



Analysis

Mexico Wages Drug War on *YouTube* With Violent Songs, Video Threats

Postings of popular songs about drug traffickers are the most prevalent cartel-related content found in YouTube, the third most-visited social networking website in Mexico. Direct threats among cartels are less prevalent but hold a significant following, while videos honoring police killed in action register a low viewing record. Some sectors of Mexican society have also turned to the video-sharing site to express their anger at the violence brought by the ongoing drug war.

WARNING: Some videos linked in this media aid may contain gruesome/offensive content.

Background, Methodology

YouTube (www.youtube.com) describes itself as the world's most popular online video community, allowing millions of people to discover, watch, and share originally created clips. The site provides a forum for people to connect with others and acts as a distribution platform for original content (*YouTube*, 4 May).¹



The method used to determine the occurrence of video clips about drug cartels consisted of searching for the desired content uploaded by any *YouTube*-registered individual, group, or organization, regardless of location, although an effort was made to focus the analysis on users claiming to be in Mexico. Cited figures were current as of 30 July and include those removed by the video-sharing website before that date.

Four of the 10 most-visited Internet sites in Mexico are of the social networking kind, of which the most visited is *YouTube*, in the third position overall (*Etcetera*, August 2009).² An attempt to create a "*Mexican YouTube*" site failed, as the website only has 817 public videos and 2,100 members (www.stufferbox.com, 27 April).³

'Narcocorridos' Remain Heavily Viewed Despite Attempted Official Bans

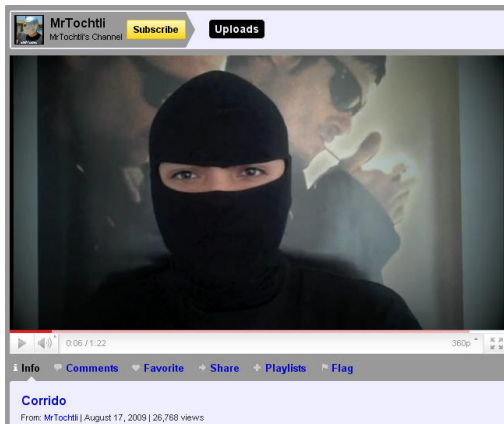
"Narcocorridos" are songs whose lyrics often speak approvingly of illegal drug-related criminal activities and are one of the most widely used means used by certain Mexicans to learn about and discuss cartels and their violent activities.

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- One important aspect of "narcocorridos" is their currency, as their updated lyrics are used to discuss ongoing events or status of cartels. For example, a new song written by Teodoro Bello and sung by Los Tigres del Norte is called "La Granja" ("The Farm"), a metaphor for ongoing violence in Mexico that assigns specific characters to politicians, ordinary citizens, and cartels. The song compares the November 2008 plane crash that killed Interior Secretary Juan Camilo Mourino to a sparrow hawk that falls on "the farm," representing the country of Mexico (*YouTube*, 24 November 2009).⁴



The animated video "La Granja" by Los Tigres del Norte



YouTube's "MrTochtli"

- Wearing a ski mask, "MrTochtli" (which means "rabbit" in the Aztecs' Nahuatl language) says that his *YouTube* channel is dedicated to explain and promote the "outlawed" narcocorridos which, in [one of his pieces](#), he claims "tell the whole truth" (*YouTube*, 17 August 2009).⁵

"Narcocorridos" and related video postings register the highest numbers of hits of any cartel-related *YouTube* communications.

- The narcocorrido music genre is widely present in *YouTube*. Los Tigres del Norte was the first group to start singing this type of song (Gomez, 1999).^{6 7} One [popular hit](#) called "La Camioneta Gris" ("The Gray Truck") is a romantic story of a trafficker and his girlfriend fleeing police in a pick-up truck and reported more than 2 million hits on *YouTube* (31 July 2007).⁸
- Another popular "narcocorrido" is "El Gallo de Oro" (The Golden Rooster) by Valentin Elizalde, a young norteno singer among whose fans was Sinaloa Cartel chief Joaquin Guzman Loera, alias "Chapo,"⁹ and who was executed by the rival Gulf Cartel in 2006 after performing the song in that criminal organization's operating area. Elizalde's interpretation of the single "A mis enemigos" ("To my enemies") had more than 2 million *YouTube* hits (9 May 2007).¹⁰
- "Los Tucanes de Tijuana" reported more than 1 million *YouTube* hits for their [song](#) "Cien por Uno" ("One Hundred for One"), which tells the story of a drug lord's brother forced to pay his murdered sibling's enduring debt (*YouTube*, 18 January 2008).¹¹ Baja California State officials accuse some of these "Norteno bands" of having close ties to traffickers.¹²

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Government officials try to restrict the public airing of narcocorridos and traditional broadcasters generally avoid programming them, but the Internet and black market offer alternative dissemination platforms.

- A ruling National Action Party (PAN) deputy proposed a bill to outlaw narcocorridos to "stem admiration " for drug traffickers and cited cases where criminals were inspired by the violent songs (*Vanguardia*, 23 January).¹³
- The city of Tijuana has a law that fines public transportation drivers who play "narcocorridos " in their vehicles (*El Norte*, March).¹⁴
- Although not present in mass media, "narcocorridos " can easily be found on the Internet and through the sizeable CD black market (Radio Nederland, April).¹⁵

Video Sharing by Cartels Less Frequent

Trafficking organizations and individuals use *YouTube* videos to threaten each other, but this method is used much less often than banners left on city corners or scribbled messages left on murdered rivals.

- Cartels or associated individuals or groups have posted videos on *YouTube* supporting their causes or threatening other criminal organizations. Following *YouTube's* terms of service, some of those clips have been removed when users flag them as inappropriate (*YouTube*, 4 May).¹⁶ Six such video clips were removed during the survey period; one of these was the on-camera killing of a Los Zetas member, which garnered over 500,000 hits (*YouTube*, 7 June 2009).¹⁷



This clip by "DenunciandoporMexico," distances the Gulf Cartel from Los Zetas and their atrocities.

- Cartel members break former alliances as they struggle over power and territory. Several clips have been uploaded by enemies of Los Zetas, such as the "DenunciandoporMexico" ("Denouncing for Mexico") channel, in which the Gulf Cartel distances itself from kidnappings, rapes, and bank robberies by Los Zetas (*YouTube*, 12 March).¹⁸ The site had just over 35,000 hits.

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- A site similar in content, but with more than 900,000 hits, was the uploaded [direct threat](#) from "Chapo," to the Los Zeta, at that time allied to the Gulf Cartel. The video, sung in hip-hop rhythm with foul language, promised revenge for the Gulf Cartel's killing of singer Elizalde (*YouTube*, 6 September 2007).¹⁹
- Some postings are simple shots of printed messages, like one uploaded by a *YouTube* user naming a group called "Mexico United Against Los Zetas." The typed message calls on businessmen of Torreon, Coahuila State, to avoid certain night clubs Los Zetas owns (*YouTube*, 2 February).²⁰



YouTube member "mcanonimo25" posted a music video threatening revenge for the killing of popular norteno singer Elizalde.

Videos of Families Praising Police Officers Killed in Action Have Much Fewer Hits

While the Mexican Government runs no anti-narco music video sites, families and supporters of the Federal Police post video clips honoring agents killed in action. The same style of "corridos" music genre is used in videos to laud brave officers who gave their lives for their country, but their *YouTube* audience is much smaller.

- The government's *YouTube* channel covers most of President Calderon's activities and speeches as has some television advertisements and documentaries, but it includes no videos that explicitly honor officers and troops killed in action against traffickers (*YouTube*, 4 May).²¹



A black ribbon sets the tone for a video honoring Federal Police killed in action.

- Individual *YouTube* subscribers have uploaded videos honoring law enforcement and promising cartels that "they will not win this war." One such [video](#), with over 200,000 viewings, shows destroyed police cars and killed officers over a slow-tempo song with lyrics, such as "even though my eyes cannot see you, I can feel you, I know you're here" (*YouTube*, 19 August 2009).²²
- With more than 200,000 hits, the lyrics of one video honoring Federal Police tell of the death of an officer confronting crime: "This land of Durango was a witness, after being stained with the blood of a brave man..." (*YouTube*, 14 December 2007).²³

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Some Videos Send Messages to Cartels

To a lesser degree, some individuals and groups self-described as "enemies of cartels" who are affected by drug-related violence also use *YouTube* to express their anger against cartels.



Angry Ciudad Juarez businessmen threaten cartels with phrases such as "We will speak the same language of arms."

- Businessmen from the US border city of Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, posted a 90-second video ordering cartels to leave their city and threatened to use an "eye for an eye" strategy to combat them (*YouTube*, 14 June 2008).²⁴
- One representative individual *YouTube* user, "romanticomexicano," posted 26 videos lashing out against cartel violence, including a [recording](#) that received over 100,000 viewings titled "A message for narcos in Mexico." The song curses criminals to the rhythm of the "3+1" song by the musical group Panda and contains lyrics such as "I am tired of you and your lies" (*YouTube*, 30 March 2009).²⁵

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¹ [Internet Site | YouTube Staff | YouTube | About Us | 1 January 2010 | | <http://www.youtube.com/t/about> | 3 May 2010 |]

² [Open Source (Not OSC) | www.etcetera.com mx | | 14 August 2009 | | Irma Carolina Valadez Calderon, "Social Networking Sites: Usage in Mexico " | | (U) |]

³ [Internet Site | | Videos Chuscos-RedTube-Yuvutu | The first video community in Mexico | 20 February 2007 | | <http://www.stufferbox.com/index.php> | 19 April 2010 |]

⁴ [Internet Site | Los Tigres del Norte | YouTube | "La Granja " (The Farm) | 24 November 2009 | | <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ff3C-Kyv8wI> | 21 June 2010 |]

⁵ [Internet Site | MrTochtli | YouTube | "A Journey into the World of the corrido " | 17 August 2009 | | <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GewD9qRkNZk&feature=related> | 30 April 2010 |]

⁶ [Online Publication | Avelino Gomez Guzman | The Narcocorrido and its Keys | | 1 January 1999 | | www.elnarco.saltos.com | 26 April 2010 |]

⁷ [OSC | | LAP20100224068001 | 24 February 2010 | | Mexican Kingpin 'El Chapo' Guzman Said To Have Spent Time Resting in Honduras - Mozilla Firefox | | U | U | Madrid EFE in English -- independent Spanish press agency]

⁸ [Internet Site | Jack Papadopoulos | YouTube | "Los Tigres del Norte ": El Discipulo del Diablo | 30 September 2008 | | <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB5NbPO1G08> | 27 April 2010 |]

⁹ [OSC | | LAP20100301202001 | 28 February 2010 | | FYI: Mexican Reporter Explores Drug Trafficking Lifestyles, Influence in Sinaloa - Mozilla Firefox | | U | U | Mexico City Noticias MVS Online in Spanish --]

¹⁰ [Internet Site | 3630W | YouTube | To my enemies-Valentin Elizalde | 9 May 2007 | | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_VTTEjQZHMw | 27 April 2010 |]

¹¹ [Internet Site | El Chivilio | YouTube | | 18 January 2008 | | <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXYAyhKAKNk&feature=related> | 26 April 2010 |]

¹² [OSC | | FBS20091125464945 | 25 November 2009 | | FMSO-JRIC: Latin America Military and Security Watch 24 NOV 09 - Mozilla Firefox | | U//FOUO | U//FOUO |]

¹³ [Open Source (Not OSC) | <http://www.vanguardia.com.mx> | | 23 January 2010 | | Unattributed article, "Narcocorridos classes now offered on YouTube " | | (U) |]

¹⁴ [Open Source (Not OSC) | Monterrey El Norte | | 23 March 2010 | | Unattributed article, "Tijuana Stops Narcocorridos " | | (U) |]

¹⁵ [Open Source (Not OSC) | Radio Nederland Wereldomroep | | 26 April 2010 | | Marta Duran de Hueerta, "Mexico: Narcos on the Internet and Social Nets " | | (U) |]

¹⁶ [Internet Site | You Tube Staff | You Tube | YouTube Community Guides | 4 May 2010 | | http://www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines | 4 May 2010 |]

¹⁷ [Internet Site | ShakaM16 | You Tube | | 7 June 2009 | | <http://www.youtube.com/user/ShakaM16> (Video Clip removed by You Tube) | 27 April 2010 |]

¹⁸ [Internet Site | denunciandopormexico | YouTube | | 12 March 2010 | | <http://www.youtube.com/user/denunciandopormexico> | 28 April 2010 |]

¹⁹ [Internet Site | mcanonimo25 | YouTube | | 6 September 2007 | | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqiPP2-VzGU&playnext_from=TL&videos=kHDIT0ih_ro | 13 April 2010 |]

²⁰ [Internet Site | Amllopeje | YouTube | | 2 February 2010 | | http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIY_Q_GXsNw&feature=PlayList&p=4792851923AA3E18&playnext_from=PL&index=0&playnext=1 | 28 April 2010 |]

²¹ [Internet Site | Mexican Federal Government | YouTube | | 4 May 2010 | | <http://www.youtube.com/user/gobiernofederal#p/u> | 4 May 2010 |]

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²² [Internet Site | caballero del camino - juannauj555 | You Tube || 19 August 2009 ||
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMVeIGeWsQg&playnext_from=TL&videos=Xe-hyzzzt50 | 26 April 2010 |]

²³ [Internet Site | Torotarasco | YouTube | "The Death of a Federal Policeman " | 14 December 2007 ||
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3tWBG93QyM&feature=related> | 7 June 2010 |]

²⁴ [Internet Site | pepetona44 | YouTube | "Businessmen United " | 14 June 2008 ||
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR9M4s_xp_g&playnext_from=TL&videos=TZ76FDpkKIM | 7 May 2010 |]

²⁵ [Internet Site | romanticomexicano | YouTube || 30 March 2009 ||
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcjmDsha4NA> | 22 June 2010 |]

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