

December 29,

MURDER, SHE WROTE: Slaying of Three Escobedo Family Members in Chihuahua

Mexican murder victims are just numbers—until it’s someone you know

The longest running murder-mystery television series in the United States was “Murder She Wrote,” which ran for twelve years (1984-96). In each of 264 episodes Jessica Fletcher (Angela Lansbury), a widow and former English teacher with no police training, solves a murder case. Her counterpart today would seem to be Lizbeth Salander, the anorexic, Swedish geek who is the protagonist of the trilogy by the late Stieg Larsson and which was published posthumously.

In Mexico, murder is taking place in unprecedented numbers, reaching over 10,000 in 2010 alone; and, of these, perhaps 2% will be solved. On this scale, murder is not only a matter of individual corpses; it is also a threat to the governability of society that takes the shape of a question mark around the presidency of Felipe Calderón.

Murders in Mexico in 2010 increased by 40% over the level of 2009. Killings in seven of Mexico’s 32 states account for more than 70% of the national total; the state with the highest number—over 3,000—is Chihuahua.

This report identifies some of the obstacles to restoring safety to many of Mexico’s streets, and identifies some of the measures that have been successful. The report briefly recounts two killings that took place in the final two months of 2010: Marisela Escobedo, 52, a prominent victim’s rights activist in Chihuahua, and Silverio Cavazos, 42, a former governor of the State of Colima.

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INTRODUCTION

To judge by the experience of Torreón, a mid-sized city in the north-central state of Durango, the main problem with the criminal justice system is that it is administered by criminals. In March, 2010, mayor of Torreón fired 600 of 700 police officers on account of their ties to drug cartels. Later, a rehiring program was begun; but of 300 applicants, only one passed lie-detector tests and other requirements.¹

As for the criminals themselves, many are former police officers or former members of the armed forces who acquired their skills in the use of high-caliber weapons during military service or in training in police academies. As the mayor of Torreón memorably said, “It’s not that our cops weren’t fighting the bad guys—they *were* the bad guys.”

The populations most vulnerable to violent crime in Mexico are young women, local politicians and police officers. In 2010, in addition to the PRI gubernatorial candidate in Tamaulipas, a dozen mayors and mayors-elect were killed by agents of the drug cartels.

DISCUSSION

In this section we shall inquire into the recent deaths of two prominent public figures in Mexico, and, drawing on the successful experiment in the City of Torreón and what is known about these killings, we shall list measures that might help to reverse the deteriorating state of public safety in Mexico.

MARISELA ESCOBEDO

The murder of Marisela Escobedo on December 16, 2010, outraged Mexico. For over two years she had waged a one-woman fight to have the murderer of her 16-year-old daughter, Rubí Frayre, brought to justice; then, in the most public of all places in the state—in front of the governor’s office—she was herself murdered minutes after the governor’s office closed for the night.²

When her daughter’s live-in boyfriend, Sergio Rafael Barraza, disappeared at the same time as her daughter, the mother suspected murder, adding her daughter as one more of the thousands of young women who had been killed in Ciudad Juárez. The mother became a murder detective for this one case: eventually, she located the former boyfriend, and notified the police who arrested him.

Mr. Barraza subsequently confessed to the crime, and led the police to the gravesite where he had deposited the remains of his girlfriend, whose corpse he had at first burned.

¹ *Wall Street Journal*, “To Root Out Dirty Police, Mexico Sends in a General,” Dec. 23, 2010. The online version of the article includes a slide show that depicts the situation in Torreón.

² *The Wall Street Journal* ran a story on Dec. 23, 2010, and posted an interview with David Luhnaw, the reporter who covered the story. The murder was captured on video, and a clip is shown in the WSJ interview: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703814804576035791419284246.html?KEYWORDS=a+mother%27s+two-year+crusade#articleTabs%3Dvideo>

The case took a completely unexpected turn, however, when, following the presentation of the evidence by the federal prosecutor, the three-judge court found Mr. Barraza innocent, and ordered his release. Ms. Escobedo, in the court room, hysterically protested this verdict (in a scene shown on YouTube and other web sites). An appeals court later reversed this court ruling, and convicted and sentenced him *in absentia*; but, by then, Mr. Barraza had again disappeared.

Ms. Escobedo, while continuing her search for her daughter's confessed killer, broadened her protest movement to ask for "Justice for Our Daughters" (see insert). In a public meeting she told Gov. César Duarte that "Justice in Chihuahua is only for the rich."

On December 16, she was closing the day after a week of political activism in front of the governor's office in downtown Chihuahua. She was stationed directly across from the entrance, separated by a one-way street with three lanes of traffic. The state offices closed at 8 p.m. and the police guard stationed at the entrance remained inside. A few minutes later—as the video clearly shows—a white sedan pulled up in the right-hand lane, and a passenger got out.

The passenger approached the place where Ms. Escobedo was standing. The shadowy figures remained stationary a few seconds, suggestive that some exchange between them took place. Then a figure—later identified as Ms. Escobedo—ran into the street toward the entrance of the governor's office, pursued by another figure.

The video does not show clearly if she reached the sidewalk on the other side of the street before collapsing. The figure that had been pursuing her turned back and ran to the waiting white sedan, entered, and the car drove off, turning right at the corner-- and disappeared off-camera.

The audacious murder provoked intense media attention: Two of Mexico's prominent TV journalists, Carmen Aristegui and Carlos Loret de Mola, dedicated long segments to the crime.

When asked in an interview if there were any police in front of his office who gave chase to the car in which the assailant escaped, Governor Duarte all but admitted that there was no officer present. When asked if the State had offered her police protection, he replied that Ms. Escobedo had said that she did not want police nearby.

In reaction to her death, the governor insisted that the three court judges be suspended from their responsibilities, have their immunity lifted, and be prosecuted in criminal court for abuse of authority.³ "How is it possible," he asked, "that a defendant who confessed to the crime, who led the police to the corpse and who asked for forgiveness for his crime could, later, be found innocent on 'technicalities'?"



³ The three judges were Catalina Ochoa Contreras, Nezahualcóyotl Zúñiga Vázquez and Rafael Boudib, It was Judge Ochoa, who in the video appeared to be in her early 30's, who read the court's finding in favor of the defendant.

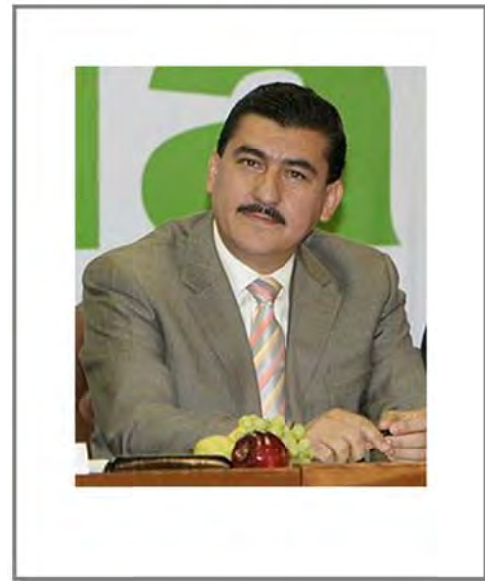
Mr. Barrazos, meanwhile, has again disappeared. The family of Ms. Escobedo, meanwhile, has been threatened, and has sought asylum in the United States (Tables 1 and 2).

SILVERIO CAVAZOS

Silverio Cavazos, of modest family origins, came to the governorship of this southwestern coastal state of Colima by a thin thread of events. One governor, Gustavo Vázquez, died in an airplane crash on February 24, 2005, and his successor called for a special election to fulfill his term. Cavazos, then the PRI leader in the state legislature, prevailed over Leoncio Morán, the PAN candidate, in a closely-contested election.⁴

It was during his tenure that two major energy infrastructure projects were finalized: the LNG terminal in Manzanillo and the Manzanillo-Guadalajara natural gas pipeline.

In July of 2009, four months before he would leave office, he convened an energy conference of PRI luminaries, including Sen. Francisco Labastida, chairman of the Senate Energy Committee. Raúl Livas, the Corporate Director of Operations, came from Pemex. The only international speaker was George Baker, who spoke on the rationale for associations among oil companies for deepwater projects.⁵



Governor Cavazos completed his last day in office on Nov. 1, 2009, and was succeeded by his hand-picked successor, Mario Anguiano.⁶ Opponents, meanwhile, called for an audit of his governorship.

On Nov. 21, 2010, the former governor was walking his dog on the sidewalk outside his home about 10:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning. Sources in Colima who knew his habits report that he would walk to the end of the block to make telephone calls on his cell phone that were out of hearing of his guards. While he was thus engaged, the current state director for economic development, Rafael Gutiérrez, approached him; and the two men remained in conversation.

There has been speculation about what happened next: A Jeep Patriot approached, and by one report the governor asked, “Do you recognize that car?” When the answer was negative, the

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colima_state_election,_2003. The complicated story of how Mr. Cavazos came to office is told in Wikipedia’s entry on the Colima elections of 2003 (See also the Wikipedia story for the Colima elections of 2005).

⁵ After the seminar, the governor hosted an outdoor, luncheon reception for the panelists. After Sen. Labastida had left, Mr. Baker rose, tapped a spoon against a wine glass, and looked toward the governor for permission to speak. The governor nodded his approval. Mr. Baker spoke, in Spanish, about the need to change the national oil narrative in order that Mexico’s own account of its oil history would fit better with international practices and the Energy Reform of 2008. For the Colima paper: http://www.energia.com/news/newsoverview_detail.asp?news_type=5&news_id=708&scr=se

⁶ His candidacy had been opposed by the PRI leadership, owing to alleged ties to narcos by family members. It may be that the real agenda of PRI delegates who came to the energy conference of Gov. Cavazos was to persuade him to desist in his support for Mario Anguiano as his successor.

governor—alarmed by some detail—started running back to the front of his house where the security detail was posted. (One press report speculated *that he was waiting for a car.*) The vehicle caught up with them, however; one person, with a baseball cap pulled down to conceal his face, got out of the car and fired three shots point-blank at the former governor with a .38 caliber magnum pistol. Taken to a clinic, Gov. Cavazos died an hour later.

The security detail was completely taken by surprise, and offered no resistance. Once the police were called out, however, one officer fatally shot an innocent physician whose movements were regarded as “suspicious.”

Within days, the get-away car was found and the finger prints of a local policeman were identified, and a reward was offered for information leading to his apprehension. Subsequent reports established that the policeman was not the gunman (Tables 3 and 4).

WHAT CAN MEXICO DO TO CONTAIN DRUG VIOLENCE?

Increase efforts to protect adolescent women from unwanted pregnancies. Not all segments of Mexico’s population are equally vulnerable, young women are probably the most vulnerable to violence (especially in Chihuahua).

Bear down on the LPG conglomerates whose cash-based business is a perfect cover for money-laundering.

Continue purging the police. According to a federal estimate, Mexican drug cartels have a payroll cost of US\$100 million that is allocated annually for policemen. This money helps compensate officers for their low salaries. In Torreón, having fired most of its police officers, the new police chief brought in new recruits from out-of-state and paid them higher salaries.

Take additional precautions to protect the police and to isolate them from bribes from narcos. The police chief in Torreón sleeps at the police station and takes his meals there. New recruits are also confined to the police barracks; they go into the city only on patrol.

Install more cameras in public places but with better optics. The murders of both Marisela Escobedo and Silverio Cavazos were caught on video; but the optics in the in the assault on Ms. Escobedo were so poor as to be useless in identifying a suspect. The video of the Cavazos murder has not yet been released; but the optics were of sufficient quality as to allow authorities to discard the hypothesis that the police officer whose fingerprints were found on the get-away car was the gunman.

Offer rewards to citizens who supply license-plate numbers or other information to identify criminals. The car into which the killer of Ms. Escobedo entered left the scene of the crime without chase or other incident. There were people on the sidewalk in the immediate vicinity of Ms. Escobedo, but none came to her help (later, four eye witnesses have come forward).

Continue to press the U.S. for measures to slow the flow of illegal arms to Mexico. As Mexico’s ambassador to the United States, Arturo Sarukhan, told a Houston audience on October 12, “70% of the illegal weapons that are captured from the drug cartels come from the United States.”

Train persons who are vulnerable to cartel violence to use police protection wisely. Ex-Governor Cavazos would walk his dog to the end of the block to be able to have telephone conversations outside of hearing by his security detail; but, in so doing, he also walked out of the envelop of effective protection by his security detail that was stationed at the entrance. Ms. Escobedo said that she did not want police protection; but the State had every reason to protect her if she wanted it or not. (In interviews, she almost dared her enemies to kill her.)

OBSERVATIONS

Drug cartels have published lists of “*sequestrables*,” that is, prominent public figures from the public and private sectors who would be juicy candidates for kidnapping; and the political class is worried.

MARISELA ESCOBEDO

- Only a few press reports mentioned that her daughter Rubí had a child of her own. In the U.S., the frequency of teenage pregnancies has gone down. Between 1992 and 2000, pregnancy rates in the U.S. for the 15-17-old age group fell by 23% and the trend has continued. One-third of all pregnancies end in abortion. Comparable statistics for Mexico are not available, but in 2003 it was estimated that one-sixth of live births in Mexico are of mothers less than 19 years of age. The social costs of unplanned and unwanted births by teenage mothers are high in all societies.
- In Rubí’s case, the unintended consequences of her romance with her boyfriend resulted, indirectly, in her death and that of her mother, Marisela.
- The motive of the killing of Rubí has not been disclosed in the public media. Did she threaten to expose her boyfriend’s ties to drug cartels?
- Barring the recapture of the fugitive boyfriend, or the testimony of someone allied with him who may be motivated by the reward, it is doubtful that the justice for which Ms. Escobedo and her daughter died will ever be achieved. If the boyfriend does have ties to drug cartels, that fact could put his life at risk, as narcos would not want the police, in looking for him, to make additional arrests or drug seizures.

SILVERIO CAVAZOS

- A similar outcome may be expected in the case of Silverio Cavazos. The policeman whose fingerprints were found on the get-away-car, if captured, may know nothing about the intellectual author(s) of the crime. His life may also be at risk.
- A striking detail in the murder of the former governor is the timing and location of the attack: it is as if the assailants knew in advance that the ex-governor was at the end of the block, out of the range of protection by his security detail. A question for investigators concerns the identities of all persons who had that knowledge, starting with the members of the security unit itself.
- The situation of the person with whom the ex-governor struck up conversation at the corner of the block also begs for investigation. *How did Rafael Gutiérrez get to the end of the block*

at 10 a.m. on a Sunday morning? What was he doing in the neighborhood of the former governor in the first place? Press reports say that Mr. Cavazos was shot at point-bank range three times; but the injuries to Mr. Gutiérrez, if any, have been strangely missing in press reports.⁷

CONCLUSIONS

To be seen in public with a local politician now carries a heightened risk of violence that is indifferent to the nationality of invited guests. This situation enters into the security calculations of figures from the public and private sectors who plan to attend a local event at which city or state officials are present. Even Gov. Mario Anguiano chose not to attend the funeral of his predecessor, doubtless citing the security risk.

The unprecedented murder rate—coupled with the danger of kidnappings—also figures into the calculations of country risk from the perspective of Mexican and international commerce. Such calculations will end up increasing the cost of any public or private investment in Mexico. Pemex itself has experienced kidnappings in the Burgos Basin, and Pemex contractors have also registered such events, although not on a large scale.

This state of insecurity is increasing the cost of doing business in Mexico; and, if the violence is not contained, it will eventually affect tourism, oilfield services and capital investment.

George Baker
Publisher

Appendices

Table 1 Press titles on Marisela Escobedo (English in free translation)

Table 2 Press titles on Marisela Escobedo (as published)

Table 3 Press titles on Silverio Cavazos (English in free translation)

Table 4 Press titles on Silverio Cavazos (as published)

⁷ http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Mexican_politician_Silverio_Cavazos_killed_by_gunmen. Wikipedia says that he “was also wounded in the attack, but reports on his condition have not been released.”

**Murder of Marisela Escobedo**

Titles in free translation

Keyword for search: 100073.1

Title

Source

MEI Keywords

File No.

2010

December

Dec 03, 2010

<1>	Marisela Escobedo Interview - Had Received Death Threats	You Tube	17689
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Dec 17, 2010

<2>	Activist Marisela Escobedo is Assassinated in Front of State Government Building	You Tube	17688
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<3>	Carmen Aristegui: Marisela Escobedo Ortiz is Executed for Asking for Justice for Her Murdered Daughter	You Tube	17690
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<4>	Video Recording of the Assassination of Activist Marisela Escobedo	You Tube	17691
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<5>	Marisela Escobedo, Chihuahua activist, is Assassinated (Video of Assassination); Interview with Gov. César Duarte	You Tube	17692
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<6>	Marisela Escobedo Is Executed For Asking for Justice for Her Murdered Daughter	You Tube	17706
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Dec 23, 2010

<7>	A Mother's Two-Year Crusade Ends in Death	Wall Street Journal	17693
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Dec 24, 2010

<8>	Chihuahua Governor Seeks Jail Sentences for Judges Who Freed Killer of Rubí	Reforma	17704
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Dec 28, 2010

<9>	Family of Murdered Chihuahua Activist Seeks Refuge in U.S.	Reforma	17703
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Table 2

Murder of Marisela Escobedo

Original titles

Keyword: 100073.1

Records found as of 12/29/2010

Title	Source	File
December		
Dec 03, 2010		
<1> Marisela Escobedo había denunciado amenazas de muerte	You Tube	17689
Dec 17, 2010		
<2> Matan a activista Marisela Escobedo Ortiz	You Tube	17688
<3> Carmen Aristegui: Marisela Escobedo Ortiz Ejecutada Por Pedir Justicia Para Su Hija Asesinada	You Tube	17690
<4> Graban asesinato de activista	You Tube	17691
<5> Asesinan a Marisela Escobedo activista en Chihuahua (Video de la ejecución) Habla Cesar Duarte	You Tube	17692
<6> Marisela Escobedo Ortiz Ejecutada Por Pedir Justicia Para Su Hija Asesinada	You Tube	17706
Dec 23, 2010		
<7> A Mother's Two-Year Crusade Ends in Death	Wall Street Journal	17693
Dec 24, 2010		
<8> Buscan encarcelar a jueces de caso Rubí	Reforma	17704
Dec 28, 2010		
<9> Huye a EU la familia de activista ejecutada	Reforma	17703

**Murder of Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos**

Spanish titles in free translation

Keyword for search: 100073

Title

Source

MEI Keywords

File No.

2010

November

Nov 21, 2010

<1>	Ex-Colima Governor Silverio Cavazos, 42, killed in narco-style execution	El Universal		17671
<2>	Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos Executed	Milenio		17674
<3>	Ex-Governor of Colima is Assassinated	Grupo Fórmula		17677
<4>	Alleged narco ties of family members of Silverio Cavazos	Publimetro		17678
<5>	Former Colima Governor Cavazos is Executed	Publimetro		17679
<6>	Silverio Cavazos dies	You Tube		17680

Nov 22, 2010

<7>	Javier Solorzano.com: Ex Governor is Executed ... Hypotheses	You Tube		17682
<8>	The Context of the Assassination of Silverio Cavazos (Efecto TV)	You Tube		17683
<9>	Jarring Death of Silverio Cavazos	Reforma		17698

Nov 23, 2010

<10>	PAN Congressman from Colima Says Ex-governor Had Ties to Narcos	SDP noticias.com		17676
<11>	Video: The former governor of the Mexican state of Colima was killed Sunday morning.	Wall Street Journal		17694
<12>	PRI Leadership Challenged Cavazos Over Alleged Narco Ties of His Chosen Successor	Reforma		17701
<13>	Hand of Narcos Suspected in Death of Silverio	Reforma		17702

Nov 25, 2010

<14>	Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa: Violence in Colima	Reforma		17699
<15>	Guerrero Politician Urges Investigation of PRI State Delegate in Cavazos Murder	Reforma		17700

December

Dec 01, 2010

<16>	\$3 Million-Peso Reward Offered for Information on Suspect in Cavazos murder	Milenio		17675
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Dec 02, 2010

<17>	Police officer implicated in death of Governor Cavazos	Excelsior		17672
<18>	Photo Distributed of Wanted Suspect in Murder of Cavazos	El Universal		17685



Murder of Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos

Title	Source	MEI Keywords	File No.
<19> Police Officer Implicated in Death of Cavazos Is Fugitive	El Universal		17686
<20> Police Officer Implicated in Murder of ex-Governor Cavazos; Reward Offered	Reforma		17695
Dec 03, 2010			
<21> Video Captures Killing of ex-Governor Cavazos	La Crónica de Hoy		17673
<22> State Police on the Trail of the Homicide of Cavazos	El Universal		17687
Dec 04, 2010			
<23> Photos of Assassin of Cavazos Do Not Match Police Suspect	El Universal		17684



Murder of Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos

Original titles

Keyword for search: 100073

Title	Source	File
2010		
November		
Nov 21, 2010		
<1> Ex gobernador de Colima y militante del Partido Revolucionario Institucional, falleció víctima de un atentado	El Universal	17671
<2> Asesinan a ex gobernador de Colima, Silverio Cavazos. Con Raquel Flores	Grupo Fórmula	17677
<3> Ejecutan al ex gobernador de Colima, Silverio Cavazos	Milenio	17674
<4> Las ligas familiares de Silverio Cavazos con el narco	Publimetro	17678
<5> Ejecutan a ex gobernador de Colima	Publimetro	17679
<6> Fallece Silverio Cavazos	You Tube	17680
Nov 22, 2010		
<7> Sorprende muerte de Silverio Cavazos	Reforma	17698
<8> Javier Solorzano.com: Ex gobernador ejecutado...	You Tube	17682
<9> "El Contexto del asesinato de Silverio Cavazos Ceballos" Parte 1/2. EfektoTV Noticias presenta:	You Tube	17683
Nov 23, 2010		
<10> Dudaba de Cavazos la dirigencia del PRI	Reforma	17701
<11> Ven mano del narco en muerte de Silverio	Reforma	17702
<12> PAN liga muerte de Silverio Cavazos con el narcotráfico	SDP noticias.com	17676
<13> Video: The former governor of the Mexican state of Colima was killed Sunday morning.	Wall Street Journal	17694
Nov 25, 2010		
<14> Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa: Violencia en Colima	Reforma	17699
<15> ... Y en Guerrero piden investigar [Fernando Moreno]	Reforma	17700
December		
Dec 01, 2010		
<16> Dan recompensa por caso Cavazos	Milenio	17675
Dec 02, 2010		
<17> Difunden fotografía de policía ligado a caso Cavazos	El Universal	17685
<18> Prófugo, policía involucrado en caso Cavazos	El Universal	17686
<19> Un policía participó en muerte de Silverio Cavazos Ceballos	Excelsior	17672

Murder of Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos

Title	Source	File
<20> Implica FCH a policía en crimen de Cavazos; ofrecen recompensa Dec 03, 2010	Reforma	17695
<21> Policía estatal, detrás del homicidio de Cavazos	El Universal	17687
<22> Es video prueba fundamental en caso Silverio Cavazos Dec 04, 2010	La Crónica de Hoy	17673
<23> Muestran fotos del asesinato de Cavazos	El Universal	17684

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MURDER, SHE WROTE: Slaying of Three Escobedo Family Members in Chihuahua
Mexican murder victims are just numbers—until it’s someone you know

The longest running murder-mystery television series in the United States was “Murder She Wrote,” which ran for twelve years (1984-96). In each of 264 episodes Jessica Fletcher (Angela Lansbury), a widow and former English teacher with no police training, solves a murder case. Her counterpart today would seem to be Lizbeth Salander, the anorexic, Swedish geek who is the protagonist of the trilogy by the late Stieg Larsson and which was published posthumously.

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INTRODUCTION

To judge by the experience of Torreón, a mid-sized city in the north-central state of Durango, the main problem with the criminal justice system is that it is administered by criminals. In March, 2010, mayor of Torreón fired 600 of 700 police officers on account of their ties to drug cartels. Later, a rehiring program was begun; but of 300 applicants, only one passed lie-detector tests and other requirements.¹

As for the criminals themselves, many are former police officers or former members of the armed forces who acquired their skills in the use of high-caliber weapons during military service or in training in police academies. As the mayor of Torreón memorably said, “It’s not that our cops weren’t fighting the bad guys—they *were* the bad guys.”

The populations most vulnerable to violent crime in Mexico are young women, local politicians and police officers. In 2010, in addition to the PRI gubernatorial candidate in Tamaulipas, a dozen mayors and mayors-elect were killed by agents of the drug cartels.

DISCUSSION

In this section we shall inquire into the recent deaths of two prominent public figures in Mexico, and, drawing on the successful experiment in the City of Torreón and what is known about these killings, we shall list measures that might help to reverse the deteriorating state of public safety in Mexico.

MARISELA ESCOBEDO

The murder of Marisela Escobedo on December 16, 2010, outraged Mexico. For over two years she had waged a one-woman fight to have the murderer of her 16-year-old daughter, Rubí Frayre, brought to justice; then, in the most public of all places in the state—in front of the governor’s office—she was herself murdered minutes after the governor’s office closed for the night.²

When her daughter’s live-in boyfriend, Sergio Rafael Barraza, disappeared at the same time as her daughter, the mother suspected murder, adding her daughter as one more of the thousands of young women who had been killed in Ciudad Juárez. The mother became a murder detective for this one case: eventually, she located the former boyfriend, and notified the police who arrested him.

Mr. Barraza subsequently confessed to the crime, and led the police to the gravesite where he had deposited the remains of his girlfriend, whose corpse he had at first burned.

¹ *Wall Street Journal*, “To Root Out Dirty Police, Mexico Sends in a General,” Dec. 23, 2010. The online version of the article includes a slide show that depicts the situation in Torreón.

² *The Wall Street Journal* ran a story on Dec. 23, 2010, and posted an interview with David Luhnaw, the reporter who covered the story. The murder was captured on video, and a clip is shown in the WSJ interview: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703814804576035791419284246.html?KEYWORDS=a+mother%27s+two-year+crusade#articleTabs%3Dvideo>

The case took a completely unexpected turn, however, when, following the presentation of the evidence by the federal prosecutor, the three-judge court found Mr. Barraza innocent, and ordered his release. Ms. Escobedo, in the court room, hysterically protested this verdict (in a scene shown on YouTube and other web sites). An appeals court later reversed this court ruling, and convicted and sentenced him *in absentia*; but, by then, Mr. Barraza had again disappeared.

Ms. Escobedo, while continuing her search for her daughter's confessed killer, broadened her protest movement to ask for "Justice for Our Daughters" (see insert). In a public meeting she told Gov. César Duarte that "Justice in Chihuahua is only for the rich."

On December 16, she was closing the day after a week of political activism in front of the governor's office in downtown Chihuahua. She was stationed directly across from the entrance, separated by a one-way street with three lanes of traffic. The state offices closed at 8 p.m. and the police guard stationed at the entrance remained inside. A few minutes later—as the video clearly shows—a white sedan pulled up in the right-hand lane, and a passenger got out.

The passenger approached the place where Ms. Escobedo was standing. The shadowy figures remained stationary a few seconds, suggestive that some exchange between them took place. Then a figure—later identified as Ms. Escobedo—ran into the street toward the entrance of the governor's office, pursued by another figure.

The video does not show clearly if she reached the sidewalk on the other side of the street before collapsing. The figure that had been pursuing her turned back and ran to the waiting white sedan, entered, and the car drove off, turning right at the corner-- and disappeared off-camera.

The audacious murder provoked intense media attention: Two of Mexico's prominent TV journalists, Carmen Aristegui and Carlos Loret de Mola, dedicated long segments to the crime.

When asked in an interview if there were any police in front of his office who gave chase to the car in which the assailant escaped, Governor Duarte all but admitted that there was no officer present. When asked if the State had offered her police protection, he replied that Ms. Escobedo had said that she did not want police nearby.

In reaction to her death, the governor insisted that the three court judges be suspended from their responsibilities, have their immunity lifted, and be prosecuted in criminal court for abuse of authority.³ "How is it possible," he asked, "that a defendant who confessed to the crime, who led the police to the corpse and who asked for forgiveness for his crime could, later, be found innocent on 'technicalities'?"



³ The three judges were Catalina Ochoa Contreras, Nezahualcóyotl Zúñiga Vázquez and Rafael Boudib, It was Judge Ochoa, who in the video appeared to be in her early 30's, who read the court's finding in favor of the defendant.

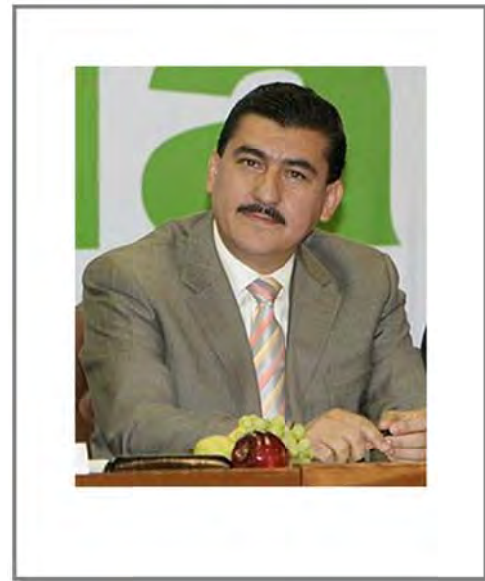
Mr. Barrazos, meanwhile, has again disappeared. The family of Ms. Escobedo, meanwhile, has been threatened, and has sought asylum in the United States (Tables 1 and 2).

SILVERIO CAVAZOS

Silverio Cavazos, of modest family origins, came to the governorship of this southwestern coastal state of Colima by a thin thread of events. One governor, Gustavo Vázquez, died in an airplane crash on February 24, 2005, and his successor called for a special election to fulfill his term. Cavazos, then the PRI leader in the state legislature, prevailed over Leoncio Morán, the PAN candidate, in a closely-contested election.⁴

It was during his tenure that two major energy infrastructure projects were finalized: the LNG terminal in Manzanillo and the Manzanillo-Guadalajara natural gas pipeline.

In July of 2009, four months before he would leave office, he convened an energy conference of PRI luminaries, including Sen. Francisco Labastida, chairman of the Senate Energy Committee. Raúl Livas, the Corporate Director of Operations, came from Pemex. The only international speaker was George Baker, who spoke on the rationale for associations among oil companies for deepwater projects.⁵



Governor Cavazos completed his last day in office on Nov. 1, 2009, and was succeeded by his hand-picked successor, Mario Anguiano.⁶ Opponents, meanwhile, called for an audit of his governorship.

On Nov. 21, 2010, the former governor was walking his dog on the sidewalk outside his home about 10:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning. Sources in Colima who knew his habits report that he would walk to the end of the block to make telephone calls on his cell phone that were out of hearing of his guards. While he was thus engaged, the current state director for economic development, Rafael Gutiérrez, approached him; and the two men remained in conversation.

There has been speculation about what happened next: A Jeep Patriot approached, and by one report the governor asked, “Do you recognize that car?” When the answer was negative, the

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colima_state_election,_2003. The complicated story of how Mr. Cavazos came to office is told in Wikipedia’s entry on the Colima elections of 2003 (See also the Wikipedia story for the Colima elections of 2005).

⁵ After the seminar, the governor hosted an outdoor, luncheon reception for the panelists. After Sen. Labastida had left, Mr. Baker rose, tapped a spoon against a wine glass, and looked toward the governor for permission to speak. The governor nodded his approval. Mr. Baker spoke, in Spanish, about the need to change the national oil narrative in order that Mexico’s own account of its oil history would fit better with international practices and the Energy Reform of 2008. For the Colima paper: http://www.energia.com/news/newsoverview_detail.asp?news_type=5&news_id=708&scr=se

⁶ His candidacy had been opposed by the PRI leadership, owing to alleged ties to narcos by family members. It may be that the real agenda of PRI delegates who came to the energy conference of Gov. Cavazos was to persuade him to desist in his support for Mario Anguiano as his successor.

governor—alarmed by some detail—started running back to the front of his house where the security detail was posted. (One press report speculated *that he was waiting for a car.*) The vehicle caught up with them, however; one person, with a baseball cap pulled down to conceal his face, got out of the car and fired three shots point-blank at the former governor with a .38 caliber magnum pistol. Taken to a clinic, Gov. Cavazos died an hour later.

The security detail was completely taken by surprise, and offered no resistance. Once the police were called out, however, one officer fatally shot an innocent physician whose movements were regarded as “suspicious.”

Within days, the get-away car was found and the finger prints of a local policeman were identified, and a reward was offered for information leading to his apprehension. Subsequent reports established that the policeman was not the gunman (Tables 3 and 4).

WHAT CAN MEXICO DO TO CONTAIN DRUG VIOLENCE?

Increase efforts to protect adolescent women from unwanted pregnancies. Not all segments of Mexico’s population are equally vulnerable, young women are probably the most vulnerable to violence (especially in Chihuahua).

Bear down on the LPG conglomerates whose cash-based business is a perfect cover for money-laundering.

Continue purging the police. According to a federal estimate, Mexican drug cartels have a payroll cost of US\$100 million that is allocated annually for policemen. This money helps compensate officers for their low salaries. In Torreón, having fired most of its police officers, the new police chief brought in new recruits from out-of-state and paid them higher salaries.

Take additional precautions to protect the police and to isolate them from bribes from narcos. The police chief in Torreón sleeps at the police station and takes his meals there. New recruits are also confined to the police barracks; they go into the city only on patrol.

Install more cameras in public places but with better optics. The murders of both Marisela Escobedo and Silverio Cavazos were caught on video; but the optics in the in the assault on Ms. Escobedo were so poor as to be useless in identifying a suspect. The video of the Cavazos murder has not yet been released; but the optics were of sufficient quality as to allow authorities to discard the hypothesis that the police officer whose fingerprints were found on the get-away car was the gunman.

Offer rewards to citizens who supply license-plate numbers or other information to identify criminals. The car into which the killer of Ms. Escobedo entered left the scene of the crime without chase or other incident. There were people on the sidewalk in the immediate vicinity of Ms. Escobedo, but none came to her help (later, four eye witnesses have come forward).

Continue to press the U.S. for measures to slow the flow of illegal arms to Mexico. As Mexico’s ambassador to the United States, Arturo Sarukhan, told a Houston audience on October 12, “70% of the illegal weapons that are captured from the drug cartels come from the United States.”

Train persons who are vulnerable to cartel violence to use police protection wisely. Ex-Governor Cavazos would walk his dog to the end of the block to be able to have telephone conversations outside of hearing by his security detail; but, in so doing, he also walked out of the envelop of effective protection by his security detail that was stationed at the entrance. Ms. Escobedo said that she did not want police protection; but the State had every reason to protect her if she wanted it or not. (In interviews, she almost dared her enemies to kill her.)

OBSERVATIONS

Drug cartels have published lists of “*sequestrables*,” that is, prominent public figures from the public and private sectors who would be juicy candidates for kidnapping; and the political class is worried.

MARISELA ESCOBEDO

- Only a few press reports mentioned that her daughter Rubí had a child of her own. In the U.S., the frequency of teenage pregnancies has gone down. Between 1992 and 2000, pregnancy rates in the U.S. for the 15-17-old age group fell by 23% and the trend has continued. One-third of all pregnancies end in abortion. Comparable statistics for Mexico are not available, but in 2003 it was estimated that one-sixth of live births in Mexico are of mothers less than 19 years of age. The social costs of unplanned and unwanted births by teenage mothers are high in all societies.
- In Rubí’s case, the unintended consequences of her romance with her boyfriend resulted, indirectly, in her death and that of her mother, Marisela.
- The motive of the killing of Rubí has not been disclosed in the public media. Did she threaten to expose her boyfriend’s ties to drug cartels?
- Barring the recapture of the fugitive boyfriend, or the testimony of someone allied with him who may be motivated by the reward, it is doubtful that the justice for which Ms. Escobedo and her daughter died will ever be achieved. If the boyfriend does have ties to drug cartels, that fact could put his life at risk, as narcos would not want the police, in looking for him, to make additional arrests or drug seizures.

SILVERIO CAVAZOS

- A similar outcome may be expected in the case of Silverio Cavazos. The policeman whose fingerprints were found on the get-away-car, if captured, may know nothing about the intellectual author(s) of the crime. His life may also be at risk.
- A striking detail in the murder of the former governor is the timing and location of the attack: it is as if the assailants knew in advance that the ex-governor was at the end of the block, out of the range of protection by his security detail. A question for investigators concerns the identities of all persons who had that knowledge, starting with the members of the security unit itself.
- The situation of the person with whom the ex-governor struck up conversation at the corner of the block also begs for investigation. *How did Rafael Gutiérrez get to the end of the block*

at 10 a.m. on a Sunday morning? What was he doing in the neighborhood of the former governor in the first place? Press reports say that Mr. Cavazos was shot at point-bank range three times; but the injuries to Mr. Gutiérrez, if any, have been strangely missing in press reports.⁷

CONCLUSIONS

To be seen in public with a local politician now carries a heightened risk of violence that is indifferent to the nationality of invited guests. This situation enters into the security calculations of figures from the public and private sectors who plan to attend a local event at which city or state officials are present. Even Gov. Mario Anguiano chose not to attend the funeral of his predecessor, doubtless citing the security risk.

The unprecedented murder rate—coupled with the danger of kidnappings—also figures into the calculations of country risk from the perspective of Mexican and international commerce. Such calculations will end up increasing the cost of any public or private investment in Mexico. Pemex itself has experienced kidnappings in the Burgos Basin, and Pemex contractors have also registered such events, although not on a large scale.

This state of insecurity is increasing the cost of doing business in Mexico; and, if the violence is not contained, it will eventually affect tourism, oilfield services and capital investment.

George Baker
Publisher

Appendices

Table 1 Press titles on Marisela Escobedo (English in free translation)

Table 2 Press titles on Marisela Escobedo (as published)

Table 3 Press titles on Silverio Cavazos (English in free translation)

Table 4 Press titles on Silverio Cavazos (as published)

⁷ http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Mexican_politician_Silverio_Cavazos_killed_by_gunmen. Wikipedia says that he “was also wounded in the attack, but reports on his condition have not been released.”

**Murder of Marisela Escobedo**

Titles in free translation

Keyword for search: 100073.1

Title

Source

MEI Keywords

File No.

2010

December

Dec 03, 2010

<1>	Marisela Escobedo Interview - Had Received Death Threats	You Tube		17689
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Dec 17, 2010

<2>	Activist Marisela Escobedo is Assassinated in Front of State Government Building	You Tube		17688
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<3>	Carmen Aristegui: Marisela Escobedo Ortiz is Executed for Asking for Justice for Her Murdered Daughter	You Tube		17690
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<4>	Video Recording of the Assassination of Activist Marisela Escobedo	You Tube		17691
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<5>	Marisela Escobedo, Chihuahua activist, is Assassinated (Video of Assassination); Interview with Gov. César Duarte	You Tube		17692
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<6>	Marisela Escobedo Is Executed For Asking for Justice for Her Murdered Daughter	You Tube		17706
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Dec 23, 2010

<7>	A Mother's Two-Year Crusade Ends in Death	Wall Street Journal		17693
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Dec 24, 2010

<8>	Chihuahua Governor Seeks Jail Sentences for Judges Who Freed Killer of Rubí	Reforma		17704
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Dec 28, 2010

<9>	Family of Murdered Chihuahua Activist Seeks Refuge in U.S.	Reforma		17703
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Table 2

Murder of Marisela Escobedo

Original titles

Keyword: 100073.1

Records found as of 12/29/2010

Title	Source	File
December		
Dec 03, 2010		
<1> Marisela Escobedo había denunciado amenazas de muerte	You Tube	17689
Dec 17, 2010		
<2> Matan a activista Marisela Escobedo Ortiz	You Tube	17688
<3> Carmen Aristegui: Marisela Escobedo Ortiz Ejecutada Por Pedir Justicia Para Su Hija Asesinada	You Tube	17690
<4> Graban asesinato de activista	You Tube	17691
<5> Asesinan a Marisela Escobedo activista en Chihuahua (Video de la ejecución) Habla Cesar Duarte	You Tube	17692
<6> Marisela Escobedo Ortiz Ejecutada Por Pedir Justicia Para Su Hija Asesinada	You Tube	17706
Dec 23, 2010		
<7> A Mother's Two-Year Crusade Ends in Death	Wall Street Journal	17693
Dec 24, 2010		
<8> Buscan encarcelar a jueces de caso Rubí	Reforma	17704
Dec 28, 2010		
<9> Huye a EU la familia de activista ejecutada	Reforma	17703

**Murder of Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos**

Spanish titles in free translation

Keyword for search: 100073

Title

Source

MEI Keywords

File No.

2010

November

Nov 21, 2010

<1>	Ex-Colima Governor Silverio Cavazos, 42, killed in narco-style execution	El Universal		17671
<2>	Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos Executed	Milenio		17674
<3>	Ex-Governor of Colima is Assassinated	Grupo Fórmula		17677
<4>	Alleged narco ties of family members of Silverio Cavazos	Publimetro		17678
<5>	Former Colima Governor Cavazos is Executed	Publimetro		17679
<6>	Silverio Cavazos dies	You Tube		17680

Nov 22, 2010

<7>	Javier Solorzano.com: Ex Governor is Executed ... Hypotheses	You Tube		17682
<8>	The Context of the Assassination of Silverio Cavazos (Efecto TV)	You Tube		17683
<9>	Jarring Death of Silverio Cavazos	Reforma		17698

Nov 23, 2010

<10>	PAN Congressman from Colima Says Ex-governor Had Ties to Narcos	SDP noticias.com		17676
<11>	Video: The former governor of the Mexican state of Colima was killed Sunday morning.	Wall Street Journal		17694
<12>	PRI Leadership Challenged Cavazos Over Alleged Narco Ties of His Chosen Successor	Reforma		17701
<13>	Hand of Narcos Suspected in Death of Silverio	Reforma		17702

Nov 25, 2010

<14>	Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa: Violence in Colima	Reforma		17699
<15>	Guerrero Politician Urges Investigation of PRI State Delegate in Cavazos Murder	Reforma		17700

December

Dec 01, 2010

<16>	\$3 Million-Peso Reward Offered for Information on Suspect in Cavazos murder	Milenio		17675
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Dec 02, 2010

<17>	Police officer implicated in death of Governor Cavazos	Excelsior		17672
<18>	Photo Distributed of Wanted Suspect in Murder of Cavazos	El Universal		17685



Murder of Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos

Title	Source	MEI Keywords	File No.
<19> Police Officer Implicated in Death of Cavazos Is Fugitive	El Universal		17686
<20> Police Officer Implicated in Murder of ex-Governor Cavazos; Reward Offered	Reforma		17695
Dec 03, 2010			
<21> Video Captures Killing of ex-Governor Cavazos	La Crónica de Hoy		17673
<22> State Police on the Trail of the Homicide of Cavazos	El Universal		17687
Dec 04, 2010			
<23> Photos of Assassin of Cavazos Do Not Match Police Suspect	El Universal		17684



Murder of Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos

Original titles

Keyword for search: 100073

Title	Source	File
2010		
November		
Nov 21, 2010		
<1> Ex gobernador de Colima y militante del Partido Revolucionario Institucional, falleció víctima de un atentado	El Universal	17671
<2> Asesinan a ex gobernador de Colima, Silverio Cavazos. Con Raquel Flores	Grupo Fórmula	17677
<3> Ejecutan al ex gobernador de Colima, Silverio Cavazos	Milenio	17674
<4> Las ligas familiares de Silverio Cavazos con el narco	Publimetro	17678
<5> Ejecutan a ex gobernador de Colima	Publimetro	17679
<6> Fallece Silverio Cavazos	You Tube	17680
Nov 22, 2010		
<7> Sorprende muerte de Silverio Cavazos	Reforma	17698
<8> Javier Solorzano.com: Ex gobernador ejecutado...	You Tube	17682
<9> "El Contexto del asesinato de Silverio Cavazos Ceballos" Parte 1/2. EfektoTV Noticias presenta:	You Tube	17683
Nov 23, 2010		
<10> Dudaba de Cavazos la dirigencia del PRI	Reforma	17701
<11> Ven mano del narco en muerte de Silverio	Reforma	17702
<12> PAN liga muerte de Silverio Cavazos con el narcotráfico	SDP noticias.com	17676
<13> Video: The former governor of the Mexican state of Colima was killed Sunday morning.	Wall Street Journal	17694
Nov 25, 2010		
<14> Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa: Violencia en Colima	Reforma	17699
<15> ... Y en Guerrero piden investigar [Fernando Moreno]	Reforma	17700
December		
Dec 01, 2010		
<16> Dan recompensa por caso Cavazos	Milenio	17675
Dec 02, 2010		
<17> Difunden fotografía de policía ligado a caso Cavazos	El Universal	17685
<18> Prófugo, policía involucrado en caso Cavazos	El Universal	17686
<19> Un policía participó en muerte de Silverio Cavazos Ceballos	Excelsior	17672

Murder of Ex-Governor Silverio Cavazos

Title	Source	File
<20> Implica FCH a policía en crimen de Cavazos; ofrecen recompensa Dec 03, 2010	Reforma	17695
<21> Policía estatal, detrás del homicidio de Cavazos	El Universal	17687
<22> Es video prueba fundamental en caso Silverio Cavazos Dec 04, 2010	La Crónica de Hoy	17673
<23> Muestran fotos del asesinato de Cavazos	El Universal	17684