



## Gulf Cartel Conducts Psychological Operations During COVID-19 Pandemic

**OE Watch Commentary:** Mexican drug cartels need the support of the local populace for their success. They need lookouts to provide cartel leaders with information regarding enemy, police, and military movements. They also need places to store drug shipments and locations where they can count on respite when moving from one area to another. Overall, the local populace is incredibly important to cartels; especially to the Gulf Cartel. According to the accompany article and other social media, most recently, the Gulf Cartel provided food to families in need during the COVID-19 pandemic, making its competition with the state clear.

Pictures of this activity flooded social media platforms and quickly went viral. Mexican news source *El Debate* reprinted tweets made by the Gulf Cartel indicating that that the support was from the “Gulf Cartel and not the National System for Integral Family Development (DIF).” Boxes seen in pictures were also stamped with a message that read: “in support of Ciudad Victoria. Senor 46 Vaquero.” This sort of assistance follows in a pattern of taking advantage of crises and other events to win over the local populace, such as after hurricanes and in support of local holiday celebrations. It reinforces a well-worn psychological operations instrument in the Gulf Cartel tool kit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

***“So that you know who is doing this and where this is coming from, it is the Gulf Cartel, not the DIF (National System for Integral Family Development).”***



Logotype used by the Gulf Cartel.

Source: BaptisteGrandGrand via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C%C3%A1rtel\\_del\\_Golfo\\_logo.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C%C3%A1rtel_del_Golfo_logo.png), CC by SA 4.0

**Source:** “Narcos y sicarios reparten comida a familias que sufran por el coronavirus en Mexico (Narcos and Gunmen Hand Out Food to Families in Need because of the Coronavirus),” *El Confidencial*, 20 April 2020. [https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2020-04-07/cartel-golfo-reparte-comida-familias-coronavirus\\_2537767/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2020-04-07/cartel-golfo-reparte-comida-familias-coronavirus_2537767/)

*Although Mexico has not been hit by the coronavirus as hard as the United States, the pandemic is still affecting its population. Many people are stuck in their homes and cannot work so they do not have an income. In the most vulnerable populations, some families do not even have food available to them every day. The answer to the problem? Drug cartels who hand out food to those families most in need. In some poverty-stricken barrios located in Ciudad Victoria, they have been seen handing out food filled boxes with the Gulf Cartel stamped on top. Other boxes contain the message, “In support of Ciudad Victoria, Senor 46 Vaquero.” Citizens are also advised that: “So that you know who is doing this and where this is coming from, it is the Gulf Cartel, not the DIF (National System for Integral Family Development).”*