



**FBI: El Paso gangs could join cartel power struggle** [By Aileen B. Flores \ El Paso Times](#) Posted: 04/12/2010

EL PASO -- Two gangs could be on a collision course in El Paso, says an FBI specialist.

Marco Cordero, a special agent with the FBI's gang task force, said the Barrio Azteca and Los Sureños gangs may start a power struggle.

"The information on the streets is that Los Sureños may be aligning with the Chapo Guzmán cartel," Cordero said in an interview.

The alliance between Los Sureños and the Sinaloa cartel, led by Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera, makes Barrio Azteca and Los Sureños natural enemies, Cordero said.

Many in law enforcement believe Barrio Azteca members are fighting on the side of the Juárez cartel against the Sinaloa cartel. More than 5,000 homicides have occurred in Juárez since 2008.

"We see two possibilities," Cordero said. "They can work in harmony or they can do what the cartels are doing in Juárez, fight for the control of the plaza, in this case El Paso."

Detective Andres Sanchez, an El Paso police gang investigator, said the two gangs have never been aligned.

"The information that we have is that they are not getting along," Sanchez said.

He said several confrontations in El Paso involving Sureños and Aztecas have occurred within the last year and a half, including assaults and stabbings.

Sanchez said Los Sureños do not have a leader and are not as organized as the Barrio Azteca gang. Los Sureños are under the California Mexican Mafia, a prison gang that originated in the 1950s.

Los Sureños are broken into at least 200 different cliques, or gangs, scattered throughout the United States, Sanchez said. He said El Paso authorities have identified between 15 and 20 Sureños groups who moved to El Paso between the late 1980s and early '90s.

"Authorities have confirmed the presence of about 400 Sureños gang members in El Paso," Sanchez said.

Sanchez said these groups are mostly attracted to border cities because of the drug trade.

He said it was common to see street gangs operating with cartels to smuggle and sell drugs in the United States.

Cordero said the Safe Streets Gang Task Force, made up of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, is working to stay ahead of gangs.

The community has to be willing to work with authorities to ensure that El Paso continues to be safe, Cordero said.

"We are only as safe as people want us to be. We are going to do our part, but we don't have as many eyes and ears as they have," he said.

Recently, the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, El Paso police, the Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies carried out Operation Knockdown, an effort to elicit information from Barrio Azteca members about an unsolved high-profile triple-homicide on March 13 in Juárez.

The victims were Lesley Enriquez Redelfs, 35, who worked for the U.S. Consulate in Juárez, and her husband, Arthur Redelfs, 34, a detention officer for the Sheriff's Office in El Paso. Also killed was Juárez resident Jorge Alberto Cenicerros Salcido, 37, whose wife, Hilda Antillon Jimenez, also worked for the U.S. Consulate.

Operation Knockdown led to the arrests of 54 Barrio Azteca members and alleged associates. On March 23, Juárez authorities arrested Ricardo "Chino" Valles de la Rosa, 45, a former Barrio Azteca gang member from El Paso, suspected of other killings but not the consulate murders.

Mexican officials said Valles claimed the target of the attack was Arthur Redelfs. Valles purportedly said the detention officer had mistreated gang members at the El Paso County Jail. El Paso County Sheriff Richard Wiles said the allegation was untrue and called Redelfs a "model officer."

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