

Organization Attributes Sheet: Los Leones

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Originally, there were three major drug trafficking organizations: Los Lorenzanas, Los Leones and the Vargas group. Arnoldo Vargas was the mayor in Zacapa and was contacted by Colombian drug traffickers to set up operations in the 1990s.¹ It is unknown if Los Lorenzanas, otherwise known as the Zacapa cartel, took control over Vargas' territory in Zacapa after his arrest; however newspapers started reporting Los Mendozas activity with the other two DTOs and did not mention the Vargas group.² Los Mendozas and Los Lorenzanas had a non-aggression-pact whereby traffickers shared drug contacts, used each other's routes and sometime cooperated to move or store drugs.³ Before becoming involved in drug trafficking, Los Leones stole cars and cattle. Later, the family was known for stealing drug shipments from Los Mendozas and Los Lorenzana in Zacapa.⁴According to <i>Prensa Libre</i>, the Leon cartel was the most powerful and violent of Guatemala's three drug trafficking families, Los Mendozas and Los Lorenzanas.⁵ In 2008, "Juancho" Leon, the leader was killed by Los Zetas in Zacapa in Los Lorenzanas territory.⁶
B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,
a. In general
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Drug trafficking, distribution and storage of drugs.⁷
b. <i>Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Harolodo Leon as of 2008, he had "two prior convictions, for willful injury and for the trade, traffic, and storage of illegal drugs."⁸Trafficking cocaine, heroin, and marijuana.⁹
C. Scope and Size
a. Estimated size of network and membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none">In 2008, <i>Prensa Libre</i> reported Los Leones had 80 family members working for the organization and this did not include the people hired for security and moving cocaine shipments.¹⁰
b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Guatemala's Izabal, Zacapa, El Progreso, and Chiquimula, as well as part of Petén.¹¹ And eastern borders of Honduras and El Salvador.¹²
D. Leader Characteristics
a. Who is/are the leader(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information not found.
b. Leadership timeline
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Melrym Giovani España killed in 2010¹³Leon Ardon was killed in 2008.¹⁴"Juancho" Leon killed in 2008.¹⁵
c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information not found.
E. Organizational Structure
a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found.
b.	<p>Membership – is there formal or informal membership in the organization or network? What role do informal or nonmembers play in trafficking and other criminal activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juancho's family is divided into four family groups: Leon Ardon, Leon Orellana, Leon Lara, and Leon Chacno. Other cousins related to the Leones are: Roberto and Juventino Leon Ovalle cousins.¹⁶
c.	<p>Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centralized¹⁷
F. Resources	
a.	<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haroldo Leon is connected to three trade firms and the family owns transportation companies which employ a large labor force.¹⁸
b.	<p>Human</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group has at least 80 family members working for the organization. This does not include those hired for security and unload/loading cocaine shipments.¹⁹The family owns a transportation company and trade firms which have a larger labor force.²⁰
c.	<p>Logistical</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Forgery, safe-houses, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location and number of safe houses are unknown but Harold Leon was convicted of storing illegal drugs.²¹ <p>Key routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eastern borders of Honduras and El Salvador are known areas for clandestine airstrips and cocaine flights from Colombia.
d.	<p>Transportation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found. <p>Sea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found. <p>Air</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found. <p>Intermodal container</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found.
G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities	
a.	<p>Corruption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found.
b.	<p>Concealment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found.
c.	<p>Deception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found.
d.	<p>Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found.

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H. Prior / Existing Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative with Mexican Gulf DTO, Vargas group and Los Lorenzanas.²² • Conflict with Los Zetas b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement , political parties and other state entities, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found. c. <i>Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily familial based; however, not all members are blood related.
J. Technical Sophistication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
K. Penchant for Innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
L. Activities in United States
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found. b. <i>Specific detail: trafficking activities; logistical activities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found. c. Linkages with US groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Market/transaction links <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found. ii. Stable supplier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found. iii. Franchise arrangement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found. iv. HQ and Branch office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found.
M. Evaluations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization’s strengths are not different from the other Guatemalan DTOs. Territory, known routes, regional knowledge. b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unclear when Melrym Giovanni España began leading the group; he was killed in 2010.²³ An April 2011 report from <i>Prensa Libre</i> claims Los Leones is in decline.²⁴ It is unclear how strong the organization is today. The group is assessed at a moderate to low level because it is unknown who the leader is and how prominent it is in comparison to other drug trafficking organizations. Drug trafficking in Guatemala is changing rapidly because of the addition of Los Zetas and Sinaloa members who have brought their feud to the country, as well as the success authorities have had in arresting kingpins this year. c. Additional insights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Other Notes

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- ¹ "Intelligence Analysis Identifies Leaders of Main Guatemalan Drug Cartels," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, March 31, 2008, OSC: LAP20080331026003.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ "Authorities Investigating Six Drug Cartels Operating in Guatemala," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 5, 2011, OSC: LAP20110406026002.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ "Guatemala: Lorenzana Case Arrest Delay, Land Dispute Matter Addressed," Guatemala City *Plaza Publica* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 29, 2011, OSC: LAP20110506369001.
- ⁷ Osorio, J, Orantes, C, and Leon, C, "Guatemala: Leon Cartel Said Reorganizing in Wake of Zacapa Massacre," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW), March 28, 2008, OSC: FEA20080331606867.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ "Authorities Investigating Six Drug Cartels Operating in Guatemala," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 5, 2011, OSC: LAP20110406026002.
- ¹⁰ Osorio, J, Orantes, C, and Leon, C, "Guatemala: Leon Cartel Said Reorganizing in Wake of Zacapa Massacre," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW), March 28, 2008, OSC: FEA20080331606867.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² "Authorities Investigating Six Drug Cartels Operating in Guatemala," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 5, 2011, OSC: LAP20110406026002.
- ¹³ "Drug Trafficker Killed in Guatemala," Latin American Herald Tribune.
<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=359356&CategoryId=23558>
- ¹⁴ "Highlights: Northern Central America Press ," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre*, (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, March 28, 2008, OSC: LAP20080328026002.
- ¹⁵ "Guatemala: Lorenzana Case Arrest Delay, Land Dispute Matter Addressed," Guatemala City *Plaza Publica* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 29, 2011, OSC: LAP20110506369001.
- ¹⁶ "Intelligence Analysis Identifies Leaders of Main Guatemalan Drug Cartels," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, March 31, 2008, OSC: LAP20080331026003.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Osorio, J, Orantes, C, and Leon, C, "Guatemala: Leon Cartel Said Reorganizing in Wake of Zacapa Massacre," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW), March 28, 2008, OSC: FEA20080331606867.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ "Highlights: Northern Central America Press ," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre*, (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, March 28, 2008, OSC: LAP20080328026002.
- ²¹ Osorio, J, Orantes, C, and Leon, C, "Guatemala: Leon Cartel Said Reorganizing in Wake of Zacapa Massacre," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW), March 28, 2008, OSC: FEA20080331606867.
- ²² "Intelligence Analysis Identifies Leaders of Main Guatemalan Drug Cartels," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, March 31, 2008, OSC: LAP20080331026003.
- ²³ "Drug Trafficker Killed in Guatemala," *Latin American Herald Tribune*.
<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=359356&CategoryId=23558>
- ²⁴ "Authorities Investigating Six Drug Cartels Operating in Guatemala," Guatemala City *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 5, 2011, OSC: LAP20110406026002.