



Mexican Gangs Threaten, Extort U.S. Businesses

Criminal Mexican cartels are reportedly threatening American businesses in Mexico and even in the United States; and the problem is getting worse as gangs become increasingly brazen and violent.



Cartel murders, drug trafficking, and kidnappings have all been increasingly spilling over the border into the United States during the last few years. In fact, a recent [threat assessment](#) from the Department of Justice's National Drug Intelligence Center estimates that the Mexican organizations are operating in at least 230 American cities. They also have "strong affiliations with gangs in the United States."

A recent survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico revealed that 75 percent of member businesses have been affected by the violence and security situation there. Now, the [Associated Press](#) reports that in recent weeks American businesses in the United States have complained to the police about extortion threats allegedly coming from notorious Mexican cartels. The AP describes these extortion threats as "a sign that criminal tactics common in Mexico are showing up north of the border."

In one week, at least two businesses in El Paso received phone calls from somebody claiming to be a Zetas commander with the infamous Gulf Cartel. According to one of the businessmen, the caller demanded \$50,000 immediately in a "bullying voice," threatening that otherwise "the next time we'll see you, it will be at the funeral of a loved one."

These sorts of operations are common in Mexico, where the AP highlights a funeral home owner close to the border was murdered and had his business burned to the ground recently after refusing to pay extortion fees. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) intelligence chief for Mexico and Central America, Mexico has seen almost 6,000 cartel-related murders so far this year, on track to surpass last year's 6,500. But America has so far been largely spared from the worst of it.

The incidents in El Paso were reported to police, who assigned an investigator to the case and admitted that other local businesses had endured similar threats in recent days. A spokesman for the El Paso police department said it could be people trying to capitalize on the gangs' fearsome reputation, but the victims are nonetheless concerned for their families' safety. He did not say how many businesses had been affected.

One of the businessmen's mothers told the AP that the family was frightened. "We're taking this very seriously. We're not getting much rest," she said. "And whenever I think about it, I shake like a leaf." None of the victims would allow their names to be used in the AP article due to fear of retaliation.

"There are only so many companies they can extort on the Mexican side," AP was told by a business owner who received a phone call. "Sooner, or later, they will start operating here. After all, we're so close, right along the border."

Michael Webster, an investigative journalist, claims that the problem has become widespread in America in an *American Chronicle* article entitled "[Mexican mafia type extortion crosses the border into USA](#)." Citing a DEA agent, he reported that "businesses along the dangerous U.S. Mexican border from Texas to California have been the victims of extortion attempts and threats." He added that many of the



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victims, some of whom are illegal aliens, do not even report the crimes because of the constant threat of retaliatory action.

But Mexican cartel violence in America is hardly a new phenomenon. "Some of these groups not only engage in crime and violence not only in Mexico and along the border, but they come across and kidnap, murder and carry out assassinations," Bush's "Drug Czar" John Walters [told reporters](#) late last year. "These groups do not respect the border." Kidnappings and assassinations supposedly carried out by the cartels and their affiliates have been widely reported in recent years.

A [report](#) by the global security and intelligence firm Kroll Associates warns that U.S. businesses, particularly those operating in Mexico, will find themselves increasingly targeted by the cartels. One of the primary factors leading to the heightened alerts is deepening U.S. government involvement in Mexico's drug war, which according to the firm could mean that "U.S. companies may be faced with extortion, that local managers are kidnapped for ransom and that truck hijacking increases."

But despite all of this, the federal government continues to unconstitutionally shovel tens of billions of dollars at a failed war on drugs that only serves to enrich the cartels and corrupt public officials. Ending the federal government's international war on drugs would immediately decimate the cartels and their main source of profits, promoting peace in Mexico and in America. Groups like [Law Enforcement Against Prohibition](#) argue that such a move would end or decrease the violence.

While the Department of Homeland Security frantically [pursues](#) "right-wing extremists," the Southern border [remains porous](#) and the violence continues to slowly seep in. Properly guarding the border would prevent more criminals from sneaking across, and pursuing those that are already here could prove to be a valuable deterrent. If government would simply follow the Constitution and faithfully execute its responsibilities, these problems could be minimized with relative ease. But until then, American businesses, towns, cities and people will be forced to contend with the violence coming from south of the border.



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