that has been collected. I've discussed this issue extensively with John Sullivan, and we are at a loss concerning how to mitigate the perishability factor. Wild card developments are taking place all the time – a case in point is the dark spirituality making its presence increasingly known in Mexico. The information and analysis of such developments presented in this work should thus be considered a baseline – the reader will have to judge how they have changed and mutated as events and incidents unfold. The second issue goes to the heart of the grand strategic overview that I provided. The recent Standard & Poor's (S&P) downgrade of the US credit rating to AA + – a direct outcome of US political gridlock in Washington, DC and our continuing inability as a nation to live within our economic resources vis-à-vis our superpower global obligations – means the US is ultimately going to have less military, policing, and foreign aid resources to allocate against the cartel and gang threat growing in the Americas. While many still consider the S&P downgrade to be only a minor issue at this point, it represents an initial chink in the US economic armor and one that must be closely watched to ensure that fissure lines do not begin to spread and deepen. If they do, the cartel and gang threats of the Americas identified and discussed in this work will be greatly magnified as the US finds itself in an increasingly weakened economic position.

Dr Robert J. Bunker
Epochal Warfare Studies scholar
Claremont, CA, USA
August 2011

Foreword

Those involved in research on insurgency, counterinsurgency and terrorism have been rather reluctant until relatively recently to focus with any degree of seriousness on the issue of large scale drug gangs and the war between rival drug cartels. These issues have appeared to be more the province of sociologists of organised crime and those studying the impact of the drug industry on western economies and the economies of the societies that produce the drugs. Moreover large drug gangs, while well armed and with a capacity for considerable social destabilisation, appeared to follow patterns rather different to mainstream insurgent groupings such as the Vietnamese NLF, the Taliban or the various insurgent groups to be found in weak or failing states such as Somalia or Yemen.

This relative disinterest by the mainstream military analysts of insurgency or COIN can also be ascribed to the preoccupation with the Middle East since the mid 1990s with the resulting deluge of work that has accompanied the US intervention into Afghanistan and Iraq in the years after 2001. Despite the fact that the rising cartel wars in Mexico were right on the US border the US military and strategic research establishment can to some degree be seen as taking its eye off the ball at a very critical moment when the rising scale of violence threatened not only to spill over into the US but to threaten at least the northern part of Mexico with effective state failure and breakdown – the very sort of thing the US military was supposed to be concerned about much further afield in East Africa and Yemen.

This volume edited by Robert Bunker is thus extremely timely. Following on previous edited work that Dr Bunker has published in *Small Wars and Insurgencies* the selection of essays pinpoints both the intricate nature of nature of the organisation of *Los Zetas* cartel and their methods of maintaining control over followers and establishing social identity among its followers. It also depicts the increasingly barbaric trajectory of violence the gang employs to maintain its turf boundaries. The research suggests that this kind of drug based warfare could become an increasingly dominant feature of what some analysts have termed “fourth generation warfare” in which “spiritual” forms of insurgency will lead both to state breaking and the making of new forms of narco states which may well become a growing threatening to international stability in the decades to come.

This volume indicates that analysts of insurgency and COIN as well as those involved in research in mainstream International Relations need to move beyond the short term and the reassessment the past eras of conflict –

the equivalent of the old stereotype of arm chair generals in years past fighting the last war. A greater imagination is required to work through what appear to be current strategic threats and to look at threats and insurgent dynamics in the medium to longer term.

Of course it is impossible to know how the current insurgencies in the Middle East will be played out but there is some evidence to suggest that the current wave of democratically inclined revolutions in North Africa may well marginalise radical Islamism and jihadist ideology. In other words the crude conception of the “war on terror” might indeed lead to the eventual downgrading of global jihadist confrontations with western societies, although doubtless there will remain significant insurgencies in the Middle East region for decades to come.

But it is precisely with the apparent seeing of global jihadist threats that the west will be confronted with a new and possibly equally dangerous series of threats from militaries drug formations of the kind that Dr Bunker outlines in this illuminating as well as disturbing volume. The essays here show that far more work is needed on both the Mexican and US border regions as well as South America and other parts of the international system to produce a more detailed comparative picture in which the scale and nature of threats from these cartels can be assessed and the appropriate responses in turn formulated.

Paul B. Rich
Tom Durell-Young
Editors *Small Wars and Insurgencies*

Preface: Los Zetas and a new barbarism

Samuel Logan

Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas literally exploded in August 2005, as rival drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) battled for control of the busiest inland border crossing between Mexico and the United States. The dust settled in the fall of 2005, and while Los Zetas, the organization that defended the city, remains in control to this day, their defense of the border town during that period sparked a cycle of violence that in the following six years has taken Mexico to new highs of recorded homicides and new lows of barbarism – both effectively used to hone the edge of a criminal organization’s most potent weapon: fear.

Today, various outlets of social media in Mexico’s virtual reporting space, and some old media, regularly post videos and photos of the most grotesque acts of violence one human can do to another, from photos of the now common quartered remains of victims to the recently posted macabre photo of two young men who were found skinned, allegedly while alive initially, with their hearts removed.¹ In the Spring of 2011, Mexico’s various assassins – and the new media platform they expertly wield – presented observers a level of grotesque visual stimulation beyond what the early theorists of the ‘CNN Effect’ likely ever considered possible.² Beyond the effect that real-time information sharing may have on nation-states and other political stakeholders, photos, videos, and other new media forms of information sharing, such as Twitter, have accelerated the velocity at which Mexico’s rival criminal organizations exceed the cruelty visited upon one another. Mexican media outlets, and the criminals’ own blogs and YouTube channels, display this barbarism for the viewing public at large, but the violent content is intended specifically for the rivals of those who commit these gruesome acts. Most observers remain on the edge, sickened, disheartened, and scared, while analysts, stakeholders, academics, and other critical observers wonder what will happen next.

To what extent will this new barbarism and depravity go? There is no simple answer but to say that many more years will pass before it touches bottom; the number of criminals-in-training ready to wield a skinning knife and a handheld camera will only grow as the combination of a youth bulge in cities such as Juárez, Chihuahua, and Hermosillo overlaps with each criminal organization’s