Violence on the rise

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In Mexico, massacre of family underlines surging violence

COATZACOALCOS, Mexico (AP)

The bullet-riddled bodies of the Martínez children were found on a bloody floor, huddled next to the corpses of their parents in a rented shack.

The family of six was massacred, authorities believe, because the Zetas cartel suspected the father, an unemployed taxi driver, had played some part in a rival gang’s attack that killed a Zeta gunman.

The response underlines the no-holds-barred tactics of drug gangs that are splintering and battling one another for control in much of Mexico, which recently recorded its highest monthly murder total in at least 20 years.

Despite President Enrique Pena Nieto’s promises of a safer nation when he came to office five years ago, the violence is outpacing even the darkest days of the drug war launched by his predecessor.

“It has taken on the proportions of a ring of hell that would be described in Dante’s ‘Inferno,’” said Mike Vigil, former chief of international operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and author of the book “Deal.”

“Their strategy was strictly going after the kingpin. ... That was pretty much not the way to go because, you know, you cut off a head and others take its place,” Vigil added. “You have weak institutions, weak rule of law, weak judiciary, massive corruption, particularly within the state and municipal police forces, and all of that contributes to the escalating violence.”

In the first five months of 2017, there were 9,916 killings nationwide — an increase of about 30 percent over the 7,638 slain during the same period last year. In 2011, the bloodiest year of the drug war, the figure for the same January-May period was 9,466.

In some places the bloodshed has accompanied the rise of the upstart Jalisco New Generation cartel and the breakup of the once-dominant Sinaloa cartel into warring factions following the arrest of drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, who was extradited to the United States in January.

At least 19 people died in turf battles pitting Guzman’s son, brother and former allies against each other late last month in the western state of Sinaloa, according to investigators.

In the northern border state of Chihuahua, shootout last week between Sinaloa gunmen and the gang known as La Linea killed at least 14.

In the Gulf Coast oil city of Coatzacoalcos, Veracruz Gov. Miguel Angel Yunes said the slaying of a top gunman in late June prompted the Zetas to kill the entire Martínez family: Clemente; his wife Martimana; 10-year-old Jocelin; Victor Daniel, 8; Angel, 6; and Nahomi, 5.

All died in the house where they washed cars for $1 each.

“They didn’t have anything, not even furniture. They slept on the floor,” grandmother Flora Martínez said, sobbing. “I don’t understand why they did this, why they did this to my little ones. They were innocent, they didn’t know anything.”
**Seattle approves new income tax for wealthy residents**

SEATTLE, Washington (AP)

Seattle's wealthiest would become the only Washington state residents to pay an income tax under legislation approved by the City Council, a measure designed as much to raise revenue as to open a broader discussion about whether the wealthy pay their fair share.

The council voted unanimously Monday to impose a 2.25 percent tax on the city's highest earners. Personal income in excess of $250,000 for individuals and in excess of $500,000 for married couples filing joint returns would be taxed.

The measure is certain to face a court challenge from opponents who call the tax proposal illegal, unconstitutional and a waste of taxpayer money.

The council is "going to unanimously adopt an illegal income tax that has no hope of taking effect and will waste taxpayer resources on litigation the city is sure to lose," said Jason Mercier, who directs the center for government reform with the Washington Policy Center.

Supporters of the new tax say the city's economic growth and prosperity has created significant wealth and opportunity, but it has also exacerbated the affordable housing crisis that has put a strain on those in lower income brackets.

Washington is one of seven states without a personal income tax, and a state law passed in 1984 prohibits a county, city, or city-county from levying a tax on net income.

"We have an increasing affordability gap between the have and have nots. The middle class is being squeezed as well. And one of the reasons is our outdated, regressive and unfair tax structure," said Councilmember Lisa Herbold, who co-sponsored the measure.

"This is a big step forward in Seattle but it's also hopefully a big step forward for our state," she said before the 9-0 vote.

A Seattle tax would be a step toward building political momentum for the state and its other cities and towns to enact progressive tax systems, the city council said in resolution earlier this year endorsing the idea of an income tax.

Those who testified in favor of the bill Monday included tech workers who said they were wealthy and favored being taxed to maintain city services and ensure the city remains a place for all incomes.

The city estimates the income tax will raise about $140 million a year. Revenue could be used to lower property taxes, pay for public services such as transit and housing, replace any federal money that is lost and meet carbon reduction goals.
How do I get a loan for a house?

No matter what your budget is, buying a first home is an exciting, but often stressful, time for anyone. If you have worked through your personal budget and have decided that you should invest in a home, condominium or piece of land of your own, then it is time for the real work to begin – finding a home loan that is right for you. Because of the amount of money required in order to buy a home and the length of time that you will be repaying that money - usually between 15 and 30 years - a home loan is likely one of the most significant loans you will ever apply for.

If you are thinking about buying a home, here is how the process generally works:

Research mortgage lenders.

A home loan, or a mortgage, is like making any other major purchase - you should shop around before deciding on one.

How do you find a lender? If you have not already done so, consider attending a first-time homebuyer seminar. Many banks, credit unions or housing organizations offer these for free. Ask friends and family that have recently bought homes who they used for their home loan. After you have identified some potential lenders, it is a good idea to get at least three different financing quotes to consider.

Schedule appointments to find out more.

After you have identified a few lenders that you might work with to get a home loan, then you will meet with them to discuss your finances and whether their mortgages might be a good match. During your first meeting with a lender, they will probably ask you some questions to find out more about your financial situation and the type of home that you want. These questions will probably center on how much money you make, the amount you are planning to use for a down payment, what type of home you are thinking about buying, and any other loans that you have.

Compare mortgage products.

After you have received information from three different lenders, it is time to take a hard look at the home loan options available to you. Every borrower’s situation is different, so there is no one “right” mortgage for everyone.

Here are a few questions you should consider when reviewing different mortgages:

- What will the amount of my monthly mortgage payment be?
- Will my monthly mortgage payment change over the course of the loan?
- How long until the mortgage is paid off?
- How much of my mortgage payment will go towards principal, versus interest?

Apply for your home loan.

After you have decided which mortgage product you are interested in, then it is time to start the loan application process. Each lender’s requirements for applying for a home loan are a little different, but here is how the process usually works:

1. You will complete the Uniform Residential Loan Application and return it to the lender.
2. Upon your preapproval, the lender will provide a loan estimate within three business days.
3. Your mortgage lender may ask you for additional documentation, depending on their requirements and the type of mortgage loan you are applying for.

Receive your credit approval - if applicable.

A credit approval letter or document from your lender provides basic information to help you move onto the next step of buying a home. The document includes your maximum loan amount based on your qualifications, term of the loan, and/or mortgage type and the expiration date of the credit approval (usually 60 days).

Start house hunting.

After you have received your credit approval document, you can start shopping for specific homes. Usually this is done with an experienced real estate agent, especially if you are a first-time homebuyer. Just like when you looked into potential mortgage lenders, be sure to ask around and research realtors before you start working with someone.

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Trump remains a wild card on the world stage

HAMBURG, Germany (AP)

On President Donald Trump’s second trip abroad, there were fewer of the bull-in-a-diplomatic-china-shop moments that had solidified European leaders’ skepticism during his maiden overseas tour. Less public berating of allies, no pushing to the front of photo opportunities.

But Trump still departed Europe on Saturday in the same position as he started: an unpredictable force on the world stage and an outlier among longtime American partners.

For the president’s backers, his posture is the fulfillment of his campaign promise to bring more opaqueness to American foreign policy and challenge long-standing global agreements, even with the nation’s closest allies. But his detractors say he keeps sending the world dangerously mixed messages.

“Our partners and our allies are all looking for meaning and intention in those words and will read into it what they want to, which may or may not be what Trump meant,” said Laura Rosenberger, a former foreign policy adviser to Hillary Clinton and a senior fellow with the German Marshall Fund.

Trump’s message on Russia remains the most convoluted, despite his advisers’ efforts to put to rest questions about his views on Moscow’s election meddling. The president refused to publicly give the kind of condemnation that his staff said he delivered to Russian President Vladimir Putin during a private meeting Friday. He let a challenge from Putin, who said Trump accepted his denial of Russian involvement in the 2016 election, go largely unanswered, tweeting Sunday morning that he’d “already given my opinion” on the matter.

Trump’s posture toward Putin has left allies both baffled and anxious, particularly against the backdrop of the investigations into whether his campaign coordinated with Russia during last year’s election. But increasingly, it’s Trump’s positions on climate and trade that have catapulted to the top of their list of concerns.

The divide over climate was particularly glaring as the Group of 20 summit in Hamburg, Germany, drew to a close. The U.S. was the only member country that did not sign a statement reaffirming the alliance’s support for international efforts to fight global warming. The statement called the Paris climate accord, which Trump withdrew from last month, an “irreversible” global agreement.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Trump’s refusal to sign on to the statement was “regrettable.” French President Emmanuel Macron, who will host Trump on a quick trip to Paris this week declared: “There are major differences, growing differences between major powers. There is the emergence of authoritarian regimes and even within the Western world there are major divisions, uncertainties, instabilities, that didn’t exist just a few short years ago.”

But Trump and his allies appear to relish his volatility and isolation. Nile Gardiner, a foreign policy analyst for the conservative Heritage Foundation, which has close ties to the Trump White House, praised the president as “the most outspoken and unconventional U.S. president of modern time” and said he is still managing to articulate a “coherent doctrine and vision.”
NEW YORK (AP)

Singer Daddy Yankee ousted Ed Sheeran from the No. 1 spot on Spotify to become the first Latino artist to lead the music platform.

The Puerto Rican superstar of reggaeton has hits that include “Gasolina,” “Shaky Shaky” and “Despacito,” a song co-written with Luis Fonsi. He’s surpassed 44,735,586 monthly listeners to reach the first global spot, Spotify announced Sunday in an email sent to The Associated Press.

“Being the first Latin artist to reach #1 in Spotify marks a precedent not only for my career but for the industry in general,” Daddy Yankee, whose real name is Ramón Luis Ayala Rodríguez, said in an email. “The musical digital revolution has unified the world and this is the proof. We are all in the same boat with no labels or stereotypes.”

He recalled that, when he started his career in 1992 in Puerto Rico, many didn’t believe he would last more than three years, much less that he would become an international sensation.

“But I never stopped,” he said. “I had to keep fighting. I had to make big sacrifices, to miss important moments with my family, to feel the prejudice of many people that didn’t open the doors for me.”

Rocio Guerrero, Spotify’s head of Latin culture, shows & editorial says: “Spotify has been supporting Latin music for many years, and this is the moment that shows our passion and love for the genre are equally supported by our audience. We are grateful for all of our artists, and specifically for Daddy Yankee’s influence in bringing global appreciation to Latin music.”

The remix to “Despacito,” featuring additional vocals by Justin Bieber,” is No. 1 on Spotify’s global charts.

More than a decade after Daddy Yankee’s best-selling album, “Barrio Fino,” and the single “Gasolina” that made him a global star, the Latin Grammy Award winner is still one of the most influential and recognizable names in reggaeton.

“Today, this genre is the most listened to in the world,” Daddy Yankee said. “Thanks to all the fans and colleagues that gave me the opportunity to collaborate with them. We did it!”

NEW YORK (AP)

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26 arrests made in child sex sting

RICHLAND, Washington

A child sex sting known as “Tri-Cities Net Nanny Operation” resulted in 26 men being arrested over a period of five days.

The operation took place at a Richland apartment where men showed up with the intention to have sex with young girls and boys.

Officers posted ads on various websites claiming to be kids as young as 11 or parents offering their children for sex. The ads generated thousands of responses, but the only arrests made were on those who actually went to the apartment, said Washington State Patrol Lt. James Mjor.

The operation was led by the state patrol’s Missing and Exploited Children Task Force, with 45 local, state and federal law enforcement officers and prosecutors also participating.

The arrests were made between Wednesday and Sunday of last week. The crimes being investigated include attempted rape, distributing drugs to a person under 18, commercial sex abuse of a minor, possessing and dealing child pornography, and communication with a minor for immoral purposes.

This was the eighth Net Nanny Operation in Washington state since August 2015, which have led to 115 arrests and 21 victims being rescued.

The 26 men arrested are:
- Ryan D. Harris, 32, Pendleton, Ore.
- Douglas V. Arbogast, 70, Pasco, Wash.
- Marco A. Celis-Hernandez, 21, Richland, Wash.
- Andrew L. Sanders, 33, Pasco, Wash.
- John M. Scheline, 40, Pasco, Wash.
- Gabriel Saenz, 41, Kennewick, Wash.
- William J. Barrett, 47, Kennewick, Wash.
- Darren J. Kerbyson, 50, West Richland, Wash.
- James C. Doty, 34, Richland, Wash.
- Yasir M. Majeed, 35, Kennewick, Wash.
- Gregory B. Taber, 65, Pasco, Wash.
- Antonio C. Garcia, 21, Richland, Wash.
- Lucas F. Beach, 38, Pasco, Wash.
- Stephen C. Perez, 45, Pasco, Wash.
- Kyle R. Sickels, 25, Kennewick, Wash.
- Jesus G. Contreras Salgado, 29, Tieton, Wash.
- Dewayne L. Hetrick, 42, Kennewick, Wash.
- Thomas A. Swarers, 69, Kennewick, Wash.
- Jerome G. Williams, 24, Kennewick, Wash.
- James C. Escobedo, 20, Kennewick, Wash.
- Yurii L. Gulchuk, 35, Kennewick, Wash.
- Jairo Lopez, 20, Yakima, Wash.
- Aaron D. Hagerty, 42, Kennewick, Wash.
- Daniel A. Medina, 20, Pendleton, Ore.

Cano homerun decides All-Star Game

MIAMI, Florida (AP)

It was a nondescript All-Star Game with a similar outcome as one that was played half a century ago.

Robinson Cano, the Seattle star who was included on the roster as a substitute, opened the top of the tenth inning with a homer to give the American League a 2-1 win over the National, the fifth consecutive win by the American League in the MLB All-Star Game.

Only the injury of his compatriot Starlin Castro allowed Cano, 34, to be selected for the eighth time to the midseason classic, and finished as the Most Valuable Player of this edition.
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