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# Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center



## HSTC Intelligence Note

**Tenancingo Bulletin #1:  
The Anatomy of a Trafficking Ring:  
Origins and Recruitment**

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*(CONTEXT STATEMENT: The information in this report was provided by the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center (HSTC) in collaboration with the participating agencies of the HSTC. The HSTC is an interagency fusion center and information clearinghouse, composed of representatives from various governmental agencies, and focused on matters of human smuggling, human trafficking, and the facilitation of terrorist travel. The HSTC provides the U.S. Government with a mechanism to achieve greater integration and overall effectiveness in its efforts to eliminate these activities. The HSTC is unique among U.S. organizations and centers in that it concentrates on illicit worldwide travel and provides guidance to U.S. Government policymakers.)*

**Scope Note:** *This is the first in a series of bulletins at the unclassified level intended to inform federal, state, and local law enforcement about the Tlaxcala, Mexico-based sex trafficking network with ties to the U.S.*

### **(U) The Anatomy of a Trafficking Ring: Origins and Recruitment**

(U) Tenancingo, Tlaxcala is legendary on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border for its sexual exploitation of women and girls, natives of central and southeastern Mexican states, as well as women of similarly poor backgrounds from Central and South American nations. ***Mexico-based recruitment locations, trafficker and victims' profiles, and trafficking routes follow patterns known to the Mexican public and are documented in the Mexican media.***

#### **(U) Tlaxcalan Trafficking Origins**

(U) Mexican trafficking is concentrated in eight of Tlaxcala State's 60 municipalities, according to a Tlaxcala-based NGO and an academic study reported in the Mexican press. Tlaxcala-based non governmental organizations estimate some 1,000 traffickers in operation there, earning 5,000 pesos a day per young woman, with some traffickers controlling up to 20 women.<sup>1</sup> Tenancingo is the most documented focal point for sex trafficking in the state, with the infamous groups Los Negros, Los Romanes, and Los Gueros, as well as the Zacatero and Flores families in operation.<sup>2,3</sup> Other key Tlaxcalan trafficking locales are Ayometla, Mazatecochco, San Pablo del Monte, San Luis Teolocholco, Acuamanala, Xicohtzinco, Papalotla, and Zacatelco.<sup>4</sup>

#### **(U) The Victims: A Cruel Cinderella Story**

(U) Traffickers recruit vulnerable undocumented women and minor migrants from Latin American countries as they traverse Mexico en route to the U.S. and poor, indigenous Mexicans from rural central and southeast Mexican states, such as Tlaxcala, Puebla, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Veracruz. They force women to prostitute themselves in states of recruitment, and also the Federal District, and northern border cities, like Tijuana, en route to the U.S., according to Mexican NGOs. Frequent non-Mexican national targets include Guatemalans, Hondurans, Salvadorans, Colombians, Ecuadorans, Peruvians, and Brazilians, according to a July 2010 private Mexican security firm report.<sup>5,6</sup> Victims of all nationalities are generally between 14 and 19 years of age, with low self-esteem, little education, and poor families, according to a Mexican non-profit.<sup>7,8,9</sup>

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### (U) Traffickers' Poverty Disposes them to the Industry

(U) Like their victims, the traffickers, some of them trained and operational before they turn 18, attribute their career path to economic need. From run of the mill street stand vendors, they morph into full-fledged traffickers with some training from more experienced cohorts. Of the 10,000 inhabitants of La Meca, an outskirts of Tenancingo that has earned the moniker “the university for sex traffickers,” 50 percent are traffickers, according to a Mexican expert on human trafficking.<sup>10</sup>

### (U) A Tlaxcalan Trafficker's Playbook

(U) Tlaxcalan-trained traffickers, known in Mexican Spanish by the terms *padrotes*, *caimanes*, *kalimanes*, or *calinches*, use lies and seduction to recruit victims both in person and online.<sup>11,12</sup> Tlaxcalan traffickers employ the religious-based social structure of indigenous communities to their advantage, participating in the traditional hierarchy and ceremony in order to gain status in the eyes of victims' parents, and then trap teenage girls into romantic relationships with promises of wealth to their families. Other poor families willingly sell their daughters with the understanding that they will do domestic housework.<sup>13</sup> Often, traffickers kidnap, rape, and use physical violence to maintain control over victims. They bring victims to cohabit, getting them pregnant, and extorting them with prostitution if they want to see their children.<sup>14</sup>

### (U) Mexico City Prostitution Hubs

(U) In the Mexican capital, the Alameda Central, metro Hidalgo station, Avenida Circunvalación Garibaldi, Sullivan, Avenida Insurgentes Center, Reforma center, Zona Rosa, Central Camionera del Norte, Central Camionera Poniente, and metro Indios Verdes and La Villa neighborhoods are focal points of sexual commerce, as are nearby Iztapalapa, metro Zaragoza, Central de Abastos, Santa Fe, and Xalalpa.<sup>15</sup> 85 percent of sex traffickers detained in the La Merced area of the capital come from Tenancingo, Tlaxcala.<sup>16</sup>



*(U) With Tlaxcala-based traffickers' recruitment methods, origins, points of transit, and victims' profiles so widely known to the Mexican public, Tlaxcalan authorities need only cooperate with their federal level partners, who have U.S. anti-trafficking backing, to target these individuals. If state authorities persist in looking the other way in spite of publically known crimes, Tlaxcalan traffickers can be expected to continue indefinitely and respect for rule of law, already historically weak in this part of the country, will be further degraded.*

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### Contact Information:

Please direct any information, questions, or comments concerning this report or the information herein to the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center at 202-312-9746 or [HSTC@state.gov](mailto:HSTC@state.gov).

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<sup>1</sup>(U) *La Jornada*, "Cobra fuerza el lenocinio en el sur de Tlaxcala, con anuencia de autoridades," 23 April 2006, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/04/24/index.php?section=estados&article=039n1est>, accessed 20 October 2010.

<sup>2</sup>(U) *El Universal*, "Detectan en Tlaxcala mil traficantes," 21 June 2009, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/169154.html>, accessed 25 August 2010.

<sup>3</sup>(U) *Milenio*, "Traficantes de mujeres utilizan la capital como punto de envio a EU," 16 November 2008, <http://impreso.milenio.com/node/7031519>, accessed 19 October 2010.

<sup>4</sup>(U) *El Universal*, "La Meca, 'universidad' en trata de blancas," 27 September 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/sociedad/6499.html>, accessed 20 October 2010.

<sup>5</sup>(U) *Milenio*, "Traficantes de mujeres utilizan la capital como punto de envio a EU," 16 November 2008, <http://impreso.milenio.com/node/7031519>, accessed 19 October 2010.

<sup>6</sup>(U) *La Cronica*, "Triple 'T', Tenancingo, Tapachula y Tijuana, ruta del tráfico sexual," 18 June 2008, [http://www.cronica.com.mx/notaImprimir.php?id\\_notas=367900](http://www.cronica.com.mx/notaImprimir.php?id_notas=367900), accessed 20 October 2010.

<sup>7</sup>(U) *El Universal*, "Trata de personas 'moderniza' la esclavitud," 27 February 2009, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/166064.html>, accessed 31 August 2010.

<sup>8</sup>(U) *Alerta Periodistica*, "Desarticulan red de trafico y trata de mujeres; operaban en Tlaxcala y EU," 14 September 2009, <http://alertaperiodistica.com.mx/desarticulan-red-de-trfico-y-trata-de-mujeres-operaban-en-tlaxcala-y-eu.html>, accessed 19 October 2010.

<sup>9</sup>(U) *La Jornada*, "¿De qué viven los hombres de aquí? De la cosecha. Sí, pero de mujeres..," 14 September 2010, <http://www.lajornadajalisco.com.mx/2010/09/14/index.php?section=politica&article=009n1pol>, accessed 21 October 2010.

<sup>10</sup>(U) *El Universal*, "La Meca, 'universidad' en trata de blancas," 27 September 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/sociedad/6499.html>, accessed 20 October 2010.

<sup>11</sup>(U) *El Universal*, "Trata de personas 'moderniza' la esclavitud," 27 February 2009, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/166064.html>, accessed 31 August 2010.

<sup>12</sup>(U) *Alerta Periodistica*, "Desarticulan red de trafico y trata de mujeres; operaban en Tlaxcala y EU," 14 September 2009, <http://alertaperiodistica.com.mx/desarticulan-red-de-trfico-y-trata-de-mujeres-operaban-en-tlaxcala-y-eu.html>, accessed 19 October 2010.

<sup>13</sup>(U) *La Jornada*, "Cobra fuerza el lenocinio en el sur de Tlaxcala, con anuencia de autoridades," 23 April 2006, <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2006/04/24/index.php?section=estados&article=039n1est>, accessed 20 October 2010.

<sup>14</sup>(U) *El Universal*, "PGJ resguarda a 45 sexoservidoras," 14 March 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/ciudad/94518.html>, accessed 31 August 2010.

<sup>15</sup>(U) *El Financiero*, "Trata de personas, el tercer delito mas lucrativo del crimen organizado," 26 July 2010, <http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/ElFinanciero/Portal/cfpages/contentmgr.cfm?docId=276093&docTipo=1&orderby=docid&sortby=ASC>, accessed 24 August 2010.

<sup>16</sup>(U) *El Universal*, "Buscan red de tratantes en Tenancingo," 23 September 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.com.mx/primera/35585.html>, accessed 19 October 2010.