

Los Zetas Mexican Drug Trafficking Organization

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Overview of Los Zetas Strategic Plan

- Operational Plan
- Command and Control Structure
- Defense Economics
 - Logistics that Identifies Principal Transportation Modalities and ability to project power
- Geographic Locality Importance
- Personnel/Demographics
- Training
- Weapons Types
- Operational Strategy: Conventional and/or Asymmetric Warfare
 - Medical Support



Operational Plan

- Los Zetas operational activity comes from their diverse background of former military personnel, law enforcement agents and impressionable youth
- Primary missions still fall in line primarily with drug trafficking, human/weapons smuggling and money laundering
- Special operations/Mexican military background make them adept in aerial assaults, marksmanship, sophisticated communications, and intimidation
- Proficient at conducting complex, coordinated military-style operations
- Recently turned to “insurgent –like” TTPs



Command and Control Structure

Heriberto Lazcano
 Lazcano *El Lazca*
 (Lider de Los Zetas) 

Miguel Ángel Treviño
 (Encargado regional) 



Defense Logistics/Economics

- A hierarchical structure exists that facilitates logistical movement and the flow of drug trafficking
 - This allows them to maintain their lifeline of drug trafficking activity, which also allows for continued logistical freedom of movement and economic expenditures
- Human trafficking from Cuba and other Latin America countries has also been a primary source of revenue for Los Zetas



Geography/Locality Importance

- Most of Los Zetas recruitment and organization structure is local
 - There also exists a global recruitment effort which takes people of different ethnic and cultural background into consideration
- Reach goes to places like Philippines (SE Asia) and Central/South American countries as well
- Much power and influence still comes from local populace
 - Re-enforces ability to blend in with the civilian population (popular COIN technique)



Personnel/Demographics

- Public relations and information operations campaign directed towards a young, poor, easily influenced base
- The socio-economic nature of the campaign evident in physical banners, advertisements and audio messages
- Demographics also extremely important in near and far term timeframe
 - Affect certain alliances that this organization currently has and potentially will have
 - Political, cultural, socio-economic or gender-specific



Training

- Military style training is hallmark of Los Zetas
 - Great emphasis on properly training their new recruits and ensuring that their more seasoned members undergo reinforcement training
- Los Zetas military-style “training camps” spread out in the area of northeastern Mexico (just south of the Texas border)
- One disadvantage lies in the manner in which their training camps operate
 - Covert style of training camps leaves little publicity for enhanced recruiting efforts
 - Secretive nature in which they operate strikes at the question of their legitimacy



Weapons Types

- Los Zetas has an incredibly large and diverse amount of different types of weapons at their disposal
 - Outdated weapons previously associated with most Mexican DTOs have been replaced with an arsenal that includes AR-15 and AK-47 assault rifles, MP5 machine guns, .50mm machine guns, grenade launchers, ground-to-air missiles, dynamite, bazookas, and helicopters
- A large portion of these weapons were actually acquired in the United States and then smuggled across the border into Mexico
 - Significance lies in the ease with which these weapons have been smuggled across the border



Operational Strategy: Conventional and/or Asymmetric Warfare

- Los Zetas and other similar Mexican DTOs will seek to conduct insurgent-style warfare with the local civilian population while also conducting some semblance of military attacks directed towards the Mexican Army
 - COIN style TTPs will facilitate the Los Zetas members living with the population and attempting to blend in with this population
 - Therefore, they will receive medical attention as well as logistics and sustenance through these civilian channels
 - Regular kinetic attacks will continue on both sides of the border, facilitating the resemblance of conventional type warfare



?Questions?

