E.O. 12958: E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ASEC, SOCI, PGOV, PHUM, KFAO, KWMN, CASC, MX
SUBJECT: FACT FW: FEDERAL POLICE TAKE CHARGE OF PUBLIC SAFETY IN JUAREZ

REF: CIUDAD JUAREZ 3835

1. SUMMARY: THREE MONTHS AFTER THE LAUNCH OF THE UNITED SECURITY PROGRAM IN CIUDAD JUAREZ, WHICH BROUGHT 300 FEDERAL PREVENTIVE POLICE (PFP) TO THE CITY, THE SECOND PHASE HAS BEGUN. THE NUMBER OF PFP PATROLLING THE STREETS OF THIS CITY HAS INCREASED TO 770 OFFICERS. THE NUMBER OF TARGETED HIGH-CRIME AREAS IN THE CITY HAS ALSO DOUBLED, WHILE THE GOALS CONTINUE TO BE CRIME PREVENTION AND INVESTIGATION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION. PFP OFFICERS, DRESSED IN PARAMILITARY FATIGUES AND ARMED WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, ARE NOW A COMMON SIGHT ON CITY STREET CORNERS. PUBLIC REACTION TO PFP PRESENCE IN THE CITY IS GENERALLY POSITIVE, BUT MANY REMAIN DOUBTFUL THAT IT IS ANYTHING MORE THAN A TEMPORARY FIX. END SUMMARY.

2. BACKGROUND: PUBLIC AND POLITICAL PRESSURE, STEMMING LARGELY FROM THE UNSOLVED MURDERS OF YOUNG WOMEN IN AND AROUND CIUDAD JUAREZ, PUSHED MEXICAN FEDERAL AUTHORITIES TO LAUNCH THE UNITED SECURITY PROGRAM IN JULY (REPTEL). THE PROGRAM PUTS THE PFP IN CHARGE OF PUBLIC SAFETY IN JUAREZ, WITH AUTHORITY OVER THE MUNICIPAL POLICE. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN MEXICO'S HISTORY THAT A FEDERAL AGENCY HAS HAD AUTHORITY TO DIRECT ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS IN A MUNICIPALITY. END BACKGROUND.
3. Under the second phase of the United Security Program, the number of PFP in Juárez jumped to 770 in late September. Seventy of the PFP are intelligence analysts, charged with analyzing and mapping crime patterns in the city. The Federal Police are joined by 1,800 Municipal Police, 300 State Judicial Police (PJE) and an unspecified number of officers from the Federal Investigations Agency (AFI). The PFP brought with them 50 patrol vehicles, nine trucks, and one ambulance.

4. PFP officials have pledged to prevent business and home robberies, track automobile theft, and enforce the city's reported 1,800 pending arrest warrants. They are also responsible for protecting the city's infrastructure and four international bridges. The majority of PFP arrests in recent weeks, however, have reportedly been narcotics-related. PFP are focusing on 84 high-crime areas in the city (up from 35 in July) and are patrolling in vehicles and on foot. Though the duration of PFP presence in Juárez is unknown, officials have said it will likely continue at least through Christmas.

5. Official reaction to PFP presence in Juárez is largely positive. Hector Garcia Rodriguez, Chihuahua Delegate for the Federal Attorney General's Office (PGR), told consulate officials that interagency cooperation is effective and cited improved response times to crimes and better funding for local initiatives. The head of the Municipal Police, Ramon Dominguez Perea, a native of Juárez, is himself a former PFP official who was assigned by Mexico City four months ago. According to Sr. Dominguez Perea, PFP has provided much-needed training to Municipal Police and helped cut the city's crime rate by 27 percent. He said that the response time for an emergency call has dropped from an hour, a year ago, to around five minutes now. He sees positive institutional changes resulting from PFP presence and the United Security Program.

6. Public reaction to PFP presence, however, is more mixed. In general, citizens seem to view the PFP in Juárez as little more than symbolic. Though they see this as a step in the right direction, they are doubtful that crime in the city has subsided or that the exercise will have a lasting effect on local police operations. Some observers continue to see the United Security Program as politically motivated, with Fox's Pan attempting to bolster support after disappointing congressional election results in June.

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