

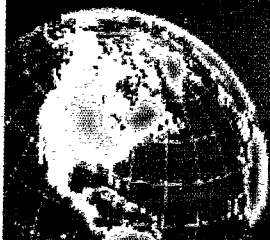
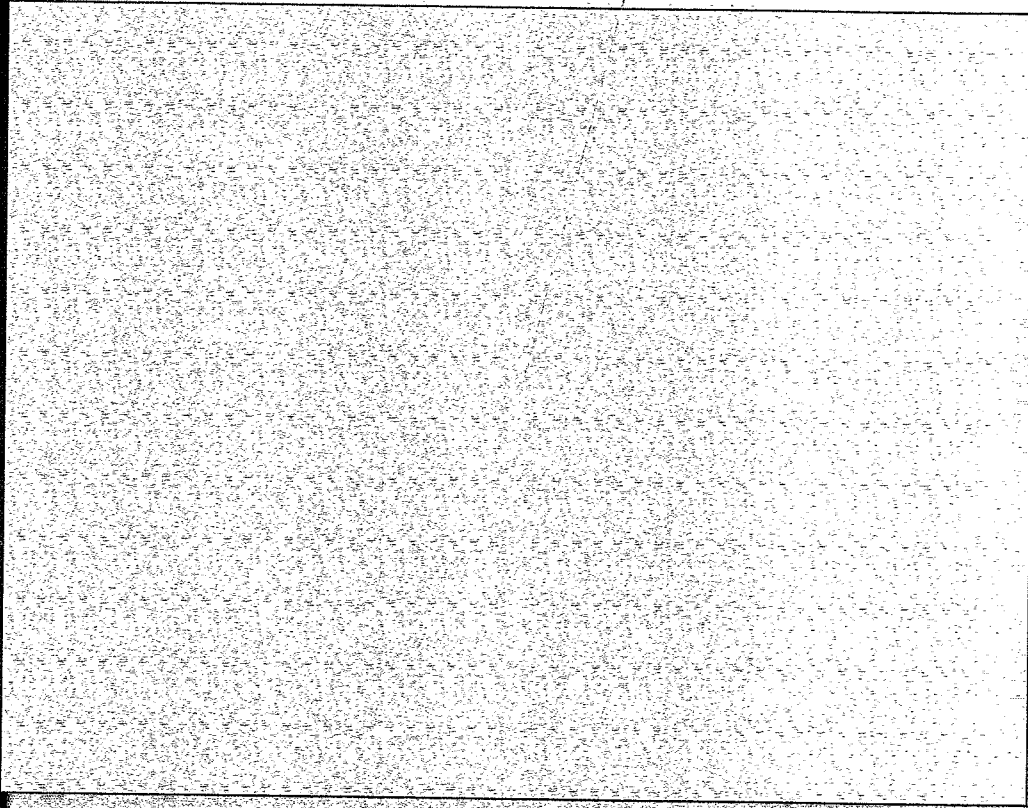


DEA
INTELLIGENCE
REPORT

(U) 2015 Assessment of Most Significant Drug Trafficking Organizations Operating in Mexico

DEA-DCT-DIR-036-16
MAY 2016

(b)(7)(A)



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2015 Assessment of Most Significant Drug Trafficking Organizations Operating in Mexico

(U) Executive Summary

(U//FOUO) Originating as transportation groups for powerful Colombian Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) in the 1980s, Mexican organizations have become the dominant DTOs in Central and North America. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) identifies six major cartels currently operating in Mexico: the Sinaloa Cartel, New Generation Jalisco Cartel (Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación or CJNG), [redacted] Organization [redacted] O), Los Zetas, Gulf Cartel, and Juarez Cartel (or La Linea). (b)(7)(C)

(b)(7)(D)(U//FOUO) [redacted]
(b)(7)(D) [redacted]

(b)(7)(C)(U//FOUO) Los Zetas, Gulf Cartel [redacted] O, and Juarez Cartel operated on a lesser level than the Sinaloa Cartel in 2015, but still had a discernable effect on drug movement from Mexico. The remaining Mexican cartels appeared to no longer operate at levels nearing the previously mentioned six organizations. For instance, in 2015, the Los Caballeros Templarios (LCT or Knights Templar) and their predecessor La Familia Michoacána (LFM) sustained significant leadership losses due to law enforcement action and cartel infighting and lost large swaths of territory to larger DTOs. As such, these nearly defunct groups are not discussed at length in this assessment.¹

(U) Details

(U) SINALOA CARTEL

(U//DSEN) The Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG have historical ties to one another—the CJNG once operated under the auspices of the Sinaloa Cartel in Jalisco State. This linkage has led to some confusion as to whether or not the two organizations are "allied" with one another. According to DEA intelligence, these organizations operate parallel DTOs that share many of the same smuggling routes through Mexico into the United States, Canada, and various other countries.

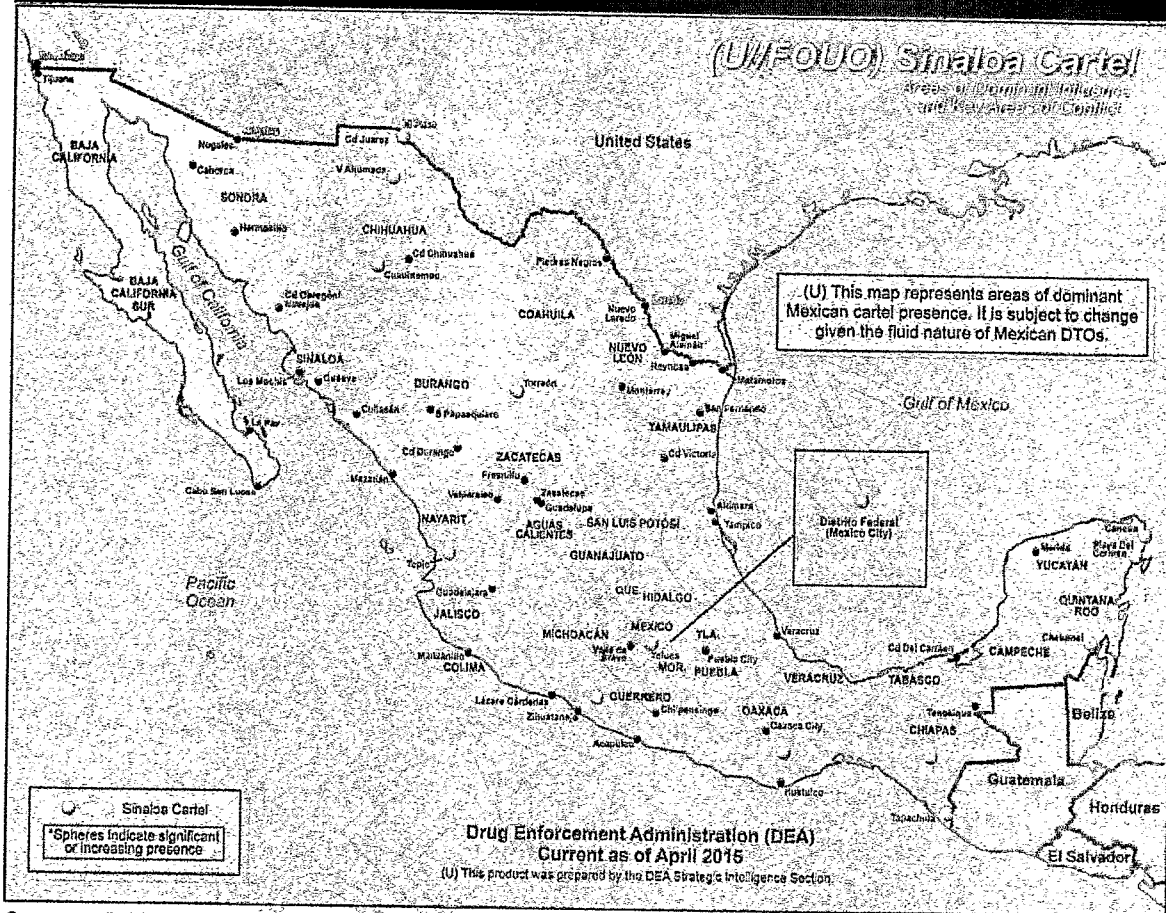
(U) The term "alliance" is more of an indication that the organizations are sharing drug routes and points of entry without fear of retribution. The "alliance" is informal and it is not a well-defined and mutually agreed upon business relationship. Non-competing DTOs that are in an "alliance" are not necessarily aligned with, or protective of, the other DTO's interests.

(b)(7)(D)(U//DSEN) [redacted]
(b)(7)(D) [redacted]

(U//DSEN) The Sinaloa Cartel has the most high-profile leadership, as seen with the recapture of (b)(7)(C) Sinaloa Cartel DTO leader [redacted] in January 2016. The Sinaloa Cartel (b)(7)(C) currently operates as four major DTOs— [redacted] DTO, [redacted] DTO, [redacted] DTO, [redacted] DTO. (b)(7)(C)

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(U//FOUO) Figure 1: Areas of Sinaloa Cartel and Control



Source: DEA

(b)(7)(C) DTO, and [redacted] DTO. Each DTO shares resources, territory, and points of entry into the United States. Prior to the January 2016 recapture of [redacted] and the Government of Mexico's (b)(7)(C) perceived willingness to extradite him to the United States, DEA deemed it very unlikely that these four groups would split from one another in the near future. Generally, major splits similar to the one (b)(7)(A) between the Sinaloa Cartel and [redacted] O are prompted by the murder of family members or, as was the case of CJNG, happen after the death of the leader of a DTO that is already semi-independent.²

(U//DSEN) In 2015, the Sinaloa Cartel continued to operate as normal despite the initial February (b)(7)(C) 2014 arrest of [redacted] and his 2015 escape from custody. In fact, DEA reporting indicates the (b)(7)(C) [redacted] DTOs actually grew more powerful after [redacted] 2014- (b)(7)(C) 2015 incarceration because [redacted] continued to run his business from prison. The (b)(7)(C) [redacted] DTO, which was led by long-time leader [redacted] pushed [redacted] (b)(7)(C) back into the leadership position and spotlight.³ The [redacted] DTO, led by [redacted] (b)(7)(C) [redacted] also continued normal operations. The children and nephews of these leaders assumed leadership roles within their respective DTOs.⁴

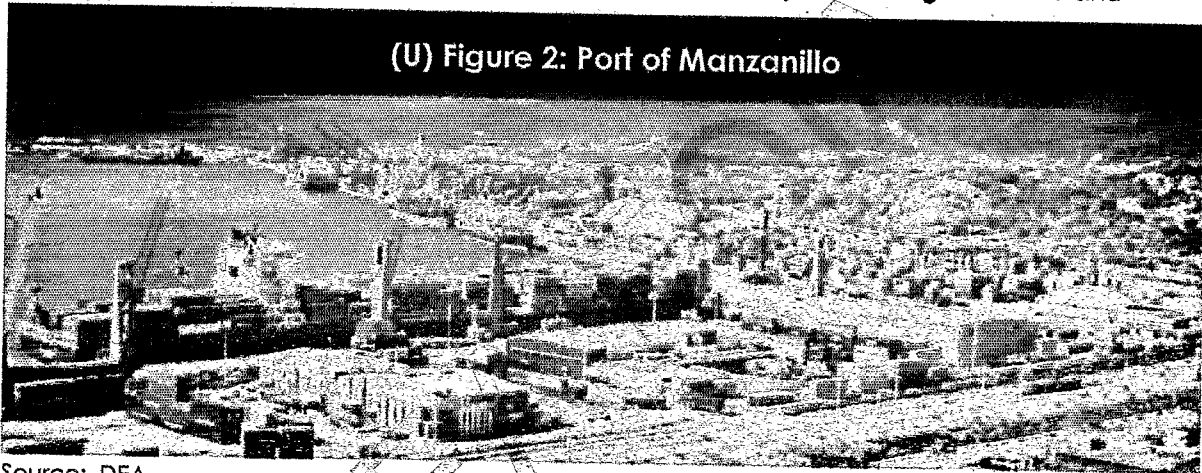
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(b)(7)(A)(U//DSEN)

(b)(7)(A)

(U) CÁRTEL DE JALISCO NUEVO GENERACIÓN

(U//DSEN) The Cártel de Jalisco Nuevo Generación directs its operations from within Jalisco State. The CJNG, which was once a Guadalajara branch of the Sinaloa Cartel, is quickly gaining ground on the Sinaloa Cartel in methamphetamine production and money laundering in Mexico and



(U) Figure 2: Port of Manzanillo

Source: DEA

abroad.

(b)(7)(C),
(b)(7)(A)

(b)(7)(C),
(b)(7)(A)

(U//FOUO) The CJNG has operative cells throughout Mexico,

(b)(7)(A)

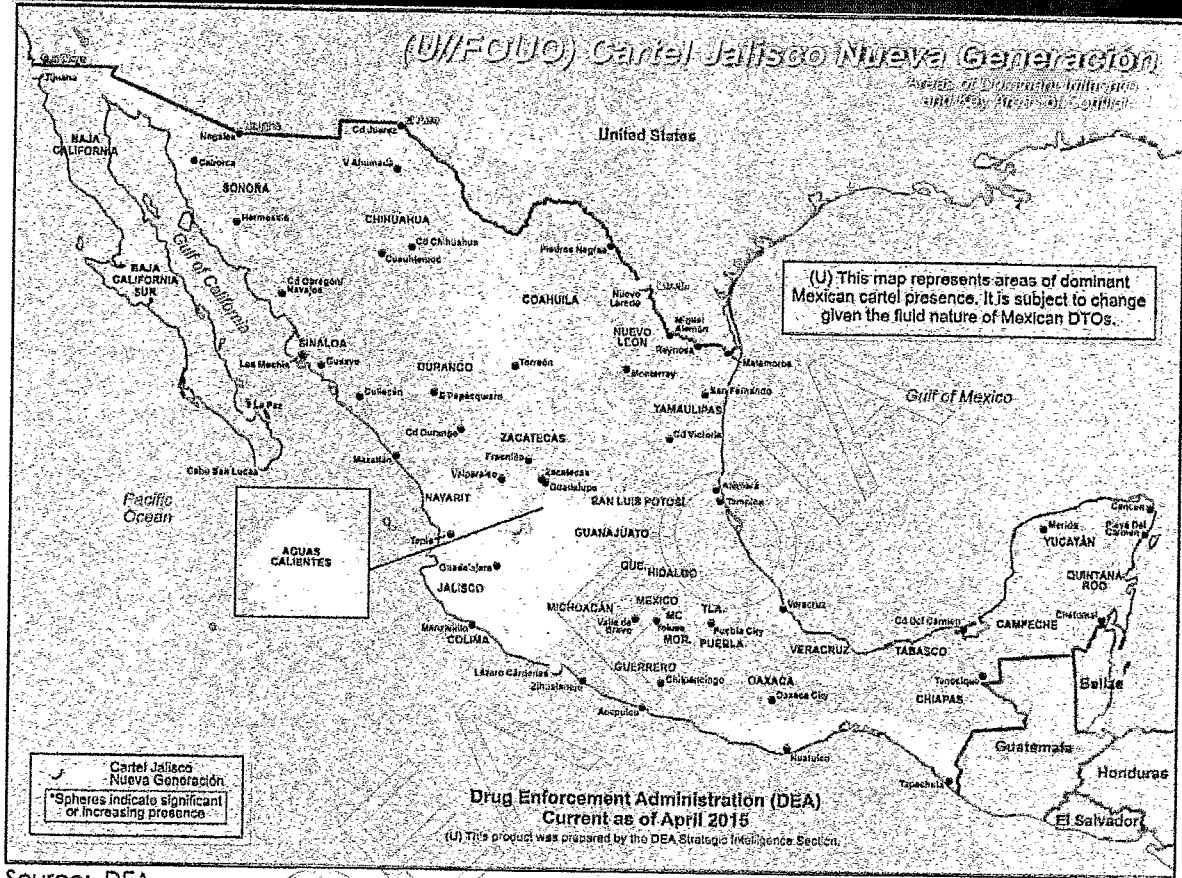
(b)(7)(A)

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(b)(7)(A)

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(U) Figure 3: Areas of Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación Influence and Control



Source: DEA

(b)(7)(A) CJNG has become a leading player in methamphetamine production in Mexico, and a likely source of the increasing amount of methamphetamine transiting the U.S.–Mexico border.

(U//FOUO) In 2015, Mexico experienced an uptick in CJNG-perpetuated violence as the cartel's DTOs increased violent attacks in April and May, including multiple ambushes against the Jalisco State Police. One of the CJNG ambushes resulted in the May 1 downing of a Mexican military helicopter.

(b)(7)(A)(U//DSEN) [Redacted]

(b)(7)(A) [Redacted]

(U//DSEN) Animosity between the leaders of the Sinaloa and Juarez Cartels led to a violent turf war for control of Chihuahua from 2008-2012. In light of this history, CJNG and the Sinaloa Cartel could

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join forces against the Juarez Cartel; however, current infighting amongst Sinaloa-aligned groups makes that possibility unlikely in the near term. Intra-cartel violence is a DTO's method of self-policing and is typically the result of individuals or groups engaged in unauthorized smuggling, stealing from the DTO, changing of allegiance, cooperating with law enforcement, or unauthorized actions resulting in unwanted attention on the DTO.

(b)(7)(A) [Redacted]

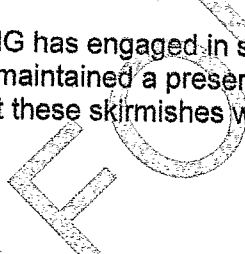
(U//FOUO) It is possible that the CJNG will increase its presence in the northeastern states that have been traditionally held by Los Zetas and the Gulf Cartel.

(b)(7)(A) [Redacted]

(b)(7)(A)

(U//DSEN) DEA reporting confirms that the CJNG has engaged in skirmishes with the Sinaloa Cartel gatekeepers in Tijuana. The CJNG has always maintained a presence in the Tijuana/Baja California corridor, so it remains to be seen whether or not these skirmishes will lead to an overall increase in violence in Tijuana.

(U) Los CUINIS



(b)(7)(A)(U//FOUO) [Redacted]

(b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(A)

(b)(7)(C) (U//DSEN) The [Redacted] Organization

(b)(7)(C) (U//DSEN) The [Redacted] Organization [Redacted]

(b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(A)

(b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(A) [Redacted]

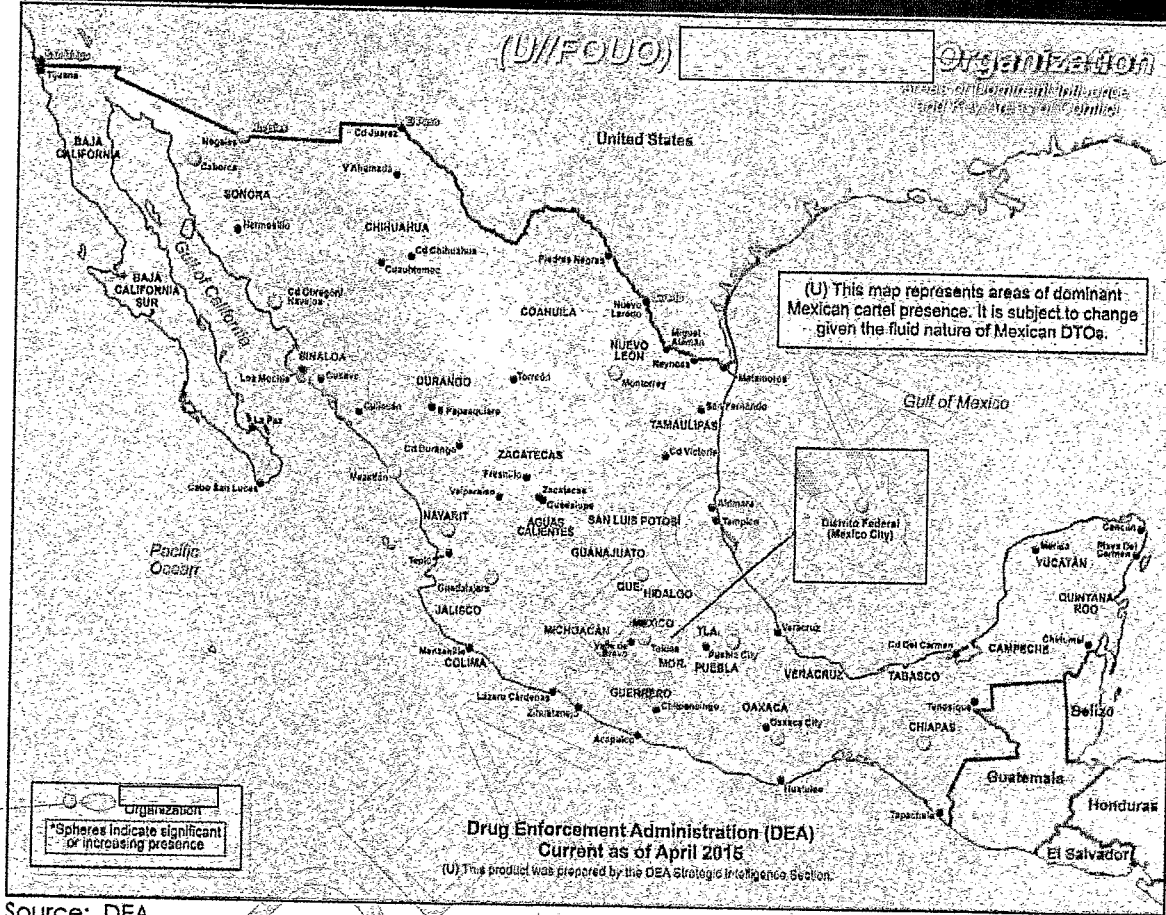
(b)(7)(C) [Redacted]

(b)(7)(C), (b)(7)(A)

(b)(7)(C)(U//FOUO) There are at least two [Redacted] splinter groups that engage in drug trafficking and other criminal activity such as kidnapping, extortion, and collection of "piso" from other DTOs in the region—the Guerreros Unidos and Los Rojos. The Guerreros Unidos has a strong presence in the

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(U//FOUO) Figure 4: Areas of [redacted] Organization Influence and Control



(b)(7)(C),(b)(7)(A)

(b)(7)(C),(b)(7)(A)

(b)(7)(C)

Source: DEA

State of Guerrero, and Los Rojos has reportedly operated in Guerrero and (Southern) Morelos. Los Rojos is likely to vanish within the next year because its leaders have all been arrested, causing the remaining Los Rojos members to align with other DTOs.

(b)(7)(C),(b)(7)

(A) (U//FOUO) The [redacted] O also operates in a partnership with the [redacted] (b)(7)(C)

(b)(7)(C) [redacted] DTO to control a large portion of the Golden Triangle area, which consists of the Mexican states of Sinaloa, Durango, and Chihuahua. [redacted] runs his heroin supply operations to the

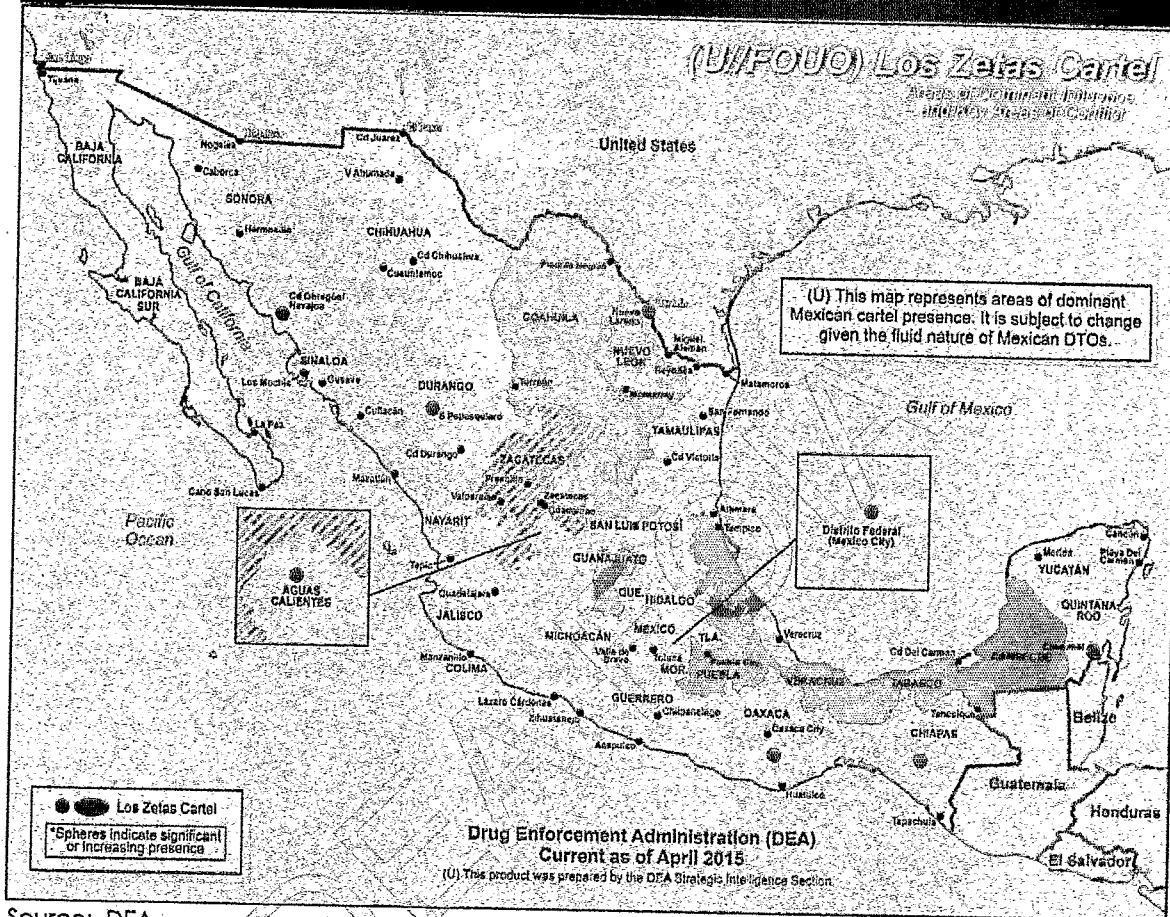
(b)(7)(C) [redacted] O in the State of Sinaloa, where his success lies in large part due to his ability to corrupt regional government officials. The [redacted] DTO utilizes a complex transportation network capable of moving drugs into the United States through the Nogales Port of Entry.^a

(b)(7)(C),(b)(7)(A)

(b)(7)(C)

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(U//FOUO) Figure 5: Areas of Los Zetas Influence and Control



Source: DEA

(U//DSEN) LOS ZETAS

(U//DSEN) Los Zetas (aka Cartel del Noreste)⁹ once operated as the second most powerful DTO in Mexico and in parts of Central America. Los Zetas has lost influence in both areas and appears to operate primarily as gatekeepers to the Northeastern Mexico smuggling corridors and entry points into the United States. Los Zetas possibly remain solvent because of the local retail drug market in Northeastern Mexico. Unlike the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas maintains familial ties within the (b)(7)(C) family, which provides continuity and resilience and could aid in their resurgence.

(U//DSEN) Los Zetas operate in Nuevo Laredo and Nuevo Leon States, as well as pockets throughout the Gulf Coast of Mexico. They battle the Gulf Cartel for control over Zacatecas. In terms of leadership, 2015 Los Zetas was as weak as it has been in its short history. As of March 2016, the leadership consisted of very young and inexperienced members, a far cry from the highly trained military operatives who formed and led the original Los Zetas DTO.

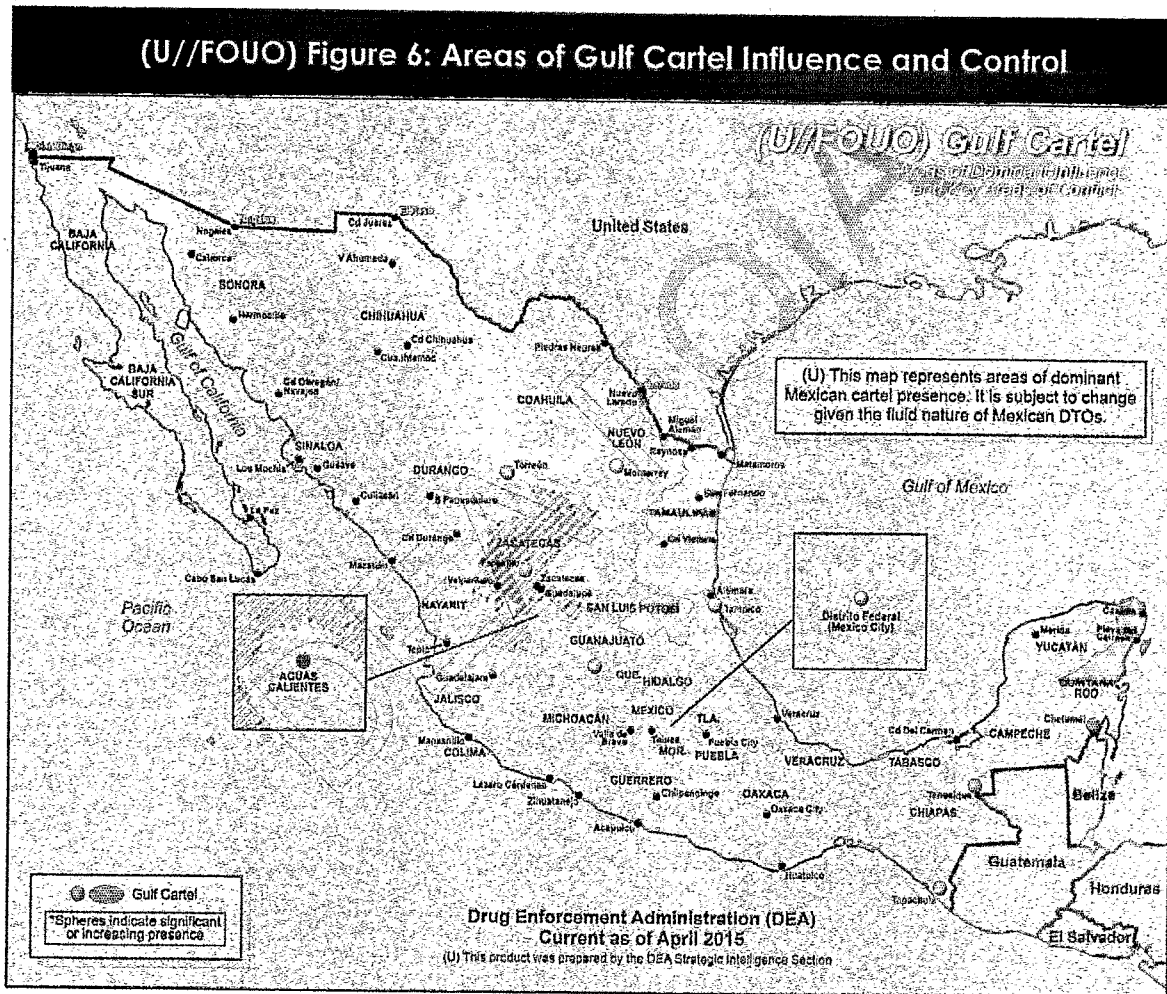
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(U//DSEN) In late 2015, members of Los Zetas made a conscious effort to rebrand the DTO as the "Cartel del Noreste" (Cartel of the Northeast), even going so far as to use the new name on banners and in their online branding.

(U//DSEN) THE GULF CARTEL

(U//DSEN) The Gulf Cartel is also in a weakened position compared to 2008, when Los Zetas were still a part of its enforcement arm. At that time, the Gulf and Sinaloa Cartels dominated Mexican drug trafficking, effectively dividing the country into east and west coast coalitions. In 2015, the Gulf Cartel

(U//FOUO) Figure 6: Areas of Gulf Cartel Influence and Control



Source: DEA

was a fractured and financially weak organization that suffered from a leadership void due to the loss of key leaders over the past year. The Gulf Cartel maintains regional commands in Reynosa, Matamoros, Zacatecas, and Tampico, Tamaulipas State. However, fracturing within the Gulf Cartel has created splinter cells, such as Los Metros and Los Ciclonas, which are leading much of the

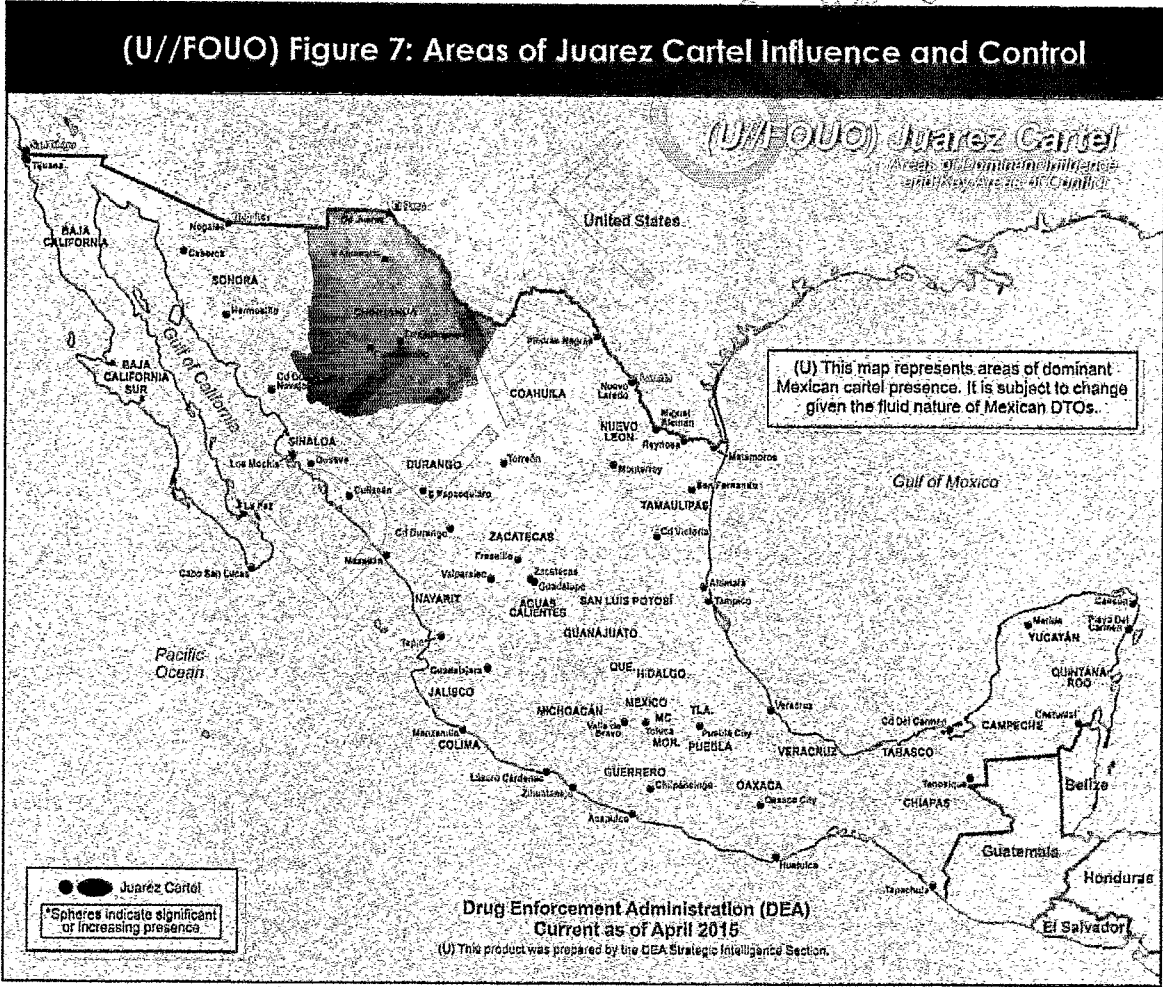
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infighting within the organization. The Gulf Cartel continues to battle Los Zetas for territory and points of entry into the United States.

(U//DSEN) It is unclear if either the Sinaloa Cartel or the CJNG will allow the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas to retain their corridors in eastern Mexico, or if efforts will be made to take control of these territories by the larger DTOs in the coming year. The future of these territories depends on whether the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas can maintain enough funding through drug trafficking to continue the hold over their historical plazas, or if an uptick in violence would cause law enforcement and military organizations to dedicate more assets to the region.

(U//FOUO) JUAREZ CARTEL

(U//DSEN) The Juarez Cartel (aka La Linea), run by [redacted] is the (b)(7)(C) dominant organization in Chihuahua State. The Juarez Cartel has fought the Sinaloa Cartel for control over the lucrative Ciudad Juarez plaza since 2008 and has solidified control of its stronghold in the



Source: DEA

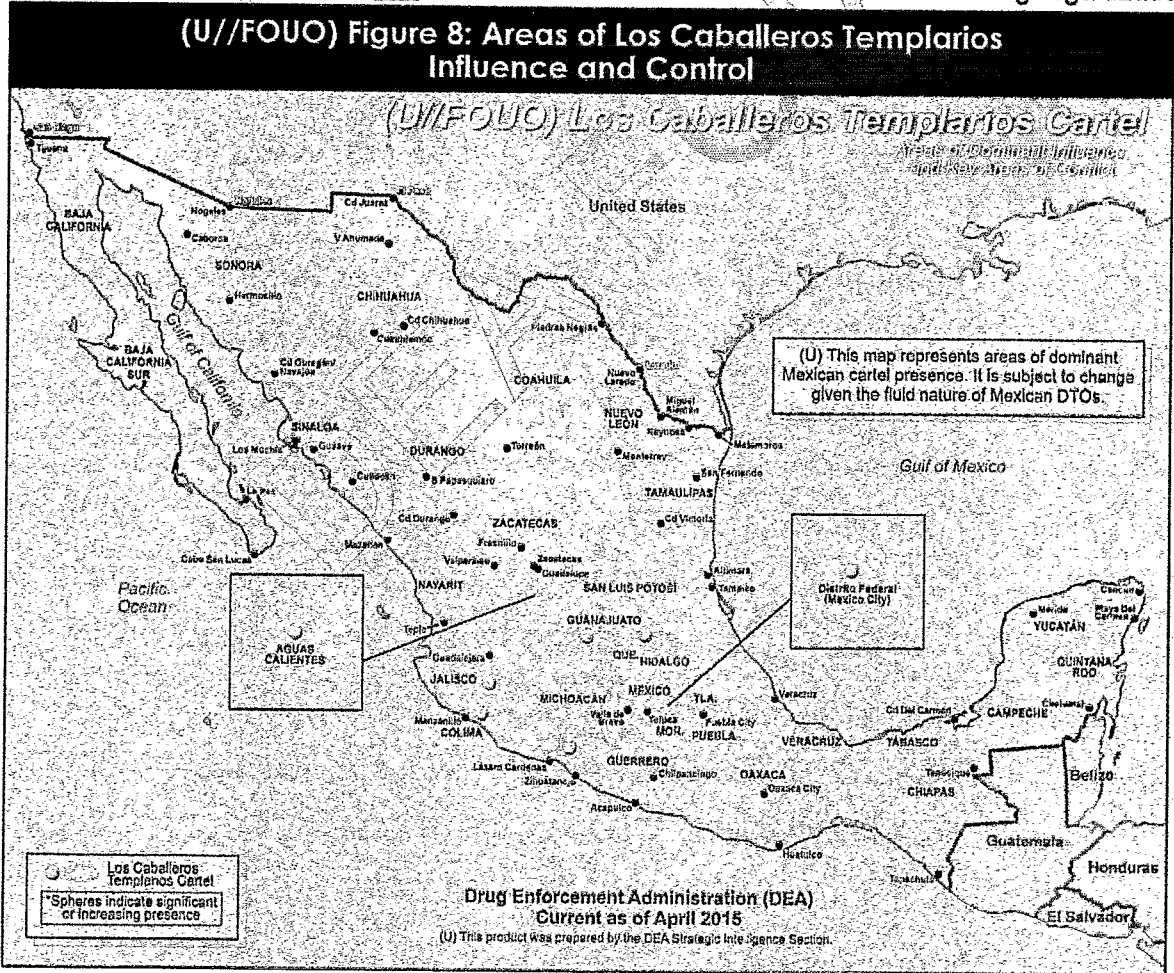
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(b)(7)(D) region over the past 2 years.

(U//DSEN) The Juarez Cartel includes the Mennonite DTO, an increasingly powerful transportation group in Chihuahua. Over the past decade, individuals in Mennonite communities in Mexico and Canada have been exploiting kinship networks to engage in drug/weapons trafficking and bulk currency movement. The Mennonites have gained recognition in drug trafficking largely due to their increasing alliance with, and leadership in, the Juarez Cartel.

(U) DISMANTLED OR DISRUPTED CARTELS

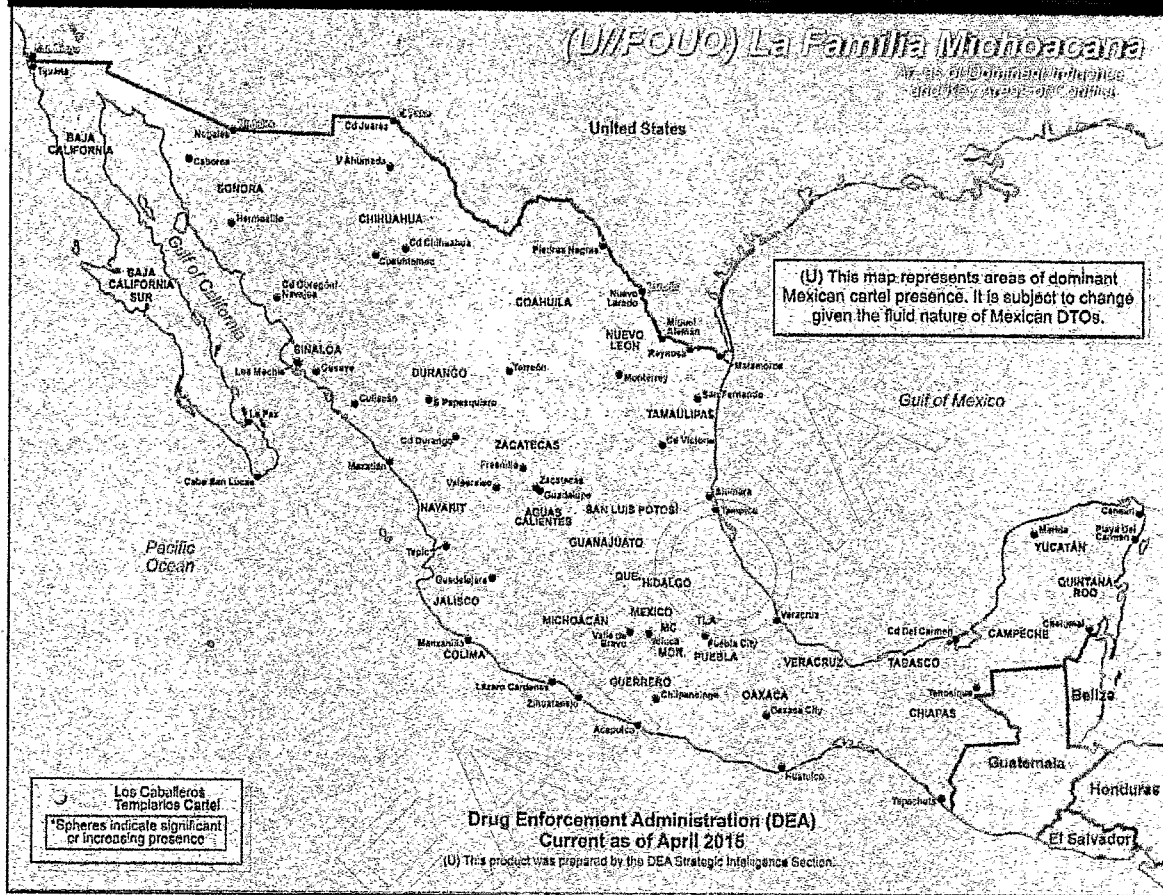
(b)(7)(C) (U//DSEN) Over the past decade, the Organization () has experienced one of the most spectacular downfalls of any major Mexican cartel. The once-powerful DTO went from one of the most significant trafficking organizations in Mexico in the late 1990s and early 2000s to an organization almost completely decimated by law enforcement action and rival cartel incursions. (b)(7)(C) During the height of its power, the () was seen as one of the most violent trafficking organizations



Source: DEA

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(U//FOUO) Figure 9: Areas of La Familia Michoacana Cartel Influence and Control



Source: DEA

operating in Mexico and along the southwest border of the United States, a reputation that galvanized law enforcement attention. In 2015, the AFO had lost almost all of their drug sources of supply, territory, and smuggling routes to the Sinaloa Cartel. Also, nearly every senior-level member of the organization has been killed or imprisoned.¹²

- (b)(7)(C) (U//DSEN) Like the [redacted] O, the Michoacan Family (La Familia Michoacan – LFM) and Knights Templar (Los Caballeros Templarios – LCT) organizations are considered largely defunct or are no longer operating at levels nearing those of the previously mentioned six major organizations. Over the last 24 months, the LFM and LCT have sustained significant leadership losses due to law enforcement action and cartel infighting, and have lost large swaths of territory to larger DTOs. Although there are still traffickers who consider themselves to be [redacted] O or LFM members, they are slowly being subsumed into the larger cartels where they stand to make more profits. As of October 2015, the majority of the remaining LCT members have aligned themselves with the CJNG.

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(U) Outlook

(U//DSEN) It is likely that the Sinaloa Cartel and the CJNG will remain the most powerful DTOs in Mexico for the foreseeable future. The Sinaloa Cartel has been stable over the past few decades, and unless there are major losses in leadership or infighting that fractures the alliance, the DTO is unlikely to lose much territory to rival groups. The CJNG will likely expand in the next year, given the scale of their trafficking activities and the inroads the organization has made into smuggling corridors along the southwest U.S. border.

(U) It is unlikely that any of the smaller groups identified in this report will gain significant territory in the coming year. The [redacted] O is losing some territory to the Sinaloa Cartel and may find it more lucrative to remain in their strongholds rather than expand. It is difficult to predict what will happen with the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas, as the respective leaders attempt to consolidate their groups after major leadership and territory losses. It is possible that the CJNG or Sinaloa Cartel will attempt to take over some of the plazas currently controlled by the struggling Gulf and Zetas organizations, which would lead to more Sinaloa or CJNG-controlled drugs arriving on the east coast of the United States through the eastern Texas corridors.

¹ (U) DEA-DCT-DIR-064-15; July 2015; Mexico: Updated Assessment of the Major Drug Trafficking Organizations' Areas of Dominant Control; Overall document classification in (U); Source Descriptor: Finished Intelligence.

(b)(7)(C) ² (U//FOUO) DEA-DCT-DIR-066-15; September 2015; The [redacted] Trafficking Group: One of the Four Major Organizations in the Sinaloa Cartel; Overall document classification in (U//LES); Source Descriptor: Finished Intelligence.

³ (U) DEA-DCT-DIB-019-15; September 2015; The Re-Emergence of [redacted] as a Leader within the Sinaloa Cartel; Overall document classification in (U//LES); Source Descriptor: Finished Intelligence. (b)(7)(C)

⁴ (U) DEA-DCT-DIB-004-14; July 2014; Leadership Succession of the "Narco Juniors" in the Sinaloa Cartel; Overall document classification in (U//LES); Source Descriptor: Finished Intelligence.

(b)(7)(A) ⁵ (U) [redacted] (U//LES);

(b)(7)(A) ⁶ (U) [redacted] (U//LES); (b)(7)(A)

⁷ (U) Ibid. (b)(7)(A) ⁸ (U) DEA-DCT-DIR-047-15; June 2015; Overview of Heroin Manufacturing in Mexico; Overall document classification in (U//LES); Source Descriptor: Finished Intelligence.

(b)(7)(A) ⁹ (U) [redacted] (U//LES);

¹⁰ (U) DEA-DCT-DIR-047-15; June 2015; Overview of Heroin Manufacturing in Mexico; Overall document classification in (U//LES); Source Descriptor: Finished Intelligence.

¹¹ (U//LES) DEA-DCT-DIR-055-15; July 2015; The Mexican Mennonite Community and Drug Movement to Canada; Overall document classification in (U//LES); Source Descriptor: Finished Intelligence.

¹² (U//FOUO) DEA-DCT-DIR-011-15; December 2014; Downfall of a Cartel: A History of the [redacted] Drug Organization; Overall document classification in (U//LES); Source Descriptor: Finished Intelligence. (b)(7)(C)



(U) This product was prepared by the DEA Strategic Intelligence Section. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at dea.onsi@usdoj.gov.