



FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN
Knoxville Division
Criminal Investigative Division

2 October 2008

(U//LES) Los Zetas Expanding Reach into Southeast and Midwest United States

(U//FOUO/LES) This intelligence bulletin addresses Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) standing intelligence requirements set part I.A.1, I.B.1, I.B.3, and I.D.1; and part II.D.1 and II.D.2 (REQS: Q-FBI-2500-005-05, CRIM-DTO-I.A.1, I.B.1, I.B.3 and I.D.1; and CRIM-DTO-II.D.1 and II.D.2). It also addresses the International Organized Crime (CRIM) topic of the National Intelligence Priorities Framework.

(U//LES) Intelligence reporting indicates that Los Zetas has expanded its criminal activities including extortion, kidnapping, and drug trafficking, into the Midwest and Southeast United States, and may be collaborating with a newly identified drug trafficking organization (DTO) to expand its role in the illicit drug trade in the Southeast. Los Zetas activities in the United States to date have largely been limited to the US/Mexico border area. The group's expansion further into the United States could lead to increased smuggling, drug trafficking, and violent crime in the Southeast region, including East Tennessee and Georgia.

- (U//LES) As of mid-2007 Los Zetas kidnapping and extortion operations were expanding from along the US/Mexico border into midwestern and southeastern United States, specifically Tennessee and Oklahoma. According to information provided by a detainee with indirect access whose reliability is not determined, Los Zetas targeted non-US persons (USPERs) who owed money to Zetas leadership, as well as competitors of Zetas' human smuggling operations.¹

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(U) Los Zetas emerged from the Grupo Aeromovil de Fuerzas Especiales (GAFE), a Mexican army unit created in the mid-1990s to combat drug trafficking organizations along the US/Mexico border, and that received special training from the US military. In early 2002 an unknown number deserted and joined the Gulf Cartel, serving as the hired guns for cartel leadership. Since that time Los Zetas has grown into a sizeable, semi-independent organization.

(U//FOUO) Los Zetas is tied to numerous illicit activities including public corruption, alien smuggling, kidnapping, assault, murder, extortion, and money laundering, the majority of which facilitate their drug trafficking. The group is well-armed, highly-trained, and reputed for their brutal tactics as cartel enforcers.

(U) As of late 2005, reports of Zetas' reach into the southeastern United States had not been confirmed or corroborated, and the FBI assessed that any expansion of Zetas operations beyond border states was unlikely because their resources and support infrastructures were located in Mexico.

(U//LES) FBI Intelligence Assessment, "Los Zetas: An Emerging Threat to the United States," 15 July 2005 (UNCLASSIFIED); (U//LES) EPIC El Paso, Los Zetas Threat Assessment, 21 September 2005 (UNCLASSIFIED).

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- (U//LES) The same source reported that Gaspar Gonzales Alcantar, a non-USPER, was a key Los Zetas leader and was involved in kidnapping and extortion operations in Oklahoma and Tennessee (NFI), and that Martin Moreno, a ‘Zeta 21,’ was also involved in the operations. Gonzales used a network of Zetas members and individuals who owed a debt to Zetas to extort money from victims in the United States. According to the same detainee, Gonzales fled to Mexico; the FBI has no information on his current location.²
- (U//LES) According to a source with excellent access, much of whose reporting has been corroborated over the last three years, a Zetas-associated individual, Jose Fuentes Anaya, was trafficking drugs from within the Bennettsville Federal Correctional Institution in South Carolina as of early 2008.¹ The source reported that Fuentes claimed Zetas was his sole drug supplier and could supply large amounts of cocaine or marijuana, delivered from Mexico to Texas then distributed anywhere in the United States. Although Fuentes acknowledged being ‘strongly associated’ with the Zetas, he claimed he was not a Zetas member.³

(U) Los Zetas may be collaborating with a newly identified DTO, the Acapulco-based Los Tolles organization, to increase its role in the southeastern US drug trade. FBI and local investigations to date have not corroborated intelligence reporting of ties between Los Zetas and Los Tolles in Mexico and Los Tolles drug trafficking networks in the United States. If accurate, however, these ties could facilitate expanded Los Zetas operations in the United States, and could lead to increased smuggling, drug trafficking, and violent crime in the Southeast region, including East Tennessee and Georgia.

- (U//LES) According to a collaborative source with good access, Los Tolles has connections with Los Zetas DTO in Acapulcoⁱⁱ and Los Zetas was collecting debts from the illegal drug trade for Los Tolles. Los Tolles also operates in Atlanta, Georgia, and has “lines of support” there that facilitate cocaine distribution from Mexico to the United States, including distribution routes in the East Tennessee area.⁴
- (U//LES) The same source reported that Los Tolles was receiving deliveries of large quantities of cocaine—100 to 150 kilograms per load—from Mexico to the Atlanta area every two weeks to two months as of December 2007.⁵
- (U//LES) A spring 2008 Knoxville Division survey of local law enforcement agencies indicates an increase in Hispanic gangs and illegal immigrants in the East Tennessee area, which the FBI judges increases the risk of expanded drug trafficking to and through the division.⁶

ⁱ (U//FOUO) Fuentes Anaya was scheduled for release in June 2008, but the FBI has no information to confirm his release or his present location.

ⁱⁱ (U//FOUO) The source indicated a blood relationship and an “in-law” relationship existed between Los Tolles and Los Zetas in Acapulco.

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- (U//LES) Interstate 40 runs through Knoxville, Tennessee, and is a major east-west highway linking Tennessee to Arizona, and connects to major north-south interstates in the southeast, providing an easy smuggling route for drug trafficking by either Los Zetas or Los Tolles.

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(U) Interstate 40 runs east-west through Knoxville, Tennessee, and connects to major north-south interstates in the eastern United States, that could allow Los Zetas or Los Tolles to expand their drug trafficking operations to other areas of the country.

(U) This intelligence bulletin was prepared by the Knoxville Field Intelligence Group (KFIG) in conjunction with the Criminal Investigative Division of the FBI. Comments and queries may be addressed to the KFIG at (865) 544-0751.

(U) Endnotes

¹ (U) IIR 4 214 0647 08 (UNCLASSIFIED).

² (U) Ibid.

³ (U) IIR 4 214 5565 08 (UNCLASSIFIED).

⁴ (U) IIR 4 214 4986 08 (UNCLASSIFIED).

⁵ (U) Ibid.

⁶ (U) FBI electronic communication, "(U//LES) Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) in the State of Georgia," 14 February 2007 (UNCLASSIFIED); FBI Knoxville electronic communication, 28 April 2008 (UNCLASSIFIED); FBI Knoxville electronic communication, 5 June 2008 (UNCLASSIFIED).