



From The Times

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Mexican drug gang massacres family of hero in revenge for boss's death



Ruth Mclean in Mexico City

Mexicans have become hardened to the brutality of the country's drugs gangs but the latest mass murder of an entire family has stunned the country. In a revenge attack for the killing last week of the drug kingpin Arturo Beltrán Leyva, gunmen killed the family of a Mexican Marine who died in the assault.

Several hours after Ensign Melquisedet Angulo Córdova was buried on Tuesday gunmen went to his small family home in Paraiso and shot members of his family while they slept. His mother Irma and sister Yolidabey, 22, died instantly. His aunt Josefa died on the way to hospital and his brother Benito died in hospital. Miraldeyi, his 24-year-old sister, has been injured severely.

Mr Córdova was the only member of the armed forces to die in the operation on December 16, which was hailed as one of the biggest successes of Felipe Calderón's three-year war on drugs. In a manoeuvre marked by its efficiency elite navy forces surrounded and evacuated Leyva's luxury hideout in Cuernavaca, a holiday town south of Mexico City in the state of Morelos. In the ensuing gunbattle Leyva, nicknamed the Boss of Bosses, and six of his henchmen were killed.

Mr Córdova was pronounced a hero by President Calderón. He was given a state funeral in which the Secretary of the Navy presented his mother with the flag that covered the coffin. Navy officials accompanied Mr Córdova's body to his home state.

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and the revenge attack highlights the latter's weakness. The naivety of President Calderón in naming Mr Córdova exemplifies the Government's underestimation of the cartels, even after deploying 45,000 troops to fight them.

"It's not even the beginning of the war . . . you've made the terrible mistake of messing with THE business," read a sign that was put up by members of the Beltrán Leyva cartel in Cuernavaca.

Cost of cartels' war

\$10 billion cartels' annual earnings from US drug sales

150,000 people employed by the cartels

11,000 lives lost in the three-year war on the drugs cartels — including 917 police officers, soldiers, prosecutors and political leaders

5,300 drug-related deaths in Mexico in 2008, up from 2,500 reported deaths in 2007

Sources: *UN World Drugs Report 2009, Times database*

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