Systemic Criminogenic Risk Factors and Their Effects on Deported Veterans
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Opportunity

Case Study: Tijuana
Southern California has the largest veteran community in the United States. Tijuana is the primary port of deportation for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Tijuana contains the largest concentration of deported veterans where criminogenic risk factors prevail.

Veteran Populations by Quarters, 2000

Research Method

Quantitative Data is not Appropriate
Limited and skewed data: ICE reports 92 veteran deportations. However, a support house in Tijuana has directly worked with 450 veterans living in Tijuana. The US Congressional Hispanic Caucus estimates 1,000 cases of deportation across Mexican border cities.

Qualitative Data Utilized for Research
- Ethnographic research: Spent three summers working with veterans at the ‘Bunker’
- The Bunker: privately run support house assisting deported veterans located in Tijuana, Mexico
- External Studies: ACLU and GAO
- Public Data: San Diego court records, FBI data base, and Veterans Affairs

Impact

“These Risk Factors Result In...”

1: Gang Involvement
- Joining a gang provides community, financial autonomy, and security
- Veterans are high valued assets: bilingual in Spanish and English, US military training, and familiarity with the US
- Enforcers can make ‘easy money’ compared to the legitimate economy
- A broader consequence of Veteran gang involvement is the militarization of cartels at the American border, advancing the war on drugs, human and drug trafficking, border instability, and violence in United States border cities.

“I wouldn’t hate the U.S., I don’t. I served the U.S. with pride, and I would have given my life for them. But now that I’m here, I’m living hell.” - El Vet, a deported veteran explaining why he was involved with a Mexican cartel, Ready for War Documentary 2019 (2)

2: Continued Substance Abuse and Addiction
- The narco-kleptocracy increases exposure to negative stimuli and removes positive stimuli
- Addiction related offenses is the leading cause of deportation (33%)
- Many veterans had pre-existing drug or alcohol problems before deportation; being so close to the drug trade makes relapse and continued usage more likely
- Approximately 20% of service members reported binge drinking at least once a week
- Can result in long-term health issues, inability to hold a job, and destroys ties with family

3: Mental Illness is not Addressed, leading to Suicide
- “After adjusting for difference in age, the rate of suicide was 2.1 times higher among veterans compared with nonveteran adults.” - Veteran Affairs, 2018 (3)
- Can become hopeless and might perceive suicide as the only option when support from family is lost
- Researchers asked 72 soldiers why they attempted suicide, all stated a desire to end intense emotional distress
- 30% of completed suicides were preceded by alcohol or drug use
- Veterans are at highest risk for PTSD & depression related to their service, yet there are no services or social programs to treat illness once deported

Solution

“All the brothers that are still here, we have the motto of ‘leave no man behind’.” - Hector Barajas, 2013 (4)

Support Houses Mitigate Criminogenic Risk Factors

Stability: Offers necessities at first arrival that help navigate the narco-kleptocracy
- Housing, food, protection and communication to family back in US

Mitigates Strain: Creating a community of veterans reintroduces positive stimuli such as support networks and mitigates negative stimuli by offering counseling for traumatic events and negative experiences
- Creation of a new family helps veterans adjust to Tijuana

Reobtain Financial Autonomy: Provides socially acceptable sources of income that fit the culturally prescribed aspirations
- streamlines access to VA benefits and local opportunities

Advocacy: As non-citizens, veterans receive no political representation in the US
- The support houses can create collective action through American media which can appeal to US legislation

Advantages over Alternatives

PRACTICAL: The naturalization is an extensive process that is not viable for every deportation case

Cost-effective: The annual expense of the Bunker is currently $32,000

Proven: The model is successful in Tijuana, displaying veteran interest and demand for its services

1. The Bunker receives continual independent funding
- Through private donations, interin financial stability will allow the support house to continue to provide its essential services
- Provides base level of family, financial autonomy, and provision

2. US Government legally recognizes informal support houses, directing deported veterans to the institution
- Government recognizes this as the support house, resulting in a formal introduction between veterans and the support house staff
- Legitimates formal path for welfare applications through Veteran Affairs

3. US Government funds, streamlines, and creates formal support houses throughout border cities
- Expand the support house model across Mexican border cities
- Offer up to 16% of the support house to continue to provide its essential services

Acknowledgment: Thank you Hector Barajas, for giving me the opportunity to work with you for the last three years at the Bunker
Get more info about the documentary film: http://www.readyforwar.com/documentary.html
Get more info about the support house: http://www.readyforwar.com/support_house.html

References
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