First Document from San Fernando Case File Confirms Police Involvement in Massacre

In December 2014, Mexico’s attorney general (PGR) finally complied with an order from the Federal Institute for Access to Public Information and Data Protection (IFAI) to disclose information in response to a petition sent by the National Security Archive for documents on the arrests of 17 San Fernando police officials in the wake of the 2011 massacre case.

The document is a chronology of investigatory actions taken by the PGR’s sub-directorate for organized crime (SEIDO) after the April 2011 unearthing of mass graves containing the remains of hundreds of victims in San Fernando, Tamaulipas.

The memo identifies nine members of the Los Zetas criminal group and 17 members of the San Fernando police forces detained in connection to the killings and includes damning never-before-seen testimony on how police allegedly helped the Zetas both abduct their victims and evade capture.

Some previous declassified documents already stated that 10 out of the 17 police members were freed from charges. The seven others are still under prosecution under seven different charges. Since then, no other information was made public.

This declassified document puts a new light on the fight of local and international organizations against opacity and impunity.

IFAI: San Fernando Investigative Files Subject to Human Rights Exception

IFAI’s September 2014 ruling in the case found that the 2011 San Fernando massacre was a grave violation of human rights
or humanitarian law for purpose of access to information, in accordance with Article 14 of Mexico’s access law.

Los Zetas Criminal Group Linked San Fernando Police to Migrant Massacres

Detained members of the Los Zetas gang named in the PGR document said that San Fernando police acted as “lookouts” [“halconeo”] for the group, helped with “the interception of persons,” and otherwise turned a blind eye to the Zetas’ illegal activities.

San Fernando Police Officer Described Links between Los Zetas and Police Officials

One of the police detainees named in the memo told investigators that San Fernando police and transit officials were paid to deliver prisoners to the Zetas.

“I know that police and transit officials in San Fernando help the Zetas organization,” he told SEIDO investigators. “Because rather than take detainees to the Pentágano, which is to say the municipal jail, they would deliver them to the Zetas.”

Tamaulipas Officials Tried to Minimize Extent of 2011 Massacre

U.S. reports show that Mexican officials in Tamaulipas tried to minimize the extent of the bloodshed and hide the truth about what happened, telling their U.S. counterparts that “the bodies are being split up to make the total number less obvious and thus less alarming.”

San Fernando and Cadereyta Investigative Files Subject to Human Rights Exception

Following a constitutional trial promoted by Fundación para la Justicia, Mexico’s Supreme Court is about to decide whether both massacres of San Fernando (occurred in August 2010 and April 2011) and the Cadereyta events (May 2012) are grave violations of human rights. Henceforth, information related to these massacres should be made public in order to guarantee society’s right to truth. A local Judge declared, in first instance, that the three events are grave violations of human rights for information purposes. Following this sentence, IFAI re-evaluated the case and in September 2014 acknowledged that the 2011 San Fernando massacre classifies as a grave violation of human rights, in accordance with Article 14 of Mexico’s access to information law.

For more information on National Security Archive, contact mevans@gwu.edu or jfranzbl@umich.edu, or see www.nsarchive.org/NSAEBB/NSAEBB499. On Fundación para la Justicia y el Estado de Derecho www.fundacionjusticia.org, or contact justiciayestadoderecho@gmail.com.