

Mexican Government in Control of Acuña

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Inspections and Patrols are the Key Elements

Without formal announcements the Mexican Marines and Navy Helicopters were deployed in Acuña, Mexico. A squad of Mexican Marines is stationed at the entrance to the city. As incoming vehicles leave the inspection area (where the federal officers have increased inspections) the squads of marines randomly stops and inspect many vehicles. The marines are professional and thorough. As the foot-soldiers inspect the vehicles, they are protected by other marines, including a truck with a mounted, belt fed-machine gun.

Although this all sounds intimidating, the process is smooth and there is a feeling of security. These are not the young faces of new recruits. These men and women have the look of experience and exhibit confidence without heavy-handedness. Being selected for inspection is not frightening, unless you are smuggling guns like Erendira Rodriguez Blanco was on September 29th. She was arrested and 16- weapons and ammunition were seized from her vehicle by these marines.

Another squad of marines conducts random searches of vehicles exiting Acuña. No longer can drug-smugglers simply worry about a possible inspection by American officials. They must also contend with their own country's efforts to stop the illegal transportation of narcotics.

The highways into Acuña are also guarded by marines at check-points where vehicles are inspected. At each of these check-points, there are sandbagged machine guns and the placement of each squad makes it unlikely that a cartel attack could succeed. An attack on the military as they drive to and from the check-points is more likely.

In addition to the inspection points, four large Mexican Navy helicopters loaded with marines patrolling the city. They can land anywhere in the city within minutes. In fact, they do land and the marines patrol an area for a half-hour and then move on.

With so many Marines and four helicopters supplementing the Army base patrols in Acuña, it appears that the Mexican authorities are directly challenging the cartels.

The deployment and action of these Marines is a challenge to the Zetas. The extortion, gun and drug smuggling is not going to disappear simply because the Marines arrived.

Although Paper Houses Across the Border is not bringing groups of Americans into Acuña at this time, we continue to deliver food and medicine as we walk the streets of the colonias. We continue to meet with families every two weeks in the heart of Acuña to discuss medical, educational and the issues of the poor.