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Mexican Cartel Tactical Note No. 9: Decapitated Adult Male with Hands and Feet Removed: Found on Side of a Dirt Road Near Marana (Pima County) Arizona

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Mexican Cartel Tactical Note #9

By [Robert Bunker](#)

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Mexican Cartel Tactical Note #9: Decapitated Adult Male with Hands and Feet Removed:

Found on Side of a Dirt Road Near Marana (Pima County) Arizona

Key Information:

Via Veronica M. Cruz, "Decapitated body found near Tucson Mountains," Arizona Daily Star Saturday 7 January 2012:

A man's decapitated body was found on the side of a dirt road Friday morning west of the Tucson Mountains.

The hands and feet also had also been removed from the body discovered in the 2300 block of North Reservation Road and West Mile Wide Road. None of the missing body parts were found at the scene, Pima County sheriff's Bureau Chief Rick Kastigar said.

The body was discovered by two men cutting grass along the road to feed their animals, he said.

The men flagged down Bureau of Land Management Rangers and border patrol agents in the area, but were released before deputies could question them, Kastigar said.

"We don't know who they are or where they came from," Kastigar said of pair who reported the discovery. "We don't know their association to the crime."

Other evidence was found at the scene but Kastigar could not provide details, citing the ongoing investigation.

Kastigar said that neither he nor the department's veteran investigators have dealt with a case like this before.

"I can tell you that the crime of murder is not necessarily new to that part of the county," Kastigar said. Homicide victims have been found in the remote area.

An autopsy is scheduled for today.

Sheriff's deputies are asking for anyone with information to call to call 911 or 88-CRIME (882-7463) [1].

See Kvoa.com (Ch 4 News Tucson, AZ) 1:23 minute video <http://www.kvoa.com/videos/body-found-near-marana-was-decapitated-sheriffs-say/>

For information on this incident and on other Mexican cartel beheadings in the US see Krgv.com (Ch 5 News Rio Grande Valley, TX) 1:45 minute video <http://www.krgv.com/news/expert-says-beheadings-in-u-s-look-like-work-of-cartels/>

Who: Unknown adult male. Ethnicity and/or distinguishing features not provided.

What: Beheading and partial dismemberment; hands and feet removed.

When: Estimates are that the body was not at the location more than 24 hours which would place the body dump on roughly Thursday 5 January 2012 [3].

Where: On the side of a dirt road near Marana (Pima County) Arizona— 2300 block of North Reservation Road and West Mile Wide Road [2]. This is a rural area North-West of Tucson with the interstate I-10, linking Phoenix and Tucson, about 15 miles to the East.

Why: The working assumption is that this is Mexican cartel related [4], though the homicide is still under investigation. The lead investigative agency is the Pima County Sheriff's Office.

Tactical Analysis: The beheading and partial dismemberment of the adult male has all the trademarks of a Mexican cartel killing although this homicide will likely never be solved in the near term [5]. No mention of tattoos on the body or personal items have been made in the news reports which would help to identify potential cartel and gang linkages. None of the victim's removed body parts have been located [1] and investigating detectives said that the body also suffered other obvious signs of trauma [2]. Lack of the head and other body parts at the body dump scene (potential crime scene unlikely) indicate that the perpetrators did not want the victim identified. The mention of 'obvious signs of trauma' is assumed to mean physical abuse and/or blunt force or penetrating trauma [eg. bladed weapon or gunshot(s)]. It is noted that the body was dumped by the side of a dirt road. The body could have instead been buried in a shallow grave further away from the road which could mean (a). The perpetrators wanted the body found (possibly as a warning to others linked to their activities) or (b). Due to time or operational security (OPSEC) reasons they decided to leave the body out in the open. Past cartel TTPs (tactics, techniques and procedures) would suggest that the perpetrators wanted the body found to make a statement to other illicit narcotics and/or human trafficking smugglers. A body dump to dispose of a kidnapping victim (for family extortion purposes) also has to be considered but would appear highly unlikely. This incident will now likely end the debate concerning whether beheadings have taken place in the Arizona desert— though technically the victim may have been killed indoors for OPSEC reasons. While no such Arizona desert beheadings had been identified prior to this incident this cartel violence spillover 'firebreak' now appears to have been crossed [6].

Significance: Beheading; Cartel Tactics; Cartel TTPs; Cross Border Violence

Source(s):

1. Veronica M. Cruz, "Decapitated body found near Tucson Mountains" Arizona Daily Star Saturday 7 January 2012 http://azstarnet.com/news/local/crime/decapitated-body-found-near-tucson-mountains/article_dcf05a7-73d2-598f-a44d-144b17ffae9f.html Note—typos in original article.

2. "Decapitated Body Found in Area West of Tucson" MyFoxphoenix.com Friday 6 January 2012. <http://www.myfoxphoenix.com/dpp/news/crime/decapitated-body-found-in-rural-area-west-of-tucson-1-6-2012> Includes 2 crime scene photos.

3. Ina Ronquillo, "Beheaded murder victim found in Marana area" Kuhn-TV Tucson, AZ Friday 6 January 2012 <http://www.kgun9.com/news/local/136822898.html>

4. See former DEA supervisor Phil Jordan's analysis. "Expert Says Beheadings in U.S. Look Like Work of Cartels." KRGV.com Tuesday 10 January 2012. <http://www.krgv.com/news/expert-says-beheadings-in-u-s-look-like-work-of-cartels/>.

5. Such incidents have the potential to be solved many months, even years, later when cartel and gang cells are broken up and the perpetrators accept plea deals to reduce sentences and/or seek immunity when they testify against their former associates.

6. See ABC15.com staff, "Have there been beheadings in Arizona deABC15.com 2 September 2010. <http://www.abc15.com/dpp/news/state/have-there-been-beheadings-in-arizona>. Contains a video sequence on the earlier debate that became politicized during Arizona gubernatorial elections in 2010. It should be noted that the Martin Alejandro Cota Monroy beheading in Chandler, Arizona, which was a Mexican cartel hit, took place in an apartment in October 2010.

Useful Reference(s):

Robert Bunker, "Mexican Cartel Tactical Note #8: Teen Tortured, Dismembered, Beheaded by Trafficking Gang in Bethany, Oklahoma." Small Wars Journal 3 January 2012. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/mexican-cartel-tactical-note-8>

Pamela L. Bunker, Lisa J. Campbell, and Robert J. Bunker, "Torture, beheadings, and narcocultos." Robert J. Bunker, ed. Narcos Over the Border. London: Routledge, 2011: 145-178.

Robert J. Bunker and Pamela L. Bunker. Beheadings and Ritual Murders Bibliography. Quantico, VA: FBI Academy Library. August 2007. <http://fbilibrary.fbiacademy.edu/bibliographies.html#beheadings>

About the Author

Robert Bunker

Dr. Robert J. Bunker holds degrees in political science, government, behavioral science, social science, anthropology-geography, and history. Training taken includes that provided by DHS, FLETC, DIA, Cal DOJ, Cal POST, LA JRIC, NTOA, and private security entities in counter-terrorism, counter-surveillance, incident-response, force protection, and intelligence. Dr. Bunker has been involved in red teaming and counter-terrorism exercises and has provided operations support within Los Angeles County.

Available online at : <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/mexican-cartel-tactical-note-9>

Links:

{1} <http://smallwarsjournal.com/author/robert-bunker>

{2} <http://www.kvoa.com/videos/body-found-near-marana-was-decapitated-sheriffs-say/>

{3} <http://www.krgv.com/news/expert-says-beheadings-in-u-s-look-like-work-of-cartels/>

{4} http://azstarnet.com/news/local/crime/decapitated-body-found-near-tucson-mountains/article_dcfd05a7-73d2-598f-a44d-144b17ffae9f.html

{5} <http://www.myfoxphoenix.com/dpp/news/crime/decapitated-body-found-in-rural-area-westson-1-6-2012>

{6} <http://www.kgun9.com/news/local/136822898.html>

{7} <http://www.abc15.com/dpp/news/state/have-there-been-beheadings-in-arizona>
{8} <http://smallwarsjournal.com/.../blog/mexican-cartel-tactical-note-8>
{9} <http://fbilibrary.fbiacademy.edu/bibliographies.html#beheadings>

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