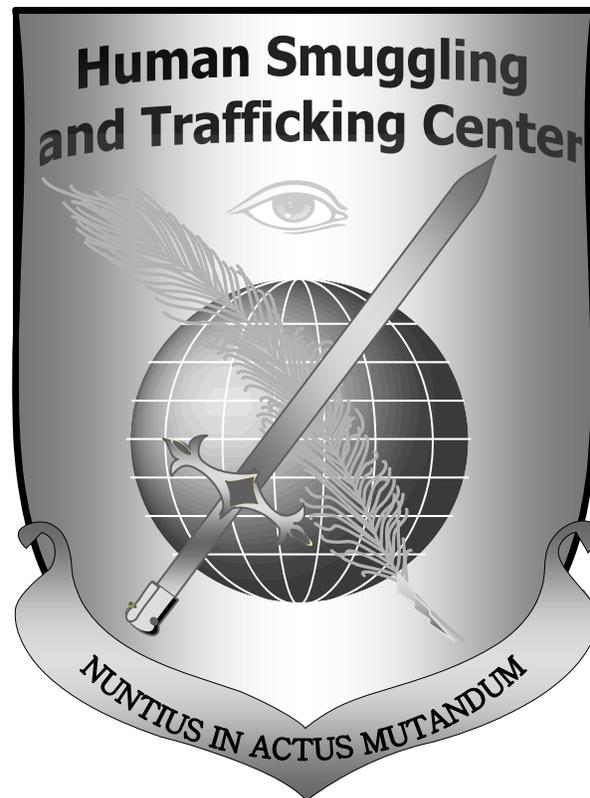


# Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center



## HSTC Intelligence Note

**Tenancingo Bulletin #4:  
Scrutiny of Migrant Trafficking  
Follows Mass Grave Discovery**

**November 16, 2010  
HSTC 2010110006**

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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 fourth in a series of bulletins at the unclassified level based solely on open source reporting intended to inform federal, state, and local law enforcement about the Tlaxcala, Mexico-based sex trafficking network with ties to the U.S.*

### **(U) Scrutiny of Migrant Trafficking Follows Mass Grave Discovery**

(U) Latin American papers have highlighted, since the late-August discovery in Tamaulipas State of the bodies of over 70 undocumented Latin American migrants en route to the U.S. -- kidnapped by organized criminal group *Los Zetas*, and killed for refusing to join their enterprise -- the lack of Mexican government attention to abuses of undocumented migrants, and especially the crime of trafficking.<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6</sup>

*(U) The mass grave discovery increased visibility on crimes against undocumented migrants in Mexico and pressed President Felipe Calderon's administration.<sup>7</sup> While Mexican media has focused on the criminal group Los Zetas' kidnapping of undocumented Latin American migrants through the Southeast and Gulf regions of Mexico for profit and recruitment, it increasingly reports criminal groups extending into the lucrative sex trafficking trade.<sup>8,9</sup>*



(U) Photo: Excelsior. A Central American stowaway clings to a train in Southeast Mexico.

### **(U) Indigenous Rural Central American and Mexican Migrants Most Vulnerable**

(U) Undocumented migrants from rural Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, and particularly women and children, are most vulnerable to transnational human trafficking networks, according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants and the Canadian Institute for Health.<sup>10,11</sup>

### **(U) New Focus on Kidnappings and Lack of Prosecutions**

(U) In the first report by Mexican authorities about this problem, the Mexican National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) estimated some 20,000 undocumented migrants are kidnapped each year and that 75 percent of these crimes go unreported.<sup>12</sup> In a study

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of a six-month period between September 2008 and February 2009, the CNDH concluded some 9,758 migrants were kidnapped en route to the U.S. and 80 percent of the women had been sexually assaulted or raped. The federal attorney general's office indicated no new federal prosecutions since 2009 and in the southeastern-most state of Chiapas, where most Central Americans' journey through Mexico begins," there are fewer than thirty open investigations with the state attorney general.<sup>13</sup> Tenosique, Tabasco, Coatzacoalcos, Medias Aguas, and Tierra Blanca, Veracruz; Ixtepec, Oaxaca; Saltillo, Coahuila; and Reynosa and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas are the most notorious sites of violations of undocumented migrants' rights, according to reporters who spent two years documenting migrants' illegal travels across Mexico. *It is not possible to give an exact number of how many of these kidnapping victims turn into trafficking victims, but media and NGO reporting suggests that they are numerous.*<sup>14,15</sup>



(U) Smugglers sometimes become trafficking victims in Mexico en route to the U.S. Poor, indigenous women and minors are most likely victims, according to NGO and international organizations.

### (U) Reports of Official Complicity in Rural Mexican Trafficking

(U) Illegal migrants are fearful of Mexican state authorities, particularly in southeastern Mexico, where they are reputedly complicit with organized crime, according to civil society groups in the Mexican papers.<sup>16,17,18</sup> According to a Chiapas-based NGO, there is a high rate of tolerance for the sexual exploitation of Central American women and minors, particularly those of indigenous descent, in Mexican border communities.<sup>19</sup> The CNDH report found that 91 percent of kidnapping victims noted public officials were directly responsible, and 40 percent observed official collusion while in captivity.<sup>20</sup>

### (U) Some States Begin to Take Action but Much Work Remains

(U) Because of the public outcry, the Chiapas state government has established a Special Prosecutor for Crimes Against Migrants and remains the only state to do so. It has arrested five members of a local police unit targeting migrants for assault, begun to

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interview migrants, and established regional offices with Central American consulate and NGO assistance. It is not clear how much of their work is focused on crimes of sex trafficking or how well these crimes are distinguished from kidnapping, extortion, and other assaults committed against migrants during their journey.<sup>21</sup>



(U) Principal migrant routes through Mexico, Amnesty International, 2010.

*(U) To change these trends, Mexican officials would need to better vet state and local authorities in the well-known trafficking origin and transit areas -- southeastern states with poor, rural, and indigenous populations. Until migrants -- nationals of Mexico and other Latin American nations, both of similarly humble origins -- feel safe reporting trafficking crimes, they will continue to be easy targets.*

### **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).

<sup>1</sup> (U) *El Milenio*, “Migrantes de 4 países, los 72 narcoejecutados,” 26 August 2010, <http://www.milenio.com/node/515800>, accessed 26 August 2010.

<sup>2</sup> (U) *El Universal*, “Se negaron a ser sicarios; “Los Zetas” los fusilaron,” 26 August 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/primera/35447.html>, accessed 26 August 2010.

<sup>3</sup> (U) *Expreso*, “Entre los 72 masacrados en México hay ecuatorianos,” 25 August 2010, <http://www.diario-expreso.com/ediciones/2010/08/26/nacional/actualidad/entre-los-72--masacrados-en-mexico-hay-ecuatorianos/>, accessed 26 August 2010.

<sup>4</sup> (U) *El Faro*, “Nos vemos en el proximo masacre de migrantes,” 26 August 2010, <http://elfaro.net/es/201008/opinion/2333/>, accessed 7 September 2010.

<sup>5</sup> (U) *La Prensa*, “Quien trata, maltrata,” 28 September 2010, [http://www.prensalibre.com/opinion/Trata-maltrata\\_0\\_341965830.html](http://www.prensalibre.com/opinion/Trata-maltrata_0_341965830.html), accessed 5 October 2010.

<sup>6</sup> (U) *La Prensa*, “Extrema forma de violencia,” 28 September 2010, <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/opinion/editorial/143831-extrema-forma-de-violencia.html>, accessed 5 October 2010.

<sup>7</sup> (U) *El Universal*, “Y, ¿el IV Informe de gobierno?,” 2 September 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/columnas/85760.html>, accessed 7 September 2010.

<sup>8</sup> (U) *La Jornada*, “El cártel de Los Zetas ha convertido el secuestro de migrantes en su mina de oro,” <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2010/10/18/index.php?section=politica&article=012n1pol>, accessed 18 October 2010

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- <sup>10</sup> (U) UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, UN/HRC/11/7/Add.2, para.65, 24 March 2009.
- <sup>11</sup> (U) *Revista Contralinea*, "Trata de mujeres, problema de género," 10 October 2010, <http://contralinea.info/archivo-revista/index.php/2010/10/12/trata-de-mujeres-problema-de-genero/>, accessed 21 October 2010.
- <sup>12</sup> (U) *El Universal*, "El secuestro se triplico en el pais en 5 anos," 7 September 2010, <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/primera/35502.html>, accessed 7 September 2010.
- <sup>13</sup> (U) *El Pais*, "El crimen organizado mexicano se ceba con los inmigrantes 'sin papeles'," 31 August 2010, [http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/crimen/organizado/mexicano/ceba/inmigrantes/papeles/elpepuint/20100831elpepuint\\_1/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/crimen/organizado/mexicano/ceba/inmigrantes/papeles/elpepuint/20100831elpepuint_1/Tes), accessed 7 September 2010.
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- <sup>17</sup> (U) Amnesty International, "Invisible Victims: Migrants on the Move in Mexico," <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/widespread-abuse-migrants-mexico-human-rights-crisis-2010-04-27>, accessed 26 August 2010.
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