

Progress Report '10

Vol. 11 Issue 2

Winter 2010

Mexican Homicide May Profoundly Impact the United States

Violence from the Mexican drug cartels has dramatically escalated ever since Mexican President Felipe Calderón ordered federal troops to assist in combating the influence of Mexican drug cartels that seek to export drugs into the United States and Canada.

Since then (2006), the killing has increased exponentially and many in the United States are concerned that these killings and other forms of aggression may "spill-over" the border in the southern states of Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. Congressional committees have already started seeking to address this concern and have identified representatives of Mexican drug cartels in at least 230 American cities.

Researchers at the Center for Homicide Research are working to identify the impact of any infiltration of Mexican homicides into the U.S. Already it is clear that infiltration is occurring in Los Angeles and Northern Virginia, where the MS-13 Gang is using a very brutal implement for killing - the machete. Researchers are seeking to understand how MS-13 is importing Latin and Mexican styles of violence into the U.S., and to warn U.S. homicide detectives about this newest threat.

In Mexico, no one can avoid the impact of these ruthless and brutal killings. Chiefs of Police and

homicide detectives have become prime targets in the killing, as do community leaders and anti-violence activists. Media reports indicate that in 2008, over 60 police officers were murdered in Ciudad Juarez, a Mexican city near the U.S. border. Hanging bodies from bridges and beheading victims are common-place homicide tactics in Mexico. Many victims show signs of torture, and now there is evidence of Al Qaeda influence. Mexico in 2010 began experiencing car bomb explosions.

Homicide during the cartel drug war also makes it easier for anyone to murder and to do so with impunity. There are so many killings, that few murders of any type are being solved. Hundreds of women are disappearing in femicides (the killing of women), and several incidents of "social cleansing" of drug addicts in rehabilitation centers has already been reported by journalists. Gay activists are also being targeted in a country that values machismo, a form of hyper-masculinity that is degrading towards women.

It is clear that Mexican homicide is an emerging concern and it has the potential to change the very nature of the homicide landscape in the United States. At the very least, it will create a confounding factor when evaluating some kinds of homicides. Center for Homicide researchers expect to offer a public presentation about this emerging issue in the near future. [iii](#)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS EXPANDING

Two new members have joined the Center for Homicide Research's Board of Directors.

Brandon Wheeler is a recent *summa cum laude* graduate of the University of Minnesota where he majored in history and journalism. He plans to attend law school in the very near future. Brandon's public service includes volunteering at Habitat for Humanity, and at the Boy Scouts of America where he served as a mentor for at-risk youth. Brandon also interned at the Center for Homicide Research from September 2009 to August 2010. At the Center, Brandon co-authored a research brief called, "Drowning the Smiley Face Murder Theory." He also assisted on several homicide case reviews and worked with many of the Center's data collection systems. As such, Brandon is well-versed in the day-to-day operations of the Center.

Bethany Dorfe graduated in 2008 from the University of Minnesota with a degree in English, and is continuing her graduate education. She has worked in human resources and has extensive experience within her church and community. She volunteered for PRISM (People Responding in Social Ministry). Bethany is a current member of the Hennepin County Domestic Fatality Review Team. She has also volunteered many hours for Cedar Island Elementary School in her home town of Maple Grove. Bethany was an intern with the Center from June-December of 2008.

The Center for Homicide Research is still in need of an additional two professionals with experience in fundraising, grant-writing, or organizational management to lead CHR and its team of researchers, interns, and volunteers.

If you are interested in becoming a board member for CHR, contact Dallas Drake at dallas.drake@mindspring.com. More information is also available at www.CHROnline.org. 

STUDENT ALUMS

In looking toward the future, CHR is seeking to reconnect with former student interns and service-learners. The Center has hosted over 300 students since the Student Internship Academy began in the spring of 2004. CHR students know more about the center than almost anyone due to their hands-on role in the day-to-day operation of the Center. As they move out into the community it is likely they will become ambassadors for the Center and its mission.

Staff is updating contact information on all past students in hopes of organizing occasional social networking events. Our students are now spread far and wide. Many are already working in their chosen occupation. It is our hope that they assist in spreading the word that homicide is preventable. 

INTERN PROFILE: JESSICA PROSKIN

Jessica Proskin started in November of 2010 and has already made an outstanding contribution to CHR. She recently transferred to the University of Minnesota from Normandale Community College (NCC) where she completed an Associates degree in Spanish. While at NCC, she was very involved in the Student Senate, Phi Theta Kappa, and AmeriCorps. Last year she received the NCC Student Leader of the Year Award.



Today, Proskin is working towards her degree in Sociology: Law, Crime, and Deviance, while also pursuing a minor in Political Science. Being a new student to the U of M Proskin wanted an internship that would allow her to apply her major, as well as, give her first hand research experience.

Proskin is excited to work with CHR to increase case solvability, learn about homicide issues, and most importantly use the research to reduce the incidence of homicide. Thus far she has been actively working on two projects. The first project involves gaining an understanding of the drug cartels that are spreading from Mexico to the U.S. The second one focuses on the increased homicide rates in Flint, MI this year, which have reached a record high. She co-authored an evaluation of the homicide problem in Flint.

Proskin says that thus far the training she has received at CHR has been very informative and enlightening. "Everything has been new to me," she said. Proskin has gained experience searching out information, manipulating databases, tabulating results, and reporting the findings. She especially finds interesting the discussions among fellow researchers and linking theoretical insights to public policy.

She expects that this training and experience at the Center will help her complete her senior capstone project at the University. She also will be completing the Community Engagement Scholars' Program, which links the University to the nonprofit community.

JOHN BURTON HARTER CHARITABLE TRUST

The Center for Homicide Research recently received a grant from a foundation called the John Burton Harter Charitable Trust for \$3000. This funding was made available in no small part due to the circumstances of Mr. Harter's death in 2002 prior to Hurricane Katrina.

Mr. Harter's death demonstrates the loss an entire community can experience when a homicide occurs. An extremely talented painter, his death is also a cultural loss to the nation. For more information about him and his extraordinary life, visit:

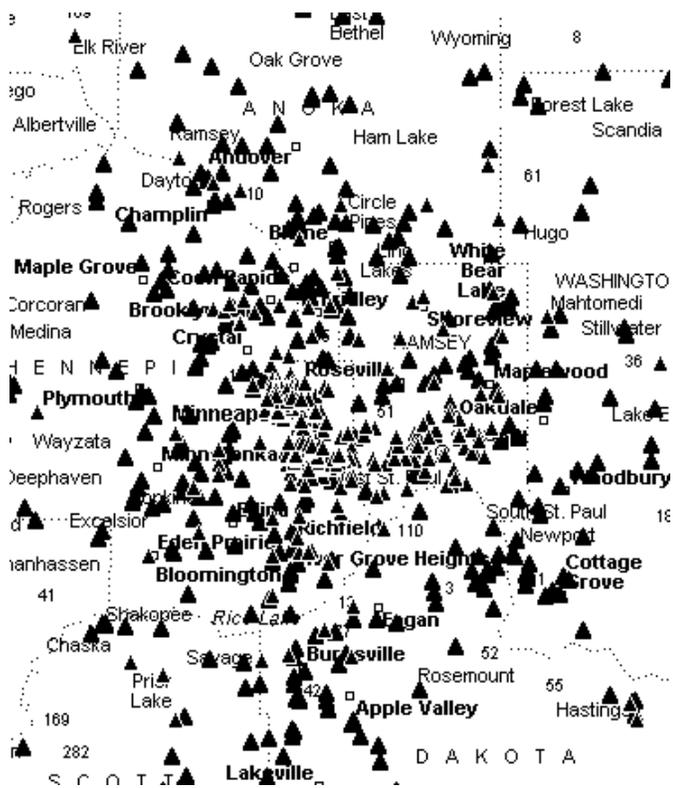
<http://www.jbharter.org/info/trust.html>. 

FIREARM HOMICIDES AND PROJECT EXILE

When Charles Crain came to intern at the Center for Homicide Research he already had a specific interest in mind. He wanted to learn more about the construction of electronic databases and how to manage that data.

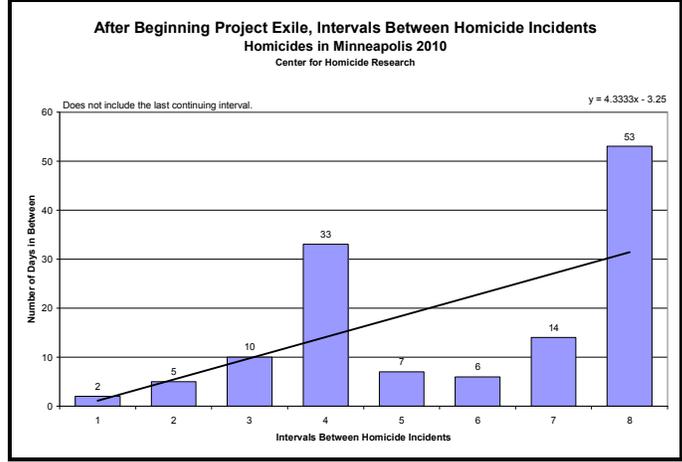
In November of 2010, Crain set about learning the fundamentals. To his surprise, he soon was thrust into the middle of a very interesting project. Using the Internet, he first identified a list of federally licensed firearm dealers (FFL) from Minnesota. From there he imported this data into database software and electronically reformatted the data. Although this reformatting was a tedious process, he soon had a comprehensive list from which he then filtered off 421 dealers residing within the Seven-county Metropolitan area, 21 of which are located within Minneapolis. Many of these dealers are simply individuals or companies who collect or otherwise use firearms, but do not actually do much selling, like the Guthrie Theater, who uses their license for acquiring and disposing of theater props.

Crain then used the addresses of the licensed dealers to map the locations of each dealer using a specialized software. This program links street addresses to coordinates of longitude and latitude to produce a point-map of the results. Interestingly, there is only one retail sales point (gun store) in the city of Minneapolis. This is due to a city zoning ordinance which restricts, but does not eliminate, gun sales within the city since 1995.



(Large triangles are homicides and small triangles are FFLs in Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.)

Next Crain imported pre-existing homicide data with mappable addresses into the mapping software as a contrast. The homicide data included all the criminal and justifiable homicides in Minnesota from 1996-2000. All of this took very little time to perform, yet the results were stunning, keeping in mind that the analysis is only of the metropolitan area, the homicides cluster tightly within the city of Minneapolis, while the federally licensed firearm dealers are scattered randomly throughout the region in a diffused manner (except for Minneapolis).



(Chart shows increasing intervals between homicides after Project Exile began in Minneapolis.)

Project Exile, was recently implemented in Minneapolis to combat the homicide problem and targets chronic criminal offenders. For convicted felons, it is against federal law to possess a firearm. Project Exile promotes the arrest of the 25 most dangerous felons anytime they are found to have a firearm on their person. All elements of the criminal justice system agree in advance that if this happens, the offender will return to prison for a minimum of five years, no questions asked. The NRA also endorses this program because it targets enforcement of existing federal laws. Project Exile remains a very stealthy solution to a politically charged problem.

Handguns are the main weapons used in homicides in Minnesota, but this has not always been the case. A transition occurred across the United States back in the mid-1960s toward firearm use, where previously homicides were enacted mostly by beatings and stabbings. Minneapolis too, made this transition around 1966 and almost overnight, firearm homicides became common. The purchase of handguns became affordable to nearly anyone, and today one half of all homicides in the United States involve use of a handgun.

Firearms owners and proponents of the Second Amendment (the right to keep and bear arms), are quick to point out that "guns don't kill people - people kill people." This has long been a sticking point in the debate over ease of handgun availability by criminals. The issue was never about taking away gun owner's rights, but rather how to solve the entrenched homicide problem. That's where Project Exile comes in. 

CONTRIBUTORS

Leadership Circle

The Braun Foundation
John Burton Harter Charitable Trust
James Denton

Executive Circle

John M. and Marcie S. Wogan

Director's Circle

Jason E. and Anne B. Cross
Eden Stelflug
Kevin Horne
Eric P. Gustin
Jennie and Timmy Tam
David and Ruth Waterbury
David Buchkosky
Huff-Corzine
Lin Huff-Corzine and Jay Corzine
Michael Garrett
Richard A Berk and Susan B. Sorenson
Sigrid Glasoe

Advocates

Kevin and Jody Swanson
Miriam Drake
Paul J or Judith Mikolajczak
Peter Gabrail
Vernon Maetzold
John Mayfield
Allen Siu
Bonny Jean Stelflug
Brad Van Auken
Eric Woelfel
John Delaire
Neal Thoeke
Wallace Olson & Nancy Olson
Angela Van Auken
Angela Van Auken
Marvin R. & Nancy C. Drake
Curtis L. Hillstrom
Rueben and Marlys Nordgren
Angie and Pat Murphy
Jill Cyann
Kent Barnes, ADC-T
Matthew P Johnson
Millie Van Auken
Nancy Cary
Robert Gallas
William and Kathleen Sorenson
Brenda Ottinger
Jerome Sylvester, Tech
Kenneth McDonnell, MA, LADC
Larry Bauer and Shelly Joyner
Melvin Reaney
Robin Stellug
Sharron Dornseif
GiveMN

Donations from Jan. 1, 2010 to Dec. 31, 2010

SPECIAL THANKS

Dan Ahlquist, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
American Society of Criminology
Audrey Lorde Project
Augsburg College
Ron Brunk, Accountant
Candice Batton, University of Nebraska
Century College, White Bear Lake
City Pages
Steve Daniels, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
Scott Dibble, Minnesota State Senator
Chief Edward Kondracki, La Crosse Police Department

Chief Tim Dolan, Minneapolis Police Department
Everett Doolittle, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
Dorset England Police Department
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Gay Police Officers Action League
Genesis II for Families, Inc.
Tom Goldstein, Minnesota Justice Foundation
Green Bay Wisconsin Police Department
Scott Gunn, Gay Police Officers Action League
Carol Hajicek, Minnesota Department of Health
Doug Hicks, City of Minneapolis
Homicide Research Working Group
International Homicide Investigators Association
Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, Ann Arbor, MI
Tim Keel, Federal Bureau of Investigation
Lavender Media, Inc.
Judy Lykins, Century College
MAD DADS, Inc.
Mall of America Security Department
Carl Malmquist, M.D., M.S., Univ. of Minnesota
Capt. Mike Martin, Minneapolis Police Dept.
Marymount University
Carol Matthews, Century College
Metropolitan State University
Ann Miller, U of M Dept. of Sociology
Minneapolis Police Department
Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
Minnesota Chiefs' of Police
Minnesota Coroners and Medical Examiners Assn.
Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
Minnesota Department of Corrections
Minnesota History Center
Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum
Minnesota Social Service Association
Molly Bish Foundation
Yvonne Muirhead, Federal Bureau of Investigation
National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects
New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
Northfield Police Department
OutFront Minnesota
Parents of Missing & Murdered Children, MN Hope Chapter
Superintendent Tim O'Malley, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
Quatrefoil Library
John Paquette, Century College
PEACE Foundation
The Performance Institute
Tom Petee, Auburn University
Prime Timers Minneapolis-St. Paul Chapter
Katie Peacock, U of M Service Learning
Jake Magazine
Leah Russell, Marymount University
Gabrielle Salfati, Ph.D. John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Terry Smith, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
St. Cloud State University
St. Paul Police Department
Detective James Trainum, Metropolitan Washington DC Police Department
Jean Tretter, Tretter Collection at the U of M Archives
Twin Cities GLBT Pride Committee
Christopher Uggen, Ph.D., Univ. of Minnesota
United States Department of Justice
University of Minnesota Law School
University of Minnesota – Duluth
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
University of St. Thomas
Kim Vogt, Ph.D., UW – La Crosse

Washington DC Metropolitan Police Department

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dallas Drake, President, & Principal Researcher
Jon Mikolajczak, Treasurer
Joanne Sitt
William Dooley, J.D.
Anne Crosse, Ph.D.
Phillip Miner, M.A.

RESEARCH ADVISORY PANEL

Lin Huff-Corzine, Ph.D.
University of Central Florida

Gary Jensen, Ph.D.
Vanderbilt University

Vance McLaughlin, Ph.D.
Jacksonville State University

Thomas Petee, Ph.D.
Auburn University

Wendy Regoezi, Ph.D.
Cleveland State University

Marc Riedel, Ph.D.
Southeastern Louisiana University

C. Gabrielle Salfati, PhD
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Roger B. Trent, Ph.D.
California Department of Public Health

Kimberly A. Vogt, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

STUDENT INTERNS

Eden Stelflug	Niesha Kruiuzenga-
Kevin Olson	Conley
Angela Van Auken	Charles Crain
Kelsey Brooks	Jessica Proskinn

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for Homicide Research is an independent, volunteer-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to increasing the capacity of the community, criminal justice professionals, and law enforcement to become more effective in identifying, solving and preventing homicide.

Research began in 1992 and incorporated in 1999 as a nonprofit organization called the Minnesota Gay Homicide Study. In 2004, the name was changed to the Center for Homicide Research.

CENTER FOR HOMICIDE RESEARCH
3036 University Avenue SE Suite E
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 331-4820
www.CHRonline.org