



Guatemala Human Rights Commission / USA

Fact Sheet

The Guatemalan National Civil Police (PNC)

Guatemala's 36 year war left a legacy of violence; 93% of the wartime human rights violations were committed by state forces. Today, police 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.

Challenges for the PNC

- ◆ Guatemalan murder rate 2009: 6,570 people (population 13.9 million). An average of 18 people were killed every day, 47 per 100,000.
- ◆ In 2009, 365 people were killed in attacks on public transportation (most cases connected to extortion fees).
- ◆ There are an estimated 8,000- 14,000 gang members in Guatemala.
- ◆ Mexican drug cartels, including Los Zetas, Gulf Cartel, and The Michoacán Family, actively operate throughout Guatemala.
- ◆ "We estimate about 400 metric tons of cocaine...go through Guatemala [annually]." U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala, Stephen McFarland, said in late 2008.
- ◆ Kidnappings reported to the PNC in 2008: 438; 2009: 234 (decrease in kidnapping are due to an increase in extortion. An average of 60 to 70 cases of extortions are reported daily to PNC).
- ◆ Vigilante justice in areas with few to no PNC officers resulted in 180 cases of attempted lynching, including 49 deaths in 2009 (50% increase from 2008).
- ◆ Police officer doused with gasoline and burned alive on Nov.16, 2009 by angry civilians 40 miles west of Guatemala City.



Guatemala is a key country for trafficking in cocaine and heroin from South America en route to the U.S. and Europe.

Role of the Police:

Law enforcement officials (appointed and selected officers of the law, especially those who exercise the powers of arrest and detention) shall: serve the community and protect all persons against illegal acts, respect and protect human dignity, maintain and uphold the rights of all persons. They shall not commit any act of corruption. –*United Nations Blue Book*

- ◆ May 2010: 22,223 police officers in Guatemala.
- ◆ Guatemala City: 5,000 police, 3 million civilians. Ratio: 1 officer: 600 civilians as compared to Washington D.C. 4,650 police, 600,000 civilians. Ratio: 1 officer: 129 civilians
- ◆ *Foreign Policy Magazine* listed Guatemala as a "failed state" in 2010 due to the nation's inability to provide security for its citizens. With 10 being the worst score, Guatemala ranked in at 8.1; out of 188 countries surveyed worldwide, Guatemala ranked #73.

Corruption in the PNC:

- ◆ Six of the eleven arrested suspects in the May 2009 murder case of prominent lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg are current or former police officers, including the alleged ringleader William Gilberto Santos Divas.
- ◆ The Office of Professional Responsibility for the PNC received 2,000 allegations of PNC criminal activity in 2008, including rapes, killings, and kidnappings. In December 2008, PNC Director Blanco reported 2,000 weapons registered to the PNC missing, including AK-47s and Mini-Uzis.
- ◆ Porfirio Pérez Paniagua, former Director of the PNC, was removed from his position and arrested on corruption charges (and accused of running a criminal drug trafficking network) in August 2009.
- ◆ The U.S. State Department 2007 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 and other institutions prevented adequate investigation of many such killings, as well as the arrest and successful prosecution of perpetrators."

SOURCES:

elPeriódico: "Los Policias que tenemos y los que necesitamos" by Paola Hurtado
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Latin American Herald Tribune: "Cops Could Be Behind Kidnappings in Guatemala"
Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo, www.gam.org.gt
Foreign Policy, "Failed States Index" www.foreignpolicy.com
U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
U.S. Department of State: "Guatemala and U.S. Implement Merida Initiative."
Prensalibre: "Baja número de secuestros pero aumentan las extorsiones señalan las autoridades"
Government of Guatemala: Ministers

Recommendations: How to Improve the PNC?



Advancements:

- ◆ A more comprehensive curriculum is currently used for training PNC officers, including courses in: human rights community policing, gender-based violence, disciplinary procedures, and basic criminal investigation techniques.
- ◆ September 2009: the PNC received training from 30 Chilean instructors who specialize in logistics, administration and intelligence. A seminar on kidnapping was offered by the FBI.
- ◆ Guatemalan president Colom has purged hundreds of PNC officers for corruption since he took office in January 2008.
- ◆ In June 2010 President Colom increased PNC officer's salaries by Q700.00 per month (\$85).
- ◆ In July 2010, the Guatemalan government bought 11,000 firearms for new PNC agents.
- ◆ The US has provided \$70.17 million for police and military training since 2000.

Recommendations:

- ◆ 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.

Guatemalan Police:

A History--PN vs. PNC

- ◆ During the war (1960-1996), the national police committed thousands of acts of forced disappearance, torture, and murder of civilians (accused of guerrilla activity or support).
- ◆ The PNC was created as a result of the 1996 Peace Accords, due to the abuses perpetrated by the PN during the war.
- ◆ 11,000 of the original 19,000 officers in the PNC were recycled from the national police.
- ◆ The 11,000 transitioned forces only received a three month re-training period.

PNC Requirements:

- Must be between 18-28 years old to join
- Pass a height requirement
- Completed middle school
- Not have any criminal record

Lifestyle of a PNC Officer:

- Minimum Salary:
Q 3,754/month equivalent to \$480.00
- Minimum Wage in Guatemala:
\$180.00/month
- Majority have no high school or college education



Less than 4% of police officers in PNC have a college education and 89% of police officers are men.

Founded in 1982, the Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA (GHRC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, humanitarian organization that monitors, documents, and reports on the human rights situation in Guatemala, advocates for survivors of human rights abuses in Guatemala, and works toward positive, systemic change.

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