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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 MEXICO 009416

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PAGE 02 MEXICO 09416 01 OF 04 271752Z
LABOR FOR ILAB AND NRO-KARESH

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TAGS: PHUM, PGOV, ELAB, SOCI, SMIG, MX
SUBJECT: GROWING CIVIC MOVEMENT IN JUAREZ

REF: MEXICO 8921

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: INTERRELATED SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ HAVE GIVEN RISE TO A STRONG CIVIC MOVEMENT. TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS SUCH AS VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ABUSE, DRUG ADDICTION, POVERTY, LOW WAGES, HOUSING SHORTAGES, INADEQUATE HEALTH AND SANITATION PROGRAMS, STREET CHILDREN, AND HOMELESS MIGRANTS, BOTH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE INTRODUCED
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EDUCATION AND PHILANTHROPIC PROGRAMS AIMED AT "HIGH RISK" GROUPS. MANY OF THOSE PEOPLE WORK IN MAQUILADORA FACTORIES, WHICH PERMIT OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS ACCESS TO EDUCATE EMPLOYEES ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS AS PART OF THEIR PAID WORK-TIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE LOW WAGES PAID BY THE MAQUILADORAS EXACERBATE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

MIGRANTS, MAQUILADORAS, AND LOW WAGES

2. (U) ON OCTOBER 5, MISSIONOFFS MET WITH FATHER FRANCISCO PELLIZARI, HEAD OF THE MIGRANT HOUSE (CASA DEL MIGRANTE), A SHELTER OFFERING LODGING AND SUPPORT TO MIGRANTS. FATHER PELLIZARI EXPLAINED THAT AS BOTH A TRANSIT CITY ON THE WAY TO THE UNITED STATES AND AS THE UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 MEXICO 09416 01 OF 04 271752Z
HOME OF NUMEROUS MAQUILADORA FACTORIES, THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT MIGRANT POPULATION LIVING IN CIUDAD JUAREZ AT ANY GIVEN TIME. THE ALLURE OF GUARANTEED JOBS DRAWS IN MIGRANTS FROM ACROSS MEXICO, WITH A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER FROM VERACRUZ DUE TO HEAVY RECRUITING EFFORTS IN THAT STATE (REFTEL). ACCORDING TO FATHER PELLIZARI, APPROXIMATELY 40-45% OF THE MIGRANTS WHO PASS THROUGH HIS SHELTER ARRIVE IN CIUDAD JUAREZ WITH THE INTENTION OF CONTINUING ON TO THE U.S.; 30-35% ARRIVE WITH THE INTENTION OF LIVING AND WORKING IN CIUDAD JUAREZ; 20-25% WITH THE INTENTION OF RETURNING TO THEIR HOMES AFTER EARNING MONEY FROM THE MAQUILADORAS; AND 2-8% HAVE OTHER INTENTIONS.

3. (U) ACCORDING TO NUMEROUS NGO SOURCES, DESPITE NEARLY FULL EMPLOYMENT, WAGES IN CIUDAD JUAREZ HAVE REMAINED LOW DUE IN PART TO THE CONSTANT ARRIVAL OF NEW MIGRANTS AND MORE WOMEN ENTERING THE WORKFORCE. DURING A LUNCH HOSTED BY THE CONSUL GENERAL ON OCTOBER 5, ESTHER CHAVEZ CANO, HEAD OF THE "CASA AMIGA", NOTED THAT A FOUR-PERSON HOUSEHOLD WOULD NEED TO EARN ABOUT $8,000 PESOS ($800 USD) A MONTH TO SUPPORT MINIMAL LIVING CONDITIONS. HOWEVER, THE AVERAGE MONTHLY WAGE IN A MAQUILADORA IS ONLY ABOUT $1600 PESOS (REFTEL). CONSTANT LOW WAGES COMBINED WITH THE CONSISTENT INFUX OF MIGRANTS RESULT IN A PLETHORA OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH PROBLEMS.

HOUSING SHORTAGES AND SANITATION PROBLEMS

4. (U) ON OCTOBER 6, MISSIONOFFS MET WITH SISTER AURORA
RAMIREZ AND SISTER MARIA DE JESUS FROM THE TONANTzin CENTER, WHICH ASSISTS LOW-INCOME WOMEN AND CHILDREN. THE SISTERS ARGUED THAT MIGRATION INTO CIUDAD JUAREZ HAS CAUSED A SEVERE SHORTAGE OF ADEQUATE HOUSING AND SANITATION FACILITIES. AS A RESULT, THE MAJORITY OF MIGRANTS LIVE IN CROWDED, MAKESHIFT HOMES THAT LACK BATHROOMS AND PLUMBING AND SOMETIMES ARE CONSTRUCTED SOLELY OF CRATES DISCARDED BY MAQUILLADORA FACTORIES. EVEN IF LOW-INCOME HOUSING WERE AVAILABLE, MOST MIGRANTS DO NOT HAVE A CREDIT HISTORY THAT WOULD ENABLE THEM TO QUALIFY FOR A HOUSING LOAN, NOR DO THEY HAVE SUFFICIENT INCOME TO PAY FOR EXPENSIVE UTILITIES. THE TONANTzin CENTER HELPS BUILD ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY OUTHOUSE-TYPE COMMUNITY BATHROOMS.

PUBLIC HEALTH ON THE BORDER

5. (SBU) ON OCTOBER 4, MISSIONOFFS MET WITH JON AMASTAE, CHERYL HOWARD, IRASEMA CORONADO, AND TRICIA GABANY-GUERRERO, FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO'S (UTEP) CENTER FOR INTERAMERICAN AND BORDER STUDIES. CORONADO NOTED THAT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, INCLUDING SANITATION MATTERS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ, IN THE BORDER REGION

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UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04    MEXICO 09416  01 OF 04  271752Z

PAGE 01    MEXICO 09416  02 OF 04  271752Z

ACTION WHA-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 CA-02 INL-00 DOE-00
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ARE OF UTMOST CONCERN TO THE UNITED STATES. FOR EXAMPLE,
THE TEXAS COMPTROLLER'S 1998 REPORT "BORDERING THE
FUTURE," ASSERTS THAT BECAUSE OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL
MIGRATION, DISEASES PASS FREELY VIA SHARED WATER
RESOURCES, CONTAMINATED FOODS, AND PHARMACEUTICAL AND
CONSUMER PRODUCTS. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, IN THE
1990'S, MEXICAN BORDER COMMUNITIES SUFFERED OUTBREAKS OF
CHOLERA AND TEXAS BORDER COMMUNITIES CONFRONTED OUTBREAKS
OF DENGUE FEVER AND RABIES. ACCORDING TO AMASTAE, THE
BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO RESOLVING PUBLIC HEALTH AND OTHER
ISSUES IN THE BORDER REGION IS THE LACK OF COORDINATION
BETWEEN LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS. ISSUES
THAT WOULD BE HANDLED ON A LOCAL OR STATE LEVEL IF THEY
TOOK PLACE ENTIRELY WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF ONE COUNTRY,
ARE CONSIDERED INTERNATIONAL ISSUES ALONG THE BORDER AND
THEREFORE MUST BE HANDLED AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL. THIS
MAKES CITY-TO-CITY OR STATE-TO-STATE COOPERATION
DIFFICULT.

VIOLENCE
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6. (U) ON OCTOBER 4, MISSIONOFFS MET WITH SULY PONCE,
CHIHUAHUA SPECIAL PROSECUTOR FOR CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN.
PONCE EXPLAINED THAT MIGRANTS ARRIVING IN CIUDAD JUAREZ
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NETWORKS THEY LEFT BACK HOME. THE LOW MAQUILADORA WAGES FORCE BOTH THE HUSBAND AND WIFE TO WORK FULL-TIME, LEAVING THEIR YOUNG KIDS UNATTENDED DURING THE DAY. WOMEN COMING TO CIUDAD JUAREZ ALONE ARE EVEN MORE VULNERABLE. DUE TO LONG HOURS WORKING IN THE MAQUILADORA FACTORIES, SHIFT WORKERS COME AND GO THROUGHOUT THE DAY AND NIGHT AND YOUNG WOMEN ARE OFTEN LEFT WITH NO CHOICE, BUT TO VENTURE THROUGH DARK, DANGEROUS, AND POVERTY-STRICKEN NEIGHBORHOODS ALONE AT ALL HOURS OF THE NIGHT.

7. (SBU/NOFORN) PONCE NOTED THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE APPROXIMATELY 200 WOMEN MURDERED IN CIUDAD JUAREZ SINCE 1993 WERE YOUNG AND POOR MIGRANTS FITTING THE ABOVE DESCRIPTION. SHE CONFIRMED THAT THE 30-YEAR SENTENCE OF ABDUL LATIF SHARIF, CONVICTED IN CONNECTION WITH THIS STRING OF MURDERS, WAS OVERTURNED ON APPEAL IN APRIL BASED ON INCONSISTENCIES IN THE AUTOPSY REPORTS. SHE REPORTED THAT SHARIF REMAINS IN CUSTODY AND WILL BE RETRIED. SINCE HIS ARREST, EIGHT MORE WOMEN HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED, RAPED, STRANGLED, AND THEIR BODIES DUMPED IN THE SAME DESERT AREAS WHERE PREVIOUS VICTIMS WERE FOUND. FOUR BUS DRIVERS ARE STILL IN DETENTION FOR ALLEGEDLY COMMITTING MURDERS WHILE SHARIF WAS INCARCERATED. THE BUS DRIVERS CLAIM THEY WERE TORTURED INTO CONFESSIONING, BUT THEIR ATTEMPT TO GET THE CASE THROWN OUT WAS RECENTLY DENIED AND THEIR TRIAL WILL PROCEED.

8. (U) PONCE EXPLAINED THAT AS A PREVENTATIVE MEASURE, THE CHIHUAHUA STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL’S OFFICE (PGJE) RUNS UNCLASSIFIED

A SERIES OF SELF-AWARENESS PROGRAMS TO EDUCATE WOMEN ABOUT THE DANGERS CONFRONTING THEM. THEY HAVE A TEAM OF PSYCHIATRISTS WHO EVALUATE MAQUILADORA WOMEN TO IDENTIFY THOSE AT "HIGH-RISK," DEFINED IN PART AS WOMEN WHO ARE EITHER VERY SHY AND TIMID OR VERY OUTGOING IN NATURE. ONCE THE PGJE HAS FINISHED TRAINING WOMEN IN MAQUILADORAS IT PLANS TO IMPLEMENT THE SAME EDUCATION PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS. PONCE SAID THE PGJE RECEIVES GOOD COOPERATION FROM THE MAQUILADORAS AND IS ABLE TO DO THE PROGRAMS ON PAID WORK TIME, THEREBY ENABLING GREATER EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION.

9. (U) ON OCTOBER 5, MISSION OFFICERS MET WITH/.according to the police mindset in ciudad juarez is to downplay the significance of domestic violence or sexual abuse cases under the belief
THAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS AN INTERNAL FAMILY MATTER AND
SEXUAL ABUSE IS USUALLY BROUGHT ON BY THE WAY THE WOMAN
DRESSED OR ACTED. SHE CHARGED THAT THE POLICE'S
LACKADAISICAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THESE VIOLENT CRIMES AND
WEAK LAWS AGAINST DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE MAKE IT
ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO INVESTIGATE, PROSECUTE, AND BRING

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PAGE 01  MEXICO 09416 03 OF 04 271752Z

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UNCLAS SECTION 03 OF 04 MEXICO 009416

SENSITIVE - NOFORN

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02  MEXICO 09416 03 OF 04 271752Z

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THE PERPETRATORS TO JUSTICE.

DRUGS

10. (SBU/NOFORN) DRUG ADDICTION AND DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE IS ANOTHER PROBLEM ASSOCIATED WITH CIUDAD JUAREZ. ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS, 27 HOMICIDES WITH PRESUMED OR PROVEN DRUG CONNECTIONS TOOK PLACE IN CIUDAD JUAREZ BETWEEN JANUARY 1 TO AUGUST 31. THE MODUS OPERANDI OF THE KILLINGS HAS SHIFTED FROM THE KIDNAPPINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES OF THE MID-1990'S TO ARMED ATTACKS IN PUBLIC AREAS IN WHICH INTENDED TARGETS AND INNOCENT BYSTANDERS FALL VICTIM. THE MUNICIPAL POLICE ESTIMATES THAT 130,000 PERSONS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ, OR APPROXIMATELY 13% OF THE CITY'S POPULATION, CONSUME DRUGS, ALMOST DOUBLE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE. ENRIQUEZ RUBIO, COMMISSIONER OF THE GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION THE FIGHT AGAINST ADDICTIONS, STATED THAT DRUG USE AMONG GIRLS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ BETWEEN 12 AND 17 YEARS OF AGE HAS TRIPLED RECENTLY. HE ALSO REPORTED THAT THE MUNICIPAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS WERE WORKING TOGETHER TO ESTABLISH A DETOXIFICATION FACILITY IN CIUDAD JUAREZ.

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PAGE 03 MEXICO 09416 03 OF 04 271752Z
REPATRIATED CHILDREN

11. (SBU) ON OCTOBER 4, EXPLAINED TO MISSIONOFFS THAT ONE MAIN FUNCTION OF THE DIF IN CIUDAD JUAREZ WAS TO HANDLE CHILDREN REPATRIATED FROM THE UNITED STATES AFTER DEPORTATION. THE PARENTS OF REPATRIATED CHILDREN OFTEN REMAIN ILLEGALLY IN THE UNITED STATES, SO THE DIF MUST SEARCH FOR RELATIVES IN MEXICO WHO WILL AGREE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHILDREN. MANY OF THE CHILDREN ATTEMPT TO ILLEGALLY CROSS AGAIN INTO THE U.S. TO JOIN THEIR FAMILIES. DURING THE OCTOBER 4 MEETING WITH UTEP FACULTY, CORONADO SAID THAT U.S. IMMIGRATION POLICY WAS AN OBSTACLE TO FAMILY REUNIFICATION AND SHOULD BE MODIFIED.

12. (U) ON OCTOBER 6, MISSIONOFFS MET WITH RICARDO MARTINEZ DOZAL, REGIONAL DELEGATE FOR MEXICAN IMMIGRATION (INM), WHO NOTED THAT IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 2000 CIUDAD JUAREZ HAD RECEIVED 1,082 REPATRIATED CHILDREN AND THE STATE OF CHIHUAHUA 1,977, 91% OF WHOM WERE OVER 12
YEARS OF AGE. SOME OF THE REPATRIATED CHILDREN HAVE LIVED MOST OF THEIR LIVES ILLEGALLY IN THE U.S. AND THEREFORE DO NOT HAVE IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS FOR EITHER THE U.S. OR MEXICO, MAKING IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO FUNCTION LEGALLY IN MEXICAN SOCIETY. THIS IS A PROBLEM FOR MANY ADULTS AS WELL.

STREET CHILDREN

13. (U) ON OCTOBER 6, MISSIONOFFS MET WITH JOSE IBARRA MORENO, AND GUILLERMO MACEDO ORDAZ FROM DIF'S CENTER FOR ATTENTION FOR CHILDREN ON THE BORDER. IBARRA DIFFERENTIATED BETWEEN "CHILDREN OF THE STREET" AND "CHILDREN IN THE STREET," STATING THAT THE FORMER ARE HOMELESS CHILDREN WHO REALLY HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO GO, WHILE THE LATTER ARE KIDS WHO HAVE A FAMILY AND HOME TO RETURN TO EACH NIGHT. THE LATTER GROUP OF CHILDREN USUALLY LIVES WITH LOW INCOME PARENTS WHO WORK LONG HOURS AND LEAVE THEIR CHILDREN UNATTENDED. SOME OF THESE CHILDREN WORK TO SUPPLEMENT THEIR PARENTS' INCOME WHILE MANY ARE LIVING ON THE STREET TO ESCAPE ABUSIVE FAMILY SITUATIONS. THE CHILDREN USUALLY DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL. ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS, THERE ARE 800 CHILD PROSTITUTES IN CIUDAD JUAREZ, PLACING IT FOURTH IN THE COUNTRY BEHIND MEXICO CITY, ACAPULCO, AND TIJUANA. THE MAJORITY OF THESE CHILDREN HAVE MOTHERS FROM THE INTERIOR OF THE COUNTRY WHO, FOR LACK OF BETTER EMPLOYMENT, ARE ALSO INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION. IBARRA EXPLAINED THAT THE DIF CENTER OFFERS BOTH SHELTER AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES TO GET KIDS OFF THE STREETS AND OFFER THEM AN ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE.
14. (SBU) COMMENT: THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS ADDRESSING THE NUMEROUS SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACING CIUDAD JUAREZ HAS BEEN THE RECOGNITION OF THE PROBLEMS AND THE GROWTH OF CIVIC AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS DEDICATED TO CONFRONTING THEM. HOWEVER, THE NORTHERN BORDER REGION IN GENERAL, AND CIUDAD JUAREZ IN PARTICULAR, IRONICALLY FACES A SHORTAGE IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES AND ATTENTION DUE TO ITS RELATIVELY STRONG ECONOMY IN COMPARISON TO OTHER REGIONS OF MEXICO. DESPITE THE LOW WAGES PAID BY THE MAQUILADORAS, MIGRANTS CONTINUE TO FLOW INTO THE AREA MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR THESE GROUPS TO FULLY ADDRESS THE SOCIAL, HEALTH, AND ECONOMIC ISSUES CONFRONTING THE CITY.

DAVIDOW