



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 13, 2010

DHS: Cartel Hit Teams May Target U.S. Cops

The Department of Homeland Security issued a warning to law-enforcement officers in Western Texas that a Mexican gang may be seeking to assassinate them in retaliation for a “sweep” conducted last month that produced more than 50 arrests.

Citing “uncorroborated information” received by the Border Intelligence Center, the DHS [Officer Safety Alert](#) said the Barrio Azteca gang may issue a “green light” authorizing the attempted murder of police in the El Paso area. “Due to the threat, it is recommended that [law-enforcement officers] take extra safety precautions,” advised the report.



The document also instructed officers to report any suspicious people or vehicles near their homes or government property, warning lawmen to “frequently change their route of travel to and from work” and “be aware of their surroundings.” It also encouraged them to warn their families and wear ballistic armor while at work.

The gang was reportedly formed inside Texas prisons during the 1980s and is said to be affiliated with a gang south of the border called Aztecas. The group’s alleged leader, Eduardo Ravelo, is considered a fugitive and appears on the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s [Ten Most Wanted](#) list. The Bureau claims that Azteca gang members also carry out hits for more well-known criminal enterprises like the Ciudad Juarez cartel La Linea.

“[They] are extremely cold-blooded and aggressive,” El Paso FBI special agent David Cuthbertson told [FoxNews.com](#). “The killings are done really without thought and any kind of remorse.” He also explained that the gang operates “assassination teams” that routinely murder rivals and are believed to work for very low fees.

Though Mexican officials are regularly slaughtered by criminal syndicates (including almost 50 police officers in Ciudad Juarez last year), [analysts](#) said it is unusual for Mexican cartels to target American law enforcement because it is not good for “business” and it ends up causing even more problems. But three recent homicides in the area — including a U.S. consular worker and a local detention officer — are suspected to be the work of Barrio Azteca.

[Foxnews.com](#) reported that one of the gang’s sergeants recently admitted to American investigators that he was ordered to seek out one of the murder victims because of alleged mistreatment of fellow gang members in custody. Mexican officials also reportedly suspect the gang’s involvement in the slayings.

Following the murders, a massive operation to round up and interview suspected Azteca gang members was undertaken by multiple federal, state, and local agencies in Western Texas. Hundreds of law-enforcement officers reportedly participated in the action, dubbed “Operation Knockdown.”



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The four-day-long “gang sweep” was cited in the DHS advisory as the reason for potential retaliation against American law-enforcement officers. “We take everything serious,” El Paso Police Officers’ Association President Ron Martin told the [El Paso Times](#). “The safety of the officers is paramount. It’s not the first time somebody has put a hit or a green light on an officer, and it probably won’t be the last.” He also strongly condemned the murders and said Mexico should fix its problem.

It is to be hoped that this threat to lawmen’s lives has been overblown. But there is a real problem, and it is not going to go away on its own. In fact, it will continue to get worse if America “stays the course” in its unconstitutional, failed “War on Drugs.”

The best solution to the war gradually spilling across America’s Southern border would be — in addition to properly policing the border — to end the unconstitutional federal drug war and force cartel members to go find real jobs by putting their enterprises out of business. After all, liquor manufacturers have not employed assassination squads since the end of prohibition. And while the scourge of drugs represents a veritable societal tragedy, tens of thousands of senseless deaths in the name of an impossible-to-win war are even worse.

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