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Human Smuggling and Trafficking Center



HSTC Intelligence Note

**Tenancingo Bulletin #11:
Portrait of the Tlaxcala Trafficker
As a Young Man**

**January 24, 2011
HSTC2011010025**

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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 eleventh 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) Portrait of the Tlaxcala Trafficker as a Young Man

(U) In Tlaxcala, young boys aspire to the lucrative careers of their fathers and uncles; they learn early how to dupe poor women with limited education into situations of forced prostitution. In this Intelligence Note, we explore Tlaxcala-based traffickers' development, coping strategies, and evolving local gender roles to shed light on the persistence of a Southern pimp culture in Mexico.

(U) Two Ways to Get into the Business

(U) Sex trafficking work is often passed down from family to family; sons take on the profession of their fathers and uncles; mothers help to recruit and control new female victims. Sex trafficking is viewed in these communities as a way to escape poverty. Sometimes, the “apprentices” are the first traffickers in their family. These “entrepreneurs” learn from neighbors and friends who are already involved.

(U) Traffickers Deploy Successful Coping Strategies

(U) The language of “the trade,” as it is known simply, indicates that sex trafficking is an institutionalized way of life in “The South” -- the poorer, more rural, and indigenous states of Mexico. *Padrotes*, as the sex traffickers are called, describe the need to maintain a cold-blooded outlook on their work that they call “killing emotion.” Another strategy that *padrotes* employ to detach from their illicit work is absenting themselves during the transaction of sexual services.

(U) Before they have established themselves in the sex trafficking business, traffickers “hustle to get chicks,” developing a repertoire of women to move as merchandise. Then, traffickers “move it so that the woman will work,” wherever they can earn from a victim’s exploitation, whether in Mexico or in the United States. Traffickers describe being careful not to let their victims get “the mental advantage,” aiming to think quickly on their feet and always be “a step ahead of victims.” The *padrotes* have learned to “move it according to circumstances” that arise, reflecting adaptability and agility.¹

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(U) Traditional Gender Roles Facilitate Work-Life Separation

(U) Most traffickers maintain an active family life with spouse and children, tending toward closer relations with the latter. They keep a careful distance between their own families and their businesses and they are careful to keep their own wife out of their work; if a trafficker allows his spouse to be trafficked initially, it is only to get his enterprise started. Similarly, with the girls they recruit, *padrotes* avoid sentimental ties: “Love needs to stay out of this type of business,” they explain. They also recruit in other regions to avoid community conflict. “There’s no need to hurt our town...the harvest of women is never-ending... and you can find the fruits anywhere,” according to a wide sample of Tlaxcala-based traffickers interviewed for a major Mexican academic study.²

(U) Sex Trafficking Has Caused Family Role Readjustments

The predominance of sex trafficking has given rise to new family roles. Modern families in the region often have mothers of *padrotes* caring for the offspring of prostitutes when they are not given away to other, nearby families. The level of acceptance of families headed by single mothers or polygamous households has increased, with variance according to the prevalence of sex trafficking practice in the community. In La Meca, Tenancingo, Tlaxcala, for example, where traffickers predominate, they are looked to as an example and form the local elite.³

(U) Mexican youth in communities with high trafficker concentrations could benefit from education tracks gearing them toward other professions and educating them against illicit sex trafficking, but until boys see economically viable career alternatives and their elders held accountable for illicit paths, little will deter youth from what appears their best, if not only, economic exit from poverty.

¹ (U) Inmujeres, “Trata de Personas: Padrotes, iniciación, y modus operandi,” July 2009, http://cedoc.inmujeres.gob.mx/documentos_download/101080.pdf, accessed 29 October 2010.

²(U) CIMAC, “Estado mexicano, ineficaz para sancionar delito de trata,” 17 February 2010, <http://www.cimacnoticias.com/site/10021708-Estado-mexicano-in.41595.0.html>, accessed 5 November 2010.

³ (U) Inmujeres, “Trata de Personas: Padrotes, iniciación, y modus operandi,” July 2009, http://cedoc.inmujeres.gob.mx/documentos_download/101080.pdf, accessed 29 October 2010.