



## Obama-backed Mexican Troops Disarm & Massacre More Civilians

[Obama administration-backed Mexican troops](#) opened fire this week on a [group of civilians](#) seeking to keep their weapons and rein in ruthless government-linked drug cartels, which have terrorized their communities in the state of Michoacán. The attack sparked an international outcry on behalf of the citizens, who have suffered non-stop brutality at the hands of both government officials and criminal syndicates. News reports, some of which conflict with each other, suggest that around a dozen people were shot and at least four were killed in the massacre, including an 11-year-old girl. A Mexican paper [reported](#) that a dozen civilians died in the clash.

Multiple reports and local witnesses said that Mexican forces opened fire on an unarmed crowd, though officials would not confirm that to foreign reporters. Community leaders quoted in press reports said the government was trying to protect cartels. Authorities also claimed not to know exactly how many people had been killed in the clashes, which reportedly began Monday, January 13, when a group of unarmed citizens tried to stop a convoy of heavily armed government functionaries from entering the town of Antunez and disarming residents.

However, journalists and news reports confirmed that there were multiple bodies in the area, and at least several locals reported that their family members had been slain in attacks by government troops. The federal assault came days after local self-defense groups managed to drive out criminal syndicates from more and more towns in the region over the weekend. Spokesmen for local communities said the biggest confrontation involved around 60 to 80 government troops, although hundreds were in the area.

Officials claim they were trying to bring “security” to the region by disarming the civilians, whom they refer to as “vigilantes” for seeking to drive cartels out of their beleaguered communities. Also part of the scheme was enforcing Mexico’s draconian gun-control regime, which critics say violates the human rights of law-abiding Mexicans while contributing heavily to the ongoing reign of terror and murder across much of the nation. “There will be no tolerance for anyone caught with firearms,” [decreed](#) Government Secretary Miguel Angel Osorio Chong.

Other top Mexican officials made similar statements, demanding that citizens surrender their weapons and essentially submit to whatever group or cartel happens to be terrorizing the public at that moment. “We can’t combat illegality with illegality,” claimed Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam in a statement to Televisa television. He claimed the purpose of the latest deployment, which led to the massacre, “is simply to restore legal order in a place that did not have it.”

Authorities apparently expect citizens to rely on the deeply corrupt government for security, even



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though estimates suggest that between 50,000 and 100,000 innocent people have been slaughtered in less than a decade as drug war-fueled violence continues to escalate. Many Mexicans, however, have had enough of the terror and are [organizing self-defense groups](#) to protect their communities and families from lawless cartels and the corrupt officials controlled by criminal syndicates.

The latest confrontations happened near the village of Apatzingan in the southwestern Mexican state of Michoacán. Following years of abuse, dirt-poor townspeople — farmers, laborers, local officials, merchants, and more — decided to exercise their God-given right to self-defense against the cultish and brutal so-called “Knights Templar” cartel. The community defense organizations have now liberated and wrested control of more than a dozen cities and towns in the region from criminals, according to news reports.

The locals first decided to arm and organize themselves into self-defense units, known as “fuerzas autodefensas” in Spanish, early last year. By then, it had become clear to citizens that authorities were either working with the criminal syndicates, or were powerless to stop them. Indeed, entire police departments in the state have been arrested for working with cartels, and evidence [confirming U.S. government partnerships](#) with certain crime bosses continues to emerge.

In one case, though, a mayor in Michoacan, Ygnacio Lopez Mendoza, decided to [speak out](#) against the cartels and their extortion rackets. He was promptly kidnapped, tortured, mutilated, and murdered — part of a nationwide trend. The cartels even have a saying, “plomo o plata,” which translates to lead (bullets) or silver (money). In other words, officials who are not already working with cartels are offered a choice: Either take the bribes, or die.

Initially, Mexico City [reluctantly tolerated](#) some of the self-defense groups despite the radical gun-control regime. More recently, however, in response to locals’ efforts to restore order and security in their villages, authorities sent in hundreds of soldiers and federal police. Upon arrival, officials reportedly ordered citizens to surrender their only means of self-defense — mostly crude firearms. When villagers refused to let them pass, Mexican forces reportedly opened fire, shooting about a dozen victims and killing at least four, probably more.

“What we are doing is defending our family, our people,” [said](#) Estanislao Beltran, a spokesman for the General Council and Community Self-Defense Forces of Michoacán. “The government has not cared for 12 years for our safety. The army arrives and disarms us and our partners.... Following this, the people took to the roads to stop the army and asked for the return of the arms to the community because they were defending their communities.”

Beltran also said that citizens would “never” give up their weapons and that there would be no discussions with authorities until Knights Templar bosses are arrested. “The problem is the Caballeros Templarios of Michoacán, and the government is in collusion with organized crime,” he added. “The army is made of people without values or ethics. The military has no reason to shoot the people.” Other local residents and community leaders echoed those remarks, with some grieving over the loss of their loved ones at the hands of Mexican forces.

Of course, Beltran and his fellow residents are hardly alone in accusing authorities of colluding with drug cartels. In Mexico, the corruption of government officials at all levels is common knowledge. Just this month, meanwhile, a year-long investigation by a leading Mexican newspaper [confirmed once again](#) that the U.S. government has also been partnering with some of Mexico’s most ruthless cartels for over a decade — especially the Sinaloa cartel.



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Last year, as *The New American* reported, leaked documents quoting U.S. and Mexican officials also indicated that [American troops were already operating in Mexico](#). In addition to supporting certain cartels such as Sinaloa, U.S. troops secretly operating in the nation were reportedly working with Mexican forces to perpetrate “surgical strikes.” Leading analysts equated the machinations to “death squads.”

Long before those revelations hit the headlines, Obama [announced an expansion](#) of the Bush administration’s controversial program to support the Mexican government in its blood-drenched “war.” Despite widespread human-rights concerns, Washington, D.C., has continued to pour hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars into the drug-war coffers of Latin American governments — especially the one ruling Mexico — for years. So far, the schemes show no signs of slowing down or getting anywhere near “victory.”

In response to the escalating drug-war death toll and soaring violence across the region, Latin American leaders from Colombia and Guatemala to Mexico and Uruguay have [increasingly started searching for alternatives](#) — including potentially an outright end to drug prohibition. However, the United Nations and the Obama administration have [demanded](#) that the so-called “war” be stepped up, threatening non-cooperative governments while showering more taxpayer funds on those that comply. Caught in the crossfire, meanwhile, are the thousands of innocent civilians murdered every year.

*Photo of soldiers patrolling the main highway near Cuatro Caminos in the Mexican state of Michoacan: AP Images*

*Alex Newman, a foreign correspondent for The New American, is normally based in Europe after growing up in Latin America, including seven years in Mexico. He can be reached at [anewman@thenewamerican.com](mailto:anewman@thenewamerican.com).*

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