

# When Cartels Need Insurgents, They Dial I-800-Jihad

BY TONY RAFAEL

**O**n a morning in late October, 1996, the Ensenada-Tijuana highway was clogged as it usually is that time of year with southbound American snowbirds heading to the beaches and resorts of Baja Mexico. Mixed in with the RVs, overloaded SUVs, and multi-million-dollar Newell motor coaches was a three-vehicle convoy weaving at high speed through the vacation traffic that chugged along in leisure mode.

The convoy comprised a black Chevy Suburban, a blue, windowless Ford delivery van, and a black Ford F-150 pickup truck with its cargo wrapped in a blue tarp held down by yellow and black bungee cords.

Just south of Rosarito Beach, a magnet resort for San Diego party monsters, surfers, and budget vacationers, the three vehicles pulled off the pavement onto an east-bound dirt road that ran into the hills.

At the end of the road, the driver of the pickup slowed down and waved to the uniformed Mexican Federal police officer stationed at the open gate.

The three vehicles parked and eleven men exited onto the hard-packed earth that was littered with spent shell casings, live ammunition, and steel fragments of Russian- and Chinese-made hand grenades. All the men were in police uniforms, but only the driver of the pickup was an actual Mexican police officer. The rest were Cartel operators, freshly recruited hit men. They were American-born street gangsters from San Diego's Logan Heights neighborhood. Their leader that day was David Corona Barron, American born and bred and the head of security for the Arellano Felix brothers. Barron was also a member of the U.S.-based Mexican Mafia (La Eme) and a key player in forging the merger of the Arellano-Felix Cartel with La Eme.

The men emerging from the panel van, having rid-

den in near darkness, blinked and shaded their eyes at the hard sunshine. One of these recruits, "Trigger", released on parole two days earlier from Calipatria State Prison in Southern California, asked Barron, "Where are we?"

Barron's curt answer was, ".357 Ranch."

Barron pulled the tarp off the cargo in the back of the pickup and began issuing the ten recruits Russian-built AK-47s and massive 100-round circular magazines. Chinese and former Warsaw Pact arsenals are the current Wal-Marts for the world's insurgents, revolutionaries, gangsters, and narco-cartels. Anyone equipped with the right phone numbers, a secure satellite link, and a few suitcases of money or cocaine can order up enough Soviet-designed weapons to equip a regiment.

After a half hour of familiarization with the brand-new weapons, still glistening with the lubricant applied at the factory in Central Europe, the men were told to tear the guns down and clean them. The AKs, known as Cuerna de Chiva (goat horns) by the cartel operators, were purchased in gun bazaars run out of places like Guinea Bissau, the Tri-Border region of South America, and Neapolitan back streets.

As the men reassembled the weapons, a Ford Expedition arrived, followed by another Ford F-150 pickup.

Years later, in his debrief after his arrest on federal RICO charges, "Trigger" remembered the man that stepped out of the front passenger seat of the Expedition as "one of the coldest people I ever seen." The Middle-Eastern man who spoke English but practically no Spanish, was wiry and clean-shaven and looked almost malnourished. He wore loose-fitting blue jeans, a short-sleeved polo shirt, and thickish sneakers. "Trigger" remembers thinking that "He could pass for one of us."

In the weeks to come, the Middle Easterner would train them in automatic weapons, improvised explosives, remotely-detonated bombs, surveillance, counter-surveillance, communications security, torture, ambush tactics and close quarter combat with edged weapons.

"Trigger" would never know the wiry man's name. They just called him "El Terrorista."

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After an hour of marksmanship and basic weapon manipulation, El Terrorista climbed back into the Expedition and was returned to his pink and blue seaside villa in Rosarito by his heavily armed escort. They would have another training session the next day.

In the years to come as a shooter for the Arellano Felix Cartel, “Trigger” would pump AK-47 rounds into twenty victims. In most cases he had no idea why he was told to shoot these people. He was just following orders.

To the average American, the notion that Hezbollah has camped itself on our Southern Border may come as a shock. But to anyone who follows the movements of international terrorists, trans-national gangsters, and domestic criminal groups, the question should be, “Why wouldn’t Hezbollah plant itself in Mexico?”



In 2011, Hilary Clinton announced publicly that the Mexican Cartels were conducting an insurgency against civil authority in Mexico. President Obama quickly corrected her and stated that it was “not an insurgency.” In his eyes, it’s a simple criminal organization that needs dismantling. He was wrong. She was right.

Long ago, the Mexican Cartels decided that civil authority needed to be not just controlled and bribed into cooperation. It needed to be eliminated. In some provinces, the Cartels have been successful at doing just that. They essentially “sanitize” a province by killing the local police and politicians and coerce the local population into simply pulling up stakes and moving out. Local municipalities have become overnight ghost towns where the gangsters act as nothing less than warlords.

For all their violence and apparent insanity, the Cartels didn’t become a multi-billion dollar business by acting like amateurs. They understood that to create an

insurrection, you need to hire the talents of the premier insurrectionists in the world; people with a track record of bringing down governments and creating chaos. Those people happen to live in the Middle East.

In addition to bringing experience in the arts of insurgency, the hired Jihadis bring with them their tools – weapons, explosives, intelligence systems, methods of secure communications, and the rest of the portfolio of expertise. Many in U.S. law enforcement suspect that it’s this Middle East training that has brought the Cartels to use the car bomb and the tossing of hand grenades into crowds as a means of making their point. They also indicate the sophisticated tunnels dug under the border into San Diego. They have a disturbing similarity to the tunnels found in Gaza.

Clearly, the Cartels benefit from the heavy weapons and the training the Jihadis provide. But what do the Jihadis get in return? Two magic words. Access and Money.

The Jihadis have a firmly established base in Mexico from which to launch operations into the U.S. There’s no doubt many are already on American soil.

On May 4, 2011, News 10 in San Diego reported that for, “15 or 20 years Hezbollah has been setting up shop in Mexico.” The information came from an unidentified former U.S. intelligence agent.

One might ask, “If Hezbollah has been in Mexico for two decades, why haven’t they pulled off a spectacular operation in the U.S.?” The answer is money. Their operations in Mexico are profit centers. The proceeds finance worldwide terrorist operations. And they won’t jeopardize the cash flow by prematurely launching a strike in America.

Hezbollah is creating a robust infrastructure that could and probably will be utilized by people who are willing to commit suicide attacks. Hezbollah doesn’t “do” suicide. They do the cash-generating facilitating for those willing to blow themselves up.

For its part, the U.S.-based Mexican Mafia provides the cartels with U.S.-born soldiers who can travel freely across the border. In Southern California, La Eme has tens of thousands of street soldiers that it controls from inside the California prison system. One can see that the confluence of La Eme, the Mexican Cartels, and Hezbollah poses a significant potential threat that may literally blow up in our faces. ■