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Reducing the Risk of Police Corruption in Guatemala

Adrian Jenkins

Virginia Commonwealth University

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Reducing the Risk of Police Corruption in Guatemala Adrian Conway Jenkins



Abstract

- The country of Guatemala has always been plagued by political, security, and socio-economic conditions. These issues have contributed to the country having one of the highest violent crime rates in Central America and being ranked as the third most murderous country in the entire world (Grann, D.). This project will examine one of the factors believed to be most prominent in the country's security problem, police corruption.
- The Guatemalan National Civil Police (PNC) officers are confronted with institutional corruption, a homicide rate over five times the world average, insufficient resources, poor training, and distrust from the civilian population (ghrc-usa, 2014).
- "The U.S. State Department 2017 Guatemala Country Report on Human Rights Practices states that "Members of the police force committed a number of unlawful killings. Corruption, intimidation, and ineffectiveness within the police department and other institutions prevented adequate investigation of many such killings, as well as the arrest and successful prosecution of perpetrators." (ghrc-usa, 2014).
- Another challenge for the PNC is drug trafficking. Guatemalan President Alvaro Colom blames the drug traffickers for the corruption plaguing the PNC. Drug traffickers have been able to corrupt many PNC officers and chiefs because they have the ability to pay more than the monthly salaries these people receive. Mexican drug cartels such as the Los Zetas and the Mara Salvatrucha actively operate throughout the country. In addition, Guatemala's geographical location makes it a key country for trafficking in cocaine and heroin from South America en route to the U.S. and Europe

Introduction

As a law enforcement officer, I understand how important it is to be a part of a force that is dedicated to serving the public by enforcing the laws that were made to protect it. A partnership must be formed between a community and its police force in order to have a successful crime prevention and detection program. Citizens must be able to trust that their safety is paramount and the police need the support of the very people that they have been sworn to protect and serve. My in depth look at the security situation in Guatemala will focus on the troubles that plague the PNC and the reforms needed to reshape and mold this entity into one that will be the driving force in restoring order in the communities in this failed state.

History of the PNC

- Created as a result of the 1996 Peace Accords after the civil uprisings (1960-1996) in which the National Police (PN) committed a host of human rights violations
- 11,000 officers from the PN were recycled into the newly formed PNC
- Transitioned officers only received 3 months of retraining



Challenges for the PNC

- Extremely high murder rate
- Estimated 8,000 – 14,000 gang members in Guatemala
- Mexican drug cartels actively operate throughout Guatemala
- Extremely high kidnapping and extortion rate
- Lack of personnel, funding, quality training, equipment

Reforms

- Fully dismantle the organized criminal structures embedded in the PNC (investigate and prosecute criminals to prevent re-emergence).
- Increase the number of investigative police units and their funding.
- Improve PNC relations with communities.
- Improve collaboration on investigations between the PNC and the Public Prosecutor's Office.
- Recruit and retain better-qualified officers by paying sufficient wages, improving working conditions, and long-term career development incentives.
- Limit the military's role to external defense. Put an end to combined forces (PNC and military working together).
- More technological, logistical and financial support for the PNC by international donors.
- More government funding is needed for the PNC special unit of forensics, ballistics, and psychology unit to function properly.

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