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DEPT FOR WHA/MEX, DS/OP/WH, DS/ITA

EMBASSY FOR RSO, POL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/27/05
TAGS: ASEC, MX
SUBJECT: INSECURITY IN JUAREZ, FACT OR FICTION?

REF JUAREZ 2650

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY RSO ROBERT BARTON. REASON: 1.5 (C).

2. (C) SUMMARY: "GROWING WAVE OF VIOLENCE ON THE FRONTIER", "VIOLENT ROBBERIES INCREASE", "FOUR DEAD IN TWO EXECUTIONS WITHIN 48 HOURS", "VIOLENT DEATHS ON THE RISE", "MAYOR SEEKS HELP AS VIOLENCE GROWS". NEWSPAPER CONFIDENTIAL

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HEADLINES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER DESCRIBE A WORSENING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN CIUDAD JUAREZ. "STATE POLICE LIE ABOUT CRIME IN JUAREZ", "DISTOURED AND MANIPULATED STATISTICS"; THE LATER TWO HEADLINES OFFER JUAREZ MAYOR GUSTAVO ELIZONDO'S OPPOSING VIEW ON THE SITUATION. WHICH VERSION IS ACCURATE, IS JUAREZ EXPERIENCING A RISE IN VIOLENT CRIME, OR IS IT SIMPLY A CASE OF INACCURATE REPORTING AND MANIPULATED NUMBERS? DISPITE THE MAYOR'S CHARGES OF AN EXAGGERATED THREAT TO PUBLIC SAFETY, CRIME WHETHER ASSOCIATED WITH ILLEGAL DRUG ACTIVITY OR NOT, DOES IN FACT APPEAR TO BE WORSENING IN THIS BORDER CITY. SEVERAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS CRIME WAVE THAT MOVES UNCHECKED BY FEDERAL STATE, AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS. END SUMMARY.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
DATE/CASE ID: 05 JUL 2006  200502506

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3. (C) "THE NUMBERS GAME"

According to the Chihuahua State Police, violent crime in Juarez has increased significantly in the first five months of 2000. During this period, all types of crime have increased when compared with the same time frame last year. Homicides have risen by 30% and armed robberies by 13%. Furthermore, of the 85 homicides occurring to date in 2000, 50 were committed with firearms, 13 by stabbing, 11 by traumatic injury to the head, seven by strangulation and four by other causes. Conversely, of the 65 deaths from January to May of 1999, 35 resulted from gunshot (firearm), nine by stabbing, 10 due to traumatic head injury, 8 by strangulation and 3 by other causes. State police sources also show that during the same five-month period of 1999, there have been 307 armed robberies compared to 270 in 1999. Moreover, they confidential

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Report 206 residential robberies in 2000. On the other hand, Juarez Mayor Gustavo Elizondo claims that in the same five-month period of 1999, homicides numbered only 43, while in 2000 only 40 and not 85 as reported by the state police. Elizondo contends too that murders have in fact decreased during his time as mayor, e.g., from 60 in the first five months of 1998 to 43 in the same period of 1999. Elizondo's comments seem to be more political gamesmanship or posturing designed to bolster his stature as mayor while chiding state and federal authorities.

Comment: Mayor Elizondo is a member of the National Action Party (PAN), while the state governor, Patricio Martinez belongs to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and the state police of course report to the governor. Martinez and Elizondo have a long history of politically motivated sparring, one trying to show up the other. This latest feud over the accuracy of the state police crime statistics strikes many observers as yet another game of one-upmanship between Martinez and Elizondo, even more acrimonious than usual due to the imminent national elections on July 2. End comment.

4. (C) "WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING?"

By most accounts and despite the natural inflammatory effect of media reports, criminal activity of every ilk has risen in recent months. A recent execution-style killing of two women at a convenience store located in one of the better neighborhoods of the city served as a dour reminder that crime here knows no socio-economic boundaries. It is a store that routinely has been
FREQUENTED BY CONSULATE STAFF, BOTH AMERICAN OFFICERS AND
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LOCAL NATIONALS. STATE POLICE AUTHORITIES CLAIM THIS
PARTICULAR MURDER WAS A CRIME OF
PASSION, BELIEVING THAT
THE VICTIMS WERE LOVERS KILLED BY SOME OTHER JILTED
LOVER. POLICE AUTHORITIES CAN PROVIDE NO FURTHER DETAILS
AS TO THE GENESIS OF THIS THEORY NOR CAN THEY SHED ANY
LIGHT ON THE PERPETRATOR. MOST FEEL THIS CRIME, LIKE SO
MANY OTHERS, WILL REMAIN UNSOLVED, ADDING TO THE GROWING
SENSE OF IMPUNITY. MAYOR ELIZONDO, APART FROM CRITICIZING
THE CRIME STATISTICS OF STATE AUTHORITIES, HAS SHIFTED
ATTENTION TO THE PATHETIC RECORD OF BOTH FEDERAL AND
STATE AUTHORITIES IN SOLVING CRIMES. ELIZONDO CHALLENGED
STATE AUTHORITIES TO INDICATE HOW MANY PERSONS HAVE BEEN
DETAINED FOR THE MANY HOMICIDES THE STATE CLAIMS HAVE
OCCURRED. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY (REFTEL), THIS LACK OF
INVESTIGATIVE RESOLUTION HAS CAUSED SIGNIFICANT ANXIETY
AND DISCONTENT AMONG THE CITIZENRY. POST BELIEVES THE
STATE POLICE'S NUMBERS ARE FOR THE MOST PART ACCURATE
THOUGH ELIZONDO'S CRITICISM OF ITS INVESTIGATIVE PROWESS
OR LACK THEREOF IS ALSO ON THE MARK. ELIZONDO'S MEMORY
WITH REGARD TO THE WORSENING CRIME IS ITSELF SHORT

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SUBJECT: INSECURITY IN JUAREZ, FACT OR FICTION?

THOUGH, AS RECENTLY AS JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, HE CALLED FOR AN EMERGENCY MEETING WITH TOP LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS TO DEAL WITH THE "INCREASED VIOLENCE THAT WAS SHAKING THE CITY". AT THIS JANUARY MEETING, THE MAYOR FORMALLY REQUESTED FROM THE GOVERNOR AN ADDITIONAL 450 MILLION MEXICAN PESOS (APPROXIMATELY 45M USD) IN ORDER TO REALIZE MORE PUBLIC WORKS AND TO REINFORCE PUBLIC SECURITY. AS DOCUMENTED IN REFTEL, THE MUNICIPAL POLICE CONFIDENTIAL

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IS IN DIRE STRAITS AND HARD-PRESSED TO PROVIDE ANYWHERE NEAR A TRADITIONAL AND EFFECTIVE DETERRENCE TO CRIME.

5.(C) "WHO IS ON FIRST?"

ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION IN RECENT MONTHS, LOCAL STATE AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES HAVE MET AND HELD DISCUSSIONS ON ACCEPTABLE APPROACHES TO STEM THE RISING CRIME IN THE CITY. TO ILLUSTRATE THE SERIOUSNESS (OR PERHAPS DESPERATION) OF THESE TALKS, SOME CONSIDERATION HAS EVEN BEEN GIVEN TO THE USE OF THE MEXICAN MILITARY AND IMPOSITION OF SOME FORM OF MARTIAL LAW. ONE RECENT IMPLEMENTATION HAS ALREADY TRIGGERED MUCH DEBATE REGARDING THE LIMITS OF POWER HELD BY GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES. A LOCAL CURFEW ("EL TOQUE DE QUEDA") NOW PROHIBITS MINORS FROM LOITERING ON PUBLIC STREETS AFTER 10PM. RIGHTS GROUPS AND CITIZEN ACTIVISTS HAVE EXPRESSED OUTRAGE OVER THIS POLICE ACITON, WHICH THEY VIEW AS AN INFRINGEMENT ON INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES. IN GENERAL THOUGH, MOST OBSERVERS SEE LITTLE IN THE WAY OF COORDINATED EFFORT ON THE PART OF MUNICIPAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES TO EFFECTIVELY PROVIDE A DETERRENCE TO CRIME AND AFTER-THE-FACT, CREDIBLE REPERCUSSIONS FOR COMMITTING A CRIME (I.E., DETENTION, SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION AND IMPRISONMENT). THE STATE POLICE CHIEF RECENTLY DECLARED THAT THE ROLE OF CRIME PREVENTION BELONGS TO MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES. THE MUNICIPALITY QUICKLY POINTS OUT IT DOES NOT HAVE THE WHERE WITH ALL TO CARRY OUT THIS MANDE. MANY JOINT TASK FORCES AND OPERATIONS, COMPIRED OF MUNICIPAL AND STATE AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN DISMANTLED OF LATE. INFIGHTING, LACK OF DIRECTION, UNCERTAIN LINES OF AUTHORITY, ETC., HAVE ALL CONTRIBUTED TO THE INEFFECTIVE CONFIDENTIAL

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PERFORMANCE AND LESS THAN STELLAR RESULTS OF THESE SPECIAL OPERATION GROUPS. IN WHAT MAY BE YET ANOTHER PLOY DESIGNED TO SHOW UP LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE STATE
POLICE HAVE ANNOUNCED THE FORMATION OF A NEW UNIT TO PROVIDE A PREVENTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT PRESENCE. SMALL GROUPS OF STATE POLICE OFFICERS NOW PATROL PARTS OF THE CITY IN THE BACK OF PICK-UP TRUCKS, A MOVE AIMED AT DETERRING CRIME OR BREAKING THEM UP IN PROGRESS. MANY DOUBT THE LONG TERM EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS MEASURERE. EVEN A STATE POLICE HELICOPTER HAS ENTERED ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS INTO THE FIGHT ON CRIME. STILL, THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF MEXICAN LAW ENFORCEMENT REMAINS UNCHANGED: MISDIRECTION, INEFFECTIVENESS, BUMBLING OPERATIONS, AND MISTRUST OF THE AUTHORITIES BY THE CITIZENRY.

6. (C) "PREDICTIONS"

THE BOTTOM LINE REMAINS THAT CRIME STILL OCCURS AND IS ON THE RISE. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT THE PERPETRATORS REMAIN AT LARGE. POST BELIEVES UNTIL SUCH TIME THAT POLITICAL SQUABBLING CAN BE TABLED AND ALL LEVELS OF MEXICAN GOVERNMENT TRULY PULL TOGETHER TO COMBAT THE CRIME SITUATION, LITTLE CAN BE EXPECTED IN THE WAY OF IMPROVEMENT. ADD TO THIS MESS THE NEED FOR SLOW-TO-REALIZE SOCIETAL CHANGES AND OVERCOMING THE CORRUPTING INFLUENCE OF THE DRUG TRADE, ETC., AND ONE QUICKLY REALIZES THAT THE LACK OF PUBLIC SECURITY WILL CONTINUE TO PLAUGE THIS CITY FOR SOME TIME TO COME. THOUGH OUR OFFICIAL COMMUNITY IN JUAREZ IS RELATIVELY SMALL, THE OVERALL PRESENCE OF AMERICAN CITIZENS IN JUAREZ CAN BE SIGNIFICANT AT ANY GIVEN TIME. WHILE PRIVATE AMERICANS

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HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF CRIME HERE - INCLUDING MURDER - POST'S OFFICIAL COMMUNITY HAS FOR THE MOST PART REMAINED UNSCATHERED. THE PROXIMITY OF THE CONVIENCE STORE SLAYING AND A RECENT BREAK-IN ATTEMPT AT THE HOME OF THE RSO NONETHELESS REMINDS US OF OUR SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CRIME ENDEAVORS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ECONOMIC GROWTH EXPERIENCE IN THE BORDER CITY, UNMATCHED BY PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS HAS NOT COME WITHOUT A COST IN, AMONG OTHER THINGS, RISING CRIME.

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