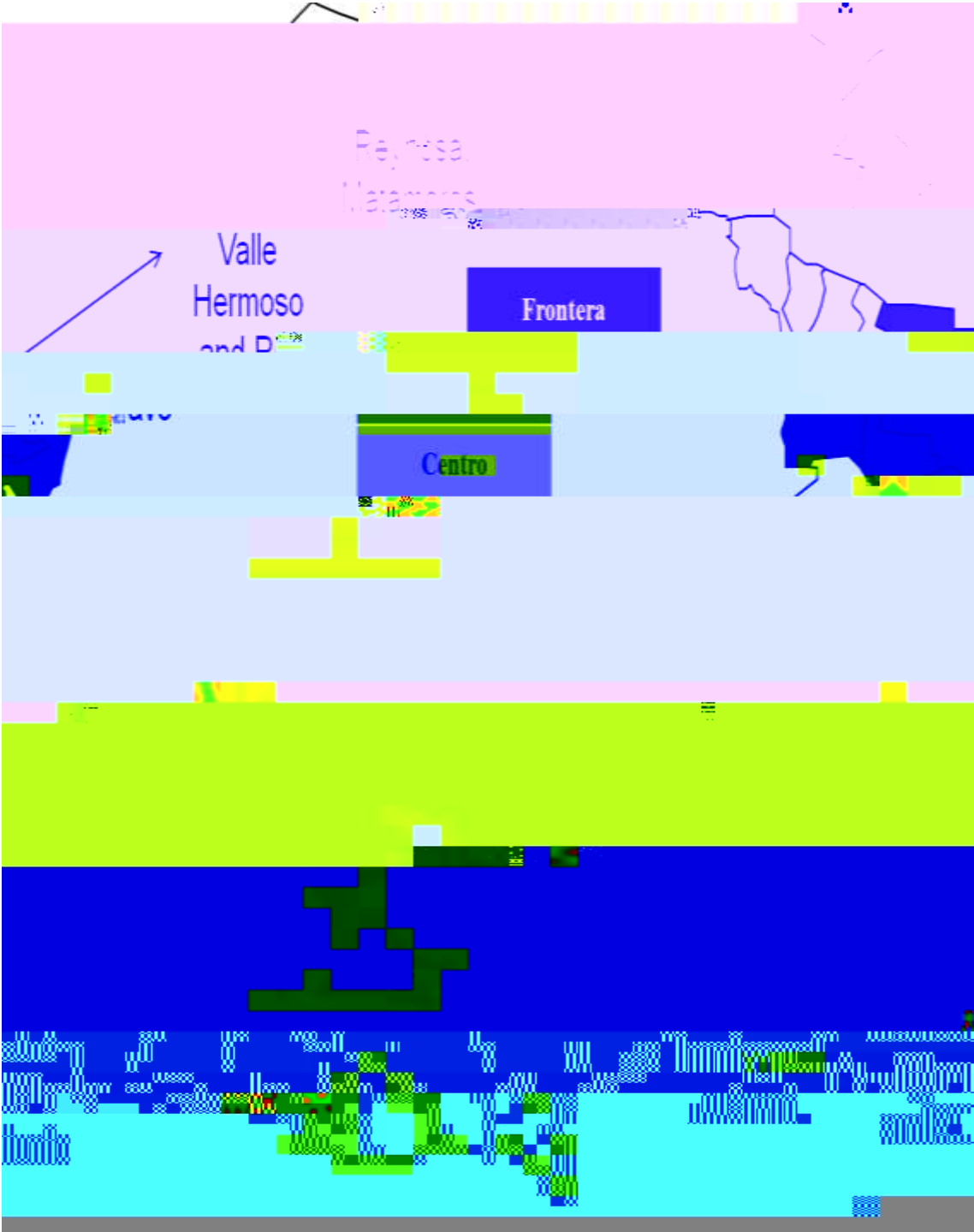


Plan Tamaulipas: A New Security Strategy for a Troubled State

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 G

violent crime. (Governor Torre Cantú has more recently begun describing Nuevo Laredo as a

Map 1: The Four Zones of Plan Tamaulipas



The first

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.

“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

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

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 Victimization 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

	Total Reported Kidnappings (SNSP)	123		Total Reported Kidnappings (SNSP)	1,418
	Estimated Total Kidnappings (ENVIPE)				
Tamaulipas Kidnappings			National Kidnappings		

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

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

allegedly linked to organized crime by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.³² The Yarrington indictment points

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.

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

Additionally, it is important to consider other characteristics that differentiate Tamaulipas from other

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 municipalities. In other words, when there is high unemployment in a given municipality, it is likely that crime will increase in neighboring municipalities.

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

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

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

About the Authors

Christopher Wilson is Senior Associate at the Mexico Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, where he leads the Institute's research and programming on regional economic integration and U.S.-Mexico border affairs. He is the author of *Working Together: Economic Ties between the United States and Mexico* and coauthor of the *State of the Border Report*. Chris has testified before the United States Congress and is regularly consulted by national and international media outlets regarding U.S.-Mexico relations. He has written opinion columns for the Wall Street Journal, Politico, CNN, and Reuters, among others. Chris previously worked as a contractor doing Mexico analysis for the U.S. military and as a researcher at American University's Center for North American Studies. In Mexico, he worked briefly with the international trade consultancy IQOM, Inteligencia Comercial, and with American students studying regional political and social issues. He completed his M.A. in International Affairs at American University, focusing on U.S. foreign policy and hemispheric relations.

Eugenio Weigend is a PhD candidate and researcher from Tecnológico de Monterrey who has focused his work on Public Security in Mexico. He has studied the topics of arms trafficking, drug policies, organized crime and police reform. He is co-author of the Security Index of Mexican States and Tecnológico de Monterrey's manifesto for public security. He has a Master's degree in Public Policy from Brown University and Bachelor's degree in Economics from Universidad de Monterrey.