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TEXAS-MEXICO BORDER SECURITY ALERT

Reynosa, Tamaulipas

Threat level: **Extremely High**

A shift in alliances between various Gulf Cartel commanders has led to a series of clashes in recent days culminating with the Saturday being the most violent day in recent years when convoys of gunmen clashed throughout the city killing 15 individuals including several bystanders and innocent motorists. The lack of response by the military and federal police forces worsened the situation as state police forces were unable to properly cover the entire city and push out the invading forces.

The shootouts on Saturday began on the eastern side of the city when a convoy of gunmen rolled in from Rio Bravo and began carrying out numerous attacks in various neighborhoods in the area. Gulf Cartel forces from Reynosa tried to fight off the invading gunmen leading to several rolling shootouts throughout the city. In the days prior, authorities had also clashed with gunmen in Reynosa and had also encountered several executions.

Of significant concern to the public is a grenade attack that took place on Saturday evening in the border city of Rio Bravo. A group of cartel gunmen believed to be with Los Metros threw a live grenade at a vehicle dealership along with one of the city's main avenues. While the device did not explode, it points to an escalation in attacks that could manifest itself in Reynosa without notice.

Law enforcement sources have revealed to Seraph Protection Group that more violence is expected in the coming days as some Gulf Cartel commanders have moved their families out of Reynosa and have begun to prepare escape plans in case they are overwhelmed by law enforcement or rivals and need to flee the city.



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The expectations of future clashes along with an ongoing wave of armed robberies and carjackings continue to be a risk for travelers and locals alike. The fighting is tied to an ongoing turf war over control of the city and surrounding smuggling routes. Currently, Reynosa is controlled by a faction of the Gulf Cartel known as Los Metros, with a rival faction known as Escorpiones or Ciclonas operating out of Matamoros, just 50 miles away. That rival faction also has control over the nearby city of Rio Bravo, less than 10 miles away.

The fighting comes at a time when Los Metros in Reynosa have been earning more from human smuggling than from drug trafficking. The territories around Reynosa and Miguel Aleman are considered very lucrative for the Gulf Cartel since they include six international ports of entry and numerous miles of the border area with no fencing or minimal security. Los Metros have been able to take advantage of those areas to move thousands of migrants and asylum seekers into Texas with minimal risk.

Of significant concern to travelers and locals is the widespread use of makeshift road spikes, which cartel operators deploy whenever confronted by police or when clashing with rivals. The caltrops are used to deflate tires to end a chase by police or cause traffic jams to delay a law enforcement response.

The security situation in Reynosa is further worsened by a low number of security forces since all local enforcement activities are carried out by state forces to decrease corruption. However, military, and federal forces have not been clashing with cartel gunmen due to pressure from Mexico's federal government to reduce violence. Since the arrival of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, federal forces have actively avoided fighting with cartel gunmen unless fired upon.

Due to a new uptick in coronavirus cases, the city of Reynosa and Tamaulipas state officials have resumed a series of restrictions that had been previously removed, such as mandatory facemasks, limiting capacity at certain locations, and other measures. Current U.S. federal restrictions limit northbound land travel to U.S. citizens and residents; Mexican citizens can only cross the border by air travel. Mexico continues to be one of the slowest countries in vaccinating its population and is experiencing a series of recent spikes in new cases in various states. The region continues to be a hotspot partly due to only a small fraction of the population has been inoculated.

The city of Reynosa continues to be a dangerous destination for foreigners and locals alike, travel around the city should be avoided unless escorted by security professionals.