

More Mexico Police Shot In Chaotic US Border City

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MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Gunmen armed with assault rifles shot dead two Mexican policemen in a lawless city on the U.S. border early on Wednesday, bringing deaths among the local police force to four in less than 24 hours.

Police sources said assailants shot the off-duty officers in separate attacks as they drove through the city of Nuevo Laredo, a sun-baked trade hub and drug-crime hotspot over the Rio Grande from Laredo, Texas.

A day earlier gunmen raked two police officers with automatic weapons fire, killing them. News reports said more than 50 shots were fired in the attack.

Nuevo Laredo is a key hub for trade in goods and illegal drugs bound for Texas. It is currently in the grip of a war between powerful drug cartels seeking control of lucrative cocaine, marijuana and amphetamine smuggling routes.

At least 72 people, including 13 police officers, have been killed in the city this year in the battle between powerful gangs from western Sinaloa state and the local Gulf cartel.

The city of 330,000 people has long been notorious for drug crime and kidnappings. Public order lurched to new lows early last month when suspected cartel hitmen shot dead the city's new police chief just hours after he was sworn into office.

The government sent troops and federal police to take over Nuevo Laredo in the following days, although more than a dozen people have since been shot dead amid spiraling violence.

The city's entire police force was suspended for investigations into the links between local police and the drug gangs.

At least 89 agents have already been fired and around 600 others remain under investigation.

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