



El Paso Intelligence Center

- GANG INTELLIGENCE UNIT -

INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION-OFFICER SAFETY

LANGUAGE OF THE CARTELS : NARCO TERMINOLOGY, IDENTIFIERS, AND CLOTHING STYLE

The El Paso Intelligence Center DEA/CBP Gang Intelligence Unit has been providing intelligence reports on many National gangs affecting this region such as the Sureños, Mexican Mafia and the Nortenos. These reports are condensed and include a short history of the gang, identifiers and current trends for the purposes of providing quick reference and concise information to the street officer that may encounter these individuals throughout the course of their duty.

In 2009, the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) assessed that Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) were operating in the U.S. in at least 1, 286 cities spanning nine regions. Moreover, NDIC assesses with high confidence that Mexican DTO's in at least 143 of these U.S. cities 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. Due to the rise in violence throughout the Southwest Region and Mexico, members of the Cartels, their associates and their families have been suspected of moving into many U.S. cities along the border. As a result, agencies are requesting information on ways to identify those involved with drug trafficking organizations. The information included in this report is not set in stone as many of these criminal organizations are dynamic and will alter their methods and trends frequently to avoid detection by law enforcement¹.

¹ U.S. Department of Justice National Drug Intelligence Center, Situation Report-April 2010
Unclassified//Law Enforcement Sensitive 01/28/2011



LOGOS/SYMBOLS:

Drug Trafficking Organizations, such as the Zetas, Gulf Cartel, and their associates are placing stickers and symbols on their rear windshields as a way to distinguish themselves, particularly used as identifiers while in the United States. If encountered at the port, BOLO as they are likely accompanying a load, may be possibly armed or may serve as counter surveillance for load vehicles.

NOTE: The presence of these symbols, logos and/or clothing should not be the only factor used when performing vehicle stops, officers/agents still must formulate their own reasonable suspicions and probable cause for stopping vehicles. The black Chevrolet Silverado shown above was spotted at the Comfort Inn on Valley Dr. in Las Cruces, New Mexico on December 16, 2010.

Gulf Cartel or Cartel del Golfo associates used the MGM lion a couple years ago, as well as the initials “CDG.” It appears that they are now using the “John Deere logo.”



Zetas logo below indicated their previous alliance to the Gulf Cartel; however, the Zetas are now currently using the Ferrari logo, as well. These symbols are not only seen on their vehicles, but also on their key chains, and on their clothing, as these logos are being placed on leather jackets and jewelry². In the wing of the “Hecho En Tamaulipas” logo, there will be a “Z” for Zetas. A sticker bearing this logo was observed on a pickup truck in Corpus Christi, Texas; however, it could be applicable to interdiction efforts on the streets. Many Zeta logos have been

² New Mexico Investigative Support Center, “Officer Awareness Report”, (575) 647-6900, December 2010.

observed on seized Zeta uniform items. The Ferrari and John Deere logos are utilized by Mexican Cartel operatives as it is thought to be an inconspicuous way of announcing their presence without drawing too much attention from law enforcement³; however, keep in mind that this style is also becoming a fashion statement for those mimicking the Cartel lifestyle.



Homeland Security Investigations is currently inquiring about the below affixed and attached "Bull" emblem/moniker. This symbol is popping up in the Laredo and Brownsville on the back of vehicles. Speculation is that it is affiliated with a criminal organization. According to a female source stopped at the POE, the emblem represents an event in the town of San Miguel de Allende in Guanajuato, Mexico called "La Carrera de Toros" similar to the running of the bulls in Spain. Groups tried to revive the event in 2010, it is on Facebook: Sanmiguelada 2010⁴. Ports are still being requested to be on the lookout for this emblem and gather more intelligence to confirm the legitimacy of the information received.



³ CBP Laredo Field Office Hidalgo/RGC POE, Intelligence Officer Daniel A. Munoz, August 2010

⁴ Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agent Charles "Chip" Kerby: charles.kerby@dhs.gov



CARTEL TATTOOS & OTHER NARCO IDENTIFIERS:

Many criminals, narcotics traffickers and users are now worshipping the Santa Muerte and Jesus Malverde, a legendary bandit killed in Sinaloa in 1909. Malverde is seen as the Mexican version of Robin Hood and smugglers bringing drugs across the border pray to him to deliver them safely across and often carry icons and images of the saint with them⁵. Officers should look for displays of these images in vehicles and residences.

Again, these displays do not necessarily mean there are drugs present; however, it is an indicator as many of these items have been found during drug search warrants.

Although the Santa Muerte is not recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, the name literally translates to Saint of



Death and is a deity or saint-like figure worshiped or venerated in Mexico. Many drug traffickers pay homage to her and pray to her for the safe passage of their drug loads, as well as prior to executions. It is reported that people have been executed at her shrines or their decapitated heads have been left as an offering to her. For the past ten years, worship of the Santa Muerte has become more public. The desperate and hopeless, as well as the outcast and outlaws, view her as the angel of last resort, who hears from the dark places. Several other recognized Saints, such as St. Jude, who is the patron saint of desperate cases, especially health and family issues is being used by narcotics traffickers as they view their work as difficult or a lost cause and ask for his intervention. Other images associated with drug trafficking are Tweety Bird. Some drug traffickers place Tweety Bird stickers on their trucks or air fresheners on their rear view mirror, as drug dealers see themselves as the invincible bird that never gets caught and law enforcement as the cat⁶.

Skull Tattoo with Crossed M-16's and the Santa Muerte⁷



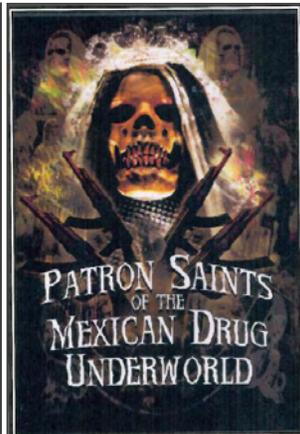
⁵ The "patron saint" of narcos- Carlos Ceresole, BBC Mundo, Mexico City.

⁶ "Patron Saints of the Mexican Drug Underworld": U.S. Marshal Robert Almonte.

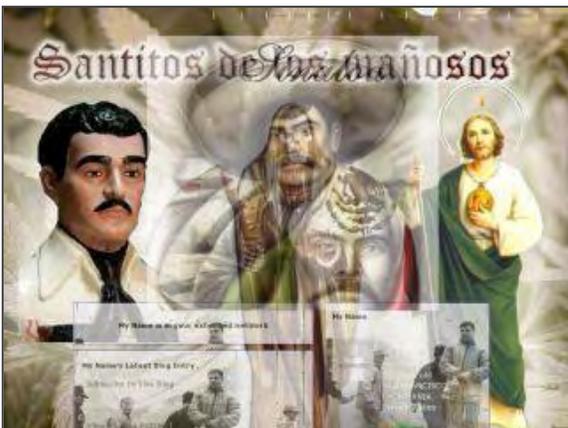
⁷ "Photos of skull tattoo with crossed M-16's"- Cline, Jason W. clinej@co.comal.tx.us 6/8/2010



"St. Jude, Santa Muerte and Jesus Malverde"⁸

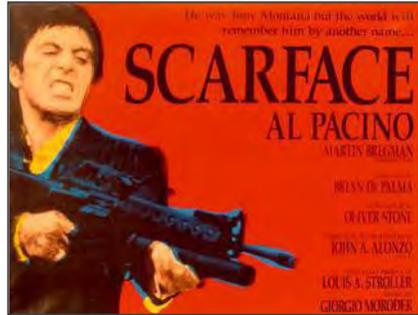


"Santitos de los Manos de Sinaloa"⁹ (Chapo Guzman in the background)



⁸ "Patron Saints of the Mexican Drug Underworld": U.S. Marshal Robert Almonte.

⁹ Photos from "Patron Saints of the Mexican Drug World 0910": Major J.T. Strickland, Special Investigations- John.Strickland@gwinnettcounty.co



CLOTHING:

Over the years, numerous articles and blogs have been posted about dressing like a Narco (narcotics-trafficker), as it has quickly evolved into a modern style and narcos have taken it to a new level. Although this style of dress has been going on for years in Mexico, the belief is that one has to have a lot of money or like to spend a lot of money, because the clothing and jewelry narcos wear are very expensive and their style of dress represents money and success usually attained through narcotics trafficking. A proper narco is believed to sport a big sombrero and a decorative buckle. As for sneakers, Narcos believe they are for mules and low-level assassins. A real Narco wears cowboy boots and is seen more as a rancher or cowboy a Narco's boots are also the most decorative part of his outfit. Exotic animal skins, fancy stitching and garish colors are common. Narcos dress like cowboys who wholesale drugs and in their eyes gangsters dress like professional athletes who retail drugs¹⁰. According to Captain Montane, a guide at the Narco Museum in Mexico City, narcos really go over the top with their jewelry, their expensive cowboy boots, hats and their weapons. They make themselves noticed as much among their own people as with strangers. Montane believes it is their way of intimidating others and reinforcing their identity¹¹. It is important to realize that not all people who dress this way are narcotraffickers. Many people in Mexico and in the United States of America dress like Narcos simply because it's a style¹².



¹⁰ Narco vs. Gangsta by Mike Santizo (El Migueloso) on MyspaceNew blog post-Rss

¹¹ Weapons, gold and drugs: the narco museum-Carlos Ceresole, BBC Mundo, Mexico City
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/news/2008/11/081111_narcomuseum.shtml

¹² "What is dressing like a Narco?" Published by [Pure Writing](#) on February 12, 2009.
http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1444950/what_is_dressing_like_a_narco.html



In a document posted on Narco-Fashion an article titled, "PGR fashion show: Tell me what brand you use and I'll tell you what you traffic", Excélsior reports the fashion tastes of Mexico's drug traffickers:

The stereotype of the drug trafficker of years past with the sombrero, pointed boots, wide belts, open button-down shirts and with accessories of gold with diamonds on the chest and hands is extinct, although perhaps among the cartel founders there remain a few [with such tastes], but the capos detained in the last year by federal authorities prefer to seem more like California boys and use the brands in fashion with American teenagers.

The article says that the Hollister, Abercrombie, and Ed Hardy are the most popular brands for young narcos. It also says that one's position in a gang can be extrapolated from his clothing: the narco-juniors (or young, rising operators) dress like businessmen, the older lieutenants are flashier, while the hit men typically dress like denizens of poorer neighborhoods¹³.



¹³ Narco-Fashion posted August 6, 2009: <http://ganchoblog.blogspot.com/2009/08/narco-fashion.html>



¹⁴ Anvem Buchonista Lifestyle 2010-<http://www.anvemstore.com/mex/index.php/vatos/santa-muerte.html>

¹⁵ Weapons, gold and drugs: the narco museum-Carlos Ceresole, BBC Mundo, Mexico City http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/news/2008/11/081111_narcomuseum.shtml



NARCO TERMS:

AFI: Mexico's Federal Investigative Agency believed to be working for the Sinaloa Cartel and the Attorney General's Office (PGR).

Ajuste de cuentas: Settling a score, getting even or revenge.

Aztecas: also known as Los Aztecas or Barrio Azteca, a gang with strong ties to El Paso and Cd. Juarez that is currently working for the Juarez Cartel and controlled by La Linea.

Beltran Leyvas: a Cartel that is made up of brothers and childhood friends of Joaquin Guzman. Relocated to Nuevo Leon.

Cartel: a criminal organization formed to promote and control the production and distribution of narcotic drugs. They range from loosely-managed agreements among various drug traffickers to formalized commercial enterprises. They are structured groups, which exists for an extended period of time. A drug cartel is large in number of members, covers a large amount of territory, and has extensive connections with foreign and native criminal groups. The group uses violence and corruption to continue its criminal activity. A drug cartel differs from a drug trafficking organization, because it is an amalgamation of independent organizations that agree to work together under the direction of specific leaders and a main boss. The eight criminal organizations in Mexico are the Gulf or Golfo, Sinaloa, Tijuana, Juarez, Beltran-Leyva, Amezcua-Contreras, Los Zetas, Diaz-Parada, & La Familia Michoacana.

Cartel del Poniente: Cartel of the West or the Sinaloa Cartel.

C.D.G.: Gulf Drug Cartel or Cartel Del Golfo.

Cell: a functional basic unit or a group of a DTO or a Cartel.

Chapos or Chaparrines: The troops of Joaquin Guzmán Loera's Sinaloa Cartel. Derived from Guzmán's nick name of "El Chapo."

Charoliar: Pretending to belong to a cartel and having a lot of inside knowledge of cartel activities.

Cortar cartuchos or Armatillar el arma. To lock and load weapon. Prepare your weapon to fire or ready to fire.

Cuerno de chivo: (the horns of a goat) which is a common term for AK-47, the preferred weapon of the drug cartels.

DTO: a Drug trafficking organization can be considered the single unit that when combined with other drug trafficking organizations form a drug cartel. Not every Mexican drug trafficking organization is part of a cartel.

El Señor de los Cielos or Lord of the Skies: Amado Carrillo Fuentes who helped consolidate the Juárez Cartel. He died in 1997 undergoing plastic surgery in Mexico City and is superseded by Vicente Carrillo Fuentes.

Encobijado: a common way that hitmen or sicarios dispose of bodies — wrapped in a blanket, rug, or tarp and taped.

Estacas: literal translation is “fence posts” or “stakes”. Armed cartel operatives are referred to as "soldiers." These soldiers are divided into "Estacas" and their role is to provide armed backup and covering firepower if shooting breaks out.

Familia (La) also known as La Familia Michoacana' or The Family, an extremely violent and unpredictable DTO with a religious undertone. Mexico's federal police believe that La Familia drug cartel has been “completely dismembered” and has broken down into small groups that commit robberies to pay their members. La Familia has been thrown into disarray by the recent arrest and deaths of top members.

Foco: crystal meth.

Fuero (EI): jurisdiction, a right or a privilege and also a song or corrido called, “El Fuero del Chapo Guzman”.

GAFES: former Mexican Special Forces (GAFES) soldiers, which were the original Zetas reportedly trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, in special tactics, surveillance and countersurveillance, urban warfare, prison escape, hostage rescue, explosives use, and high-tech communications.

Gente nueva (La): Chapo Guzman's hitmen.

Guachicol: oil product stolen from PEMEX and then sold back to businesses under duress. A practice common in Tamaulipas.

Halcones (Los): There are two definitions. In the border area, "halcones" are lookouts and street level informants (falcons) who warn the drug cartels about intrusions from other DTO's, police or army maneuvers. Many of these are the youngest and least-experienced members. Halcones are also an elite squad of commandos that have a notorious reputation for violation of civil rights and abuse.

Hormiga (El Correo de): an ant run. This is a common method of smuggling small amounts of narcotics into the U.S. using numerous smugglers primarily on foot. He states that the majority of heroin that is being moved by the BA is through individual body carriers and he compared them to transporting like ants, mueven como orugas. Mass members of BA members and their family are moving heroin into the U.S. daily.

Jefe de Jefes: Capo de Capos or the boss of bosses. The name applied to the most prominent drug chief in Mexico. The name is most frequently associated with Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo, which is also a popular song or corrido by the group "Los Tigres del Norte".

Levantón: abduction. Term used to describe kidnapping. Most of the time, the person kidnapped or the "levantado" is never seen alive again.

Linces (Los): the VCFO's enforcer group or unit of hitmen or sicarios under La Linea. This group is composed of military deserters (like the Zetas) who are well trained, use military ordinances, uniforms and vehicles. The Mexican military argues that this group is responsible for most human right violations in Chihuahua. Los Linces operate with no more than five members per group to avoid being detected, and have a wide variety of weaponry and tactical gear. Los Linces are known by some as the "Licenciados" or the Professionals, which translates to the Attorneys. Reports in *The Dallas Morning News* say this information has been confirmed by Mexican intelligence officials. The Linces job is to carry out hits for the main leaders of the [Juárez] Cartel, a few know their hiding spots and identity. They are also feared within La Linea. They exist to protect drug trafficking corridors and their DTO's general interests through the use of intimidation and violence.

Linea (La): Hitmen or sicarios employed by Juarez DTO. The VCFO has a smaller component cartel made up of corrupt law enforcement officers known as La Linea. In May 2009, a threatening video was posted on YouTube. It was aimed at business owners in Nuevo Laredo, claiming they would be kidnapped or beheaded if they didn't pay protection money, or a "war tax," to La Linea.

Matapolicia: bullets of heavy calibre that can penetrate vests. Police killers — ordinance used when attacking police or members of the military.

Matazetas (Los): a name used by a group that has executed members of Los Zetas. They are believed to be members of a rival cartel, but may be an independent group.

Maña: a local name for cartels in Tamaulipas. It is most often used to refer to Los Zetas or other hitmen or sicarios working for the Gulf cartel.

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.

Mexican DTO: A Drug Trafficking Organization 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.

Mota: marijuana.

Narcobloqueo: A barricade in the streets with vehicles that are carjacked to delay the arrival of the police or military.

Narcocorrido: a version of a corrido or Mexican song that deals with a drug theme. Some narcocorridos are commissioned by the drug dealers in order to "sing their praises", but others share much in common with morality plays because they sing about the negative consequences of drug dealing. See the excellent book by "Elijah Wald" describing narcocorridos.

Narcofosa: narco cemetery; a place where bodies are disposed, usually clandestine and used only for a period of time. These have been found in at least 8 Mexican states.

Narcomanta: a banner or a poster placed in a prominent location with a message. Most frequently, the messages seem to originate with the drug organizations, but the message may also be aimed at the drug trafficking organizations.

Narcomenudistas: the gang that concentrates on moving smaller amounts of narcotics into the U.S. The Barrio Azteca Gang is currently in charge of all the narcomenudeo, heroin & cocaine, etc...working for the Juarez Cartel / VCFO (Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization).

Negros (Los): work for the Sinaloa Federation. Los Pelones and Los Negros are described as less sophisticated than Los Zetas; however, both groups enjoy the advantageous support of corrupt law enforcement.

Pelones (Los): or "the bald ones", named after the shaved heads sported by new recruits. Refer to hitmen or sicarios that were originally assembled by the Beltran Leyva brothers for the Sinaloa Federation. Also, a term used for gang members from MS13 recruited by Chapo Guzman and/or members of the Barrio Azteca Gang in the El Paso/Juarez region.

Perico: a parrot. Refers to cocaine a nickname based on the idea that it "goes up the nose".

Pez gordo: big fish, big boss.

PGR: La Procuraduria General de la Republica. The Institutional Agency of the Mexican Attorney General.

Pista: the 'game'. Literally means "the track" as in racing. Also refers to the business at hand.

Plaza: Territory or turf. A geographic area within a country controlled by a specific DTO or a Cartel. A cartel stronghold. Can also refer to the product being moved or in dispute.

Plata o Plomo: (silver or lead) means "accept a bribe or face assassination."

Polizetas: Policemen at the service of the narcos. It originated from Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas region where the Zetas were deeply embedded with the Zetas.

Pozolero (El): the Stew-maker. A person within the cartel who has a knowledge of chemistry and disposes or dissolves human bodies.

Rematar: literally "to re-kill". the prefix re is used to indicate "once again" when it precedes a verb. Rematar is used when a means of execution is especially brutal, and also used to mean "slaughter", "finish off."

Santa Muerte (La): the saint of death.

Sicario: the word used to describe an "assassin" or hitman for the cartels. The word has roots back to Roman times. Sicarios are sometimes young and "throw-away" bodies recruited by the cartels, but can also be well-trained military deserters or police (e.g. Los Zetas).

Stash House: a place in which something is stored secretly; hiding place; cache. A warehouse or a commercial building used by DTO's to store drugs, etc. They are usually large plain buildings in industrial areas of cities and towns; however, can also be a single family home in an inconspicuous neighborhood.

Straw purchasers: surrogate purchasers of guns— someone who is licensed to purchase a gun but does so on behalf of someone who is not. Cartel sicarios have a system of straw purchasers.

Tiendita: the location where drugs are sold.

VCFO: Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization and La Linea, also known as the Juarez Cartel.

Ventanas: Lookouts for the cartels informing on the movements of security forces and suspicious civilians in their neighborhoods. See “halcones” above.

Viesca: Marijuana

Wathivato (EI): Mexican artist famous for narco images — especially iconic images of Jesus Malverde. Artist on BBC site Narco Mexico.

Zetas, (Los): previously known as la Compañía. Paramilitary force formed as an enforcement/protection arm for the Gulf Cartel and now independent. Deserters from Mexican special operations force, known as GAFE unit; highly trained anti-terrorist unit. Became the close protection detail for the Gulf cartel kingpin¹⁶.

Zetas Hierarchical Structure: New Zetas, Old Zetas, Cobras, Halcones, Dirección, Mañosos, Leopardos, and Ventanas¹⁷.

The information provided in this report is a compilation of a variety of sources that focus on gathering intelligence on Transnational Gangs and Drug Trafficking Organizations and disseminating the information to the law enforcement community throughout the country. Please feel free to send in any updated information regarding narco trends, terminology, clothing and/or identifiers.

EPIC Gang Intelligence Unit will continue to research information received and will forward it as it becomes available. Please contact this Unit for additional information at (915) 760-2227.

Report Prepared by: DEA Mary Lou Carrillo
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For More Information Contact:

Gang Intelligence Unit - El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) – 1-888-USE-EPIC

- Mary Lou Carrillo, *DEA Investigative Assistant, (915) 760-2227*
maria.carrillo1@dhs.gov
- Rachel Huerta, *CBP/OIOC Officer-Program Manager (915) 760-2366*
rachel.huerta@dhs.gov

¹⁶ Borderland Beat: Narco Terms- <http://www.borderlandbeat.com/2009/04/narco-terms.html>

¹⁷ Baseline Assessments: Los Zetas, August 2010 - U.S. Customs and Border Protection, OIOC, Washington, DC (202) 344-1150, www.cbp.gov