



U.S. Department of Justice  
**National Drug Intelligence Center**

April 2010

# Situation Report

Product Number 2010-S0787-004

## Cities Where Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate Within the United States

### Executive Summary

(LES) The National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) assesses with high confidence that in 2009, Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) were operating in the United States in at least 1,286 cities spanning all nine Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) regions, based on law enforcement reporting. Moreover, NDIC assesses with high confidence that Mexican DTOs in at least 143 of these U.S. cities (see Appendix A) were linked to a specific Mexican Cartel or DTO based in Mexico—the Sinaloa Cartel (at least 75 cities), the Gulf Cartel/Los Zetas (at least 37 cities), the Juárez Cartel (at least 33 cities), the Beltrán-Leyva DTO (at least 30 cities), La Familia Michoacán (at least 27 cities), or the Tijuana Cartel (at least 21 cities). NDIC assesses with high confidence that Mexican DTOs will further expand their drug trafficking operations in the United States in the near term, particularly in the New England, New York/New Jersey, Mid-Atlantic, and Florida/Caribbean Regions. NDIC also believes that Mexican DTOs will maintain the present high level of availability for heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine because the conditions in Mexico and in the United States that enabled and motivated the DTOs to increase production and availability of those drugs have not significantly changed.

### Scope Note

(U) This project did not attempt to measure an increase or decrease in the number of cities reporting Mexican DTO activity between 2008 and 2009, the extent of Mexican DTO operations in any city, or the specific threat posed by Mexican DTOs in each city. Further, the data in this report should not be used to compare regions with one another in terms of Mexican DTO activity.

(LES) The difference in the number of cities where the presence of Mexican DTOs was verified—230<sup>1</sup> cities in 2008<sup>a</sup> and 1,286 cities in 2009—does not necessarily represent an increase in Mexican DTO activity. More likely, the difference simply reflects a significant change in NDIC's information collection methodology. In 2008, the presence of Mexican DTOs was based on OCDETF case information from 2006 through 2008 and on reporting from or verification by High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Intelligence Support Center Managers. In 2009, in addition to using OCDETF and HIDTA information, NDIC also contacted 1,200 law enforcement

a. (LES) Analysis of OCDETF case information from 2009 yielded 247 identified cities, approximately 7 percent higher than the number of cities identified in 2008 (230).

## Cities Where Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate Within the United States

**(U) Definitions**

The following definitions were used for this report:

**Mexican DTO:** A Mexican DTO is an organization that is based in Mexico or the United States whose key leaders are Mexican nationals and whose members traffic drugs (produce, smuggle, transport, warehouse, protect, or distribute) or handle illicit drug proceeds.

**Mexican Cartel:** A Mexican drug cartel is an alliance of independent DTOs that have joined together to control segments of drug trafficking or to limit competition.

**DTO Presence:** A Mexican cartel or DTO is considered to have a presence in a U.S. city if at least one DTO member or associate is engaging in some type of trafficking activity.

agencies that reported the presence of Mexican DTOs in their areas through their responses to the National Drug Threat Survey. These agencies were asked to confirm Mexican DTO activity in their jurisdictions, applying a consistent definition. Through this change in methodology, NDIC has achieved much wider collection and better verification, resulting in a greater number of cities with a confirmed Mexican DTO presence (see [Appendix B](#)).

**Discussion**

(U) As reported in the *National Drug Threat Assessment 2010 (NDTA 2010)*,<sup>2</sup> Mexican DTOs are more deeply entrenched in drug trafficking activity in the United States and are active in more cities throughout the country than any other DTOs. Law enforcement reporting and case initiation data show that Mexican DTOs control most of the wholesale cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine distribution in the United States as well as much of the marijuana distribution.

(U) In the past few years, Mexican DTOs have expanded their operations in the Florida/Caribbean, Mid-Atlantic, New York/New Jersey, and New England OCDETF Regions, where, in the past Colombian DTOs were leading suppliers of cocaine and heroin, as reported in the *NDTA 2010*. As a result, the direct influence of Colombian DTOs has diminished, although Colombian DTOs remain a source for wholesale quantities of cocaine and heroin in many eastern states, especially New York and New Jersey. Mexican DTOs have expanded their presence by increasing their transportation and distribution networks, directly supplying Dominican drug distributors who had previously distributed cocaine and heroin provided primarily by Colombian DTOs.

(LES) NDIC assesses with high confidence that in 2009, Mexican DTOs were present in at least 1,286 U.S. cities spanning all nine OCDETF regions (see [Map 1 in Appendix B](#)), based on an analysis of federal, state, and local law enforcement reporting. The type of activity in each city varied and included DTO cells that store or distribute wholesale quantities of drugs as well as single individuals responsible for collecting drug proceeds. Further, NDIC assesses with high confidence that in at least 150 of these cities,<sup>b</sup> Mexican drug trafficking activity was linked to at least one of the principal Mexican organizations that supply illicit drugs to U.S. markets—the Beltrán-Leyva DTO, the Gulf Cartel/Los Zetas, the Juárez Cartel, La Familia Michoacán,

b. (U) Several cities have multiple cartel/DTO-affiliated cells or dealers operating within their jurisdictions.

the Sinaloa Cartel, and the Tijuana Cartel—and the Consolidated Priority Organization Targets (CPOTs) linked to the organizations. For instance:

- (LES) Organizations associated with the Mexico-based CPOT-linked organization Beltrán-Leyva DTO supply drugs to wholesale- and retail-level dealers in at least 30 cities. (See [Map 2 in Appendix B.](#))
- (LES) Traffickers aligned with the Gulf Cartel, which consists of DTOs led by CPOTs Antonio Ezequiel-Cárdenas-Guillén and Jorge Eduardo Costilla-Sánchez, supply wholesale quantities of drugs to cells or dealers in at least 37 cities. (See [Map 3 in Appendix B.](#))
- (LES) Traffickers aligned with Los Zetas, which is led by CPOTs Heriberto Lazcano-Lazcano and Miguel Trevino-Morales, supply wholesale quantities of drugs to cells or dealers in at least 37 cities. (See [Map 4 in Appendix B.](#))
- (LES) DTOs that are allied with the Juárez Cartel, led by CPOT Vicente Carrillo-Fuentes, supply drugs to dealers or distribution cells in at least 33 cities. (See [Map 5 in Appendix B.](#))
- (LES) DTOs affiliated with La Familia Michoacán, led by CPOT Jesús Méndez-Vargas, supply drugs to cells or dealers in at least 27 cities. (See [Map 6 in Appendix B.](#))
- (LES) Organizations linked to the Sinaloa Cartel, which consists of DTOs led by CPOTs Ignacio Coronel-Villareal, Juan José Esparragosa-Moreno, Joaquín Guzmán-Lorea, and Ishmael Zambada-García, supply drugs to distribution cells and dealers in at least 75 cities. (See [Map 7 in Appendix B.](#))
- (LES) Traffickers tied to the Tijuana Cartel, led by CPOT Eduardo Arrellano-Félix, supply wholesale quantities of drugs to cells and dealers in at least 20 cities. (See [Map 8 in Appendix B.](#))

## Outlook

(LES) There are no DTOs positioned to challenge the dominance of Mexican DTOs in wholesale cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine distribution in the United States, particularly in the Southwest, Southeast, Great Lakes, West Central, and Pacific Regions. NDIC believes that Mexican DTOs will further expand their drug trafficking activities in the New England, New York/New Jersey, Mid-Atlantic, and Florida/Caribbean Regions primarily at the expense of Colombian DTOs. Dominican DTOs in eastern drug markets that previously were supplied entirely by Colombian DTOs are increasingly being supplied by Mexican DTOs. There is no indication that Colombian DTOs are acting to recover or retain the Dominican distribution networks through which they have distributed many tons of cocaine and South American heroin annually.

(U) According to the *NDTA 2010*, drug availability indicator data showed that in 2009, cocaine availability was decreasing, while heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, and MDMA remained readily available, with increases in some areas. NDIC assesses with high confidence that Mexican DTOs will maintain the high level of availability for heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine because the conditions in Mexico and the United States that enabled and motivated the DTOs to increase production and availability of those drugs have not significantly changed.

**Cities Where Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate Within the United States**

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## Appendix A. Table

Table 1. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Reported Mexican DTO Presence and the Mexican Drug Cartel Affiliation

State/City	Beltrán-Leyva	Gulf	Los Zetas	Juárez	La Familia	Sinaloa	Tijuana
Fayetteville, AR					●		
Glendale, AZ						●	
Nogales, AZ						●	
Phoenix, AZ	●			●		●	
Tempe, AZ						●	
Tucson, AZ						●	
Yuma, AZ						●	
Bakersfield, CA	●						
Chula Vista, CA	●						●
El Centro, CA						●	
Fresno, CA	●						
Lodi, CA	●				●		
Long Beach, CA							
Los Angeles, CA	●				●	●	●
Oakland, CA					●		
Otay Mesa, CA							●
Palm Springs, CA						●	
Riverside, CA						●	
Sacramento, CA	●						
San Bernardino, CA						●	
San Diego, CA	●				●	●	●

Cities Where Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate Within the United States

(Table continued from previous page.)

**Table 1. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Reported Mexican DTO Presence and the Mexican Drug Cartel Affiliation**

State/City	Beltrán-Leyva	Gulf	Los Zetas	Juárez	La Familia	Sinaloa	Tijuana
San Francisco, CA	●				●	●	●
San Jose, CA	●			●	●		●
Santa Ana, CA	●						
South Lake Tahoe, CA							●
Stockton, CA						●	
Tecate, CA							●
Temecula, CA							●
Tulare, CA							●
Boulder, CO				●			
Colorado Springs, CO						●	
Denver, CO				●		●	
Grand Junction, CO						●	
Longmont, CO				●			
Fort Lauderdale, FL						●	
Gainesville, FL		●	●				
Miami, FL		●	●		●	●	
Orlando, FL						●	
Tampa, FL						●	
West Palm Beach, FL		●	●			●	
Atlanta, GA	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Blackshear, GA						●	
Bristol, GA						●	
Cedartown, GA						●	

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



**Table 1. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Reported Mexican DTO Presence and the Mexican Drug Cartel Affiliation**

State/City	Beltrán-Leyva	Gulf	Los Zetas	Juárez	La Familia	Sinaloa	Tijuana
Honolulu, HI						●	
Cedar Rapids, IA						●	●
Des Moines, IA				●			
Dubuque, IA		●	●				
Boise, ID						●	
Arcola, IL	●						
Aurora, IL						●	
Chicago, IL	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
East St. Louis, IL						●	
Ladd, IL				●			
Columbus, IN						●	
Indianapolis, IN				●			
Garden City, KS				●			
Kansas City, KS				●	●		●
Liberal, KS				●			
Wichita, KS				●			
New Orleans, LA		●	●	●			
Shreveport, LA		●	●				
Boston, MA		●	●				
Dorchester, MA						●	
Lawrence, MA		●	●				
Baltimore, MD						●	
Auburn Hills, MI						●	

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**Table 1. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Reported Mexican DTO Presence and the Mexican Drug Cartel Affiliation**

State/City	Beltrán-Leyva	Gulf	Los Zetas	Juárez	La Familia	Sinaloa	Tijuana
Detroit, MI							
Flint, MI							
Lansing, MI							
Minneapolis, MN							
St. Paul, MN							
Columbia, MO							
Joplin, MO							
Kansas City, MO							
St. Louis, MO							
Corinth, MS							
Gulfport, MS							
Pascagoula, MS							
Asheboro, NC							
Burlington, NC							
Charlotte, NC							
Greensboro, NC							
Hickory, NC							
Raleigh, NC							
Wilson, NC							
Norfolk, NE							
Omaha, NE							
Manchester, NH							
Middleton, NH							



(Table continued from previous page.)

**Table 1. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Reported Mexican DTO Presence and the Mexican Drug Cartel Affiliation**

State/City	Beltrán-Leyva	Gulf	Los Zetas	Juárez	La Familia	Sinaloa	Tijuana
Paterson, NJ						●	
Alamogordo, NM				●			
Albuquerque, NM				●		●	
Artesia, NM				●			
Santa Fe, NM				●			
Las Vegas, NV					●	●	●
Reno, NV						●	●
Buffalo, NY		●	●				
New York, NY	●	●	●	●		●	
Canton, OH	●						
Cincinnati, OH	●						
Cleveland, OH		●	●			●	
Columbus, OH						●	
Oklahoma City, OK				●	●	●	
Tulsa, OK				●	●	●	
Portland, OR					●		
Philadelphia, PA	●				●	●	
Cranston, RI						●	
Columbia, SC						●	
Chattanooga, TN						●	
Memphis, TN	●	●	●	●			
Nashville, TN		●	●				
Abilene, TX						●	

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(Table continued from previous page.)

**Table 1. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Reported Mexican DTO Presence and the Mexican Drug Cartel Affiliation**

State/City	Beltrán-Leyva	Gulf	Los Zetas	Juárez	La Familia	Sinaloa	Tijuana
Amarillo, TX				●			
Austin, TX	●	●	●	●			
Beaumont, TX		●	●				
Big Spring, TX						●	
Brownsville, TX		●	●				
Corpus Christi, TX					●		
Dallas, TX		●	●	●	●	●	
Del Rio, TX	●						
Eagle Pass, TX	●	●	●			●	
Edinburg, TX		●	●				
El Paso, TX				●		●	●
Fort Worth, TX		●	●				
Hidalgo, TX		●	●				
Houston, TX	●	●	●		●	●	
Laredo, TX	●	●	●			●	
Lubbock, TX						●	
McAllen, TX	●	●	●			●	
Mission, TX		●	●			●	
Perryton, TX				●			
Port Arthur, TX		●	●				
Prosper, TX		●	●				
Rio Grande City, TX		●	●				
Roma, TX		●	●				

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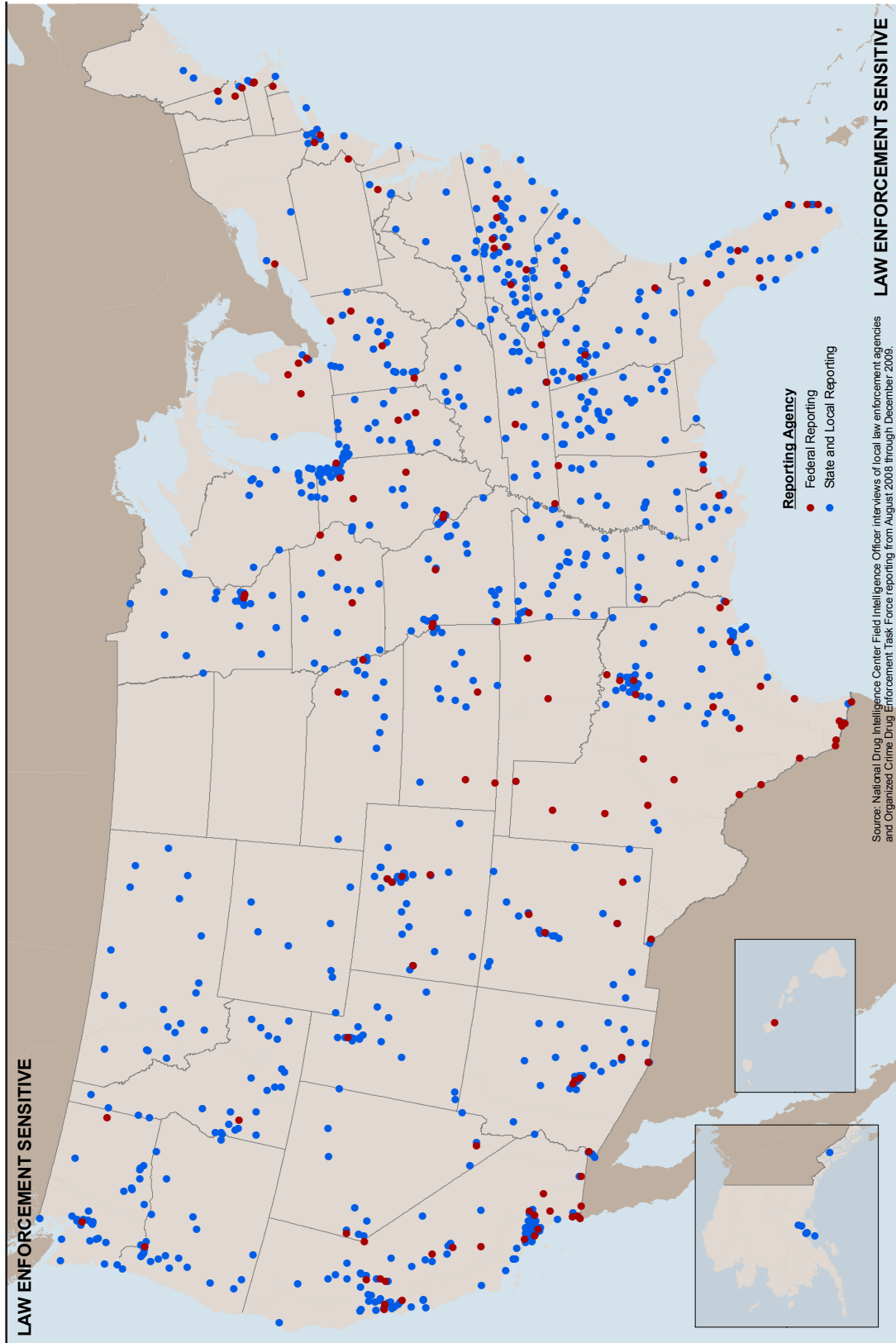
**Table 1. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Reported Mexican DTO Presence and the Mexican Drug Cartel Affiliation**

State/City	Beltrán-Leyva	Gulf	Los Zetas	Juárez	La Familia	Sinaloa	Tijuana
San Angelo, TX							
San Antonio, TX							
Sherman, TX							
Victoria, TX							
Salt Lake City, UT							
Seattle, WA							
Spokane, WA							

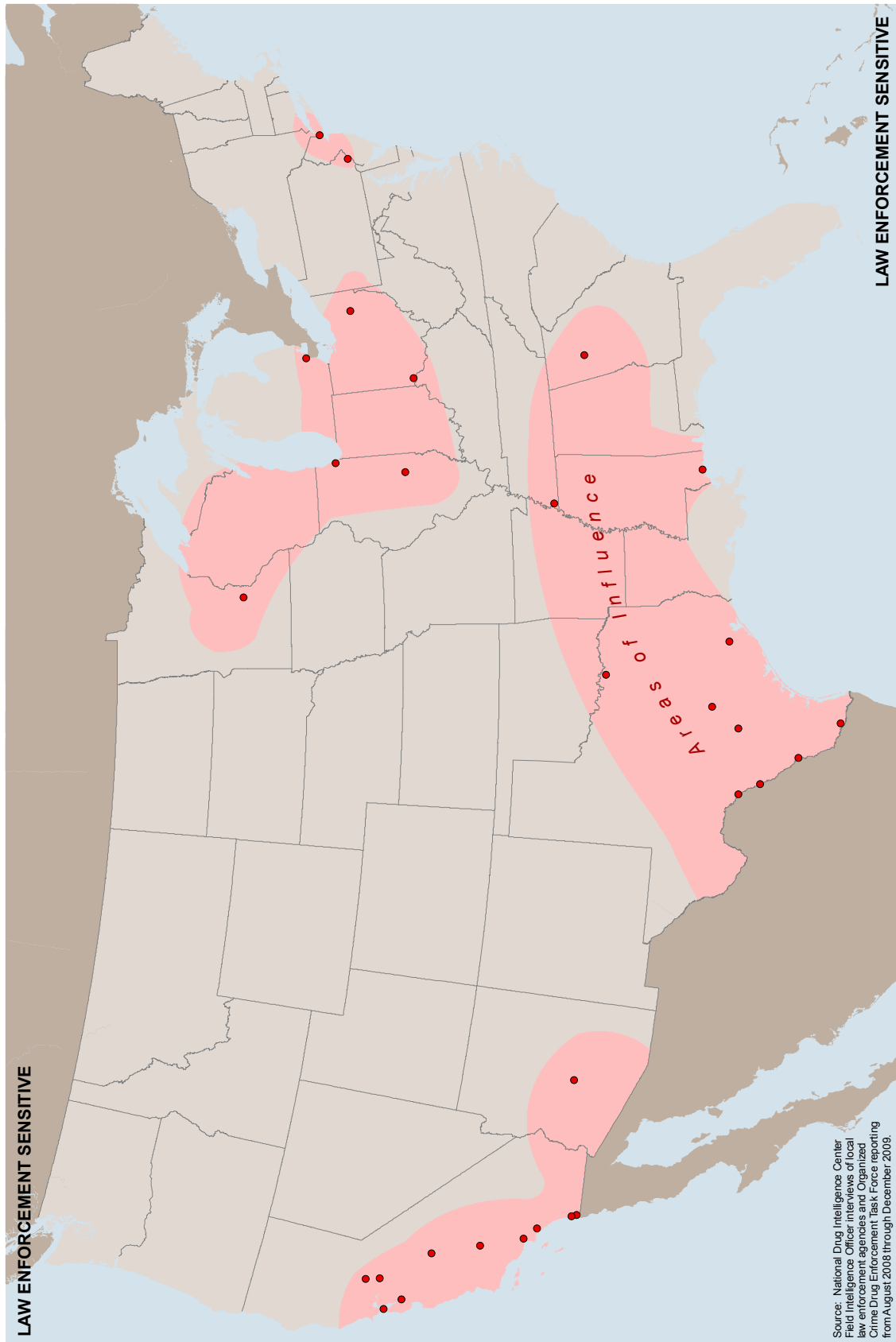
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Appendix B. Maps

Map 1. (U) U.S. Cities With Mexican Drug Trafficking Organization Activity as Reported by Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement in 2009

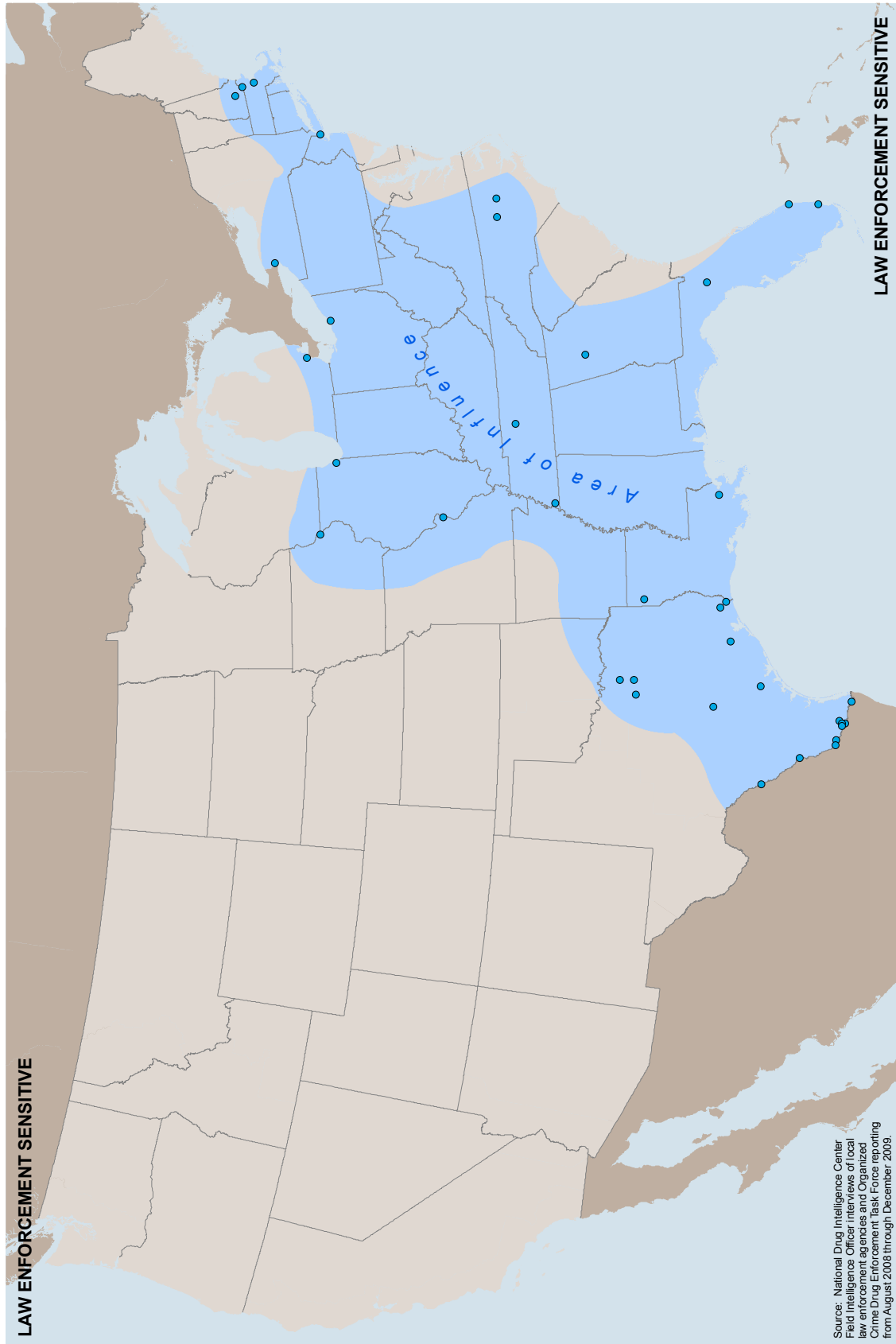


Map 2. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Presence of Members or Associates Affiliated with the Beltrán-Leyva DTO

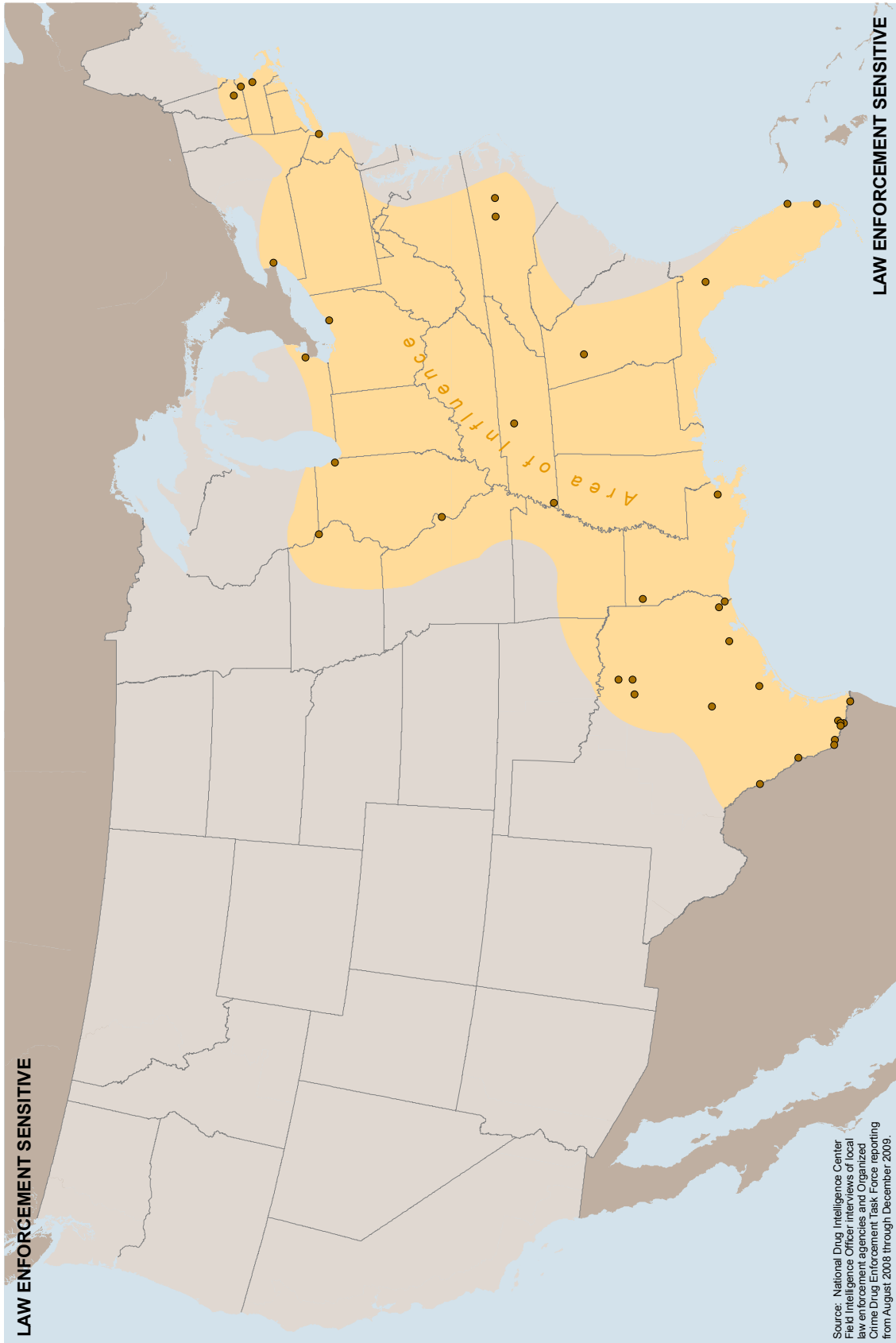


Cities Where Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate Within the United States

Map 3. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Presence of Members or Associates Affiliated With the Gulf Cartel

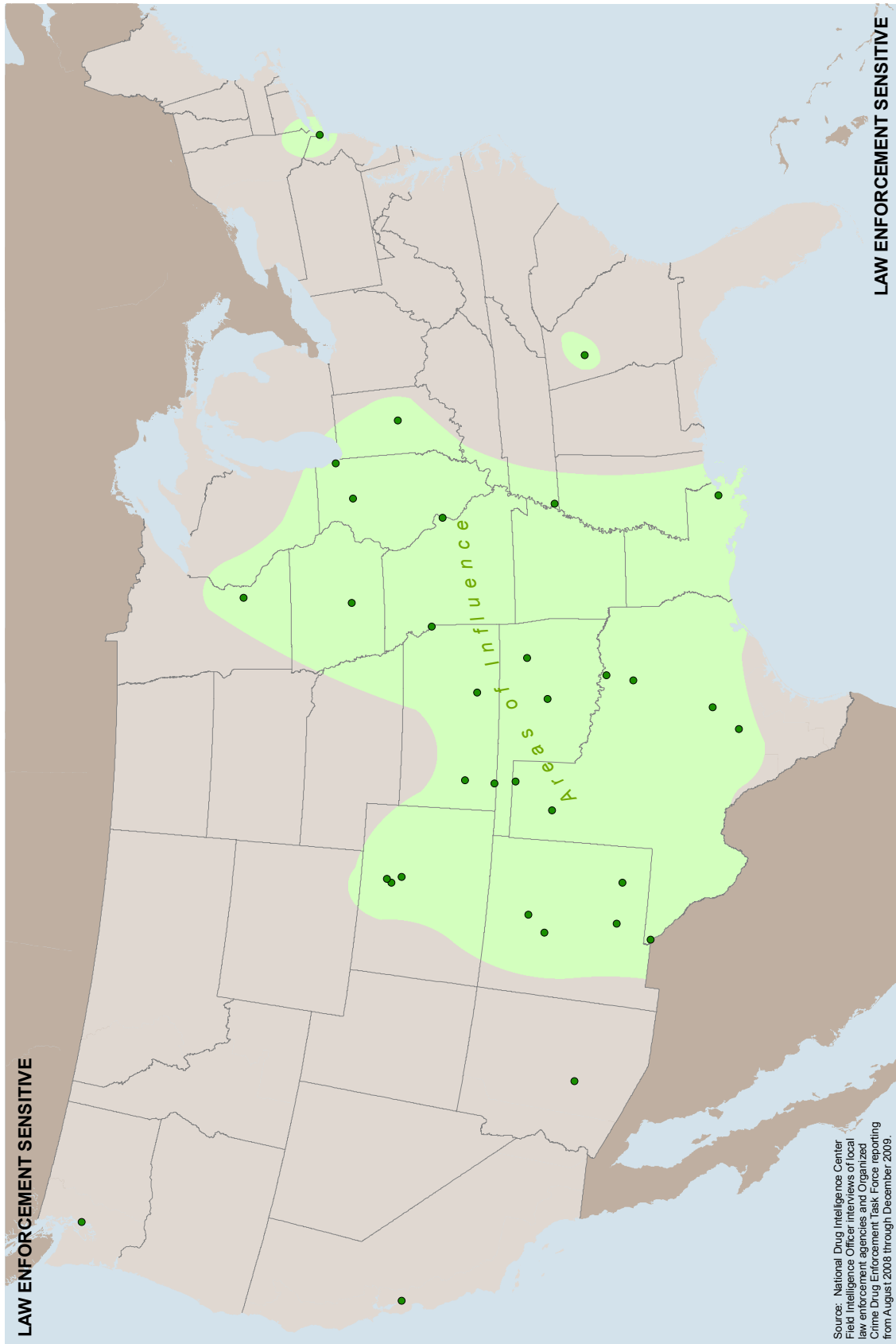


Map 4. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Presence of Members or Associates Affiliated With Los Zetas



Cities Where Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate Within the United States

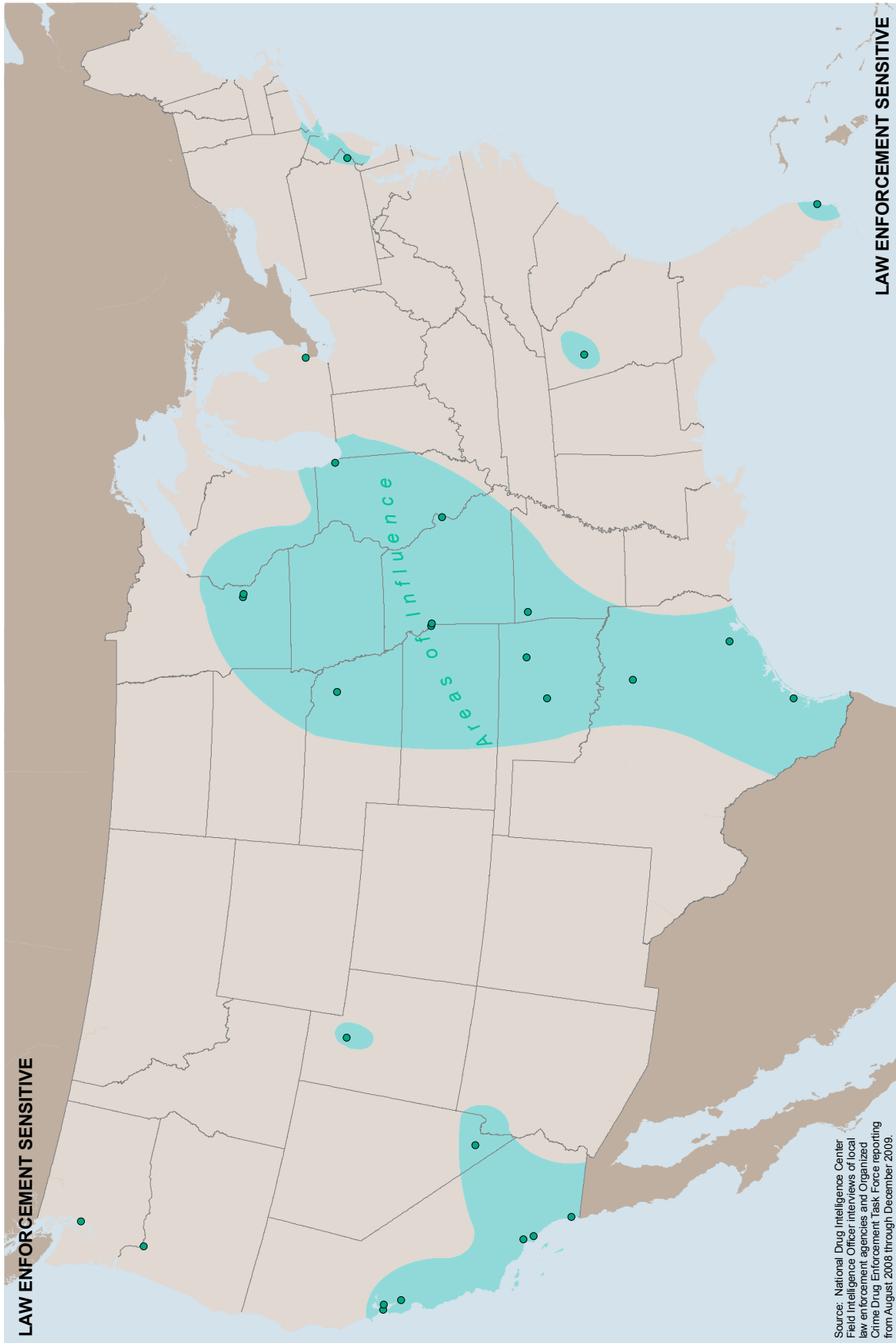
Map 5. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Presence of Members or Associates Affiliated With the Juárez Cartel



Source: National Drug Intelligence Center Field Intelligence Officer interviews of local law enforcement agencies and Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force reporting from August 2008 through December 2009.

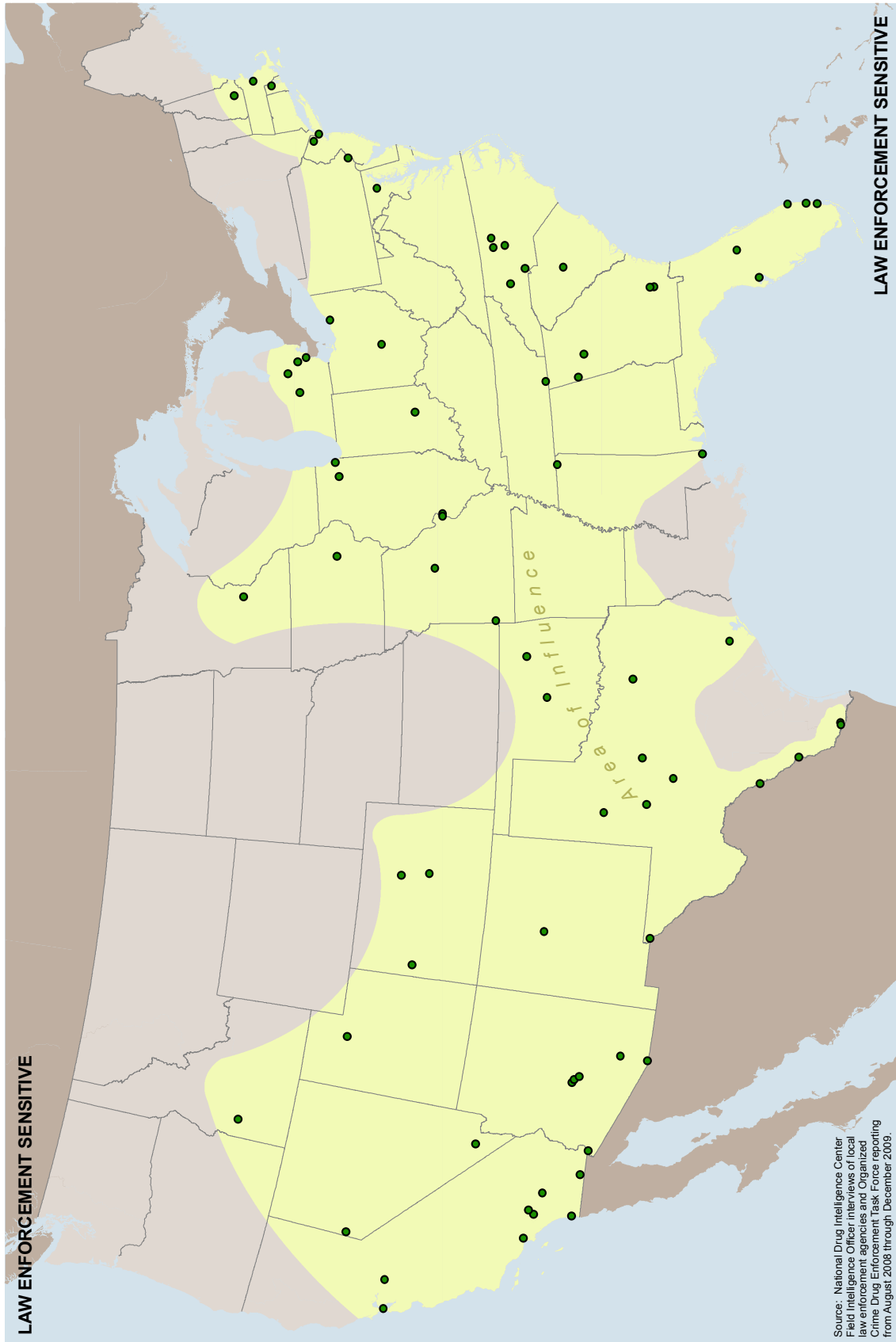


Map 6. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Presence of Members or Associates Affiliated With La Familia Michoacán

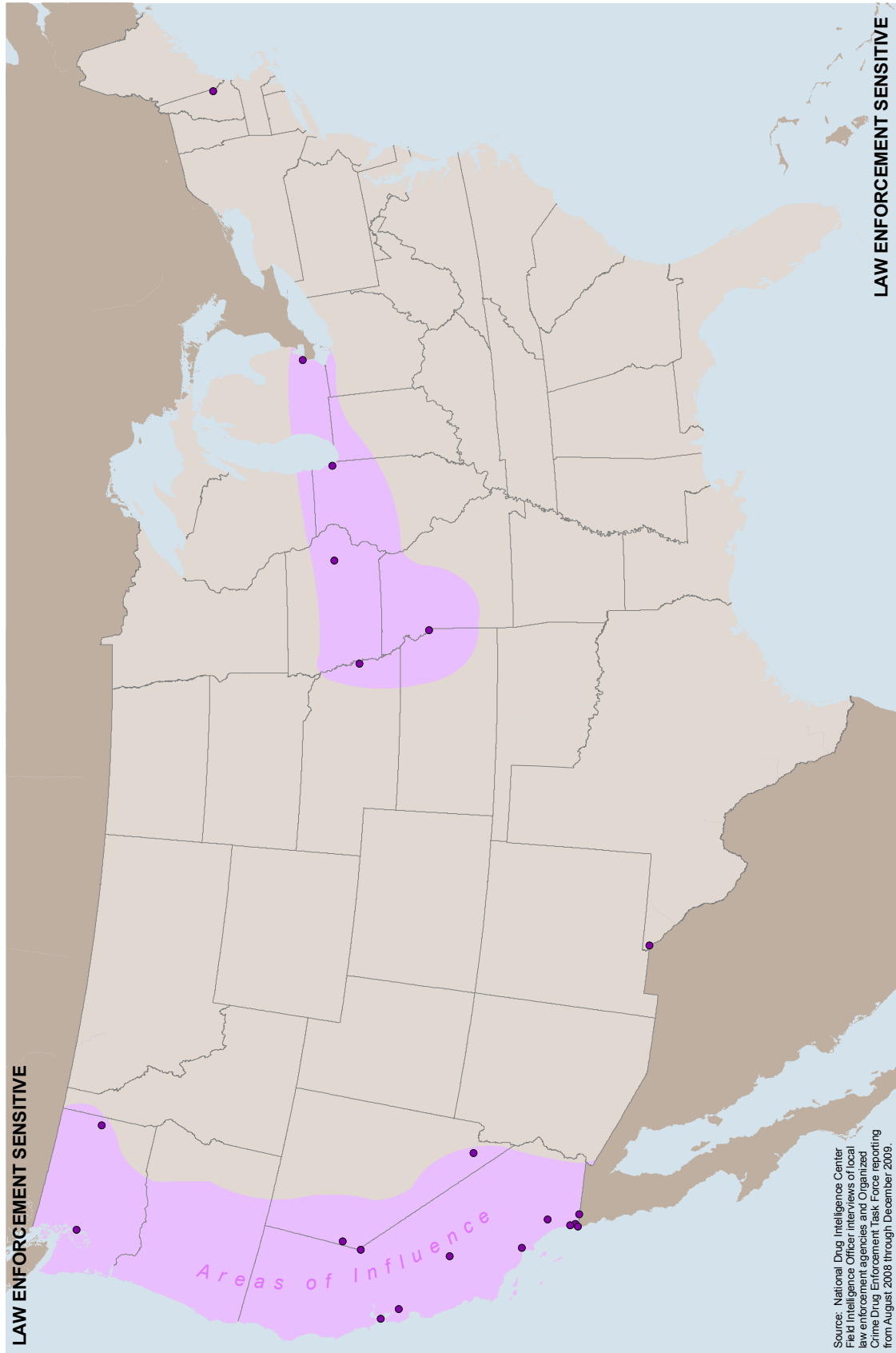


Cities Where Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate Within the United States

Map 7. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Presence of Members or Associates Affiliated With the Sinaloa Cartel



Map 8. (LES) U.S. Cities With a Presence of Members or Associates Affiliated With the Tijuana Cartel



**Cities Where Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations Operate Within the United States**

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## Appendix C. Methodology and Sources

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(U) In 2009, respondents from 1,200 local law enforcement agencies reported to NDIC via the 2009 National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS)<sup>c</sup> that they perceived Mexican DTOs were involved in wholesale drug distribution within their jurisdictions. Based on the NDTS responses, NDIC Field Intelligence Officers (FIOs) interviewed experts at each of those 1,200 law enforcement agencies and asked them to confirm the presence of Mexican DTO activity in their jurisdictions, based on the definitions provided in the text box on page 2. Through these interviews, 1,039 law enforcement agencies confirmed the presence of at least one Mexican DTO engaged in drug trafficking within their jurisdictions.

(U) In addition to the cities verified through FIO interviews, NDIC identified the presence of Mexican DTOs in an additional 247 cities, based on analysis of U.S. Department of Justice OCDETF Investigation Initiation Forms, the CPOTs list, and the Regional Priority Organization Targets list.

(U) In 2009, through FIO interviews in 1,039 cities and through analysis of federal law enforcement information in 247 cities, NDIC verified the presence of Mexican DTOs in 1,286 cities in the United States.

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c. (U) NDIC annually conducts the NDTS as a means of collecting primary data on the threat posed by various illicit drugs in the United States. A stratified random sample of nearly 3,500 state and local law enforcement agencies is surveyed to produce national, regional, and state estimates of various aspects of drug trafficking activities, including the threat posed by various drugs, the availability and production of illicit drugs, and the role of street gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs in drug trafficking activity.

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## Endnotes

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1. (U) National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), *Situation Report: Cities in Which Mexican DTOs Operate Within the United States*, April 2008, < <http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs27/27986/index.htm>>.
2. (U) NDIC, *National Drug Threat Assessment 2010*, February 2010, <<http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs38/38661/index.htm>>.



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