

Crime



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Mexico Alert: Four injured, including three Canadian nationals, in shooting at restaurant in Mazatlan, Sinaloa on March 29; highlights risk of spillover violence in tourist areas

Please be advised

- On March 29, four individuals were injured, including three Canadian nationals, during a shooting inside a taco shop, located on Avenida Rafael Buelna, in Mazatlan, Sinaloa.
- Reports indicate that an assailant entered the restaurant and fired shots at a local businessperson who is involved in the fishing industry. The victim is reportedly in stable condition.
- Amid the shooting, three Canadian nationals seated in the restaurant suffered minor injuries as they were hit by splinters from the bullets.
- An investigation is ongoing, and no arrest has been made, as of writing.
- Meanwhile, as per March 28 reports, authorities have announced security reinforcements in Mazatlan, including the use of surveillance drones, as part of the Operativo de Seguridad Semana Santa 2023, holy week operation, with the city anticipated to host over 500,000 visitors during the upcoming Holy Week from April 2-9.
- The Government of Canada maintains its third-highest travel risk advisory for Sinaloa on a four-tier scale as of March 29, recommending citizens “avoid nonessential travel to the state due to high levels of violence and organized crime”, except for Mazatlan.



Assessments & Forecast

1. Considering that the target was a local businessperson, the shooting is liable to be related to an extortion threat, with June 2022 reports claiming that the fishing sector in Mazatlan continues to be at risk from organized crime activities, including extortion, with alleged collusion of local authorities. This is supported by the arrest of a former official of the Comision Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca, National Aquaculture and Fisheries Commission on March 31, 2022, who allegedly attempted to extort marine products valued at two million MXN (110,570 USD) from a local businessman using falsified documents.
2. Regardless of the motive, the incident highlights the risk of spillover violence to civilians, including foreign nationals, from stray bullets amid targeted shootings in and around typically crowded recreational and dining facilities during the holiday season in tourist-frequented coastal towns. This is evidenced by a shooting in the tourist center of Quinta Avenida, Playa del Carmen on July 23, 2022, which left three bystanders injured and caused panic among foreign visitors, [the shooting in Tulum on October 21, 2021](#), as well as [the shooting in Cancun on June 11, 2021](#).
3. **FORECAST:** Targeted shootings related to extortion of businesses as well as gang-involved crossfires with police and rival groups will continue to pose a credible security threat to bystanders in popular tourist destinations nationwide, including in Mazatlan where the Cartel de Sinaloa (CDS) maintains a presence.
4. As such, the shooting is liable to raise security concerns regarding the effectiveness of law enforcement capabilities, as also supported by data from Secretaria de Seguridad Publica, the Ministry of Public Security, indicating that Mazatlan currently has a deficit of at least 300 municipal police officers, per March 30 reports.
5. **FORECAST:** Given the launch of Operativo de Seguridad Semana Santa 2023, increased security measures in the form of patrols and checkpoints can be expected as a general precaution in popular tourist areas across Mazatlan, including the Centro Historico, Malecon, Plaza Machado, and Zona Dorada during the Holy Week holidays from April 2-9.

Recommendations

1. All visitors, including foreign nationals, in Mazatlan, Sinaloa are advised to maintain heightened vigilance against possible violent crime, including gang-related, in areas frequented by both tourists and locals.
2. If a potential shooting or similar incident manifests, it is advised to leave the area immediately, if possible, or take shelter at a secure location.
3. MAX Security has strong on-ground capabilities in Mexico to facilitate contingency planning or provide custom travel risk assessments to meet your needs. Contact us at intel@max-security.com or +44 20-3540-0434.