

1-1-2012

Mexican Cartel Strategic Note No. 13: City of Hidalgo, Texas, Fearful of Cartel Violence Potentials—Will Not Release New Police Chief's Photo

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Recommended Citation

Bunker, Robert J. "Mexican Cartel Strategic Note No 13: City of Hidalgo, Texas, Fearful of Cartel Violence Potentials - Will Not Release New Police Chief's Photo." *Small Wars Journal*. 6 May 2012. Web.

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"But on the U.S. side, it's just a little bit different. We shouldn't hide," said Hidalgo County Sheriff Lupe Treviño, perhaps the Valley's most recognizable law enforcement official. "As leaders, as law enforcement CEOs, we shouldn't hide from the bad guys. We need to confront them head-on. And that's what I've been doing since I took over the Sheriff's Office."

Former Customs and Border Protection spokesman Felix Garza agreed. He regularly appeared on TV broadcasts and spoke to reporters before retiring last year.

"That's the role of a police chief or somebody who's a public servant: That you have to make yourself available to the public by name, face, whatever," Garza said.

While he occasionally thought about safety, Garza said he traveled across the U.S. and Mexico without fear. He now lives in Hidalgo.

"So in short, I don't think their argument holds any water," Garza said.

For further background on the threat environment in Hidalgo, Texas, see the [Hidalgo Police Chief Says Threats From Cartels Are Constant](http://www.krgv.com/news/hidalgo-police-chief-says-threats-from-cartels-are-constant). KRCA, Jan. 12, 2012. <http://www.krgv.com/news/hidalgo-police-chief-says-threats-from-cartels-are-constant> Transcript:

HIDALGO - A Valley police chief says cartel threats against police departments happen all the time. CHANNEL 5 NEWS obtained a DPS memo warning the Gulf Cartel would open fire on police officers to protect the load.

Hidalgo Police Chief Vernon Rosser gets dozens of alerts, tips and warnings every day. That intelligence comes from his officers, informants or the feds.

"You have to take intelligence for what it is," says Rosser.

He says part of his job is sorting the good info from the bad. Rosser says information is specific.

"Something that's tangible, something that the officers can see who it is," says Rosser.

His officers will be using intelligence to look for a vehicle used in a shooting at a car in Edinburg on Thursday. He says that's a helpful tip. The memo he got in his inbox the other day was not. It came from the DPS.

The letter, citing FBI information, warned departments in the McAllen area that the Gulf Cartel was willing to open fire in order to protect a valuable load moving south.

"It's either going to be one of two things: money or drugs," says Rosser.

Rosser says that's information his officers take with them every day. They don't need a memo to know cartels are willing to open fire. These tips come in all the time. He says the threat from the cartels is constant, so this is no more than a reminder for his officers to stay alert.

Analysis: The Chief's Message at the Hidalgo Police Department website is at <http://www.hidalgotexas.com/police.html#> No picture of the interim police Chief Julian Guzman is present. Apparently the former police chief, Vernon Rosser, resigned 1 June 2012 in a settlement agreement in which he was paid \$114,000.00 to leave quietly as a result of a city council shake up that took place in the 12 May elections [1]. Of note is that Rosser said in a 14 May interview that the new mayor's uncle, Rudy Franz, was the real power broker in the city of Hidalgo and that talking about it would likely end his career. Veiled allegations of localized corruption or, at the very least, instances of business hardball taking place were also made [2]. Franz and cohorts were swept into office running as "...the Concerned Citizens of Hidalgo who campaigned on reforming the Police Department" [3]. Their platform stated that the police department was going beyond its 'serve and protect' role and intimidating individuals in the process of carrying out its sworn duties.

While the circumstances of the departure of the old police chief, whom it is agreed was far from politically correct in his mannerisms, is clouded, it was well known that he did not fear having his picture circulated in the media. What makes absolutely no sense is the new Hidalgo city position on not releasing the picture of interim police Chief Julian Guzman. If this was an internal decision to somehow limit the political visibility of the interim police chief (as part of a reform process or for other reasons) or triggered by intelligence pertaining to actual officer safety issues—which appears highly unlikely—is unknown. Either way, the position that such a release "may endanger the life or physical safety of the officer" [4] signals to the American public and the cartels that the city is now fearful of Mexican cartel targeting of its top law enforcement officer. This policy is highly detrimental to US national and strategic interests because of the symbolism attached to it. Ongoing US deterrence of Mexican cartel violence directed at US law enforcement officers and public officials is derived from a 'trip wire' posture. Once this 'trip wire' has been activated by an attempted or successful attack on US such public service personnel, an immediate and overwhelming law enforcement (and allied US governmental) response is initiated. This response is meant to severely punish such Mexican cartel transgressions, and by so doing, deter such future policies and actions by the cartels.

The city of Hidalgo's breakaway policy will potentially send the message that the threatened use of terrorist assassination/targeted killing TTPs (tactics, techniques, and procedures) by the cartels in Mexico can be successfully utilized against US law enforcement officers and public officials on American soil. Such a policy, if left unchecked and potentially replicated by other American border cities, could create an initial and ever deepening fissure in the 'trip wire' defense based on overwhelming response to Mexican cartel transgressions. It has now even been suggested, via attempts at dark humor, that the interim police chief of Hidalgo will next be forced to next don a black balaclava (ski mask) for his personal safety as an extension of this policy. This is the tragic reality that exists in many regions of Mexico today due to the worsening of its internal security environment. US national and homeland security interests would best be served by the rescinding of the city of Hidalgo policy and the immediate release of the picture of interim police Chief Julian Guzman. Senior US law enforcement and public officials should not live in fear of Mexican cartel violence potentials— rather, they should serve openly and if any violence should be directed against them then the US national response should be immediate, overwhelming, and exceedingly coercive in nature.

End Note(s):

1. Dave Hendricks, "Hidalgo pays \$114,000 to settle with former police chief," *The Monitor*, June 19, 2012, <http://www.themonitor.com/articles/hidalgo-61706-former-pays.html>

2. Dave Hendricks, "Hidalgo power broker forces out longtime police chief," *The Monitor*, May 14, 2012, <http://www.themonitor.com/articles/hidalgo-60861-longtime-police.html>

3. Ibid.

4. [Dave Hendricks](#) "Amid cartel concern, Hidalgo withholds police chief's photo" *The Monitor* July 30, 2012, <http://www.themonitor.com/news/hidalgo-62623-concern-photo.html>

Tags : [El Centro](#), [Mexican Cartel Note](#), [Strategic Note](#)

About the Author

Robert Bunker

Dr. Robert J. Bunker holds degrees in political science, government, behavioral science, social science, anthropology-geography, and history. Training taken includes that provided by DHS, FLETC, DIA, Cal DOJ, Cal POST, LA JRIC, NTOA, and private security entities in counter-terrorism, counter-surveillance, incident-response, force protection, and intelligence. Dr. Bunker has been involved in red teaming and counter-terrorism exercises and has provided operations support within Los Angeles County.

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Links:

{1} <http://smallwarsjournal.com/author/robert-bunker>

{2} <http://www.themonitor.com/reporter-profile/dave-hendricks-1579>

{3} <http://www.themonitor.com/news/hidalgo-62623-concern-photo.html>

{4} <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/404835-071912-hidalgo-chief-photo-ag-appeal.html>

{5} <http://www.krgv.com/news/hidalgo-police-chief-says-threats-from-cartels-are-constant/>

{6} <http://www.hidalgotexas.com/police.html>

{7} <http://www.themonitor.com/articles/hidalgo-61706-former-pays.html>

{8} <http://www.themonitor.com/articles/hidalgo-60861-longtime-police.html>

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