

Mexico army 'surge' quells drug violence

by UPI

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico -- A "surge" of Mexican army troops into Ciudad Juarez, across the border from El Paso, Texas, has quelled drug gang violence there, observers say.

The move has given some relief to local residents and merchants, some of whom say they have been terrorized by the drug traffickers in the past but remain skeptical that the current easing of tensions will last, USA Today reported Tuesday.

"The military has had some effect but it's not going to stop the violence," Fernando Martinez, who sold his grocery store in the border city after being robbed at gunpoint nine times, told the newspaper. "This problem began in this society and it's going to take society to change it."

Some 1,607 killings were tallied in Ciudad Juarez last year as rival drug cartels battled each other as well as police for control of the vital drug route -- the death toll was a huge jump from 301 killings in 2007, officials said.

Mexico City responded by sending 5,000 army soldiers as well more than 1,200 federal police officers to the city, while local officials fired more than 600 police with alleged connections to cartels, USA Today reported.

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