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**THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS AND THE THREAT TO
U.S. HOMELAND SECURITY**

by

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December 2015

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**THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS AND THE THREAT TO U.S. HOMELAND
SECURITY**

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ABSTRACT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMIA	Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina
CJNG	Cartel de Jalisco Nueva
COIN	counter insurgency
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DTO	drug trafficking organization
ELN	National Liberation Army
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia FARC-Ejército del Pueblo or People’s Army
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FTO	foreign terrorist organization
GAFE	Airborne Special Forces Group
GAO	Government Accounting Office
GWIG	Global Intelligence Working Group
IED	improvised explosive device
IRA	Irish Republican Army
MAR	Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria—Revolutionary Action Movement
meth	methamphetamine
MTCO	Mexican transnational criminal organization
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
PCC	Colombian Communist Party
PEMEX	Mexican Petroleums
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PSUV	United Socialist Party of Venezuela
SABA	Shi’a Association Bay Area
SOUTHCOM	Southern Command
SWJ	The Small Wars Journal
TCO	transnational criminal organization

UP

Patriotic Union

VBIED

vehicle borne improvised explosive device

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2001, violent sub-national groups with disparate ideologies and motivations have been working together to further their objectives. They are collaborating, sharing each other's tactics, and learning from one another's successes and failures. To comprehend fully the complex nature of the nexus or convergence of transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), the research first examines the root causes and contributing factors that have given rise to the nexus.

Mexican transnational criminal organizations (MTCOs) are flourishing both south and north of the United States (U.S.) border with Mexico.¹ They operate with sophisticated business plans that parallel legitimate multi-national corporations.² The MTCOs are taking full advantage of globalization, advantages in technology, communication, and logistics.³ As the MTCOs have grown in wealth, and operational capability, they have also increased their willingness to commit acts of extreme violence in an effort to terrorize, threaten, intimidate, and coerce people in a manner that had previously only been perpetrated by terrorist organizations.⁴

At the same time, many of the traditional terrorism funding methods, such as charitable donations, which were used to fund the 9/11 attacks, came under intense scrutiny from the U.S. government and its allies.⁵ Today, it is imperative that FTOs fund their operations in a manner that keeps it below the radar of law enforcement. As a result, many terror groups are now turning to activities that were once considered the sole domain of criminal organizations, such as drug trafficking, money laundering, human

¹ Jennifer L. Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus: An Alliance of International Drug Cartels, Organized Crime, and Terror Groups* (Boca, FL: Taylor & Francis, 2013), 329.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ United States, Executive Office of the President, United States and President, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime Addressing Converging Threats to National Security* (Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President, 2011).

⁵ Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus: An Alliance of International Drug Cartels, Organized Crime, and Terror Group*, 4.

trafficking, etc.⁶ According to the Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime, the U.S. Department of Justice reports “29 of the 63 organizations on its FY2010 Consolidated Priority Organization Targets list, which includes the most significant international drug trafficking organizations threatening the United States, were associated with terrorist groups.”⁷

At times, the crime-terror nexus has been promoted and facilitated by different nation states.⁸ For example, the late Venezuelan President, Hugo Chavez, promoted what he called, “‘asymmetric war,’ ‘fourth generation war,’ ‘people’s war,’ or ‘super insurgency.’”⁹ Chavez also widely distributed copies of Jorge Verstryngé’s book entitled, *Peripheral War and the Islamic Revolution*, which according to Max Manwaring, has become “one of the most comprehensive and universally read analyses of contemporary revolutionary conflict.”¹⁰ A Spanish Leninist scholar, Verstryngé calls modern conflicts *guerra periferica* or peripheral war.¹¹ “Guerra periferica,” as Verstryngé describes it, combines irregular or asymmetrical, unrestricted and total war involving several different methods, with protracted war that recognizes time as a factor in contemporary conflict.¹²

Today, transnational crime is on the rise. MTCOs operate undeterred on all seven continents. Similarly, the U.S. State Department’s list of FTOs continues to grow, with six new organizations added in 2014.¹³ If left unchecked, the nexus between these

⁶ United States, Executive Office of the President, United States and President, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime Addressing Converging Threats to National Security*.

⁷ The White House, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2011).

⁸ Jon B. Perdue, *The War of all the People: The Nexus of Latin American Radicalism and Middle Eastern Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012).

⁹ Max G. Manwaring, *The Complexity of Modern Asymmetric Warfare* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” accessed October 3, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>.

disparate groups will only make their suppression or eradication increasingly more difficult.

This thesis uses a case study approach to examine the history of the nexus between TCOs and FTOs. The three violent sub-national groups selected for the case studies are each engaged in a variety of illicit activities that could be classified as both criminal and terroristic in nature. For these reasons, the three violent sub-national groups pose a significant threat to U.S. homeland security, through their interactions and cooperation with one another. For the purposes of this thesis, the case studies focus on the three violent sub-national groups known as Hezbollah, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the MTCOs. Each of these violent sub-national groups also has a distinct primary area of operation represented in specific geographic areas, which means their various illicit activities have broad implications for U.S. homeland security.

The three case studies suggest the activities of these violent sub-national groups are so protean in nature; they are best described by analysts as falling into the “gray area phenomenon.”¹⁴ The three case studies, the analysis, and conclusion of this thesis support the following recommendations:

- More effort needs to be placed on intelligence collection, especially at the domestic and local levels
- Strategic level decision makers across the U.S. homeland security enterprise should review both versions of the National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan, and work collaboratively to implement the recommendations contained in both versions.
- Strategic level decision makers across the U.S. homeland security enterprise should consider working to increase the collaboration and reduce the division between the fields of counterdrug and counterterrorism intelligence to disrupt the crime-terror nexus more effectively.

¹⁴ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 432.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2001, violent sub-national groups with disparate ideologies and motivations have been working together to further their objectives. They are collaborating, sharing each other's tactics, and learning from one another's successes and failures. To comprehend fully the complex nature of the nexus or convergence of transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) the research first examines the root causes and contributing factors, which have given rise to the nexus.

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¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” accessed October 3, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>.

A. **WHY IS THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS A PROBLEM WORTHY OF RESEARCH?**

According to a March 2010 Congressional Research Service report entitled, “International Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Security Threats, U.S. Policy, and Considerations for Congress” the authors argue, “more research on the subject from academic and non-profit communities could also improve the availability of knowledge on the subject.”¹⁴ They go on to point out that “without such resources, the intelligence community and the wider policy community cannot accurately gauge the scope and nature of relationships between terrorists and criminal actors, as well as to assess convergence trends and predict future connections.” The authors conclude by pointing out, “the lack of assessment on how, why, and in what ways criminals and terrorists liaise with each other can prevent policy makers from devising appropriate strategies to combat the nexus.”¹⁵

This thesis addresses three primary research questions:

- What is the background or historical context of the crime-terror nexus?
- How extensive is the problem of the crime-terror nexus?
- What challenges does the crime-terror nexus present for homeland security practitioners?

Material regarding the nexus or convergence of TCOs and FTOs is typically buried in obscure, sometimes classified government documents, press releases, court records, and news articles only available from foreign media sources, which are rarely reported on by the media in the United States. Through the synthesis of a variety of different sources of information, this thesis pulls together a comprehensive understanding of the crime-terror nexus, while answering the basic questions of who, what, where, why and how for the readers, and provide policy level analysis and propose recommendations. This research is relevant to policy makers and strategic planners charged with

¹⁴ John Rollins, Liana S. Wyler, and Seth Rosen, *International Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Security Threats, U.S. Policy, and Considerations for Congress* (CRS Report No. R41004) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010).

¹⁵ Ibid.

responsibilities relating to U.S. homeland security, emerging threats, TCOs, FTOs, and other emerging hybrid forms of violence.

B. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis uses a case study approach to examine the history of the nexus between TCOs and FTOs. The three case studies are then used as the data for the analysis chapter, which shows the historical, emerging, and relationships between states and the three violent sub-national groups.

The three violent sub-national groups selected for the case studies are each engaged in a variety of illicit activities that could be classified as both criminal and terroristic in nature. For these reasons, the three violent sub-national groups pose a significant threat to U.S. homeland security, through their interactions and cooperation with one another. For the purposes of this thesis, the case studies focus on the three violent sub-national groups known as Hezbollah, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the MTCOs. Each of these violent sub-national groups also has a distinct primary area of operation represented in specific geographic areas, which means their various illicit activities have broad implications for U.S. homeland security.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice reports “29 of the 63 organizations on its FY2010 Consolidated Priority Organization Targets list, which includes the most significant international drug trafficking organizations threatening the United States, were associated with terrorist groups.”¹⁶ The case studies do not extend beyond the three violent sub-national group previously discussed in an effort to limit the size and scope of the project, and because it would be impossible to discuss the criminal activities of all 29 FTOs with ties to TCOs within this thesis. The analysis is also limited to the activities of the three violent sub-national groups that would indicate they are engaging in criminal (i.e., drug trafficking) or terroristic activity. In other words, these three case studies are very selective, and focused on the crime-terrorism nexus and provide data for further analysis in a later chapter of this thesis.

¹⁶ United States, Executive Office of the President, United States and President, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime Addressing Converging Threats to National Security*.

The research for this thesis draws upon information contained in a variety of different sources regarding the TCOs and FTOs. Reports from the U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the U.S. Department of State, the Congressional Research Service, as well as congressional testimony are used to determine the homeland security challenges associated with the nexus between TCOs and FTOs. For example, the State Department's 2012 country reports on terrorism will be one of the sources used for this thesis. Besides the sources that have already been identified, information contained in a research papers and reports produced by non-government organizations, including the Kiernan Group Holdings, The Rand Corporation, the West Point Counter Terrorism Center, are also analyzed and considered with respect to the extent of the nexus.

This research improves the analysis of the crime-terror nexus giving policymakers at all levels of government insight into creating appropriate strategies related to this homeland security challenge.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following critical analysis of the extant literature is organized around, and related directly to the research questions posed in this thesis. The analysis is presented in three parts relative to the organization of this research. The first part covers the background and support of the nexus between criminality and terror in relation to different countries, which are facilitating ongoing, small, irregular, asymmetric, and revolutionary wars, in which violent sub-national actors are helping their political patrons. Secondly, the extent of the threat posed by the convergence or nexus TCOs and FTOs is considered through the careful examination of three groups of violent sub-national groups: Hezbollah, the FARC, and the Mexican TCOs. The third part examines the challenges the nexus presents for homeland security practitioners. The research is divided into two essential and explanatory categories, (1) background and support of the nexus, and (2) how extensive is the crime-terror nexus?

A. PART I—THE BACKGROUND OF THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS

The literature on the background and historical context of the crime-terror nexus begins with the writings of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Vladimir Lenin. As early as 1848, with the release of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels wrote about the three classes of society: the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and the lumpenproletariat.¹⁷ First Marx and Engels in the mid-1800s, then Lenin in the early 1900s, would all write about the use of the lumpenproletariat as a means of creating chaos, havoc, and disorder during revolutionary times.¹⁸ Lenin's writings in particular cover the use of violent crime as a means of funding the revolutionary forces.¹⁹ The literature by all three individuals when taken as a whole describes how the founders of Marxism-Leninism believed that acts of both terrorism and violent crime are permissible subversive methods for achieving

¹⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (New York: International Publishers, 1948).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *Selected Works in Three Volumes. Uniform Title: Works. Selections. English. 1970* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970–1971).

revolutionary goals.²⁰ Understanding these early Marxist-Leninist writings is particularly important to understanding fully the crime-terror nexus in contemporary times.

B. LITERATURE FROM COLD WAR UNTIL THE COLLAPSE OF THE BERLIN WALL

During the Cold War era following World War II, most of what was written about the crime-terror nexus focused on the activities of communist east bloc nations in encouraging and training violent sub-national groups to commit acts of terrorism in an effort to subvert legitimate governments in the West. During the late 1970s and 1980s, several books were written on the topic of communist support of terrorism. For example, the book *International Terrorism—The Communist Connection* was released in 1978.²¹ It was followed in the 1980s by books like *The Terror Network* by Claire Sterling,²² and *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection* by Ray Cline and Yonah Alexander.²³ However, not all books written on the topic of communist support for terrorism as a method of subversion were written by Americans. For example, *The World Held Hostage* was written by Desmond McForan from the United Kingdom.²⁴ Also, it is important to understand considerable disagreement occurs about whether communist nations were fomenting terrorism violence as a means of subversion. British author Stephen Segaller's book, *Invisible Armies*, written in 1987, serves as an example of an alternative opinion of the time.²⁵ Also, it is worth noting the literature of the period did not focus solely on the Soviet Union. In addition, several books were written about Cuba's involvement in training, supplying, and encouraging violent sub-national groups, particularly in Latin

²⁰ Ray S. Cline and Yonah Alexander, *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection* (New York: Crane Russak, 1984).

²¹ Stefan Thomas Possony and L. Francis Bouchey, *International Terrorism—The Communist Connection: With a Case Study of West German Terrorist Ulrike Meinhof* (Washington, DC: American Council for World Freedom, 1978).

²² Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981).

²³ Cline and Alexander, *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection*.

²⁴ Desmond McForan, *The World Held Hostage: The War Waged by International Terrorism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

²⁵ Stephen Segaller, *Invisible Armies: Terrorism into the 1990s* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987).

America. For example, in 1987, Rex Hudson published his book, *Castro's America Department: Systemizing Insurgencies in Latin America*, which details Cuba's subversive activities throughout the Caribbean basin during the 1980s.²⁶

There are three important things to understand about the literature surrounding the crime-terror nexus written between the late 1970s and the late 1980s before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and eventually, the collapse of the Soviet Union. First, considerable disagreement occurs about whether the communist nations were encouraging terrorism as a means of subversion. A considerable amount of literature was written during this period, which added a level of detail regarding the methods used by some nations to subvert existing governments. Third, the literature of the period focused primarily on communist support and encouragement for terrorism, rather than organized crime, although some of the authors clearly recognized an overlap existed between the two as a means of subversion.

C. LITERATURE AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE BERLIN WALL UNTIL SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

During the years between the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a significant change in the broader understanding of the crime-terror nexus occurred, which was reflected in the literature of the period. Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, new information became available that confirmed the communist engagement in subversive activities including both crime and terrorism. It changed the understanding of the topic of the crime-terror nexus. For example, in 1999, John Koehler's book, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police*, provided details of the Stasi's subversive activities on a global scale.²⁷ Another example is Christopher Andrew's book, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, which

²⁶ Rex A. Hudson, "Castro's America Department: Systemizing Insurgencies in Latin America," *Terrorism* 9, no. 2 (1987): 125-167.

²⁷ John O. Koehler, *Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999).

provided considerable insights into the Soviet Union's efforts to encourage, train, and supply terrorists through a global network of communist nations.²⁸

Two important considerations have been raised regarding the literature on the crime-terror nexus from the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the attacks of 9/11. First, the literature of this period resolved the discourse about whether communist nations were or were not encouraging international terrorism as a means of subversion. Second, the literature of this period also shed light on the fact the Soviet Union was exporting their model for creating subversion. In an effort to maintain a level of deniability, the Soviet Union utilized proxies to provide encouragement, training, and supplies to violent sub-national groups all over the world.²⁹ This last point is particularly relevant to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus in contemporary times because it explains that multiple countries around the world were taught how to engage in subversive activities against their adversaries.

D. POST-SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, LITERATURE

Some of the literature takes a different approach, taking an in-depth look at post-World War II, Cold War politics and the Soviet Union's efforts to facilitate the relationship between Middle Eastern terrorism groups and Latin American revolutionary groups. This literature describes how the Soviets would utilize proxies, like Cuba's Fidel Castro, and the "Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America" in an effort to avoid being implicated in their subversive activities. By looking at the historical context and how the Soviet Union helped to facilitate a working relationship between Middle East extremists and Latin American revolutionaries, the literature provides an understanding of state sponsorship of terrorism, which still applies to this nation's contemporary understanding of the crime-terror nexus. An example of this type of literature would be Jon Perdue's book, *War of All the People*.³⁰ The book is

²⁸ Christopher M. Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

³⁰ Perdue, *The War of all the People: The Nexus of Latin American Radicalism and Middle Eastern Terrorism*.

important to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus because it shows how the previously confirmed subversive methods of communist nations are being replicated in the modern contemporary era, and now pose a serious threat to the United States and its allies.

Much of what has been written about the crime-terror nexus since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, has focused on specific violent sub-national groups, such as Hezbollah, or on specific geographic regions, such as Latin America. For example, Matt Levitt's book, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*, addresses Hezbollah's engagement in both terroristic tactics and criminal activities, but it focuses solely on this one sub-national group.³¹ An example of a book with a regional focus is Luis Fleischman's *Latin America in the Post-Chavez Era: The Security Threat to the United States*, which focuses on the Bolivarian revolution's attempts to foment chaos, havoc, and disorder through their support of violent sub-national groups on both sides of the crime-terror nexus.³² While books of this nature do touch on the issue of the crime-terror nexus, adding to the contemporary understanding of it, the nexus is not the primary topic the authors are attempting to address.

A book by Jennifer Hesterman, a retired Air Force Intelligence Analyst, entitled, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus*, serves as an exception. Hesterman approaches the subject from a strategically and generalizable perspective. Hesterman's work effectively ties FTOs to the Mexican TCOs or cartels operating along our southwest border. By exposing this relationship, Hesterman demonstrates how the nexus is now a direct threat to U.S. homeland security. Her discussion of how the Mexican TCOs are smuggling special interest aliens, those with ties to terrorism, across the U.S. border with Mexico is particularly compelling.³³

³¹ Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 2013).

³² Luis Fleischman, *Latin America in the Post-Chávez Era: The Security Threat to the United States* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2013), 277.

³³ Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus: An Alliance of International Drug Cartels, Organized Crime, and Terror Groups*, 154.

Throughout all the literature, very little argument has been raised that FTOs have turned to the criminal activity as a means to raise funds to support their operations. For example, according to the *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*, the U.S. Department of Justice reports “29 of the 63 organizations on its FY 2010 Consolidated Priority Organization Targets list, which includes the most significant international drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) threatening the United States, were associated with terrorist groups.”³⁴ Many of these government documents, such as the U.S. Department of State *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013*, cover a variety of topics about what has been done to address the problem of the nexus in different parts of the world, and involving different FTOs.

However, most government reports are very focused on specific topics. For example, the Congressional Research Service wrote a report entitled, *Columbia: Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*.³⁵ Documents of this nature are not attempting to tackle the entire discussion of the crime-terror nexus in one all-encompassing document. As a result, most of the government reports that touch on the FTOs and their activities are policy documents, and fail to communicate the full extent of the problem to the reader. Still, these reports provide valuable insights on specific aspects of the crime-terror nexus. This thesis references a number of government reports pertaining to a variety of different aspects of the crime-terrorism nexus in an effort to give the reader an understanding of the full extent of the problem through the case studies of the three different violent sub-national groups covered.

³⁴ United States, Executive Office of the President, United States and President, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime Addressing Converging Threats to National Security*.

³⁵ June S. Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest* (CRS Report No. RL32250) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012).

E. PART II—A THREE PART CASE STUDY OF HEZBOLLAH, THE FARC, AND THE MEXICAN CARTELS

1. The Middle East and Hezbollah

The literature on Hezbollah is vast describing its foundation, terror activities, and evolution to its status today as a legitimate political and military organization.³⁶

One of the weaknesses of the literature on Hezbollah is that most of the books lack primary sources. However, a few books serve as good primary sources of information, such as *Hizbullah's Documents from the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, by Joseph Alagha. The book is a compilation of all of Hezbollah's available documents translated into English. Another book that serves as a primary source of information about Hezbollah is, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah* by Nicholas Noe, a collection of Nasrallah's public statements. Although both books are a good source of information that is extremely relevant to understanding Hezbollah's stated goals and objectives, they are not without their limitations. For example, both books are somewhat dated. Noe's book was copyrighted in 2007, and Alagha's book in 2011. Thus, one of the weaknesses, or gaps, in the existing open source literature is the lack of primary sources of information related to how Hezbollah's goals and objectives may have changed in the last four to eight years, especially with regard to the changing situation in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, or even Latin America.

Another weakness of the overall literature on Hezbollah is in the area of the organization's modern engagement in criminal activity. One book is by Tom Diaz and Barbara Newman entitled, *Lightning Out of Lebanon*.³⁷ However, the book is written in a narrative style, and the author relies too heavily on private conversations with law enforcement officials, which are impossible to verify through supporting documentation.

³⁶ Augustus R. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Michael J. Totten, *The Road to Fatima Gate: The Beirut Spring, the Rise of Hezbollah, and the Iranian War against Israel* (New York: Encounter Books, 2011); Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*.

³⁷ Tom Diaz and Barbara Newman, *Lightning Out of Lebanon: Hezbollah Terrorists on American Soil* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005).

Unfortunately, it remains one of the only attempts to address the issue of Hezbollah's engagement in criminal activity in the Western Hemisphere.

2. South America and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

As a body of literature, when compared to all the literature that has been written about Hezbollah, comparatively little has been written about the FARC.

Very few books address the subject of the background and history of the FARC. The exception is, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*, by Gary Leech.³⁸ Leech's work spends the first three chapters providing a detailed history of the development of the FARC from the 1960s through the modern era. Then, Leech dedicates a large portion to the FARC's engagement in drug trafficking, explaining in some detail why the FARC became involved with coca production, and also how the organization benefits from the sale of cocaine. The book is relevant to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus because it provides valuable insights about how the FARC, as a terrorist organization, has benefited financially from its involvement in drug trafficking and criminal activity in general.

Another book that addresses the history and background of the FARC is James J. Brittain's book entitled, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP*. Brittain, although a sociologist, uses his book as a systemic defense of the FARC declaring they are "not only preparing to act as a legitimate government in a socialist Colombia, but readying the population for a post-capitalist society not monetarily dependent on the coca industry." Brittain's book is relevant to the subject because it provides an important contrary opinion to the thesis proposition that the crime-terrorism nexus presents a unique threat to homeland security. For example, Brittain argues that any suggestion the FARC's sustainability has been linked to drug trafficking and criminal activity are "historically limited (politically neglectful) and fail to analyze the praxis of the insurgency."³⁹

³⁸ Garry M. Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency* (London: Zed Books, 2011).

³⁹ James J. Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP* (New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 44.

When looking at the body of literature surrounding the FARC, relatively little literature has been written that addresses the FARC's interactions with TCOs. Most of what has been written comes in the form of scholarly articles, trade journal articles, or government documents. For example, in February 2014, Jane's published a report entitled, "Colombia: Security Assessment," which stated, "There are indications of growing ties between Mexican-based transnational crime organisation (TCOs) and criminal groups in Colombia resulting from the increasingly horizontal structure of the cocaine supply chain."⁴⁰ Such reports provide tidbits of information that shed light on the FARC's interactions with TCOs and their engagement in criminal activity, as well as the dynamic, amorphous, and constantly evolving nature of the crime-terror nexus.

In terms of primary sources of information about the relationship between Venezuela and the FARC, one of the best open sources available is "The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of Raul Reyes." Reyes was a FARC commander killed on March 1, 2008, when the Colombian military conducted a raid on a FARC camp located 1.1 miles in Ecuadorean territory.⁴¹ The Colombian military seized a number of laptop computers, which contained approximately 38,000 files discussing FARC strategy, operations planning, meetings, etc. The computer files were later reviewed by Interpol and declared to be authentic.⁴² The records seized by the Colombian military detail the extent of the support the FARC was receiving in 2008 from the Venezuelan government of President Chavez. These documents are extremely relevant to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus because they provide insight and understanding of the support these violent sub-national groups are receiving from nation states.

Another weakness of the writing on the FARC is the lack of more recent open source writings about its criminal activities. While a few books were written about the

⁴⁰ Janes IHS Global, "SECURITY, Colombia," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, February 10, 2014, 19.

⁴¹ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

⁴² Jon-Paul N. Maddaloni, "An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3-24" (monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2009).

subject, information is lacking about what has happened since the death of Hugo Chavez, and when Nicolas Maduro Moros became the President of Venezuela. For more up-to-date information, it is necessary to rely on news media articles and websites, such as InsightCrime.com.

3. North America and the Mexican Transcontinental Criminal Organizations

A great deal has been written in recent years about the MTCOs and the violent crimes they are committing. A number of books, news media articles, websites, and blogs have been written detailing both the events and violence occurring inside Mexico. Much also has been written about the variety of criminal activity the MTCOs are engaging in, which covers nearly every type violent crime. For example, the MTCOs not only engage in drug smuggling, but also murder, robberies, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, extortion, and bribery, which are also regular activities of the cartels. The problem and threat posed by the MTCOs is extensive. Not one book, magazine article, government document, website, or blog from a credible source can be found that would suggest it is not the case. The extensive threat posed by the MTCOs seems to be a universally accepted fact.

A number of books have been written that discuss in detail the types of activities the MTCOs engage in regularly. Some of these books were written by people who served as military intelligence analysts, such as Jennifer Hesterman,⁴³ and Sylvia Longmire.⁴⁴ Both have retired and now use their expertise to write independently about the extent of the threat posed by the MTCOs. The three books written by these two individuals are relevant to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus, and the threat it now poses to U.S. homeland security. All three books illustrate how the U.S. government has failed to develop an effective border strategy, which leaves the country vulnerable to illegal immigration, terrorism, and transnational crime.

⁴³ Hesterman, *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus: An Alliance of International Drug Cartels, Organized Crime, and Terror Groups*, 329.

⁴⁴ Sylvia Longmire, *Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico's Drug Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Sylvia Longmire, *Border Insecurity: Why Big Money, Fences, and Drones Aren't Making Us Safer* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Other books written about the MTCOs focus on how these violent sub-national groups pose a multi-dimensional threat to U.S. national security. For example, Paul Rexton Kan's book entitled, *Cartels at War: Mexico's Drug Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*, is extremely relevant to the research into the crime-terror nexus. It looks at not just the level of violence occurring in Mexico, but also breaks down how the MTCOs are a tactical threat to U.S. homeland security practitioners because of their willingness to attack both border agents and first responders. Kan also describes how the nexus of crime and terrorism threatens U.S. interests both regionally and globally, by undermining U.S. efforts in the War on Terror. The literature about the MTCOs that covers the multi-dimensional nature of the threat they pose (borders in, and borders out), provides valuable information of how the crime-terror nexus is now a threat to U.S. national security beyond the shared border with Mexico.

One of the problems with the literature on the MTCOs is a distinct lack of primary sources on the subject. One exception is a book written by British journalist, Ioan Grillo, which contains hundreds of interviews with former cartel members and provides detailed accounts of their activities on behalf of the MTCOs.⁴⁵ This book is perhaps as close as might be found to a primary source of information about the activities of the MTCOs, as cartel members have not written any manifestos. Since it is a primary source of information, it is relevant to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus since it provides firsthand knowledge of the heterogeneous nature of the activities of these violent sub-national groups.

Also, a number of websites provide relevant and appropriate insights into the threat posed by the MTCOs. For example, *The Small Wars Journal* (SWJ), is a website written by a group of former military subject matter experts that covers a number of small conflicts occurring around the world. SWJ dedicates one part of its website entitled, "El Centro" to the conflict occurring in Mexico between the MTCOs and the Government of Mexico. It has written extensively about the conflict, and provides analysis, which is relevant to the understanding of the crime-terrorism nexus. For example, the SWJ wrote

⁴⁵ Ioan Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011).

an article that discusses the use of the counter insurgency (COIN) as a tactic for defeating with the MTCOs.⁴⁶ Another website, which provides open source intelligence analysis, called “In-Sight Crime,” also has a specific section of its website dedicated solely to the crime occurring in Mexico. It also covers the MTCO’s activities in the Northern Triangle of Central America, and South America. Both of these websites add to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus because they are focused on events occurring with the MTCOs throughout Latin America, and therefore, expand the knowledge of the threat occurring in other parts of the world.

In addition, a number of news media outlets cover the MTCOs and their activities. For example, the *New York Times* dedicates a part of its website to the coverage of the MTCOs, as do the *LA Times*, *Fox News*, the *Washington Times*, and the *Huffington Post* as well. All these media outlets provide coverage of recent events, but also an archive of their own reporting on the MTCOs. These are good sources of information about recent events related to the crime-terror nexus and help provide a big picture of the extent of the problem posed by the crime-terrorism nexus.

In terms of the body of literature regarding the threat posed by the MTCOs, a large amount of information is available, and more is being written every day. Therefore, in terms of scale, no shortage of information is available, and new information is becoming available from a variety of different sources on a regular basis. What all these sources, and others not mentioned by name, do when taken as a whole, is detail a significant, and growing threat posed by the MTCOs. They detail how the threat from the MTCOs continues to increase, and now threatens to destabilize parts of Central America, and undermine the U.S. War on Terror.

F. CONCLUSIONS

After looking at the whole of the literature available in these two categories, it is easy to see where consensus and disagreement occurs among the experts. Generally, the consensus is that the crime-terrorism nexus constitutes a significant and growing threat to

⁴⁶ John Maier, “Applying Counterinsurgency Doctrine as a Strategy to Defeat the Mexican Cartels,” *The Small Wars Journal*, October 27, 2013.

the U.S. homeland security, as well as a threat to U.S. regional interests, and threatens to undermine U.S. efforts in the War on Terror. However, much disagreement does occur about how to define the actions of these violent sub-national groups, and whether their activities constitute acts of crime or acts of terrorism. What these gaps in research or disagreements suggest is that more research needs to be done to determine both the extent of the threat posed by the crime-terrorism nexus, and the types of challenges they pose the U.S. homeland security practitioners.

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III. BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS

This chapter, as the title suggests, covers the background and history of the crime-terror nexus. It begins with a look at the early communist writings of people, such as Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Vladimir Lenin. It continues with a look at the debate that occurred during the Cold War era around the question of whether the Soviet Union was actively fomenting international terrorism. Then, it ends with a review of information that came to light following the collapse of Soviet Union.

A. THE INFLUENCE OF EARLY COMMUNISTS ON THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, colloquially known as the *Communist Manifesto*, in 1848. In the first chapter of their magnum opus, Marx and Engels describe the conflict between the different classes of a modern industrial society.⁴⁷ They describe the exploitation of the proletariat, or working classes, by the bourgeoisie, or middle classes, which will lead to a revolution and the eventual rise of the proletariat.⁴⁸ Of particular interest to the discussion of the crime-terror nexus is how Marx and Engels describe the third class of people, the “lumpenproletariat,” who Marx and Engels describe as the “dangerous class, the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of the old society.”⁴⁹ Marx and Engels believed the lumpenproletariat would be “swept up in the revolution.”⁵⁰ However, they pointed out the lumpenproletariat’s social conditions “prepare it far more for the part of bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.”⁵¹ In other words, Marx and Engels believed the lumpenproletariat would be of little use during a revolution for anything more than creating “reactionary intrigue.” Still, Marx and Engels end the *Communist*

⁴⁷ Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Manifesto saying the goals of communism “can only be attained by the violent overthrow of all existing social conditions.”⁵²

Both Marx and Engels would expand upon their descriptions of the lumpenproletariat in later writings. In the *Class Struggles of France, 1848–1850*, Marx would go on to describe the lumpenproletariat as “a recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabonds.”⁵³ Engels, much harsher in his descriptions, stated, “The lumpenproletariat, this scum of the depraved elements of all classes, which established headquarters in the big cities, is the worst of all possible allies. This rabble is absolutely venal and absolutely brazen.”⁵⁴ However, Marx appears to have disagreed with Engels with regard to the revolutionary value of the lumpenproletariat. In *The Class Struggles in France*, Marx foreshadows the later writings of several communists when he describes the young members of the lumpenproletariat as, “thoroughly malleable, as capable of the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices as of the basest banditry and the foulest corruption.”⁵⁵ From this last quote, it appears that Marx believed the criminal activity of the lumpenproletariat could be useful in creating chaos, disorder, and general mayhem, which could be of value as a subversive activity during a time of communist revolution.

Vladimir Lenin would later express his belief that the criminal acts could be useful during a time of revolution. In his October 16, 1905 letter “To the Combat Committee of the St. Petersburg Committee,” Lenin encouraged young revolutionaries to engage in criminal behavior on behalf of the revolution.⁵⁶ Lenin wrote, “Some may at once undertake to kill a spy or blow up a police station, others to raid a bank, to confiscate funds for the insurrection, others again may drill or prepare plans for localities,

⁵² Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

⁵³ Robert C. Tucker and Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 788.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels; Selected Works in One Volume* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 155.

⁵⁶ Lenin, *Selected Works in Three Volumes. Uniform Title: Works. Selections. English. 1970.*

etc.”⁵⁷ Lenin, not only understood Marx’s view that violent crime could be useful in creating chaos, disorder, and general mayhem during a time of revolution, he actively encouraged revolutionaries to engage in violent crime, such as robbing banks to fund the insurrection. According to Ray S. Cline, the former Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the Central Intelligence Agency, “Lenin proposed and substantiated a guideline aimed at creating a united front from all anti-imperialist forces in nations fighting for liberation from colonial and semi-colonial oppression. The goal always is destabilization in preparation for revolution and Communist political rule.”⁵⁸ The aforementioned quotations demonstrate that the founders of Marxism-Leninism believed that acts of both terrorism and violent crime are permissible subversive methods for achieving revolutionary goals.

B. THE COLD WAR AND THE CRIME-TERROR NEXUS

Following World War II, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union established two schools with the goal of facilitating subversive activities. First, in 1952, the Chairman of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, established the Lenin Institute in Moscow, officially known as the “Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute of the CC CPSU.” The purpose of the school was to train select members of third world and western communist parties “in propaganda and psychological warfare, armed and unarmed combat, and guerrilla warfare—the core curriculum in international terrorism.”⁵⁹

Later, in 1958, the Premier of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, founded Moscow’s Patrice Lumumba Friendship University to indoctrinate and train potential revolutionaries and terrorists from the third world who are not communist party members.⁶⁰ More specialized training in terrorism was provided at training bases in

⁵⁷ Lenin, *Selected Works in Three Volumes. Uniform Title: Works. Selections. English. 1970.*

⁵⁸ Cline and Alexander, *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

locations, such as Baku, Odessa, Simferopol, Tashkent, and in the suburbs of Moscow.⁶¹ These locations were used to teach irregular or asymmetrical warfare tactics including “the use of explosives, mining of transportation routes, commando field tactics, and the combat capabilities of shoulder fired rockets.”⁶²

On January 6, 1961, Khrushchev presented a report to the subcommittee of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party called, “Higher Party Schools.”⁶³ Khrushchev summarized his opinion that a nuclear war with the West was almost unthinkable. However, he explained as an alternative to nuclear war, the opportunity existed to undermine the stability of the pro-western governments in third world nations, especially those countries rich in natural resources deemed crucial to western industrialized nations.⁶⁴ Khrushchev suggested the Soviet Union could achieve its goal of destabilizing pro-western governments by training and arming communist revolutionary movements to engage in “sabotage, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism.”⁶⁵ The broader strategic goal would be to weaken western democracies.⁶⁶

On July 29, 1961, KGB chairman Aleksandr Shelepin proposed a new and aggressive global strategy against the west to Khrushchev.⁶⁷ This new strategy, according to Shelepin, was intended to “create circumstances in different areas of the world, which would assist in diverting the attention and forces of the United States and its allies, and would tie them down during the settlement of the question of a German peace treaty and West Berlin’s proposal.”⁶⁸ The plan, as outlined by Shelepin, called for the use of national liberation movements around the world to secure an advantage in the East-West struggle and to “activate by the means available to the KGB, armed uprisings against pro-

⁶¹ Cline and Alexander, *Terrorism: The Soviet Connection*.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

Western reactionary governments.”⁶⁹ Shelepin’s strategy specifically targeted, “reactionary regimes in the Main Adversary’s own backyard in Central America,” beginning with Nicaragua. Shelepin recommended the KGB coordinate a “revolutionary front” in collaboration with the Cubans and the Sandinistas. According to Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, the authors of *The Sword and the Shield*, Shelepin’s plan was approved as a Central Committee directive on August 1, 1961.⁷⁰

Evidence that Shelepin’s plan was enacted can be seen in January 1966. Fidel Castro hosted a series of international conferences of extremists in Havana, Cuba during 1966–68.⁷¹ The “Tricontinental Conference” was attended by 513 delegates of 83 radical movements and communist parties from all over the third world.⁷² Author Claire Sterling described the event saying, “The likes of it had never been seen since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the world would never be the same.”⁷³ The general declaration of the Tricontinental Conference promoted close collaboration between “Socialist countries,” meaning communist nations, and “national liberation movements,” including “democratic workers’ and students’ movements” in Europe and North America.⁷⁴ Its goal of the conference was to promote “a global revolutionary strategy to counter the global strategy of American Imperialism.”⁷⁵ The Tricontinental Conference was a well-organized attempt to create subversive activities around the world “to secure an advantage in East-West struggle,” just as Shelepin had recommended.⁷⁶

Further evidence of Soviet support for subversive activities was revealed in Czechoslovakia in 1968 during a time that became known as “the Prague Spring,” when a

⁶⁹ Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, 181.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Rex A. Hudson, *Castro’s America Department: Coordinating Cuba’s Support for Marxist-Leninist Violence in the Americas* (Washington, DC: Cuban American National Foundation, 1988), 73.

⁷² Ibid., 8–9.

⁷³ Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism*.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*.

Czechoslovakian General, named Jan Sejna, defected to the United States. Sejna was carrying documentation he had acquired during his 20-year service as a military advisor to the Central Committee of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party. The documentation provided proof that by 1964, the Soviet Union had increased spending in support of terrorism abroad by 1,000%.⁷⁷ Sejna's documentation also revealed, "the secret services of all the Communist bloc countries were involved in recruiting spies and infiltrating the worlds nascent left-wing terrorist movements; special guerrilla training schools had been set up in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Cuba for 'selected terrorists from all over the world.'"⁷⁸ Stated differently, Sejna provided evidence that the Soviet Union was supporting terrorism and subversive activities through the use of the other communist bloc nations.

In June 1969, Carlos Marighella, a Brazillian Communist, wrote *Minimanual do Guerrilheiro Urbano* or in English, *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla*. Marighella listed 14 techniques of urban guerrilla warfare in the Minimanual, which include "attack, entry or break-in, occupation, ambush, tactical street fighting, strike or other interruptional work, desertion and appropriation, or expropriation of arms, ammunition, and explosives, liberating prisoners, executions, kidnapping, sabotage, terrorism, armed propaganda, and the 'war of nerves.'"⁷⁹ Marighella describes the two functions of the urban guerrillas are to liquidate "high and low ranking officers of both the armed forces and police, and to expropriate arms and goods belonging to the government, the capitalists, the landowners, and the imperialists."⁸⁰ Marighella goes on to provide a very specific list of targets for kidnapping, which includes "policemen, spies, political figures, and notorious enemies endangering the revolution, furthermore, non-political but well-known figures from the world of arts, sports, and other activities."⁸¹ Marighella's *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla* is another example of a communist leader espousing the use of violent crime and

⁷⁷ Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁹ Possony and Bouchey, *International Terrorism - the Communist Connection: With a Case Study of West German Terrorist Ulrike Meinhof*, 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

terrorism as an asymmetrical tactic to promote low intensity conflict designed to subvert legitimate governments to seize power.

C. MEXICO AS A TARGET OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION

The Soviet Union spent nearly 15 years in an effort to destabilize Mexico beginning in 1959, with the “wild-cat railway strikes.”⁸² This destabilization was an attempt to disrupt the 1968 Olympic Games, which were held in Mexico City, by orchestrating riots and civil disobedience cities throughout Mexico.⁸³ However, the effort failed.⁸⁴ Undeterred, the Soviet Union initiated a more concerted effort and well-planned KGB operation to instigate a civil war in Mexico that would result in the violent overthrow its government.

In March 1971, the Soviet Union enacted “a plan to turn Mexico into another Vietnam.”⁸⁵ The plan, however, went awry and became public knowledge when, according to author Stephen Possney, “Mexico suddenly expelled five Soviet Embassy officials, including the charge d’affaires, the ranking Soviet representative in Mexico.”⁸⁶ The expulsions were the political fallout that followed the arrest of a group of communist revolutionaries by the Mexican government.⁸⁷ When Mexican authorities discovered the plan, 19 members of the group known as the Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Action Movement) (MAR) were arrested and jailed for robbery, murder, and attempted insurrection.⁸⁸ The group was recruited, trained, and equipped by the Soviet Union and North Korea.⁸⁹ The leader of MAR, Armando Carrillo, as well as 10

⁸² McForan, *The World Held Hostage: The War Waged by International Terrorism*.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Possony and Bouchey, *International Terrorism—The Communist Connection: With a Case Study of West German Terrorist Ulrike Meinhof*.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁸⁸ Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

other members of the group, had been recruited by the KGB while they were students at Patrice Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow.⁹⁰

Following their training in communist doctrine in Moscow, several dozen members of MAR received training at a camp 35 miles from Pyongyang, North Korea. Their training included “instruction in arson, ambush, assassination, the use of explosives and small arms, karate, communications and other guerrilla and terrorist specialties.”⁹¹ The training even included fire and maneuver exercises where the members of MAR went head-to-head against units of the regular North Korean army.⁹²

The incident was a public relations disaster for the Soviet Union. The existence of MAR, their goals to subvert the Mexican government, and the fact the group was supported by the Soviet Union were widely publicized throughout Latin America.⁹³ However, the incident did not stop the Soviet Union from fomenting violent crime and terrorism as a means of subverting pro-Western governments. Instead, the Soviets employed proxies to engage in their subversive activities. In May 1975, Brian Crozier described Soviet support for subversive activities for the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on International Security stating, “It was a very sophisticated policy, which amounted to this: the orthodox parties everywhere could denounce the extremism of the left and advance their own credentials as the alternative government and the party of order; whereas Soviet assistance to terrorist groups, including some ideologically incompatible with the Moscow line, could continue on a clandestine basis.”⁹⁴

Communist nations did not give up on the idea of targeting Mexico after the Soviet Union’s failed attempt to subvert the Mexican government. To the contrary, evidence suggests Mexico remained high on the list of targets for communist subversion. For example, in 1986, Armando Valladares, a Cuban writer and former political prisoner

⁹⁰ Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism*, 103.

⁹¹ Possony and Bouchey, *International Terrorism - the Communist Connection: With a Case Study of West German Terrorist Ulrike Meinhof*.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Possony and Bouchey, *International Terrorism - the Communist Connection: With a Case Study of West German Terrorist Ulrike Meinhof*.

of Fidel Castro, told *O Estado de Sao Paulo*, a Brazilian newspaper, that “Brazil ranked only second only to Mexico as the most important country for Castro’s subversive plans.”⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Hudson, *Castro’s America Department: Coordinating Cuba’s Support for Marxist-Leninist Violence in the Americas*, 73.

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IV. CASE STUDY #1—HEZBOLLAH

This case study begins with a brief overview of the background and origins of Hezbollah. This section is not intended to be a complete history of Hezbollah, which would require extensive work beyond the limits of this thesis. Instead, the background focuses on the origins and stated objectives of the organization as stated in their 1985 open letter, and the new Hezbollah Manifesto of 2009. The primary point of this exercise is to familiarize the reader with the organization's stated goals and objectives, and how they have changed over the course of time.

A. THE ORIGINS OF HEZBOLLAH AND THE OPEN LETTER OF 1985

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was firing Katyusha rockets into Israel from Southern Lebanon. On June 6, 1982, the Israeli military invaded Lebanon with the intentions of destroying the PLO.⁹⁶ The Shi'a population of Southern Lebanon was never the target of the invasion. However, Ehud Barak, the form Israeli Prime Minister said in 2006, "When we entered Lebanon... there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shi'a in the south. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah."⁹⁷ As Barak's comments suggest, Israel's long occupation of Lebanon (1982–2000) led to "Hezbollah's Islamic revolution and led to its military, political, and social buildup."⁹⁸

Hezbollah, or "Party of God," is a Shi'a Muslim organization based in Lebanon founded in 1982, following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.⁹⁹ Initially, Hezbollah was an amalgamation of a small radical groups inspired by Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.¹⁰⁰ The U.S. Department of State designated Hezbollah as a terrorist organization in 1997.

⁹⁶ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 32.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹⁸ Jacques Neriah and Shimon Shapira, *Hezbollah: Profile of a Terrorist Organization* (Madrid: Friends of Israel Initiative, 2012).

⁹⁹ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, "Hizbullah," *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, January 29, 2015, 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

The United Kingdom designated Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist organization in 2000, and the European Union followed suit in 2013.

It should be noted that Hezbollah did not publicly announce its existence until February 16, 1985, when it published "An Open Letter: The Hezbollah Program."¹⁰¹ The open letter stated that Hezbollah had three objectives: (1) to rid Lebanon of all colonial entities, namely the United States, and France, (2) to bring the "Phalangists," or members of a Lebanese paramilitary organization, to justice for crimes they had allegedly committed against Muslims and Christians, and (3) to allow the Lebanese people the liberty to choose their own form of government.¹⁰²

In the open letter of 1985, Hezbollah calls on Christians not to be deceived into believing they (Hezbollah) seek vengeance against Christians. In fact, the open letter says, "continue to live in our midst without anybody even thinking to trouble you."¹⁰³ While the open letter does call upon Christians of Lebanon to convert to Islam, it implies a level of tolerance towards Christians and encourages them to "maintain your ties with the Muslims and don't take part in any activity against them."¹⁰⁴

Towards Israel, the open letter expresses a refusal to recognize the existence of "the Zionist entity," which they saw as the "vanguard of the United States in our Muslim world."¹⁰⁵ As author Joseph Alagha has pointed out, "From a principal and doctrinal perspective, Hizbullah's political ideology seeks to restore Arab-Muslim historical rights in Palestine and is totally against any ceasefire, truce, land for peace, peace negotiations, or normalization of relations with Israel."¹⁰⁶ In fact, the open letter states for Hezbollah the struggle will end "only when this entity is obliterated."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents from the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 48.

Regarding the Soviet Union and the United States, communism and capitalism, Hezbollah rejected both outright by saying “both are incapable of laying the foundations for a just society.”¹⁰⁸ Hezbollah also rejected the United Nations Interim force in Lebanon, which it saw as creating a buffer zone for the protection of Israel. In short, the open letter spells out Hezbollah’s rejection of any foreign intervention in Lebanon.

B. THE NEW HEZBOLLAH MANIFESTO OF 2009

In November 2009, Hezbollah released a new Manifesto, publicly stating the organization’s strategic objectives for the first time since the open letter of 1985. Many of the objects remained the same, such as resistance to the hegemony of the United States, and resistance to the “Zionist entity.” These changes, as Joseph Alagha observed, “illustrate Hizbullah’s serious attempts to aim at identity construction and reconstruction, since over the years its ideology, political strategy, and future outlook have undergone drastic and dramatic changes.” However, two notable differences also occurred between the 1985 open letter and the 2009 manifesto, which are important in understanding the crime-terror nexus.

First, in comparing the two documents, while the rejection of American hegemony and capitalism remains the main themes between both documents, it is important to note no reference appears concerning the rejection of the Soviet Union or communism. While obviously the Soviet Union does not exist as a world superpower as it did in 1985, communism remained a prominent social, political, and economic ideology in 2009, and was practiced widely in different parts of the world then, as it is today. The absence of a rejection of communism in the 2009 manifesto, while maintaining the original rejections of capitalism, suggests a strategic shift on the part of Hezbollah’s leadership towards communist nations, and at least tolerance toward, if not an absolute embrace of communist ideology.

The second notable difference between the two documents that is of interest in discussions relating to the crime-terror nexus is in the section of the 2009 manifesto entitled, “Section 7—Lebanon and International Relations.” The document details

¹⁰⁸ Alagha, *Hizbullah’s Documents from the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 48.

Hezbollah's opinions regarding European-Arab relations. The document goes on to say, "On the other hand, we look at the experience of independence and liberation that rejects hegemony in the countries of Latin America with a lot of respect, attention, and appreciation. We see vast intersection platforms between their project and the project of resistance movements in our region, which leads to constructing a more just and balanced international system."¹⁰⁹

This nod to the resistance movements of Latin America came at a time when the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has been Hezbollah's state sponsor since its founding, was enjoying improved relationships with many Latin American countries. For example, with the help of former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Iran had entered into trade agreements with several Latin American countries that make up part of the Bolivarian Alliance, such as Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua. However, Iran had also entered into trade agreements with Brazil and Argentina, which are not part of the Bolivarian Alliance. In fact, Iran's trade with Brazil alone increased fivefold between 2002 and 2007 going from \$2 billion to \$10 billion in just five years.¹¹⁰ These improved diplomatic and economic relations allowed Iran to nearly double the number of embassies from six prior to 2004 to 11 in 2009.¹¹¹ Also, in March 2012, during the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) posture statement before the House Armed Services Committee, General Douglas Fraser, the former commander, said Iran supported at least 36 Shi'a Islamic cultural centers in Latin America.¹¹² Then, in March 2015, General John Kelly, the current SOUTHCOM commander, told the same committee, "Iran has established more than 80 'cultural centers' in a region with an extremely small Muslim population."¹¹³ According to these reports, the number of Islamic cultural centers has increased 55 percent in just three years.

¹⁰⁹ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents from the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 48.

¹¹⁰ Fleischman, *Latin America in the Post-Chávez Era: The Security Threat to the United States*, 277.

¹¹¹ U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on the Middle East and Africa, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*, 114th Cong., 1 (2015).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

It is worth noting that Hezbollah has maintained a presence in Latin America for some time, particularly in the tri-border region where the Brazilian, Paraguayan, and Argentine frontiers meet. However, Hezbollah's growing relationship with the Bolivarian Alliance opens the door for expanded influence not just in South America, but also in Central America and the Caribbean Basin. Also, the suggestion of an intersection between Latin American countries, and "the resistance movements in our region" was not only stated in the 2009 Manifesto. Hassan Nasrallah also mentioned it during the press conference on November 30, 2009, following the release of the new manifesto. Nasrallah would later say, "It is not our fault that the resistance in Lebanon has come up with a military fighting school others can benefit from in Yemen, in Latin America, even the "Israeli" may learn and benefit from it, this is not a condemnation to us, but a condemnation to all those who do not benefit from our fighting school to liberate their land and restore the holy places."¹¹⁴ Nasrallah's statement suggests the nature of the relationship between Latin American resistance movements and Hezbollah goes beyond economic cooperation, and fund raising, and implies a military relationship exists. Also, it is worth noting that Hezbollah's strategic shift towards the social-democratic nations of the Bolivarian Alliance gives Hezbollah access to Central America and the Caribbean Basin, is in keeping with former KGB Chairman Aleksandr Shelepin's 1961 suggestion of targeting "the Main Adversary's own backyard in Central America," which was described in more detail in the first chapter of this thesis.¹¹⁵ From Central America and the Caribbean Basin, Hezbollah could engage in a variety of nefarious activities throughout the region.

C. HEZBOLLAH AND TERRORISM

In terms of terroristic activities, little disagreement occurs that Hezbollah was engaged in acts of terrorism in the 1980s. One of the most notable incidents involved the hijacking of TWA flight 847, which was traveling from Athens, Greece to Rome, Italy,

¹¹⁴ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents from the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*.

¹¹⁵ Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*.

but was forced by the hijackers to land at the Beirut, Lebanon.¹¹⁶ The hijackers, both Hezbollah operatives, murdered a U.S. Navy diver, Robert Stethem, and dumped his body on the tarmac of the airport. Both hijackers remain on FBI's "Most Wanted" list.¹¹⁷

Another notable terrorist incident involving Hezbollah involved the kidnapping and murder of U.S. Marine Colonel Higgins, the chief of an unarmed observer group attached to a United Nations truce-monitoring force in Lebanon, on February 17, 1988.¹¹⁸ Higgins was tortured and eventually hanged to death on July 31, 1989.¹¹⁹ His remains were "dumped on a dusty street in Beirut on Dec. 23, 1991—the day he and his wife would have celebrated their 14th wedding anniversary."¹²⁰ It should be noted, however, that while Hezbollah actively engaged in kidnapping operations during the initial years following its formation, it rarely uses the tactic today. The most recent example of a kidnapping by Hezbollah involved the cross-border kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers, which preceded the July 2006 war.¹²¹

Hezbollah has also been linked to the March 1992 terrorist attack on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which left 29 people dead and an additional 242 people wounded.¹²² The Islamic Jihad Organization claimed responsibility for the attack in retaliation for the assassination of Sheikh Abbas al-Mussawi, the Secretary General of Hezbollah, in February 1992.¹²³ Hezbollah has also been linked to the 1994 car bombing of a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, known as the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), which killed 85 people, most of them Jews.¹²⁴ These two bombings

¹¹⁶ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Bethanne Kelly Patrick, "Col. William R. 'Rich' Higgins," *Military Advantage*, 2015, http://www.military.com/Content/MoreContent?file=ML_higgins_bkp.

¹¹⁹ Ihsan A. Hijazi, "Group in Beirut Says it Hanged U.S. Colonel; 2D Threat Issued; Bush Convenes Security Panel; Videotape Released," *New York Times*, August 1, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/08/01/world/group-beirut-says-it-hanged-us-colonel-2d-threat-issued-bush-convenes-security.html?pagewanted=all>.

¹²⁰ Bethanne Kelly Patrick, "Col. William R. 'Rich' Higgins," 1.

¹²¹ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, *Hizbullah*.

¹²² Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

¹²³ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism, *Hizbullah*.

¹²⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

stood as the two most deadly terrorist attacks in the Western Hemisphere prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001.¹²⁵

D. HEZBOLLAH AND CRIME

According to several sources, Hezbollah has been involved with drug trafficking for some time, both in Lebanon and elsewhere. However, Hezbollah has not limited its criminal activities solely to drug trafficking. It has maintained a presence in the tri-border area of South America for fundraising, and has developed links in the area with international criminals engaged in weapons trafficking, money laundering, counterfeit documents, and the sale of counterfeit merchandise.

For example, on September 12, 2001, Paraguayan police conducted a raid of Assad Ahmad Barakat's small business, "Casa Apollo," in Ciudad del Este.¹²⁶ Barakat was Hezbollah's chief fundraiser in the tri-border area who ran an extensive network of legal and illegal financial ventures. Although Barakat was not arrested during the raid, the police seized several boxes containing financial records. The financial records contained detailed information of monthly money transfers to the Middle East totaling a quarter of a million dollars.¹²⁷ In addition, the seized boxes contained detailed descriptions of 30 different attacks against Israeli targets in the Middle East. The Paraguayan authorities alleged the financial records indicated Barakat had transferred half a million dollars to bank accounts in Canada, Chile and the United States, and an equal sum in bank transfers were also made directly to accounts in Lebanon. A letter from Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was also found among the financial records. In the letter, Nasrallah congratulated Barakat's efforts to raise funds for Hezbollah, and he acknowledged having received more than \$3.5 million dollars as a result of those efforts.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*.

¹²⁶ William Costanza, "Hizballah and its Mission in Latin America," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 3 (2012): 193–210.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

Also, increasing evidence suggests that Hezbollah has developed a so-called strategic alliance with the FARC, which raises the likelihood of its engagement in drug trafficking.

For example, Hezbollah's involvement in drug trafficking in Latin America was brought to the forefront again in July 2011, during hearings of the U.S. House of Representatives sub-committee on counter-terrorism and intelligence. Evidence was presented that supported previous allegations that the Hezbollah was raising funds through drug trafficking in both Colombia and Mexico, which was later used in support of their operations in the Middle East. While the U.S. government has never made public the evidence proving a link between Hezbollah, Colombia, and Mexico, evidence did surface following the arrest of Walid Makled, a Venezuelan drug-trafficker known as "El Arabe" due to his Syrian ancestry.¹²⁹ Makled alleged that several politically connected members of Venezuela's government were involved "in cocaine trafficking and holding fundraising operations for Hezbollah and Colombian FARC guerillas."¹³⁰ The 41-year-old claimed he paid off as many as 40 Venezuelan generals, five members of the Venezuelan National Assembly, and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), of which both Hugo Chavez, and current Venezuelan President Nichols Maduro were members. Makled also claimed he had provided the PSUV with campaign cash totaling more than two million dollars.¹³¹

The DEA had evidence that Makled was shipping an estimated 10 tons of cocaine a month from Venezuela to the United States.¹³² At the time of his arrest, Mekled was also suspected of murder in Venezuela. He promised to provide details of the connection between Hezbollah, the FARC, and the Venezuelan government only after he was

¹²⁹ Jeremy McDermitt, "Walid Makled Profile," *InSight Crime*, accessed October 7, 2015, [http://www.insightcrime.com/venezuela-organized-crime-news/walid-makled?tmpl=component&print=1&page=.](http://www.insightcrime.com/venezuela-organized-crime-news/walid-makled?tmpl=component&print=1&page=)

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Jeremy McDermitt, "Makled's Window into Trafficking in Venezuela Closing," *InSight Crime*, 2011, <http://www.insightcrime.com/news-analysis/insight-walid-makled-a-look-into-drug-trafficking-in-venezuela>.

¹³² McDermitt, "Walid Makled Profile."

extradited to the United States.¹³³ Some have suggested that Mekled's motive for withholding the information he claimed to have was driven by a desire to avoid murder charges in Venezuela. Eventually, the Colombian government made the decision to approve Mekled's extradition to Venezuela citing the fact he was wanted by Venezuela on more serious charges of murder, but only on charges of drug trafficking by the United States.¹³⁴

Although Walid Meklid may have been motivated by a desire to avoid more serious charges in Venezuela, strong evidence still suggests a tie exists between Hezbollah and drug trafficking. For example, on August 20, 2014, Michele M. Leonhart, the former DEA administrator, announced the seizure of \$150 million in connection with a Hezbollah money laundering case dating from 2011. According to Leonhart, Hezbollah made use of the financial system in the United States for laundering profits from its drug trafficking operations.¹³⁵

Also, in March 2014, during a public speaking engagement in Washington, DC, the former DEA Director of Operations, Michael Braun, presented evidence of Hezbollah's engagement in drug trafficking. Braun indicated that in the last five years, "We (meaning the DEA) have seen Hezbollah go from dealing a couple of hundred pounds of cocaine to dealing a couple of hundred tons of cocaine."¹³⁶ This statement by Mr. Braun is significant in that it suggests two things. First, for Hezbollah to make such a significant change in the volume of drugs it is trafficking means the organization made a strategic shift. Second, this strategic shift may have been brought about by financial sanctions put in place against Iran by the International Community for the Islamic Republic's pursuit of nuclear technology.

Besides Hezbollah's drug trafficking activities, there are also indications it is engaging in human smuggling in different parts of Latin America. For example, on

¹³³ McDermitt, "Walid Makled Profile."

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ IHS Global, "U.S. DEA Announces Seizure of Hizbullah Funds," *Jane's Terrorism Watch Report*, 2012.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

September 2012, Rafic Labboun, a U.S. citizen and resident of the San Francisco Bay Area was arrested in Mexico for smuggling Hezbollah operatives across the Mexican border from Belize.¹³⁷ At the time, Labboun had in his possession a fake Belizean driver's license, birth certificate, and passport, all of which he had acquired in less than 72 hours of his arrest.¹³⁸ Labboun was also a member of the Shi'a Association Bay Area (SABA) mosque where he served as the spiritual leader. His criminal record also indicated he was convicted in 2009 of credit card fraud for illegal financial transactions designed to raise money for Hezbollah.¹³⁹ This case is particularly troubling in terms of U.S. border security because it demonstrates how easily legal documents can be obtained in some Central American countries.

¹³⁷ Joseph Humire, *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*, ed. U.S. House of Representatives (Washington, DC: Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on the Middle East and Africa, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, 2015).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

V. CASE STUDY #2—REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA

This case study is not an exhaustive history; rather, it provides an analysis overview of the relevant issues related to the FARC. This section is not intended to be a complete history of the FARC, which would require extensive work beyond the limits of this thesis. Instead, the background focuses on the origins and stated objectives of the organization, and the relationship between the FARC, communism, and how it relates to the crime-terror nexus. This case study provides the reader with an essential understanding of the organization's stated goals and external relationships, and how it has employed both crime and terrorism in an effort to subvert the government of Colombia, and obtain its ultimate objective of seizing power.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC is a Marxist insurgency in Colombia. The FARC claim the date its movement began was on May 27, 1964.¹⁴⁰ On that day, Colombian government forces attacked a rural community known as Marquetalia, which had become a communist enclave, with the aim of bringing the area back under state control.¹⁴¹ While the operation, known as “Plan Unite” was successful, several guerillas escaped capture, and later formed a guerrilla movement known as the “Southern Bloc.”¹⁴² Two years later, in 1966, after sufficient time to regroup, the guerrillas formed the FARC under the leadership of Manuel Marulanda Velez, although it still retained May 27, 1964 as the date it was founded.¹⁴³ Author James J. Brittain explained, “Marquetalia became the turning point in Colombia’s revolutionary struggle. Immediately following the campaign, a significant segment of the rural population moved to support the guerrillas.”¹⁴⁴ The FARC’s stated objective, in 1966, was to “overthrow the ruling order in Colombia and drive out what it perceived to be U.S. imperialist

¹⁴⁰ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

¹⁴¹ Maddaloni, “An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3–24.”

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP*.

interests from Latin America, while simultaneously establishing a Marxist or at least a socialist government.”¹⁴⁵

It is important to note that communism had existed in Colombia for many years prior to the founding of FARC. According to Brittain, “Some sources have dated the roots of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) even earlier, as left-wing workers’ collectives began to mobilize around Marxist ideals during the 1910s.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, Colombian Marxist communism had deep roots in Colombia, even predating the 1917 Russian Revolution.

During these early years of FARC’s existence, the organization served as the military arm of the PCC. For its part, the PCC did little to resolve the issue. In fact, according to Brittain, the PCC acknowledged many forms of struggle were needed to achieve political change in Colombia, “including armed struggle.”¹⁴⁷ The organization received both strategic direction and funding from the communist party leadership in Colombia.

Marulanda also stressed the relationship between FARC and the PCC when he explained that FARC did not wish to influence the communist party, but would instead always be guided by the principles of the party.¹⁴⁸ The FARC’s ties to communism are important to the discussion of the crime-terror nexus because Marx and Engels, and later Lenin, advocated the use of both crime and terrorism, which would create chaos and disorder, as a means to subvert a government and allow communists to seize power.

During the 1970s, the FARC began to grow and build strength mostly in the small rural communities where the rule of law was weak due to a lack of centralized government. One technique it was successful in using to gain support in these rural communities was to establish “public order commissions” to impose their own form of law and order, which usually targeted petty criminals, or even at times perpetrator of

¹⁴⁵ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of ‘Raúl Reyes.’* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011).

¹⁴⁶ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP.*

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

domestic violence.¹⁴⁹ The use of the “public order commissions” gave the FARC a way to increase its influence and span of control in rural villages and towns, which helped it expand its base of support.¹⁵⁰

In 1978, Colombian President Julio Cesar Turbay was elected with a mandate to restore order to the state. He implemented a new national security statute that provided the military new police like authority to question, detain, and judge suspected criminals and guerrillas.¹⁵¹ The military abused its new authorities, and tortured and murdered hundreds of guerrillas and suspected guerrilla sympathizers.¹⁵² Human rights violations were rampant, as the government and military promoted the notion that the guerrillas could be defeated and success could be achieved through the practice of giving the guerrillas a taste of their own medicine. In other words, success could be achieved by fighting violent guerrillas using violent guerrilla tactics.

Not surprisingly, widespread violence resulted in a loss of government legitimacy. The justification for the abuses that followed the National Security Statute was that the guerrillas were using the same tactics, and the violence would bring about a swift end to the war.¹⁵³ Jon Maddaloni notes, “the Security Statute had an interesting effect on the FARC’s recruitment. Throughout this period they earned their reputation as a sort of David against the strong-arm tactics of the government Goliath. This perception increased their romantic rebel image and brought many younger volunteers to their ranks.”¹⁵⁴ Leech points out, “the guerrillas have largely ignored more conventional avenues to transform society, such as elections and engagement with existing national institutions, and instead have worked at the community level and outside the parameters of the nation’s traditional power structures.”¹⁵⁵ Petras noted, “The FARC was

¹⁴⁹ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

¹⁵⁰ Maddaloni, “An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3–24.”

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

implementing its revolutionary project on the local level without achieving regime change at the national level, although the latter remained a long-term objective of the guerrilla group's revolution from below."¹⁵⁶

On the political front, one of the most significant strategic decisions made by the leadership of FARC during the 1980s was a concerted effort to gain legitimacy for the FARC as a revolutionary government, or break away resistance movement.¹⁵⁷ The FARC leadership believed this effort would give them a legal standing under the Geneva Conventions. The leadership argued that because FARC controlled territory, had an organized military, and sought to secede from Colombia, it deserved a similar legal standing as other declared independent republics.¹⁵⁸ As if to emphasize the point, the FARC officially changed its name, adding *Ejército del Pueblo* or People's Army, to be known as the FARC-EP. They also adopted hierarchical military rank structure, and mandated a more formal uniform policy.¹⁵⁹

In 1985, with the help of the Communist Party of Colombia, the FARC created a political party called Patriotic Union (UP).¹⁶⁰ The idea was that the UP would help to carry the FARC's message into urban areas, and get its political message out to the general population. When elections were held in March 1986, the UP won elections for 24 provincial deputies and 275 municipal representatives at the local level.¹⁶¹ Additionally, UP won the elections of four senators and four congressional representatives.¹⁶² It is particularly relevant to the discussion of the crime-terror nexus because it demonstrates that communists will participate in an electoral process while utilizing both crime and terrorism to create chaos, disorder, and havoc to subvert the

¹⁵⁶ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

¹⁵⁷ Maddaloni, "An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3-24."

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

current government. In other words, it will present itself during a time of chaos, disorder, and havoc as a better alternative than the existing government structure.

The reaction of the wealthy landowners and members of the conservative party was to form paramilitary organizations to target the guerrillas. The Colombian military either turned a blind eye to the activities of these groups, or worse, actively supported their campaigns. In addition, the Colombian government established a program called Convivir, which was similar to an armed neighborhood watch program. The paramilitaries went after the easiest targets, the UP and left-wing politicians, students and anyone who campaigned for the FARC and the other insurgencies. It is estimated that nearly 4,000 UP politicians and supporters were killed between 1985 and 1990.¹⁶³

Estimating the size and strength of the FARC in terms of manpower has been difficult throughout its history. Many of the historical figures for its enlistment vary; an exact number is seldom agreed upon. However, most authorities on the FARC do agree that the organization reached a peak in manpower strength during the late 1990s to mid-2000s when it was estimated to have 40,000 to 50,000 combatants.¹⁶⁴

In 2008, the FARC was dealt a significant blow to its seven-member leadership group known as the Secretariat. First, on March 1, 2008, during a Colombian military attack on a FARC camp in Ecuador, at least 25 people were killed, including the FARC's second highest ranking commander, Raul Reyes.¹⁶⁵ Also that month, Ivan Rios, another member of FARC's secretariat, was murdered by his bodyguard.¹⁶⁶ Also in March, the FARC's top commander, Manuel Marulanda, died from a heart attack.¹⁶⁷ Brittain quotes another source in his book who says following the raid, "Colombians are for the first time raising the possibility that a guerrilla group once thought invincible could be forced into peace negotiations or even defeated militarily. Weakened by infiltrators and facing

¹⁶³ Maddaloni, "An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3-24."

¹⁶⁴ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP*.

¹⁶⁵ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

¹⁶⁶ Janes IHS Global, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias De Colombia (FARC)," *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism*, March 4, 2014.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

constant combat and aerial bombardment, the insurgency is losing members in record numbers.”¹⁶⁸

The raid, which killed Raul Reyes, also yielded significant intelligence information, when the Colombian military was able to recover Reyes’ personal laptop computer. Information recovered from the captured laptops indicated Venezuela was providing support for the FARC.¹⁶⁹ The files also included information that the FARC had provided campaign funds of at least \$100,000 to Ecuadorian President, Rafael Correa, which helped his 2006 election.¹⁷⁰ It is an important point in understanding the crime-terrorism nexus, and how illicit funds from drug trafficking can be used to manipulate the outcome of elections, especially those of economically poor, third world countries.

The analysis of the computer files also indicated the Venezuelan government had agreed to allow FARC to use Venezuelan territory as a safe haven from Colombia’s military, and the FARC has been able to meet with “political sympathizers, humanitarian organizations, members of terrorist groups and potential suppliers of weaponry.”¹⁷¹ The analysis also included information pertinent to this discussion of the crime-terror nexus stating, “Venezuela has become an important corridor through which FARC exports the cocaine which provides much of the group’s revenues.”¹⁷² It is an important point in terms of understanding the crime-terror nexus because it highlights the fact that nation states will support both criminal and terroristic activities in an effort to subvert the existing governments of other nations.

In March 2008, the Bush administration initiated a legal review of Venezuela to consider whether the country should be designated a state sponsor of terrorism by the

¹⁶⁸ Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP*.

¹⁶⁹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of ‘Raúl Reyes.’*

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

U.S. State Department. Venezuela never received the designation.¹⁷³ Both former Venezuelan President Chávez, and President Correa, adamantly denied the claims. Venezuelan authorities claimed the data was fabricated by Colombia and the United States. However, in May 2008, Interpol confirmed the authenticity of the data, adding the files contained on the laptops had not been manipulated since they were recovered following the raid.¹⁷⁴

Additional evidence of the cross border relationship between the FARC and these two Bolivarian nations came to light after the 2008 raid into Ecuador. Colombian intelligence claimed 11 high-ranking members of the FARC based its operations across the Colombian borders with Venezuela and Ecuador, beyond the reach of the Colombian military.¹⁷⁵ In 2009, Gabriel Silva Lujan, the Colombian Minister of Defense, claimed that the FARC was operating from camps in areas across the border with Ecuador.¹⁷⁶ Later in 2009, a senior Ecuadorian military official confirmed eight new FARC bases had been discovered along the Ecuadorian side of the border with Colombia.¹⁷⁷

In May 2010, Brazilian authorities arrested a high-ranking FARC militant in the Brazilian state of Amazonas. Shortly afterwards, they claimed the FARC carried out drug trafficking and weapons trafficking from permanent bases in Brazil near the border with Colombia.¹⁷⁸ In October 2010, General Francisco Contreras, the commander of the Peruvian military, made a similar claim, stating the FARC maintain bases in his country.¹⁷⁹

A. THE FARC AND TERRORISM

The following section is designed to give the reader a brief description of the different types of terrorism that the FARC has engaged in over the years. It is important

¹⁷³ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

¹⁷⁴ Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*, 15.

¹⁷⁵ Janes IHS Global, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias De Colombia (FARC)."

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

to note the U.S. Department of State officially designated the FARC a foreign terrorist organization on October 8, 1997.¹⁸⁰ Canada designated the FARC a terrorist entity in 2003.¹⁸¹

1. Targeted Assassinations

One of the most publicized cases of the FARC's engagement in targeted assassinations occurred in 2002. Isaias Duarte Cancino, who was the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cali, was shot and killed by two young men.¹⁸² Duarte had been an outspoken critic of both political and drug related violence occurring in Colombia.¹⁸³ For example, in 2000, Archbishop Duarte wrote, "A rebel who kidnaps and kills, eliminates entire populations and mocks the whole process of peace lacks the virtues proper to a human being and becomes the most miserable of men."¹⁸⁴

A prosecutor from Colombia's National Unit of Human Rights linked the murder to the FARC in 2001.¹⁸⁵ The gunmen, Alexander de Jesus Zapata, and John Fredy Jimenez, were found guilty on January 18, 2005.¹⁸⁶ They were given a 36-year and 35-year sentence, respectively. Seven years later, in 2012, four leaders of the FARC, including Rodrigo Londoño Echeverry, also known as "Timochenko," were convicted by a Colombian court for having ordered the assassination in retaliation for Duarte's condemnation of the many atrocities committed by the FARC.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰ "Foreign Terrorist Organizations."

¹⁸¹ "National Security, Counter-Terrorism, List of Terrorist Entities, Currently Listed Entities." Public Safety Canada, accessed October 1, 2015, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrt/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>.

¹⁸² Jamie Dettmer, "FARC Leader Timochenko Convicted in the Murder of Archbishop Isaias Duarte Cancino," *Dialogo Digital Military Magazine—Forum of the Americas*, January 20, 2012, http://dialogo-americas.com/en_GB/articles/rmisa/features/regional_news/2012/01/20/aa-farc-archbishop-murder.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Miriam Wells, "FARC Leader Convicted of Murdering Archbishop," *Colombia Reports*, January 12, 2012, <http://colombiareports.com/farc-leader-convicted-of-murdering-archbishop/>.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Dettmer, "FARC Leader Timochenko Convicted in the Murder of Archbishop Isaias Duarte Cancino."

2. Bombings and Attacks on Critical Infrastructure

The State Department's 2011 *Country Reports on Terrorism* indicated, "the FARC alone was responsible for 377 attacks in 2011."¹⁸⁸ This number constitutes 79% of all terrorist attacks that occurred in the Western Hemisphere that year.¹⁸⁹ In 2012, FARC targets for attack included critical infrastructure of Colombia's energy sector, such as the electrical grid, and railroads used for the transportation of coal, and natural gas pipelines.¹⁹⁰ According to June Beittel, 70% of Colombia's exports come from energy and mining, while about 12% of the country's gross domestic product comes straight from oil.¹⁹¹

3. Kidnapping Activities

The principal human rights violation perpetrated by the FARC has been kidnapping, primarily of middle- and upper-class Colombians.¹⁹² Many of these civilian kidnap victims are held by the FARC for ransom to help fund its operations.¹⁹³ However, it is difficult for the FARC to argue that the financial proceeds acquired through the practice have offset the public backlash it has experienced in response to holding kidnapped police officers, soldiers, and political figures in jungle camps for years.¹⁹⁴

Most Colombians, including the poor, no longer view kidnapping as class warfare, but rather as violation of human rights.¹⁹⁵ While the FARC continues to justify its kidnappings of middle and upper class citizens as class warfare, many human rights groups believe it violates international humanitarian law as violence against non-combatants.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁸ Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*, 17.

¹⁸⁹ Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

¹⁹³ Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

B. FARC AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

1. Drug Trafficking

During the 7th FARC conference in 1982, the leadership of the FARC planned to expand extortion activities it referred to as “commodity taxes” on items, such as coffee, gold, livestock, and oil in the areas it controlled.¹⁹⁷ An important point worth noting is that the expansion of extortion on commodities included a decision to tax illegal drug trafficking.

Initially, the leadership of the FARC was opposed to engagement in drug trafficking, either the cultivation or distribution because it saw it as contrary to the social contract with the people, and viewed the use of drugs as “an elitist disease.”¹⁹⁸ It changed its position after realizing that poor farmers in the rural areas the FARC controlled had few options but to cultivate illegal drugs, and understood that a strict anti-drug policy would alienate their base of support.¹⁹⁹ They understood drug trafficking organizations and paramilitary groups were taking advantage of the poor farmers by paying them with “bazuco,” a high addictive derivative of coca paste.²⁰⁰ Protecting the farmers was seen as a justification for levying a tax against coca sales.

The drug traffickers who could not match the military firepower of the FARC, tolerated the taxes they had to pay. However, they formed paramilitary groups to defend their land, and themselves, and to challenge the FARC militarily for control of coca producing regions of the country. By the early 1980s, the FARC and the drug traffickers were on opposing sides of the conflict.²⁰¹

The FARC worked to consolidate its control over most of Colombia’s coca-growing regions, throughout the 1980s and 1990s.²⁰² The coca plantations became an

¹⁹⁷ Maddaloni, “An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3–24,” 16.

¹⁹⁸ Maddaloni, “An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3–24.”

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Nazih Richani, *Systems of Violence the Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 75.

important source of economic support for the peasants.²⁰³ The FARC provided protection for the peasant farmers who worked the land within their area of operation.²⁰⁴ The FARC would levy a tax between 7% to 10% of the market value on a kilo of coca paste.²⁰⁵ Author Nizah Richani estimated by the early 1990s, the FARC was earning between \$60 and \$100 million annually.²⁰⁶ These numbers highlight an important point as it relates to the crime-terror nexus, because it specifically shows these groups are making significant amounts of money from their criminal activities, which in turn can be used to sustain their operations against the United States and its allies.

Still, not everyone is willing to condemn the FARC's taxation of illegal drugs. For example, Leech believes the attention called to the FARC's involvement in the drug trade is nothing more than an attempt to delegitimize its taxation on both legal and illegal activities within the areas they control.²⁰⁷ Another example is Francisco E. Thoumi, an economist who points out that differences exist between the FARC and the drug cartels because the FARC uses drug trafficking money to support its subversive and political activities, rather than for personal profits. Thoumi also claims the FARC has not developed an international marketing network, and therefore, is not a cartel.²⁰⁸ Political scientist, Russell Crandall, defended the FARC's involvement in the drug trade because the guerillas see it as "a necessary evil" for the organization to achieve its goals of bringing about political change in Colombia.²⁰⁹ Regardless of whether the members of the FARC are profiting directly or not, or whether they have an international distribution network, a point that could be argued both ways, the FARC is fully engaging in drug trafficking, cultivation, taxation of drug crops, distribution on an international level, and

²⁰³ Richani, *Systems of Violence the Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia*, 75.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Richani, *Systems of Violence the Political Economy of War and Peace in Colombia*.

²⁰⁷ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*, 62.

²⁰⁸ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

enjoys significant profits from these activities.²¹⁰ In fact, according to some estimates in the late 1990s, the FARC was earning as much as \$900 million a year.²¹¹

Information obtained from the laptop of Raul Reyes, who was killed in Ecuador as described earlier in this case study, revealed a 2007 letter that detailed a plan to sell cocaine directly to Mexican transnational criminal organizations.²¹² The letter proposed selling 100 kilograms of cocaine to the Mexicans in a trial run.²¹³ In 2008, Colombia's deputy defense minister, Sergio Jaramillo, provided confirmation of the crime-terror nexus when he said the FARC was selling cocaine to the Mexican cartels.²¹⁴ This last point is of particular interest in understanding the crime-terror nexus, because it demonstrates the collaborative relationship between MTCOs and the FARC.

In April 2010, a EUROPOL report indicated the FARC was planning to expand its activities to Europe. According to the report, "FARC has identified Europe as a main area of strategic interest in its ambitions to expand its activities. Making use of its contacts in Europe...FARC has sent representatives to some member states. Their tasks include the dissemination of information and the creation of clandestine cells to facilitate drugs trafficking and the procurement of arms." The report also said the FARC was, "planning to open an office in Amsterdam, Brussels or Paris."²¹⁵

In November 2013, authorities in Costa Rica arrested four members of the FARC, as well as a Costa Rican and Nicaraguan, after receiving a tip from the DEA.²¹⁶ The group was using a legitimate armory business as a front to import drugs and weapons,

²¹⁰ Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*.

²¹¹ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

²¹² John Otis, *The FARC and Colombia's Illegal Drug Trade* (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars—Latin America Program, 2014).

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Janes IHS Global, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias De Colombia (FARC)."

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

which were then smuggled across the border into Mexico.²¹⁷ During the takedown operation, the Costa Rican authorities seized 35 firearms and 492 kilos of cocaine.²¹⁸

Two important points should be noted from the incident in Costa Rica. First, Nicaragua is one of the 12 social democratic nations that make up the Bolivarian Alliance, and is under the leadership of Daniel Ortega, the former leader of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, a democratic socialist political party.²¹⁹ The second point is that the FARC is engaged in smuggling more than drugs into Mexico, a nation originally targeted for subversion by the Soviet Union in the 1950s, and later by Cuba in the mid-1980s. Both points are relevant to understanding the crime-terror nexus because it is just one example of how the FARC, a designated foreign terrorist organization, is collaborating with the MTCOs, who are often on the receiving end of the FARC's shipments of both drugs and weapons.²²⁰

2. Extortion Activities

The FARC has also used extortion of oil companies as a means of financial support, particularly when oil was discovered in more remote areas, such as Arauca and Casanare.²²¹ The FARC would bomb oil pipelines and facilities, often in coordination with the National Liberation Army (ELN), as a means of extorting money from big oil companies.²²² Eventually, the frequency of these attacks would prompt the government to pay a \$1 per barrel "war tax" for the protection of the oil employees and infrastructure.²²³

²¹⁷ Janes IHS Global, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias De Colombia (FARC)."

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Fleischman, *Latin America in the Post-Chávez Era: The Security Threat to the United States*, 277.

²²⁰ Otis, *The FARC and Colombia's Illegal Drug Trade*.

²²¹ Maddaloni, "An Analysis of the FARC in Colombia: Breaking the Frame of FM 3-24," 13.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

3. Other Types of Criminal Activity

This thesis has focused on two crimes, extortion activities and drug trafficking, in which the FARC has been heavily engaged. However, its criminal activity involves much more. Like most large criminal organizations, the FARC have not limited its criminal activity to one or two types of crime. For example, Beittel's 2012 report indicated, "the FARC has diversified from kidnapping into illegal mining and logging, cattle rustling, and extortion to supplement its income after drug trafficking."²²⁴ John Otis, of the Woodrow Wilson International Center adds, "With the price of gold soaring, the FARC imposes taxes on illegal gold mines in rebel-dominated areas. The FARC is also involved in operations to mine tungsten and coltan, which are used for consumer electronics such as cell phones and DVD players."²²⁵ The FARC has also been accused of operating a large auto theft ring, where cars stolen in Colombia are parted out and sold in Venezuela and Ecuador, which nets the organization an estimated \$7 million a year.²²⁶

²²⁴ Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*.

²²⁵ Otis, *The FARC and Colombia's Illegal Drug Trade*.

²²⁶ Janes IHS Global, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias De Colombia (FARC)."

VI. CASE STUDY #3—MEXICAN TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

The previous two case studies have examined Hezbollah and the FARC. This third and final case study examines the MTCOs. How best to describe the violence occurring in Mexico has been the subject of much debate.²²⁷ MTCOs are generally considered to be organized criminal enterprises, and have, therefore, been excluded from designation as a FTO.²²⁸ However, some subject matter experts have adamantly stated their opinions about designating the MTCOs as FTOs. For example, Sylvia Longmire states, “Mexican drug traffickers are more than criminals. They are terrorists.”²²⁹ This case study considers the various nefarious activities of the MTCOs in an effort to give the readers a better understanding of the threat posed by the MTCOs, and help them determine for themselves whether designating the MTCOs as FTOs is truly warranted.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, a variety of factors gave rise to the MTCOs and the subsequent violence that has been occurring in Mexico. The first factor involved an increase in collaboration between the U.S. and Colombian governments during the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the two countries worked closely together to disrupt the activities of the Colombian Medellin and Cali cartels.²³⁰ This collaboration focused attention on the disruption of the smuggling routes through the Caribbean, as the cartels attempted to get their products to the markets in the United States.²³¹ This increase of law enforcement efforts to disrupt the drug trade in the Caribbean had serious consequences for the rise of MTCOs.²³² By the mid-1990s, as the Colombian cartels began to collapse,

²²⁷ Paul Rexton Kan, *Cartels at War: Mexico’s Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012).

²²⁸ Sylvia M. Longmire and John P. Longmire, “Redefining Terrorism: Why Mexican Drug Trafficking Is More than Organized Crime,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 2008): 35.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Ted Galen Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico’s Drug Violence and the Danger to America* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2012).

²³¹ Christopher Paul, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, and Colin P. Clarke, *The Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organizations an Assessment of Mexican Security Based on Existing RAND Research on Urban Unrest, Insurgency, and Defense-Sector Reform* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2011).

²³² *Ibid.*

they started outsourcing the transportation of cocaine to MTCOs who were smuggling cocaine and meth to the United States using land-based routes through Mexico.²³³

The second factor widely believed to have brought about the rise of the MTCOs was the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement or NAFTA, which pumped billions of dollars back into the Mexican economy.²³⁴ The agreement, which was signed by the United States, Canada, and Mexico in 1994, removed tariffs on trade and investment among the three nations.²³⁵ Unfortunately, while NAFTA helped to improve the flow of legal goods, it also made it easier to import illicit goods.²³⁶ According to Phil Jordan, who was the DEA's Director of the El Paso Intelligence Center at the time NAFTA was implemented, the trade agreement was a "deal made in narco-heaven."²³⁷

The third factor that has given rise to the power of the MTCOs was when the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) began to lose political clout during the late 20th century.²³⁸ For most of the 20th century, the PRI provided stability to the trafficking of narcotics by acting as a market enforcer and referee between the different MTCOs.²³⁹ According to Dr. Hal Brands, "The cartels provided bribes and kept violence to a minimum. In return, the PRI protected the kingpins and resolved conflicts between them, most notably by allocating access to the drug corridors (plazas) to the United States."²⁴⁰ However, this traditional arrangement began to break down in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the PRI lost political influence. Shannon K. O'Neil has said, "Electoral competition nullified the unwritten understandings, requiring drug lords to negotiate with the new political establishment and encouraging rival traffickers to bid for new market

²³³ Kan, *Cartels at War: Mexico's Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*.

²³⁴ Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*.

²³⁵ Kan, *Cartels at War: Mexico's Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Hal Brands, *Mexico's Narco-Insurgency and U.S. Counterdrug Policy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), 61.

opportunities.”²⁴¹ This loss of political clout by the PRI changed the balance of power within what Dr. Roy Godson, has described as the political-criminal nexus.²⁴² This shift in the balance of power resulted in violent clashes as MTCOs attempted to seize new opportunities, control drug smuggling territory known a plazas, and increase their share of the drug market.²⁴³

This third factor is of particular interest to the discussions of the crime-terror nexus because the violence that surrounds the MTCOs has been designated as being criminal in nature because it does not meet most definitions of terrorism due to a lack of a political component. However, the change in the relationship between the PRI and the MTCOs points to the fact that the MTCOs have been engaged in politics for quite some time. While their end goal remains financial gain, rather than a desire to govern for themselves, this desire should not be interpreted to mean they do not engage in political activities. They engage in political activities with the goal of creating a friendly environment for their various illicit activities.

As the wealth and power of the MTCOs grew, they escalated their use of violent paramilitary enforcement groups.²⁴⁴ MTCOs “use such groups to protect operations and drug shipments, as well as to target members of rival drug cartels, and government officials such as law enforcement officers.”²⁴⁵ An example of these paramilitary groups would be the Los Zetas cartel, which began as the enforcement arm of the Gulf Cartel when Osiel “The Friend Killer” Cardenas Guillen recruited 31 members of the Mexican Army’s elite Airborne Special Forces Group, known as GAFEs.²⁴⁶ The soldiers, with expertise in irregular warfare tactics, heavy weapons, intelligence operations, counter surveillance procedures, and the operation of sophisticated communications systems,

²⁴¹ Shannon O’Neil, “The Real War in Mexico: How Democracy Can Defeat the Drug Cartels,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (July/August, 2009): 65.

²⁴² Roy Godson, *Menace to Society: Political-Criminal Collaboration around the World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003).

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Robert J. Bunker, “Strategic Threat: Narcos and Narcotics Overview,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 21, no. 1 (March 2010): 8–29.

²⁴⁵ “Redefining Terrorism: Why Mexican Drug Trafficking is More than Organized Crime,” 35.

²⁴⁶ “Redefining Terrorism: Why Mexican Drug Trafficking is More than Organized Crime.”

were “seduced by higher salaries—referred to as a ‘canonazo de dolares’ or cannon ball of dollars.”²⁴⁷

Several subject matter experts now believe the MTCOs constitute a serious threat to destabilize Mexico. For example, Dr. Max G. Manwaring, has said the implications for Mexico could be “some manifestation of state failure.”²⁴⁸ Author Sylvia Longmire believes the MTCOs are a destabilizing threat because they have better weapons, armor, and often better training than Mexican or U.S. law enforcement.²⁴⁹ Javier Cruz Angulo agrees with Longmire’s assessment and believes the MTCOs are using “war-fighting” that go well beyond typical strategies used by organized crime.²⁵⁰ Robert Bunker added Mexico is as a nation is no longer capable of governing entire sections within its sovereign territory, and because it has been taken over by a “narco-insurgency” and is heavily influenced the MTCOs.²⁵¹ All these different opinions are relevant to the discussion of the crime-terror nexus because they are indications of the serious chaos and disorder that surrounds the MTCOs, which could be used to subvert the legitimate government of Mexico.

A. MEXICAN TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

1. Drug Trafficking

Illegal drug trafficking is an extremely profitable business. Estimates put the profits from the global drug trade at \$320 billion a year or more.²⁵² Mexico’s share of that trade is generally thought to be at least \$30 to \$35 billion, and some estimates place

²⁴⁷ Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico’s Drug Violence and the Danger to America*.

²⁴⁸ Max G. Manwaring, *A New Dynamic in the Western Hemisphere Security Environment the Mexican Zetas and Other Private Armies* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute U.S. Army War College, 2009).

²⁴⁹ Longmire and Longmire, *Redefining Terrorism: Why Mexican Drug Trafficking is More than Organized Crime*, 35.

²⁵⁰ Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico’s Drug Violence and the Danger to America*.

²⁵¹ Bunker, “Strategic Threat: Narcos and Narcotics Overview,” 8–29.

²⁵² Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico’s Drug Violence and the Danger to America*.

the figure as high as \$60 billion.²⁵³ By most estimates, Americans will spend somewhere between \$18 and \$39 billion annually on illegal drugs.²⁵⁴ When asked about the costs of Mexico’s war on drugs, Mexican Supreme Court Justice Eduardo Medina Mora said, “In a sense, the United States is already financing this war. It is just financing the wrong side.”²⁵⁵

According to the DEA’s 2014 National Drug Threat Assessment, “Several drug data sources indicate that methamphetamine availability is increasing in the United States.”²⁵⁶ The assessment goes on to indicate the domestic production of methamphetamine (meth) is low, and the high availability of meth in the United States has a direct correlation to the high levels of production of meth in Mexico.²⁵⁷ It is also worth noting the assessment indicates that since 2008, the numbers of meth labs seized in Mexico have increased significantly, and a three-fold increase has occurred in the number of meth seizures at the southwest border in the past five years.²⁵⁸

Reporting from federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies indicates heroin availability has increased throughout the United States.²⁵⁹ Heroin has increased as a threat in areas all across the United States, particularly in New England and the Great Lakes regions, where heroin overdose deaths have increased in the last few years.²⁶⁰ According to the National Drug Threat Assessment, heroin is the second greatest drug threat next to meth.²⁶¹ The assessment also indicates most of the heroin seized in the

²⁵³ Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico’s Drug Violence and the Danger to America*.

²⁵⁴ Kan, *Cartels at War: Mexico’s Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico’s Drug Violence and the Danger to America*

²⁵⁷ Drug Enforcement Administration, *2014 National Drug Threat Assessment* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, 2014).

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

United States is produced in either the Andean region of South America (51%), or Mexico (49%).²⁶²

The MTCOs are primarily engaged in smuggling four types of illegal drugs into the United States. As indicated by the previous paragraphs, the first two include meth and heroin. However, cocaine and meth are ranked as the first and second most profitable drugs, while marijuana constitutes the largest volume drug smuggled across the border.²⁶³ All four drugs smuggled into the United States by the MTCOs are widely available in significant quantities.²⁶⁴

As previously indicated, the MTCOs are heavily engaged in drug trafficking. Therefore, it is easy to understand why the MTCOs are also commonly referred to as DTOs. However, author Ian Grillo, as well as a number of other subject matter experts, believes, “*Drug-trafficking organization* is no longer a sufficient term for them; they are a *criminal paramilitary complex*.”²⁶⁵ The drug trafficking activities of the MTCOs is relevant to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus because it establishes a baseline of common illicit behavior between Hezbollah, the FARC, and the MTCOs. The enormous financial gains that go along with the drug trade also helps to explain how the MTCOs have been able to gain the military grade weapons and training necessary to threaten both the Mexican law enforcement, the Mexican military, and the Mexican citizens.

2. Extortion Activities

The MTCOs frequently engage in extortion of both illicit and licit businesses. For example, author Ian Grillo describes how the Los Zetas would generate their own income by engaging in extortion. “At first, they taxed anyone in the drug business, including marijuana growers and street dealers. Later, they branched out to shake down anything in sight.”²⁶⁶

²⁶² Drug Enforcement Administration, *2014 National Drug Threat Assessment*.

²⁶³ Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico’s Drug Violence and the Danger to America*.

²⁶⁴ Longmire, *Border Insecurity: Why Big Money, Fences, and Drones Aren’t Making Us Safer*.

²⁶⁵ Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico’s Criminal Insurgency*.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

A prime example of how the MTCOs shake down business owners occurred on August 25, 2011, in Monterrey, Mexico. When Raul Rocha Cantu and Jose Alberto Rocha Cantu, the owners of the Casino Royale San Jeronimo, failed to pay their monthly extortion fee, the Los Zetas decided to send them a message.²⁶⁷ Eyewitness accounts differ as to exactly what happened inside the casino. Some witnesses claimed the Zetas poured gasoline on the floor and set the building on fire. Others claimed to have heard gunfire followed by explosions and smoke. While some of the patrons managed to escape, 53 people perished as a result of the fire. At least one account indicated the first responders had to cut their way into the building because the exits had been locked shut to prevent people from using the fire escapes.²⁶⁸

The website, Borderland Beats, described the incident saying it “can only be regarded as a terrorist attack.”²⁶⁹ Then Mexican President Calderon called the incident an “aberrant act of terror and barbarity.”²⁷⁰ Members of President Calderon’s cabinet, such as Alejandro Poire, the Secretary of the Interior, echoed the president’s sentiments, “An unspeakable, repugnant, unacceptable act of terror has been committed.”²⁷¹

According to some reports, several U.S. companies have decided not to invest in Mexico due to MTCO extortion and violence.²⁷² For example, Terex Corp., a Westport, CT maker of construction cranes and other heavy equipment, decided not to build a manufacturing plant in Mexico.²⁷³ Terex CEO, Ron Defoe said, “We won’t put a factory in Mexico until some of this violence gets addressed.”²⁷⁴

²⁶⁷ Longmire, *Border Insecurity: Why Big Money, Fences, and Drones Aren’t Making Us Safer*.

²⁶⁸ Gerardo, “Dozens Dead in Monterrey Terrorist Attack,” Borderland Beats, accessed October 26, 2015, <http://www.borderlandbeat.com/2011/08/dozens-dead-in-monterrey-terrorist.html>.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Longmire, *Border Insecurity: Why Big Money, Fences, and Drones Aren’t Making Us Safer*.

²⁷¹ Ken Ellingwood, “Mexico Gunmen Set Casino on Fire, Killing at Least 53,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 26, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/aug/26/world/la-fgw-mexico-casino-20110827>.

²⁷² Nicholas Casey and James R. Hagerty, “Companies Shun Violent Mexico,” *Wall Street Journal*, updated December 17, 2010, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703395204576023811983098994>.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

The extortion activities of the MTCOs are important to understand the crime-terror nexus because while extortion itself is an inherently criminal activity, the nature with which it is carried out can take on characteristics of terrorism. The case of the Royale Casino, and the reaction of President Calderon and his cabinet members, points to the psychological impact of extortion activities of the MTCOs, and how these activities are interpreted by the general public and government of Mexico.

3. Other Types of Criminal Activity

The MTCOs do not limit their criminal activity to only trafficking in narcotics. Instead, they have branched out to engage in a whole host of criminal activity.²⁷⁵ They also murder rival cartel members.²⁷⁶ They raid Mexican Petroleums or PEMEX installations to steal oil, gasoline, explosives, and solvents used to produce meth.²⁷⁷ They are engaged in smuggling migrants across both the northern and southern borders of Mexico.²⁷⁸ They buy and operate legitimate businesses to launder money, engage in human trafficking operating prostitution rings, orchestrate prison breakouts, commit arson, and a litany of other felony crimes.²⁷⁹ Some MTCOs, such as the Los Zetas, are even selling counterfeit merchandize, such as pirated DVDs of the latest blockbuster movies.²⁸⁰

The discussion of the other types of criminal activity in which the MTCOs are engaged is also important to understanding the crime-terror nexus because many of these crimes, if not all, are activities that Hezbollah and the FARC are involved in as well.

²⁷⁵ Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*.

²⁷⁶ George W. Grayson, *The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism as an Instrument of Cartel Warfare* (Carlisle, PA: United States Army War College Press, 2014).

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Kan, *Cartels at War: Mexico's Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*.

²⁷⁹ Grayson, *The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism as an Instrument of Cartel Warfare*.

²⁸⁰ Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*.

B. MEXICAN TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE USE OF TERROR TACTICS

1. Targeted Assassinations

The Los Zetas also established relationships with deserters from the Guatemalan elite Special Forces known as Kaibiles.²⁸¹ The Kaibiles provided instruction in decapitations, which led the Los Zetas to adopt beheadings as a tactic of intimidation in 2006.²⁸² The first beheading incident occurred in April of that year when Los Zetas decapitated two Mexican police officers in Acapulco, apparently in retaliation for the shooting of four Zetas during a shootout.²⁸³

Some subject matter experts have pointed out the use of social media by the MTCOs closely resembles that of al-Qaeda. For example, Ioan Grillo says, “Some of the first narco snuff videos looked almost frame for frame like Al Qaeda execution videos: a victim strapped to a chair; a ski-masked man grasped a sword; a head sliced off.”²⁸⁴ This utilization is important to understanding the crime-terror nexus because it demonstrates that transnational criminal organizations are at the very least imitating the tactics and techniques of terrorist organizations. Also, the use of social media by the MTCOs is an example of how these transnational criminal organizations are attempting to intimidate, coerce, and threaten their rival cartels, government officials, and the Mexican public in the same manner as FTOs.

Decapitating their enemies is only one of the gruesome practices employed by the MTCOs. Decapitation, castrations, butchery, such as quartering or skinning their victims, and incinerations, are all common place in Mexico.²⁸⁵ According to George Grayson, the MTCOs use terrorist tactics to instill fear in their out-group who will often shy away

²⁸¹ Grayson, *The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism as an Instrument of Cartel Warfare*.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ioan Grillo, “Behind Mexico’s Wave of Beheadings,” *Time Magazine*, September 8, 2008.

²⁸⁴ Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico’s Criminal Insurgency*.

²⁸⁵ Grayson, *The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism As an Instrument of Cartel Warfare*.

from confrontations, and bolster their ability to extort money, as a method to use the media for propaganda to send messages to the public and their rivals.²⁸⁶

The case of Rosalio Reta and Gabriel Cardona, both American teenagers who were recruited to be cartel assassins by the Los Zetas cartel, is an interesting illustration of the reach of the MTCOs.²⁸⁷ The Zetas put the teens through six months of military style training, and then sent them back to Texas to carry out murders of rival cartels members at the behest of the Zetas.²⁸⁸ The two boys were paid a retainer of \$500 a week. Then, they were reimbursed with a substantial supply of cocaine and \$50,000 in cash for each assassination they carried out.²⁸⁹ “There are sleeper cells in the U.S.,” said Detective Garcia of the Laredo Police Department. “They’re here in the United States.”²⁹⁰ Both boys plead guilty to murder, Cardona to seven murders, and Reta to two.²⁹¹ This case is relevant to the crime-terror nexus as it demonstrates the MTCOs are not above carrying out assassinations north of the border, and it also demonstrates their ability to recruit American teens to carry out their dirty work.

2. Bombings and Attacks on Critical Infrastructure

The use of explosives by the MTCOs is commonplace. For example, more than a 100 grenade attacks occurred during the first four years of the Calderon administration alone.²⁹² On November 5, 2010, in one eight-hour battle between the Mexican marines and members of the Gulf Cartel, kingpin Antonio Ezequiel Cardenas, alias Tony Tormenta, was killed in Matamoros, and more than 300 grenades were set off.²⁹³

²⁸⁶ Grayson, *The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism As an Instrument of Cartel Warfare*.

²⁸⁷ Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico’s Criminal Insurgency*.

²⁸⁸ Grayson, *The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism as an Instrument of Cartel Warfare*.

²⁸⁹ Ed Lavandera, “Police: U.S. Teens Were Hit Men for Mexican Cartel,” *CNN*, March 13, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/03/12/cartel.teens/>.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico’s Criminal Insurgency*.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

Another example of a grenade attack occurred when eight civilians were killed during the Mexican Independence day celebration in 2008.²⁹⁴ Moments after the governor rang a bell for independence, the attackers lobbed grenades into an unsuspecting crowd at the main square of Morelia.²⁹⁵ Revelers initially thought the noise of the explosions was from fireworks, but then witnessed dozens of victims, men, women, and children, covered in blood with devastating injuries.²⁹⁶ Author Iacono Grillo said the incident is a good example of terrorism.²⁹⁷ This incident points to the manner in which the MTCOs will engage in terroristic activities to intimidate, coerce, and threaten the general public, leaving the public with the feeling that the legitimate government can no longer protect them.

Car bombs are less common. Up until 2010, a few improvised explosive devices (IEDs) scattered around the country had caused damage and injury but no deaths.²⁹⁸ Then, on July 15, 2010, police in Juarez received an anonymous emergency call that reported a wounded policeman lying in the street at a major intersection.²⁹⁹ When police, emergency medical personnel, and other first responders arrived at the scene, a car bomb detonated killing three people and wounding dozens more.³⁰⁰ It was later determined the bomb had contained approximately 22 pounds of Tovex, an industrial explosive.³⁰¹ This incident is important to understanding of the crime-terror nexus because again, it serves as an example of the way in which MTCOs are imitating the tactics of terrorist organizations. The tactic of drawing first responders to a specific location before detonating an explosive device mimics the tactics frequently used by terrorist organizations in the Middle East.

²⁹⁴ Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico's Drug Violence and the Danger to America*.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

At different times, the MTCOs have also used vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED) against government forces.³⁰² The first incident occurred on October 20, 2011 in Monterrey, Mexico when an Army patrol identified a suspicious vehicle.³⁰³ When they attempted to stop the vehicle, the driver fled and the Army gave pursuit. As the pursuit continued, a cell phone detonated a VBIED along the side of the road just moments before the Army vehicles passed the location.³⁰⁴ No soldiers or civilians were injured in the incident, but El Universal news agency later reported the Los Zetas were responsible for the attack.³⁰⁵

3. Kidnapping Activities

Kidnapping for ransom is the cruelest activities the MCTOs engage in regularly. Since 2007, the number of abductions has skyrocketed. According to a government study, a 317 percent increase occurred in the number of kidnappings during the five-year period between 2005 and 2010.³⁰⁶ In 2010, Mexico averaged 3.7 reported abductions every day, for a total of 1,350 over the year.³⁰⁷ According to anticrime groups, many kidnappings go unreported.³⁰⁸ Some estimates say the ratio of reported kidnappings to unreported could be in the neighborhood of 1 to 10, because the kidnappers threaten to harm the victim if the incident is reported to law enforcement authorities.³⁰⁹

A notable incident of kidnapping occurred in 2008, when Los Zetas kidnapped an affluent attorney near Veracruz, Mexico and held him captive for three days while demanding \$300,000 for his release.³¹⁰ He was released only after his business partners

³⁰² Robert J. Bunker and Small Wars Journal, *Mexican Cartel Essays and Notes: Strategic, Operational, and Tactical: A Small Wars Journal—El Centro Anthology* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse Inc., 2013).

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency*.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Grayson, *The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism As an Instrument of Cartel Warfare*.

and son raised the money to pay his ransom. Afterwards, when state officials learned of the incident, they requested the lawyer and his family remain silent about the incident.³¹¹ They feared any negative publicity about the incident would reflect poorly on Veracruz and the governor who had aspirations of becoming the President of Mexico one day.³¹²

In January 2013, members of the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva (CJNG), a small cartel that is part of the Sinaloa Federation, committed one of the most heinous kidnappings on record.³¹³ That morning, five members of CJNG kidnapped a 10-year old girl named Irma Isaisa Jasmine Arroyo near Tecoman, Mexico.³¹⁴ They raped her, killed her, incinerated her body, and callously dumped her remains in an orchard.³¹⁵ Unfortunately, while they were targeting the daughter of a rival cartel member, in a case of mistaken identity, they grabbed the wrong little girl.³¹⁶ Irma and family were completely innocent, and had never been involved in drug trafficking.³¹⁷

Kidnappings by the MTCOs is also relevant to the discussion of the crime-terror nexus, because it is another indication of common illicit behavior that Hezbollah and the FARC either do or did engage in at one time.

³¹¹ Grayson, *The Evolution of Los Zetas in Mexico and Central America: Sadism As an Instrument of Cartel Warfare*.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Longmire, *Border Insecurity: Why Big Money, Fences, and Drones Aren't Making Us Safer*.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

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VII. ANALYSIS OF THE THREE CASE STUDIES

The previous three chapters contained historical case studies of three non-state groups: Hezbollah, the FARC, and the MTCOs. This chapter compares the findings and provides analysis of the information contained in the three case studies using social identity theory as a framework.

A. HEZBOLLAH'S IN-GROUPS AND OUT-GROUPS

Hezbollah is a Shi'a Muslim political organization based in Lebanon.³¹⁸ Hezbollah "operates within the confines of a state system," and their aims are "liberation of specific territory."³¹⁹ Hezbollah's agenda is also not purely Islamic, but blends Islamic and the national concerns together in a manner that garners the support of the Lebanese people who are within the Islamic sphere.³²⁰ Hezbollah's in-groups include Muslims, d Shi'a religious sect within the Islamic faith, and many Lebanese citizens who support its political positions. Hezbollah's understanding of Lebanese independence is framed by a belief that wealthy western nations pose a serious threat to Lebanese self-determination.³²¹

Hezbollah is the client to the Islamic Republic of Iran, which supplies Hezbollah with support by sending Hezbollah members of the Islamic Republican Guard Corps Quds Force to assist with training, and provide supplies in the form of weapons and munitions.³²² Also, Iran supplies Hezbollah with considerable financial support.³²³ In return, Hezbollah emulates and supports Islamic state ideology, while at the same time, helping to expand Iran's sphere of influence in the region.

³¹⁸ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

³¹⁹ Anders Strindberg and Mats Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance* (Cambridge, UK, Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 123.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

³²¹ Strindberg and Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance*.

³²² Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

³²³ *Ibid.*

Hezbollah's in-groups and out-groups have changed throughout its history depending on the political context within Lebanon. For example, during the 2005 elections, Hezbollah entered into a political alliance with two of the domestic out-groups, Saad Hariri's Future movement, and Samir Geagea's Lebanese Forces, with the stated purpose of "safeguarding the resistance."³²⁴ Following the election, Hezbollah accepted posts in the cabinet that included their former adversaries. The cabinet would express support for the resistance, although later, the alliance would break apart over disagreements surrounding the investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, a Sunni Muslim, which resulted in Hezbollah and Amal withdrawing their ministers from the cabinet.³²⁵ In February 2006, Hezbollah entered into a new alliance with the Christian Free Patriotic Movement, led by Michel Aoun, in an effort to counterbalance the anti-Syrian March 14th coalition.³²⁶ Hezbollah's critics would later accuse the party of protecting Hariri's killers, a charge Hezbollah denies, but which fostered Sunni-Shiite tensions in Lebanon.³²⁷

Amal, another Shia political movement, is another good example of how Hezbollah's in-groups and out-groups have changed based on their political needs. The Amal movement, which is opposed to the political dominance of the Maronite Christians in the Lebanese confessional government, has at times been an out-group to Hezbollah as the two groups competed for the support of the Lebanese Shi'a. However, in recent years, Amal has formed an alliance with Hezbollah, and in 2005, they were part of the March 8th coalition that showed solidarity with the al-Asad government in Syria.³²⁸

From the perspective of the Emic, Hezbollah believes resistance is strength.³²⁹ It believes resistance is the only way to confront a national and regional order that is based

³²⁴ Strindberg and Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance*, 137.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

³²⁷ Totten, *The Road to Fatima Gate: The Beirut Spring, the Rise of Hezbollah, and the Iranian War Against Israel*, 28.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

³²⁹ Strindberg and Wärn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance*, 138.

on western influence from their two primary out-groups, the United States and Israel.³³⁰ To Hezbollah's highly politicized religious perspective, neutrality is not an option in matters of justice versus injustice.³³¹ Understanding the emic is important to the contextual understanding of both Hezbollah's 1985 Open Letter and the 2009 Manifesto.

According to the 1985 Manifesto, Hezbollah's out-groups at that time included communists and capitalists, and similarly, the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as Israel, which it refers to as the Zionist entity. Hezbollah's "Open Letter" outlined the party's three primary goals: (1) continue the resistance against Israel and western forces within Lebanon, (2) reject Lebanon's confessional political system, and (3) support the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon.³³² However, Hassan Nasrallah has denied that Hezbollah has ever proposed an Islamic Republic in Lebanon.³³³

An example of one of Hezbollah's honor challenges to Israel happened on July 12, 2006. Hezbollah military forces, known as the Islamic Resistance, conducted a cross-border raid into Israeli territory near the Shebba Farms area.³³⁴ Three Israeli soldiers were killed, two more were wounded, and two were captured by Hezbollah and taken back across the border into Lebanon.³³⁵

The Israeli response was swift and harsh. The Israeli military attempted to isolate the battlefield by cutting off escape routes from Southern Lebanon with airstrikes and artillery bombardments on airports, seaports, roads, and bridges throughout the country.³³⁶ Lebanon's infrastructure sustained heavy damage as a result of the war. Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nassrallah, would later admit they had made "a major miscalculation."³³⁷ Nassrallah indicated the operation would not have proceeded had

³³⁰ Strindberg and Wörn, *Islamism: Religion, Radicalization, and Resistance*, 139.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

³³² Hassan Nasr Allah, Nicholas Noe, and Nicholas Blanford, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah* (New York: Verso, 2007), 5.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 90.

³³⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 135.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

³³⁶ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

Hezbollah's leadership predicted by "one percent" the Israeli response to the kidnapping of the IDF soldiers.³³⁸

In 2009, Hezbollah released a new, revised manifesto, but the historical context also needs to be considered to understand the emic fully. As stated previously, Hezbollah was undergoing a transition from a resistance movement to a legitimate political party, and part of the Lebanese government. The 2009 manifesto still indicates the group's primary purpose is resistance to the hegemony of the United States, and resistance to the "Zionist entity." However, the new document makes no mention of the Soviet Union, which had collapsed in 1989. However, it also says nothing about communism, which still exists as a form of government in several countries throughout the world.

The response from the international community was one of disapproval, most notably from a number of Middle Eastern countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. The Saudi government in particular referred to Hezbollah's cross-border raid as "uncalculated adventures."³³⁹ Generally speaking, Israel held the moral high ground during the conflict while Hezbollah was widely condemned for violating Israeli territory. Even in Lebanon, many people outside the Shi'a community blamed Hezbollah for billions of dollars of infrastructure damaged by Israeli bombing done during the "July War."³⁴⁰

However, within the Shi'a community of Southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah enjoys a strong base of support, the organization's standing was bolstered by the July War.³⁴¹ This increase in support was in part due to its swift response to the needs of those whose homes or businesses had been damaged or destroyed during the war.³⁴² Hezbollah paid between \$10,000 and \$12,000 to an estimated 15,000 Shi'a Muslims who had lost their homes. It is important to note that Shi'a Muslims were not the only benefactors of

³³⁸ Nasr Allah, Noe, and Blanford, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayed Hassan Nasrallah* (New York: Verso, 2007), 12.

³³⁹ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 136.

³⁴⁰ Totten, *The Road to Fatima Gate: The Beirut Spring, the Rise of Hezbollah, and the Iranian War Against Israel*.

³⁴¹ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 140.

³⁴² Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.

Hezbollah's charity following the July war of 2006. Many Christians living in southern Lebanon also received help in the immediate aftermath of the war. Hezbollah doctors also provided free medical services and dispensed free medication.³⁴³ Free meals were also provided for several weeks to those families impacted by the war.³⁴⁴ Hezbollah's patron, the Islamic Republic of Iran, provided most of the money for these relief efforts.³⁴⁵ Therefore, within its primary in-group, Hezbollah's support remained as strong as ever, but it also enjoyed the support of its nominal in-groups, such as the Lebanese Christians.

Of particular importance to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus is Hezbollah's reference in the 2009 Manifesto of "the liberalization, independence and dominance rejection experiences of Latin America countries."³⁴⁶ In particular, Hezbollah was referencing the Bolivarian Alliance, which at that time, was led by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. The 2009 Manifesto goes on to suggest that Hezbollah saw "grounds for overlap" with the Bolivarian Alliance, which it believed would lead to a "more equitable and balanced international order."

To appreciate fully Hezbollah's 2009 reference to the Bolivarian Alliance, it should be understood that Iran and Venezuela had entered into 340 new memoranda of understanding³⁴⁷ during the three-year period between 2006 and 2009. Additionally, on November 25, 2009, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was hosted at an official state visit by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, during a three nation tour of South America.³⁴⁸ During the visit, both Ahmadinejad and Chavez pledged their solidarity against the imperialism of the United States.³⁴⁹ Hezbollah's 2009 Manifesto was released

³⁴³ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 140.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents from the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 132.

³⁴⁷ Susanne Gratius and Henner Fürtig, *Iran and Venezuela: Bilateral Alliance and Global Power Projections* (Madrid: Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior, 2009).

³⁴⁸ "Chavez Welcomes Ahmadinejad in Venezuela," November 29, 2009, http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/americas/11/25/iran.ahmadinejad.venezuala/index.html?_s=PM:WORLD.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

to the public on November 30, 2009.³⁵⁰ Thus, just five days after Hezbollah's patron Iran was courting members of the Bolivarian Alliance during a tour of South America, Hezbollah as the client was dutifully expressing its "great interest and appreciation" for the Bolivarian Alliance.

B. THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA

The FARC has been a Marxist-Leninist non-state actor predominately operating from the remote regions of Colombia with roots in the peasant self-defense groups that emerged during a period that became known as "La Violencia."³⁵¹ The FARC's primary in-group, includes the "rural peasants," the "working class," or "proletariat" of Colombia. It is also accurate to say its in-groups include other communist insurgencies operating in Colombia, such as the ELN, although at times, its relationship with the ELN has been strained over the control of territory, resources, and support from the rural Colombian communities for which the groups are in competition.³⁵² The FARC's other more nominal in-groups include other communist nations and movements throughout Latin America, such as the member states of the Bolivarian Alliance.³⁵³ Its nominal in-groups also include other designated terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah and the Irish Republican Army (IRA),³⁵⁴ and criminal organizations, such as Los Zetas and the Sinaloa Federation, with whom it at times cooperate, and at times, are in competition with for limited resources.³⁵⁵

The FARC's stated goals include overthrowing the established order in Colombia, while driving American "imperialists" out of Latin America, and establishing a Marxist, or at least socialist government in Colombia.³⁵⁶ Therefore, the FARC's out-groups

³⁵⁰ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents from the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 115.

³⁵¹ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*, 8.

³⁵² Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

³⁵³ Janes IHS Global, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias De Colombia (FARC)."

³⁵⁴ Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*.

³⁵⁵ Janes IHS Global, "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias De Colombia (FARC)."

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

include the “established order” or in Marxist terms, the bourgeoisie, the United States and its neoliberal economic policies, and last but not least, the government of Colombia.

An example of the FARC’s challenges to the Colombian government occurred during the failed peace negotiations that took place between 1998 and 2002 under Colombian President Pastrana. The Pastrana Administration attempted to negotiate a peace agreement with the FARC, and even went so far as to grant refuge to the FARC in a large demilitarized section of Colombia totaling approximately 42,000 square kilometers, or roughly the size of Switzerland.³⁵⁷ First, during an incident that became known as “the empty chair episode,” FARC leader Marulanda did not show up for the opening ceremony of the peace negotiations, which left President Pastrana sitting next to an empty chair. Additionally, as the negotiations dragged on, the FARC took advantage of the time to re-arm and regroup. The negotiations finally broke down after the FARC hijacked a commercial airliner, and kidnapped a Colombian senator.

The FARC’s patrons have changed over the 50 plus years of its existence. However, intelligence revealed because of Colombia’s March 2008 cross-border raid into Ecuador, which killed the FARC’s second highest leader, Raul Reyes, suggests Venezuela, as well as other members of the Bolivarian Alliance, such as Ecuador and Cuba, are currently the FARC’s patrons. Both Venezuela and Ecuador have allowed the FARC to use the border regions of their countries as refuge from the Colombian military.³⁵⁸ Intelligence gained from laptops recovered during the raid revealed that Venezuela was also providing the FARC with logistical support by providing the group with weapons and ammunition.³⁵⁹ More recently, Venezuelan officials have been accused of allowing the FARC to utilize their country as a transit point for drug shipments to North America and Europe.³⁶⁰ As the client, the FARC has kept up pressure on the Colombian government by conducting subversive activities. The FARC has also

³⁵⁷ Janes IHS Global, “Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias De Colombia (FARC),” 14.

³⁵⁸ Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*.

³⁵⁹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of ‘Raúl Reyes.’*

³⁶⁰ Fleischman, *Latin America in the Post-Chávez Era: The Security Threat to the United States*, 277.

helped to extend the influence of the Bolivarian Alliance by providing drug money to help fund the election campaigns of social democrats, as was the case with President Rafael Correa's 2006 presidential campaign, although Correa denied the accusation.³⁶¹

The FARC also serves as the patrons to the peasant farmers in remote parts of the country. Its doctors provide medical care in these communities, and it helps to regulate the price of coca sold to the MTCOs.³⁶² In return, the coca farmers provide the guerrillas with new recruits, and help to grow coca crops; the sale of which helps to fund the FARC's ongoing operations against the Colombian government.³⁶³

Starting in 2010, the FARC began releasing some of its high value kidnapping hostages in an effort to win popular support from the people of Colombia.³⁶⁴ In November 2011, however, the FARC killed four members of the Colombian security forces it had been holding hostage for more than a decade. The hostages were killed as the Colombian military approached a FARC camp in a rural southern part of Colombia. The incident was a public relations nightmare and prompted a public outcry from thousands of demonstrators in cities across the country expressing their disgust with the FARC. In this case of a negative honor challenge by FARC, the social group of importance to the Colombian government, the Colombian public at large, served as the final arbiter and decided the result of the challenge was a gain or increase in support for the Colombian government, and a loss of honor for the FARC. Therefore, if the limited good is considered to be the sphere of influence over the public that both the FARC and the Colombian government are competing for, then the FARC was on the losing end of this particular honor/challenge.

³⁶¹ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of 'Raúl Reyes.'*

³⁶² Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency.*

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Beittel, *Colombia Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest.*

C. THE MEXICAN TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

The in-group for the MTCOs is the other members of the criminal enterprise, both at the source of supply and the end distribution point. Therefore, in most cases, these groups would include those who supply the MTCOs with both drugs and the precursor chemicals for drugs, as well as local street gangs they are in a patron-client relationship with, such as MS-13 and Barrios Azteca, who provide end-point distribution for their products.³⁶⁵ Its out-groups include rival cartels that it struggles with for control of drug trafficking corridors or plazas, government authorities, including Mexican law enforcement, military and judicial officials, and often, innocent members of the Mexican public who get in the way of the MTCOs.³⁶⁶

The ongoing extreme violent context is representative of the serious negative honor challenges that form the basis of relationships between the MTCOs and the government, as well as the relationships between rival MTCOs. For example, the MTCOs exist in a constant feedback loop of both negative and positive honor challenges with public officials that secure their ability to continue operations.³⁶⁷ These negative and positive honor challenges often take the form of the “plata o plomo” challenge, meaning “silver or lead.” Silver represents a financial bribe, and lead represents a bullet used to inflict serious bodily injury or death to individuals and their immediate family members. This common phrase is an example of how the MTCOs employ the bribe/threat culture to dominate cartel/government relations. Regardless of which choice the public official makes, both outcomes allow the cartels to operate unhindered. In most cases, the cartels would rather pay the bribe as opposed to kill the government official. However, if it becomes necessary to use violence, it is usually extreme with the victim’s bodies displayed in a very public manner, and often accompanied by a narco-banner threatening those who do not cooperate with the MTCOs. This extreme use of violence is used to set the tone for future “plata o plomo” honor/challenges to government officials. Mexican

³⁶⁵ Kan, *Cartels at War: Mexico’s Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

authorities estimate the MTCOs pay out approximately \$100 million dollars in bribes every month to state and municipal police officers throughout Mexico.³⁶⁸

The level of public corruption is so bad that following the second escape of El Chapo Guzman, polls conducted by Parametria, found 17 percent of Mexicans believed Guzman was the sole mastermind of his escape from Altiplano federal prison.³⁶⁹ However, 77 percent of those polled believed Mexican government officials were complicit in his escape.³⁷⁰ Therefore, if the Mexican public is the final arbiter of the negative honor challenge, then the constant challenge of “plata o plomo,” results in a loss of honor for the Mexican authorities.

The MTCOs also frequently present negative honor challenges to their rival cartels using very public methods. For example, in September 2011, a highly secretive and militarized branch of the Sinaloa Federation, known as Gente Nueva, drove two trucks onto an overpass near Veracruz, Mexico.³⁷¹ Then, as horrified citizens watched, the drivers began unloading 35 semi-nude bodies, many with apparent signs of torture, onto the road.³⁷² A short time later, the Mexican government announced the victims were members of Sinaloa Federation rival Los Zetas and most had extensive criminal records for murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and extortion.³⁷³ The suspects left a narco-banner at the scene claiming responsibility and threatening Los Zetas.³⁷⁴

MTCOs act as patrons to violent street gangs, such as Mara Salvatrucha-13 or MS-13, and Barrios Azteca. For example, in the case of MS-13, the Sinaloa Cartel, as the patron, recruited MS-13 members who serve as its clients, and to help distribute drugs in the United States, and assist in its war with the Los Zetas.³⁷⁵ In return, the Sinaloa Cartel

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ “Vast Majority of Mexicans Believe Govt Complicit in Drug Lord El Chapo’s Prison Break.” August 8, 2015, <https://www.rt.com/news/311908-guzman-mexico-government-complicit/>.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Longmire, *Border Insecurity: Why Big Money, Fences, and Drones Aren’t Making Us Safer*.

³⁷² Ibid., 27.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Kan, *Cartels at War: Mexico’s Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*, 85.

gave MS-13 an increased cash flow, better expertise, and training in the use of violent tactics, money laundering, and corruption of public officials, as well as access to new drug markets.³⁷⁶

However, the patron/client relationships of the MTCOs are not limited to their relationships with violent street gangs. Many people have suggested the MTCOs are also in a patron/client relationship with the government of Venezuela. For example, Roger Noriega, who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs between 2003 and 2005, has said Venezuelan government officials have close ties with “Colombian narco-traffickers, and guerrillas, Mexican cocaine kingpins, Central American operatives, politicians, and Hezbollah terrorists” that form a crime-terror network that “sows lawlessness, bloodshed and mayhem” throughout the Western hemisphere.³⁷⁷ Others, such as Max Manwaring, have pointed to the Bolivarian Alliance, led by Venezuela, as offering political and material support for the FARC, Hezbollah, and “other non-state actors such as African and Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations.”³⁷⁸ Venezuela, as the patron, and the rest of the Bolivarian Alliance, “frequently use MTCOs as a form of statecraft.”³⁷⁹ It has also been said that Venezuela and the Bolivarian Alliance act as a gateway for non-state actors and proxies hostile to the United States, such as “Hezbollah, the Basque ETA, transnational organized crime groups.”³⁸⁰ The U.S. Department of Treasury has also charged members of the Venezuelan government as drug kingpins pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) for coordinating the transportation of “thousands of kilograms of cocaine from Colombia through Venezuela to Mexico, for transportation to

³⁷⁶ Kan, *Cartels at War: Mexico's Drug-Fueled Violence and the Threat to U.S. National Security*, 85.

³⁷⁷ Matt Salmon and Jeff Duncan, eds., *Chavismo without Chavez: Anticipated Challenges for Regional and U.S. National Security in Latin America* (Washington, DC: The Center for Security Policy—Menges Hemispheric Security Project, 2013), 35.

³⁷⁸ Max G. Manwaring, *Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, Bolivarian Socialism, and Asymmetric Warfare* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005).

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ Douglas Farah, “Populist Doctrine in Latin America: How the Bolivarian Alliance is Remaking Militaries, Dismantling Democracy and Combating the Empire,” *Prism: A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations*, July 13, 2015, 3.

and distribution within the United States.”³⁸¹ Therefore, the Venezuelan government serves as the patron by facilitating the trafficking of weapons and drugs from the Andes region to North America; thus, shortening the supplies lines for the client MTCOs.

³⁸¹ “Action Designates Former Venezuelan Military Official, Previously Indicted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Eastern District of New York, Who Aided Mexican Drug Cartels,” August 21, 2103, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2146.aspx>.

VIII. CONCLUSION

A. RISKY BUSINESS—A STUDY BY THE WEST POINT COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER

In May 2014, Dr. Scott Helfstein and Dr. John Solomon released the findings of their study of the interrelationship between crime and terror entitled, *Risky Business: The Global Threat Network and the Politics of Contraband*. More specifically, the study looked across a broad range of illicit activities including terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, human smuggling, and political corruption. Using social network analysis, Helfstein and Solomon identified 2,700 people linked by 15,000 relationships on a global scale that spanned 122 countries.³⁸²

Their findings also discredit one of the most commonly held perceptions about the crime-terror nexus, which is that the nexus or convergence of crime and terror is more likely to occur in failed states or economically poor countries. This argument is largely based on four assumptions: (1) in poor economies, people are more likely to engage in illicit behaviors, (2) criminals and terrorists thrive in places with weak economies and governments, (3) because it is easy for criminals and terrorists to collaborate, they will, and (4) government and illicit actors are adversaries.³⁸³ However, the findings of Helfstein's and Solomon's study give strategy level decision makers several reasons to question all these assumptions.

Helfstein and Solomon were able to draw several conclusions from their study, which are important to understanding the crime-terror nexus, and ability to formulate an effective strategy for dealing with the problem. For example, their study found that rather than two separate networks, one of criminals and the other of terrorists, in reality, only a single network exists comprised of both criminals and terrorists. The study also found that "by most measures of connectivity, terrorists are more central than almost all other

³⁸² Scott Helfstein, John Solomon, and Combating Terrorism Center (U.S.), *Risky Business: The Global Threat Network and the Politics of Contraband* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2014).

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

types of criminals, second only to narcotics smugglers.”³⁸⁴ Moreover, their study found that terrorists are not shunned by criminals due to social norms or fear of attracting greater scrutiny or retribution from law enforcement officials.

Perhaps one of the most relevant findings of the study as it relates to U.S. homeland security is the connectivity between criminals and terrorists “is highest in resource-rich countries, which tend to have more capable law enforcement and counterterrorism forces.”³⁸⁵ Helfstein and Solomon explain that these resource rich environments present more operational challenges than the permissive environments of failed states.³⁸⁶ However, the wealth and prestige of these resource rich countries also makes them attractive targets for both criminals and terrorists.³⁸⁷ Understood in this context, a comparative advantage exists in collaboration between criminals and terrorists in resource rich countries.

B. PROBLEMS WITH DEFINING “TERRORISM”

Equally relevant to the understanding of the crime-terror nexus is the problems with multiple competing definitions and categories of terrorism. The case studies revealed the heterogeneous nature of the activities of these three violent sub-national groups. Yet, only two of the groups have been designated as FTOs. The MTCOs, despite the remarkably violent nature of many of their activities, which are designed to threaten, intimidate, and coerce the government of Mexico, rival cartels, and the citizens of Mexico, are still largely viewed as nothing more than criminals. This viewpoint can be attributed to the motives behind their violence, which of course is profit, rather than politics. However, it is important to remember that how to define terrorism properly has little consensus.

Some of the early efforts to explain terrorism centered on different typologies based on the motives of those committing the acts of terrorism. For example, in 1974,

³⁸⁴ Helfstein, Solomon, and Combating Terrorism Center (U.S.), *Risky Business: The Global Threat Network and the Politics of Contraband*.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Professor Paul Wilkinson said there are four types of terrorism. According to Wilkinson, the four distinct types of terrorism include criminal, psychic, war, and political terrorism.³⁸⁸ However, Wilkinson's focus was solely on political terrorism, and his book, *Political Terrorism*, did not address the other three forms of terrorism.

By 1983, some researchers were beginning to question this method of categorizing terrorism based on the motive. Michael Stohl explained, "Motives are entirely irrelevant to the concept of political terrorism. Most analysts fail to recognize this and, hence, tend to discuss certain motives as logical or necessary aspects of terrorism. But they are not."³⁸⁹

Researcher and Professor Alex P. Schmid appears to have agreed saying, "just as we can define sabotage, revolution or war without explaining the underlying motives, we can define terrorism without entering the value-laden area of moving causes." He would go on to note 22 different categories in 109 different, competing definitions existed while conducting research for his study *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide*.³⁹⁰ At the end of his authoritative study, Schmid admitted he and his partner, A. J. Jorgman, could not offer "a true or correct definition of terrorism."³⁹¹ As he would explain "terrorism is an abstract phenomenon," and a correct definition would be "the one which is consistently used."³⁹² Finally, Schmid concluded, "In the field of terrorism there is no agreement about any single definition."³⁹³

Schmid, however, is not alone in his frustration with defining terrorism. It was the opinion of noted historian and political commentator, Walter Laqueur, that the effort to define terrorism was neither possible nor worthwhile.³⁹⁴ Conor Gearty pointed out, "It

³⁸⁸ Paul Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism* (New York: Wiley, 1975), 32.

³⁸⁹ Michael Stohl, *The Politics of Terrorism* (New York: M. Dekker, 1979), 12–13.

³⁹⁰ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 33.

³⁹¹ Alex Peter Schmid and A. J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases, and Literature* (Amsterdam; New Brunswick: North-Holland; Distributors, Transaction Books, 1984), 110.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), 7.

may thus be most useful to call off the search for a coherent definition and to accept that advances will be possible only when we abandon the hope that there is a credible answer to the question—what is terrorism?”³⁹⁵

Even the U.S. government cannot agree upon a single definition of terrorism. Several writers have pointed out that the U.S. State Department, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) all use completely different definitions, which reflect the operational priorities of each specific department or agency.³⁹⁶ However, all these definitions focus on the “politics” of the terrorists as their motive for most of their activities.

The fact the U.S. State Department has not designated the MTCOs as foreign terrorist organizations is based on a belief the MTCOs do not have political motives. This belief is problematic because it demonstrates a lack of understanding in the fact that the MTCOs are heavily engaged in politics, albeit for different reasons than most designated terrorist organizations. Organizations, such as Hezbollah and the FARC, engage in terrorism to either change or subvert their existing governments. The MTCOs, on the other hand, engage in politics through the use of bribes, funding election campaigns, and pure terroristic threats and intimidation for the purpose of controlling the government of Mexico.³⁹⁷ When the crime-terror nexus occurs and the MTCOs form alliances with FTOs, the terrorist organizations profit from drug trafficking, and the MTCOs become more powerful and increase their political influence.³⁹⁸

The focus on the motives of these violent sub-national groups also ignores the fact that at times, different nation states have exploited the Lumpenproletariat or professional criminal organizations to subvert a foreign government. This tactic is nothing new, and at times, has been written about by different authors. For example, Paul Wilkinson wrote in 1974, “there is the phenomenon of the exploitation of criminal methods by political movements seeking either to supplement their funds by means of expropriation of

³⁹⁵ Conor A. Gearty, *Terrorism* (Aldershot, England; Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth, 1996), 579.

³⁹⁶ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 30–31.

³⁹⁷ Carpenter, *The Fire Next Door: Mexico's Drug Violence and the Danger to America*, 93.

³⁹⁸ Rachel Ehrenfeld, *Narco Terrorism* (New York: BasicBooks, 1990), xix.

criminal methods by protection rackets in order to obtain weapons or simply to augment their armed strength in a period of internal war.”³⁹⁹ In 1990, author Rachel Ehrenfeld addressed the subject by defining “narco-terrorism” as “the use of drug trafficking to advance the objectives of certain governments and terrorist organizations.”⁴⁰⁰ More recently, in the conclusion of their study entitled *Risky Business* described previously, Helfstein and Solomon stated in their conclusion, “State sponsorship of terrorism is well known, but state sponsorship of crime in pursuit of national goals is also a problem, and it is an area that deserves greater study and analysis.” This statement is true, particularly as it applies to Marxist Communist ideology, use of the Lumpenproletariat, and the goal of creating chaos, havoc, and disorder.

It is important and relevant to the discussion of the crime-terror nexus to remember that many of these violent sub-national groups, both FTOs and MTCOs, are dynamic, amorphous, and constantly evolving. Their activities are so diverse, they cut across all the most common attempts to categorize or label any group engaged in similar activities. As the three case studies contained in this thesis suggest, the activities of these violent sub-national groups are so heterogeneous as to defy all attempts to define, label, or categorize them. In fact, the activities of these violent sub-national groups are so protean in nature,⁴⁰¹ they have best been described by analysts as the “gray area phenomenon.”⁴⁰² This term is used “to group together in one category the range of conflicts across the world that no longer conformed to traditionally accepted notions of war as fighting between armed forces of two or more established states, but instead involved irregular forces as one or more combatants.”⁴⁰³

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The crime-terror nexus presents a number of challenges for U.S. homeland security practitioners, most especially in the field of domestic intelligence. In his book,

³⁹⁹ Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism*, 13.

⁴⁰⁰ Ehrenfeld, *Narco Terrorism*, xiii.

⁴⁰¹ Richard English, *Terrorism: How to Respond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 14.

⁴⁰² Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 17.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 18.

“Intelligence and Surprise Attack, Dr. Erik Dahl makes the argument that “more effort needs to be placed on intelligence collection, especially at the domestic and local level.” Dahl goes on to point out that terrorist attacks are seldom detected or interrupted by strategic level intelligence, rather more often, “plots are disrupted as a result of tips from the public, informants working for local law enforcement, and long-term surveillance of suspects.”⁴⁰⁴ The three case studies presented in this thesis, and the analysis and conclusions, support Dr. Dahl’s claim that more effort needs to be placed on intelligence collection, especially at the domestic and local levels.

Moreover, following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, recognizing the need for a National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan convened a committee of law enforcement executives, which would become known as the Global Intelligence Working Group (GIWG). The purpose of the GIWG was to make recommendations that “would correct the inadequacies and barriers that impede information and intelligence sharing.”⁴⁰⁵ Ten years later, the GIWG was reconvened to assess the progress that had been made on the initial recommendations made in 2003. This reassessment resulted in a new version, 2.0, of the National Intelligence Information Sharing Plan, which was released in 2013. Both versions make a number of recommendations for improving the flow of criminal intelligence and information sharing across all levels of government and on a national level. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, a number of the recommendations have not been implemented. In light of the threat now posed by the crime-terror nexus, strategic level decision makers across the U.S. homeland security enterprise should review both versions of the National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan, and work collaboratively to implement the recommendations contained in both versions.

Just as these violent sub-national groups are dynamic, amorphous, and constantly evolving, law enforcement agencies across the U.S. homeland security enterprise need to be as well if they are to be prepared to meet the threat posed by the crime-terror nexus

⁴⁰⁴ Erik J. Dahl, *Intelligence and Surprise Attack: Failure and Success from Pearl Harbor to 9/11 and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013).

⁴⁰⁵ Bureau of Justice Administration, *2013 National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2013).

adequately. Rising to the challenge will require training, both on the threat posed by the crime-terror nexus, and on the proper intelligence collection and reporting. Strategic level decision makers should place particular importance on the proper reporting of transnational crime and terrorism by state, local, and tribal levels to the appropriate domestic intelligence entities, such as the high intensity drug trafficking area, investigative support centers and the joint terrorism task forces, respectively.

Moreover, in the conclusion of their study *Risky Business*, Helfstein and Solomon astutely observed, “The nature of crime-terror connectivity suggests that maintaining such rigid boundaries may not always be the most effective approach, and utilizing resources and techniques associated with counterterrorism in conjunction with counternarcotics may yield the best results.”⁴⁰⁶ The General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan included a similar finding and recommended “consolidating and collocating” domestic counterdrug intelligence elements into specific geographic areas.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, in April 2013, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) released report number 13–471 entitled, *Information Sharing*. The GAO examined a number of best practices across the five domestic intelligence entities.⁴⁰⁸ The report identified collocation as the best practice for improving the sharing of domestic intelligence.⁴⁰⁹ Strategic level decision makers across the U.S. homeland security enterprise should consider working to increase the collaboration and reduce the division between the fields of counterdrug and counterterrorism intelligence to disrupt the crime-terror nexus more effectively.

⁴⁰⁶ Helfstein, Solomon, and Combating Terrorism Center (U.S.), *Risky Business: The Global Threat Network and the Politics of Contraband*, 23.

⁴⁰⁷ The White House, *General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2000).

⁴⁰⁸ United States Government Accounting Office, *Information Sharing: Agencies could Better Coordinate to Reduce Overlap in Field-Based Activities* (GAO-13-471) (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 2013).

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

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