

What Do You Need To Know About Violent Crime In Mexico?

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In Mexico over the last few months security and crime stories such as the mass kidnapping of several dozen residents by 300 masked criminals in the town of Chilapa Guerrero and the more recent killing of 42 suspected cartel members by Federal Police in Tanhuato Michoacan, have attracted a lot of attention. Although Mexico's government has decimated the leadership structures of groups such as the Zetas and Caballeros Templarios, over the course of 2014, a new group, the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco, has risen to prominence. The CNGJ is perhaps best known for a recent brazen attack in which the cartel's gunmen shot down an army helicopter, killing eight soldiers. 2014 saw the capture of Mexican crime kingpin "El Chapo" Guzman, but clearly the fight against violent crime in Mexico is far from over.

While news outlets such as Proceso magazine and the blog borderlandbeat.com have documented each individual incident, a recent report from the University of San Diego aims to provide a wider perspective on the evolving face of organized crime in Mexico.

The town of Iguala in the state of Guerrero is known as the birth-place of the Mexican flag. On October 22 the flag on the side of the mayor's office burned during a protest over the disappearance of 43 student teachers. Photo by N. Parish Flannery: @nathanielparish on Instagram.

On October 22 the flag on the side of the mayor's office in Iguala Guerrero burned during a protest over the disappearance of 43 student teachers. Photo by N. Parish Flannery: @nathanielparish on Instagram.

Overall, at least a third of the murders in Mexico in 2014 bore signs of organized-crime related killings, such as the use of high-caliber automatic weapons, torture and the use of narcomensajes. Former Mexican president Felipe Calderon has been widely criticized for his security strategy that saw a 58% increase in organized-crime related murders in 2008, a 41% increase in 2009 and a 30% increase in 2010. Since 2011, however, Mexico's murder rate has fallen year after year, and according to the report from the University of San Diego's Justice in Mexico Project, that trend continued in 2014. According to the report,

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018) has continued the previous administration's efforts to arrest major organized crime figures. While President Peña Nieto continued the same strategies of the previous administration during his first year in office, he also began to emphasize crime prevention and judicial system reform more strongly than in the past.

Still, despite the capture of "El Chapo" Guzman and the decimation of the Caballero's Templario cartel, the threat of organized crime is still very much present in Mexico. During the course of 2014, the states with the largest number of organized-crime-style murders were all states where organized crime groups control major smuggling routes. The border state of Chihuahua reported 1,143 murders. Guerrero, the site of the disappearance of 43 student teachers in late 2014 reported 1,075 murders. Sinaloa, the home base of "El Chapo" and his organization reported 747 homicides. While Michoacán, the state once dominated by the Caballeros Templarios reported 594 deaths. Jalisco, the state that recently saw a dramatic confrontation between soldiers and gunmen from the Nueva Generacion Cartel, reported 518 killings.

According to the report,

In 2014, SNSP statistics still placed Ciudad Juárez as the municipality with the fourth highest number of homicides, though this number continued to decline by perhaps as much as 14% from the previous year (with the caveat that Ciudad Juárez was one of many cases for which data were incomplete). Meanwhile, the number of homicides also declined again in Acapulco, the city that has registered the most homicides since 2012, from 883 to 590 homicides, a decrease of more than a third.

But, these improvements are a mixed result. They are associated with a broader trend of organized crime related violence shifting away from city centers towards the urban periphery and rural areas. This has proven to be a problem for Pepsi and Coca-Cola who have seen their trucks and facilities targeted by criminals and radical activists in Guerrero and ArcelorMittal, a company who saw one of its executives killed in Michoacan, allegedly by cartel gunmen. Cemex has also seen its employees and operations in Guerrero threatened by criminals. Most recently gunmen in Guerrero kidnapped a Cemex employee while he was driving a company vehicle.

Airbnb hiring Eric Holder on the anti discrimination issue.

Airbnb hires Eric Holder for anti-discrimination policy
Elizabeth Weise, USATODAY

CEO Chesky says Airbnb has 'an obligation to be honest about our own shortcomings.'

SAN FRANCISCO – Stung by complaints of discrimination and racism among some of its hosts, Airbnb has hired former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to help it craft an anti-discrimination policy.

The home rental company announced last month it would review all aspects of its platform with an eye to fighting bias and discrimination.

Critics have said that by creating a digital space that allowed individuals to choose to whom they rent apartments and houses, Airbnb unwittingly enabled its hosts to act on their biases.

A Harvard Business School study last year found widespread discrimination by Airbnb hosts. Renters who have said they were repeatedly turned down by hosts — a pattern that tended to reverse if they swapped their profile photo for one of a cityscape, for instance — have protested the racial discrimination under the hashtag #AirbnbWhileBlack.

Holder's hiring is part of Airbnb's efforts to deal with the problems that have arisen. He said he was looking forward to working with Airbnb to develop and implement what the company calls “a world-class” anti-discrimination policy.

“Airbnb is committed to building a community where everyone can belong, no matter who they are or what they look like. I'm eager to help them craft policies that will be the model for companies who share Airbnb's commitment to diversity and inclusion,” he said in a statement.

Marijuana

Five months into 2016, Colorado marijuana sales near half-billion mark

By Alicia Wallace, The Cannabist Staff

In the first five months of 2016, Colorado marijuana sales already were starting to flirt with the half-billion mark.

Colorado recreational pot shops and medical marijuana dispensaries reeled in nearly \$98.6 million in sales during May, bringing the year-to-date tally for 2016 to just over \$486 million, according to Colorado Department of Revenue tax data released Wednesday.

The state's cannabis industry very well could surpass \$1 billion in sales by November, if the coming months' sales keep pace with 2015 monthly revenue.

The May sales — \$37.7 million from medical and \$60.85 million from retail — represent the fourth-highest monthly total since Colorado started recreational sales in January 2014.

Colorado's monthly marijuana sales set a record \$117.4 million last month — likely buoyed by the April 20 marijuana holiday.

The May sales of flower, edibles and concentrates resulted in a nearly \$14.5 million boost to Colorado coffers. Through May, taxes and license fees have contributed upward of \$71.4 million in tax revenue, according to the data.