

## Organization Attributes Sheet: Los Mendozas

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Reviewed Phil Williams

### A. When the organization was formed + brief history

- The primary group transporting drugs in Guatemala was the Mendoza Matta family or Los Mendozas. Los Mendozas, are also known as the Lords of Izabal cartel, and have the largest structure of the Guatemalan DTOs. Previously, the group ran contraband.<sup>1</sup> Several DTOs operate with the Mendozas (Los Lorenzanas, Los Leones, San Marcos) and others work under its leadership (Sayaxche Cartel). The Mexican contacts for the family were Otto Herrera and Jorge Mario el Gordo Paredes. Paredes and Herrera were blacklisted by the US State Department and communication weakened.<sup>2</sup> The family moves product in Sayaxche, Petén, and Rio Dulce, Izabal. "The Mendozas have more than 800 armed men at their disposal."<sup>3</sup> They own the Fuente del Norte, a busing company that travels through Guatemala city which transports drugs in the luggage of passengers.<sup>4</sup> In October 2010, Ottoniel Turcios Marroquin, the lieutenant of the organization was arrested in Belize and extradited to the United States.<sup>5</sup> He was known for his cruelty but provided important logistical support.<sup>6</sup> The family was involved with the short-lived non-aggression pact in Petén.<sup>7</sup> Along with the Lorenzana family, Los Mendozas are thought to be in Belize waiting until the spotlight on drug traffickers moves and the turf wars calm down.<sup>8</sup>

### B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,

#### a. In general

- Drug trafficking, jewel smuggling,<sup>9</sup> kidnapping, coercion,<sup>10</sup> The family uses farms for landing strips, storage of drugs and transports drugs to Mexico.<sup>11</sup>
- "The Colombian, Yesid Nieto, known commonly in Colombia as "the emeralds czar," presumably was organizing a group to smuggle jewels and drugs in Guatemala, with the support of the Izabal Cartel, when he was assassinated on 17 October 2008."<sup>12</sup>

#### b. Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in

- "[T]he Sayaxche Cartel supports the Mexican and Colombian cartels in transporting, by air and sea, the shipments coming from South America. They use the hours of darkness to transport their drugs in the Petén areas of the Laguna del Tigre national park, Laguna del Repaso, and La Pita, in the Sierra de Lacandon. There are around 30 clandestine airstrips and five official airfields in Petén, which makes it the ideal department for drug traffickers."<sup>13</sup>

### C. Scope and Size

#### a. Estimated size of network and membership

- Larger than the other two major DTO families in Guatemala with 800 armed men working for the organization.<sup>14</sup>

#### b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)

- Izabal,<sup>15</sup> Petén (Laguna del Tigre national park, Laguna del Repaso, and La Pita, in the Sierra de Lacandon), Guatemala and Belize.<sup>16</sup>

### D. Leader Characteristics

#### a. Who is/are the leader(s)

- Leadership is unknown at this time. As of 2008, Walter Obdulio Mendoza was known as the chief and controlled operations in Sayaxche and Petén.<sup>17</sup>
- Ottoniel el Loco Turcios, lieutenant, owns farms for landing strips, stores drugs and transports drugs to Mexico; in charge of the logistics.<sup>18</sup>

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

- Geovanny Mendoza provides security for the organization in Dulce area and the Sarstun River.<sup>19</sup>
- Milton Mendoza Matta moves almost exclusively by helicopter.<sup>20</sup>
- Rodolfo Toto Montenegro negotiates and manages finances from cardamom farms.<sup>21</sup>
- Haroldo Mendoza coordinates drug trafficking.<sup>22</sup>
- Los Malulas Group, 'Chief' Alonzo Carvajal, works with organization to provide security for shipments. Under the Malulas group, Verny Arraiza manages finances for investing and money laundering<sup>23</sup>
- Mario Alberto Lima Taylor supplies fuel for the aircraft.<sup>24</sup>

b. Leadership timeline

- Information not found

c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)

- Autocratic

**E. Organizational Structure**

a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)

- Hierarchical

b. 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?

- Membership is formal and largely familial based; however there are some individuals who are not related to the family but have high positions within the structure of the organization, such as Ottoniel Turcios Marroquin.<sup>25</sup>

c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)

- Centralized

**F. Resources**

a. Financial

- The Mendoza family owns the Fuente del Norte bus company.<sup>26</sup> Owns cardamom farms, as well as the farms Ottoniel Turcios Marroquin uses for landing strips, to store drugs and to transport drugs to Mexico.

b. Human

- The Mendozas have more than 800 armed men at their disposal.<sup>27</sup>

c. Logistical

i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.

- Farms are used for landing strips, to store drugs and to transport drugs to Mexico.<sup>28</sup>

ii. Key routes

- Pacific and in areas of Petén, Laguna del Tigre national park, Laguna del Repaso, and La Pita, in the Sierra de Lacandon.

d. Transportation

i. Land

- “[T]he Sayaxche Cartel supports the Mexican and Colombian cartels in transporting, by air and sea, the shipments coming from South America. They use the hours of darkness to transport their drugs in the Petén areas of the Laguna del Tigre national park, Laguna del Repaso, and La Pita, in the Sierra de Lacandon. There are around 30 clandestine airstrips and five official airfields in Petén, which makes it the ideal department for drug traffickers.”<sup>29</sup> Uses farms for landing strips,

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stores drugs and transports drugs to Mexico.<sup>30</sup>

ii. Sea

- See Land section above

iii. Air

- Use small planes form landing strips

iv. Intermodal container

- Information not found

**G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities**

a. Corruption

- Mendoza group operates in Petén and Belize and is believed to have ties to important government figures.<sup>31</sup>

b. Concealment

- Information not found

c. Deception

- Information not found

d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)

- Information not found

**H. Prior / Existing Relationships**

a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)

- Cooperative with Gulf DTO that operated in the north east and north of Guatemala near Mendoza territory.<sup>32</sup>
- Cooperates with Los Malulas Group, whose 'Chief' Alonzo Carvajal works with the organization to provide security for shipments.<sup>33</sup>
- Worked with Los Lorenzanas
- At times Leones were rivals.<sup>34</sup>

b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement , political parties and other state entities, etc.

- According to *Prensa Libre*, Los Mendozas have strong ties to government officials in order to maintain control over their turf.<sup>35</sup>

c. *Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.*

- Information not found

**I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)**

- Family provides much of core leadership but also promotes non-family members

**J. Technical Sophistication**

- Information not found

**K. Penchant for Innovation**

- Information not found

**L. Activities in United States**

a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities

- Information not found

b. *Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities*

- Information not found

c. Linkages with US groups

i. Market/transaction links

- Information not found

ii. Stable supplier

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
iii.	Franchise arrangement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
iv.	HQ and Branch office
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information not found</li> </ul>
<b>M. Evaluations</b>	
a.	Strengths
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to <i>In Sight</i>, Los Mendozas have strong connections to the Guatemalan government. This is important in order to run operations or be aware of where drug busts are going to happen. The size of the organization is larger than the other DTOs and has the potential to persevere against law enforcement concentrating on big kingpins. Apart from Ottoniel Turcios Marroquin, no other major Mendozas affiliate has been arrested. Authorities believe the organization has fled to Belize while the government concentrates on reducing drug trafficking in the country. This could mean Belize will become the next major drug trafficking country after Mexico and Guatemala. The organization has been around for a lot time and despite the changes in the drug trafficking dynamics in the country, the group appears to be flexible and able to go into hiding.</li> </ul>
b.	Weaknesses and vulnerabilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
c.	Additional insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
<b>Other Notes</b>	

<sup>1</sup> "Mendozas," *In Sight*, May 17, 2011.

<http://www.insightcrime.org/criminal-groups/guatemala/mendozas/item/452-mendozas>

<sup>2</sup> "Guatemala: Leaders of Main Drug Cartels Identified," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) March 31, 2008, OSC: FEA20080402610307.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> "Highlights: Northern Central America Press," Guatemala City Sigloxxi, (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, October 28, 2010, OSC: LAP20101028026001.

<sup>6</sup> "Guatemala: Drug Traffickers Forcing Owners To Sell Farms Along Mexican Border," Guatemala City Prensa Libre, (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, December 07, 2008, OSC: LAP20081209026001.

<sup>7</sup> "Authorities Investigating Six Drug Cartels Operating in Guatemala," Guatemala City Prensa Libre, (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 5, 2011, OSC: LAP20110406026002.

<sup>8</sup> "Mendozas," *In Sight*, May 17, 2011.

<http://www.insightcrime.org/criminal-groups/guatemala/mendozas/item/452-mendozas>

<sup>9</sup> "Guatemala: Intelligence Report Reveals Mexican Drug Cartels Operating in Country," Guatemala City Prensa Libre (Internet Version-WWW) -in Spanish Prensa Libre, April 1, 2008, OSC: LAP20080404026002.

<sup>10</sup> "Guatemala: Leaders of Main Drug Cartels Identified," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) March 31, 2008, OSC: FEA20080402610307.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "Guatemala: Intelligence Report Reveals Mexican Drug Cartels Operating in Country," Guatemala City Prensa Libre (Internet Version-WWW) -in Spanish Prensa Libre, April 1, 2008, OSC: LAP20080404026002.

<sup>13</sup> "Intelligence Analysis Identifies Leaders of Main Guatemalan Drug Cartels," Guatemala City Prensa Libre (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, March 31, 2008, OSC: LAP20080331026003.

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

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<sup>14</sup> "Guatemala: Leaders of Main Drug Cartels Identified," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) March 31, 2008, OSC: FEA20080402610307.

<sup>15</sup> "Guatemala: Lorenzana Case Arrest Delay, Land Dispute Matter Addressed," Guatemala City Plaza Publica (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 29,2011, OSC: LAP20110506369001.

<sup>16</sup> "Highlights: Central America Media," Guatemala City Prensa Libre (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 6, 2011, OSC: LAP20110406026001.

<sup>17</sup> "Guatemala: Leaders of Main Drug Cartels Identified," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) March 31, 2008, OSC: FEA20080402610307.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> "Intelligence Analysis Identifies Leaders of Main Guatemalan Drug Cartels," Guatemala City Prensa Libre (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, OSC: LAP20080331026003, March 31, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> "Guatemala: Leaders of Main Drug Cartels Identified," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) March 31, 2008, OSC: FEA20080402610307.

<sup>29</sup> "Intelligence Analysis Identifies Leaders of Main Guatemalan Drug Cartels," Guatemala City Prensa Libre (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, March 31, 2008, OSC: LAP2008033102600.

<sup>30</sup> "Guatemala: Leaders of Main Drug Cartels Identified," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) March 31, 2008, OSC: FEA20080402610307.

<sup>31</sup> "Highlights: Central America Media," Guatemala City Prensa Libre, (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish April 6, 2011, OSC: LAP20110406026001.

<sup>32</sup> "Guatemala: Lorenzana Case Arrest Delay, Land Dispute Matter Addressed," Guatemala City Plaza Publica (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 29,2011, OSC: LAP20110506369001.

<sup>33</sup> "Guatemala: Leaders of Main Drug Cartels Identified," *Prensa Libre* (Internet Version-WWW) March 31, 2008, OSC: FEA20080402610307.

<sup>34</sup> "Mendozas," In Sight, May 17,2011.

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<sup>35</sup> "Authorities Investigating Six Drug Cartels Operating in Guatemala," Guatemala City Prensa Libre (Internet Version-WWW) in Spanish, April 5, 2011, OSC: LAP20110406026002.