

Two Detroiters arrested after Mexican drug shootout

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RIO BRAVO, Mexico -- Mercedes Velez cried as she recounted hiding in her barbecue chicken stand while suspected **drug** cartel members exchanged gunfire with the **Mexican** military Monday.

By the firefight's end, three suspected Gulf **drug** cartel members were dead and 10 suspects **arrested** , including **two** men from Detroit, according to officials. Five federal police officers and five soldiers were injured.

The battle erupted **after** 11 a.m. Monday near the Municipal Police Station in downtown Rio Bravo. Velez fell as she ran for cover and several grenades and a gas tank exploded. Nothing like this has ever happened here, she said.

The gun battle lasted 20 minutes near the corner of Colegia Militar and Libertad streets. By Monday night, **Mexican** officials released the names of the suspects, including three U.S. citizens: Ricardo Zamora Lopez and Jose Raul Gonzalez Sanchez, both of Detroit, and Esteban Valdez de los Santos of Texas.

The U.S. suspects likely had strong criminal links on Mexico's side of the border, said Federal Public Safety assistant secretary Jose Patricio Patino. He added that police intelligence does not suggest a direct link between the Gulf cartel and any U.S. criminal organization in the Detroit area.

The U.S. **Drug** Enforcement Administration was not aware of the incident, and calls to the **Mexican** consulates in McAllen, Texas, and Detroit were not returned Tuesday.

Authorities seized 40 weapons and related equipment, including AK-47s and AR-15s. .

Witnesses, who asked that their names not be used because they feared retaliation from the gunmen not **arrested** , say suspected cartel members stormed homes for refuge and soldiers staked positions on street corners, the McAllen Monitor reported. Late Monday afternoon, more than 10 cars were riddled with bullet holes, and spent shell casings and glass lay in the streets.

Gunmen kicked through a door in one house, seeking shelter and a shooting position, according to witnesses. Witnesses said at least **two Mexican** soldiers and one federal police officer were injured.

Local police pulled residents from the streets at the outbreak of the violence and hid them in the station. The local police were not involved in the exchange of fire, Correa said.

It was the second violent incident in less than **two** months in Rio Bravo. On Nov. 30, 2007, gunmen killed former mayor Juan Antonio Guajardo Anzaldúz and five others in a shooting outside a downtown restaurant.

Monday afternoon, government troop presence was bolstered with hundreds of soldiers, some in armored vehicles, patrolling Rio Bravo, Correa said.

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