

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN San Antonio Field Office

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(U//FOUO) Los Zetas' Reliance on Non-Traditional Associates May Pose Threat to the United States

(U//FOUO) Recent FBI intelligence from multiple FBI HUMINT sources indicates a shift in Los Zetas recruiting methods and reliance on non-traditional associates. Past, accurate FBI reporting indicated Los Zetas previously focused its recruitment on members with prior specialized training, such as ex-military and ex-law enforcement officers, and not on US-based gangs or US persons in order to maintain a highly-disciplined and structured hierarchy. This hierarchy, which resembled a military-style command and control structure, facilitated drug trafficking operations and maintained lines of authority. However, current FBI reporting indicates that Los Zetas is recruiting and relying on non-traditional, non-military trained associates—US-based prison and street gangs and non-Mexican nationals—to perform drug trafficking and support operations in Mexico and in the United States. The FBI judges with high confidence^a that Los Zetas will continue to increase its recruitment efforts and establish pacts with non-military trained, non-traditional associates to maintain their drug trafficking and support operations, which may increase violence along the Southwest border posing a threat to US national security.

(U//FOUO) Current FBI reporting has indicated an increase of recruitment and contracting of US-Based gangs to conduct daily drug trafficking activities and support operations in the United States.

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(U) Source Summary Statement

(U//FOUO) Reporting was derived from multiple FBI confidential human sources with accesses ranging from indirect to direct, and from an Open Source Center report. Reporting from many of these sources has been corroborated for one to five years. The FBI considers that this information provides a reliable basis for assessing the direction and character of the new Los Zetas recruiting effort, but a less reliable basis for assessing the impact this effort will have.

^a (U) **High Confidence** generally indicates that FBI judgments are based on high-quality information or that the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment. **Medium Confidence** generally means that the information is interpreted in various ways, the FBI has alternative views, or the information, while credible, is of insufficient reliability to warrant a higher level of confidence. **Low Confidence** generally means that the information is scant, questionable, or fragmented; that it is difficult to make solid analytic inferences; or that the FBI has significant concerns with the source.

- (U//FOUO) As of October 2010, a corroborated collaborative FBI HUMINT source with excellent access showed that Los Zetas had contracted the Texas Mexican Mafia, a Texas-based prison gang, and tasked them to collect drug debts, carry out hits, and traffic drugs in and through Laredo, Texas.¹ (NFI)
- (U//FOUO) As of September 2010, a corroborated collaborative FBI HUMINT source with excellent access indicated that Los Zetas attempted to recruit US-based members in Houston, Texas, to join Los Zetas' war against the Gulf Cartel on both sides of the border.² (NFI)
- (U//FOUO) A corroborated collaborative FBI HUMINT source with indirect access indicated that as of August 2010, Los Zetas was buying AK-47's from the Tango Blast Gang, a Houston, Texas-based street gang. The weapons were moved from Houston to Laredo, Texas, and were subsequently smuggled into Mexico.³
- (U//FOUO) As of April 2010, an established source with excellent access, much of whose reporting has been corroborated over the past ten years, indicated that the McAllen, Texas Los Piojos Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) procured vehicles for Los Zetas through thefts, carjackings, and auto auctions held in McAllen, Texas. Los Piojos also operates a street gang in Mission, Texas who assisted with the acquisition of vehicles and vehicle parts for Los Zetas, and in some cases those parts were used to build armored vehicles for them.⁴

(U//FOUO) FBI reporting indicates that Los Zetas is also recruiting or contracting US person Mexican nationals to conduct drug trafficking operations in the United States.

- (U//FOUO) As of October 2010, a corroborated collaborative FBI HUMINT source with indirect access indicated that US person Javier Medina, a resident of Zapata, Texas, is an alleged Los Zetas recruit. Medina worked for Juan Pedro in Guerrero, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Juan Pedro was allegedly affiliated with the shooting of the US person on the Jet Ski at Falcon Lake near Zapata, Texas.⁵
- (U//FOUO) As of September 2010, a corroborated collaborative FBI HUMINT source with excellent access indicated that Los Zetas contracted a US person, identified as Alejandro, to steal vehicles in Laredo, Texas, and transport them to Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico to use for its operations.⁶
- (U//FOUO) As of March 2010, an FBI contact with excellent access whose reporting is limited and whose reliability cannot be determined indicated that Los Zetas contracted US person Alma Delia Martinez to collect smuggling fees from smugglers crossing illegal aliens across the Rio Grande River.⁷ (NFI)

(U//FOUO) Rising Threat to the US Citizens both in the United States and Across the Border

(U//FOUO) While Los Zetas continues to recruit law enforcement, military, and public officials to facilitate drug trafficking operations, current FBI reporting indcates Los Zetas is starting to rely more on non-trained, non-traditional associates to cover aspects of their drug trafficking operations. Los Zetas has focused much of its resources and manpower on the ongoing turf battle with the Gulf Cartel and oppose the counter-drug operations by the Government of Mexico (GOM).⁸ The turf war and arrests by the GOM have caused the Los Zetas to lose many original members and divide their trained members between several different fronts; requiring new recruits that must be ready to support Los Zetas drug trafficking and support operations quickly. These recruits, some of whom are never considered Los Zetas members, are largely untrained and undisciplined,^b leaving dangerous and violent tasks in the hands of individuals who can be unpredictable and may fail to follow orders, which FBI San Antonio believes may increase the threat to US citizen safety, both in the United States and across the border.

- (U//FOUO) As of September 2010, an FBI contact and FBI HUMINT source, both with indirect access, indicated that a Los Zetas plaza boss ordered Los Zetas members patrolling Falcon Lake, including Juan Pedro, to intercept and interrogate two individuals on jet skis. One USPER was shot in the head, even though the order was to detain and interrogate them. According to the sub-source, Petro was a new recruit from Central America.^{9,10}
- (U//FOUO) As of July 2010, a corroborated collaborative FBI HUMINT source with indirect access indicated that due to recruitment problems, Los Zetas planned to gain new inexperienced recruits to assist with daily drug trafficking operations in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas,

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(U//FOUO) Los Zetas' Origins

(U//FOUO) The original Los Zetas members were a small group of primarily ex-Mexican Special Forces and/or ex-military personnel who were well-trained and highly disciplined. Arturo Guzman Decena, an ex-Special Forces soldier, was recruited by then-Gulf Cartel leader Osiel Cardenas Guillen in Northern Mexico to assist with daily drug trafficking activities. In August 1998, Mexican police detained Cardenas and Gomez and held them in a safe house for an unknown period of time. Cardenas and Guzman were eventually rescued and Cardenas stressed the need for a military-style organization to work for the Gulf Cartel. Guzman to formed the original 18 member Zeta group in late 1999.

Source: (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 0117 10; 19 October 2010; Circa 2000; "(U//FOUO) Historical Information on the Original Members of Los Zetas, Circa 2000"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with excellent access, some of whose reporting has been corroborated over the past three years.

Mexico. Los Zetas considered helping incarcerated individuals with an escape from an unspecified prison in Nuevo Laredo. Los Zetas also attempted to release detained

^b (U//FOUO) As of September 2010, a corroborated collaborative FBI HUMINT source with excellent access indicated that Los Zetas had established an unknown number of clandestine training facilities in Mexico to accommodate new recruits within Mexico with little or no military-style training. Los Zetas apparently were able to get some of these recruits by arranging for their release from jails—freed with an obligation to serve in the organization and operate near and around the border area. *Source:* (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 0117 10; 19 October 2010; Circa 2000; "(U//FOUO) Historical Information on the Original Members of Los Zetas, Circa 2000"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with excellent access, some of whose reporting has been corroborated over the past three years.

juvenile delinquents from the Desarollo Integral De La Familia (DIA) in Nuevo Laredo.^c Los Zetas planned to use the juveniles to steal vehicles and strategically block streets during gun battles with Gulf Cartel or Mexican Military.¹¹

(U) Outlook

(U//FOUO) The FBI San Antonio judges with high confidence that Los Zetas will continue to increase their recruitment efforts and establish pacts with other Mexico and US-based prison and street gangs, as well as non-Mexican nationals to maintain their drug trafficking and support operations. FBI San Antonio believes the Los Zetas' shift in recruitment efforts will most likely not increase its membership numbers drastically, as recent reporting has indicated that these new members lack the training and skills to elude GOM law enforcement and military, which result in many Los Zetas casualties or captures.

(U//FOUO) FBI judges with moderate confidence that Los Zetas will likely pose a higher national security threat to the United States, based on their demonstrated capabilities for violence, their recent murders of US citizens, increased kidnappings of US citizens on both sides of the border, and their continued participation in the US drug trade. With the GOM military counter-narcotic operations and turf battles against other DTOs, Los Zetas violence and criminal activity will most likely increase.

(U//FOUO) In order to adequately assess the threat to the United States, FBI San Antonio would need information that indicated larger-scale or multiple plans to attack are being planned. With the recruitment of new members, Los Zetas have lost part of their disciplined command and control structure needed to maintain order within the organization, which is likely to hinder their ability to carry out complex attacks and could increase the likelihood that GOM officials may learn of planned attacks or operations. High-level Los Zetas members with minimal command and control authority have hindered their operations, and caused countless casualties and captures. Furthermore, new members are often undisciplined, which has led to recruits failing to follow orders and has gained the Los Zetas unneeded attention, as evidenced in the Falcon Lake shooting.

(U//FOUO) This bulletin satisfies intelligence requirements USA-SWB-CID-SR-0129-10.II.A.1 and USA-SWB-CID-SR-0129-10.I.B.2.

(U) This product has been prepared by the San Antonio Division of the FBI. Comments and queries may be addressed to the San Antonio Field Intelligence Group at 210-650-6110

^c (U//FOUO) According to a collaborative source, the detained juveniles were abandoned by their parents because of misconduct or for criminal activities. *Source*: FBI; IIR; 4 214 2180 10; 2 August 2010; July 2010; "(U//FOUO) Identification of New Recruitment Efforts Used by Los Zetas, as of July 2010"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with indirect access, some of whose reporting has been corroborated over the past five years.

(U) Endnotes

¹ (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 0263 11; 11 May 2010; October 2010; "(U//FOUO) Collusion between the Texas Mexican Mafia and Los Zetas, as of October 2010"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with excellent access, none of whose reporting has been corroborated for less than one year.

² (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 2575 10; 22 September 2010; September 2010; "(U//FOUO) Recruitment of US Group Members for War Against the Gulf Cartel by Los Zetas, in September 2010"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with excellent access, much of whose reporting has been corroborated for less than one year.

³ U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 0049 11; 8 October 2010; July 2010; "(U//FOUO) Collusion between the Tango Blast Gang and Los Zetas to Traffic Drugs and Weapons, as of July 2010"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with indirect access, some of whose reporting has been corroborated over the past year.

⁴ (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 0696 11; 22 December 2010; April 2010; "(U//FOUO) Acquisition of Vehicles in McAllen Texas, by the Los Piojos Drug Trafficking Organization for the Los Zetas, as of April 2010"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is an established source with excellent access, most of whose reporting has been corroborated over the past ten or more years.

⁵ (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 0329 11; 12 November 2010; October 2010; "(U//FOUO) Identification of an Alleged Los Zetas Member Living in Zapata, Texas, who Worked for Los Zetas Member Juan Pedro";

UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with indirect access, some of whose reporting has been corroborated for less than one year. ⁶ (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 2569 10; 22 September 2010; September 2010; "(U//FOUO) Identification of a Los

Zetas vehicle thief operating in Laredo, Texas"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with excellent access, some of whose reporting has been corroborated over the past two years.

⁷ (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 0265 11; 5 November 2010; March 2010; "(U//FOUO) Identification of an alien smuggler associated with Los Zetas operating in The Rio Grande Valley, Texas area and Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a contact with excellent access whose reporting is limited and whose reliability cannot be determined. ⁸ (U) Ibid.

⁹ (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 0091 11; 14 October 2010; 7 October 2010; "(U//FOUO) Details of the disposition of the body of a male USPER murdered on 30 September 2010 in Guerrero Viejo, Tamaulipas, Mexico"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a contact with indirect access whose reporting is limited and whose reliability cannot be determined.

¹⁰ (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 2575 10; 22 September 2010; September 2010; "(U//FOUO) Recruitment of US Group Members for War Against the Gulf Cartel by Los Zetas"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with excellent access, much of whose reporting has been corroborated for less than one year.

¹¹ (U//FOUO) FBI; IIR; 4 214 2180 10; 2 August 2010; July 2010; "(U//FOUO) Identification of new recruitment efforts used by Los Zetas"; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; UNCLASSIFIED//FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY; Source is a collaborative source with indirect access, some of whose reporting has been corroborated over the past five years.