

# *Mexican Army Kills at Least Nine in Clash in Michoacan*

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Michoacan, January 7 (teleSUR-RHC) -- At least nine people were killed Tuesday after the Mexican army clashed with a self-defense group in an attempt to regain the Apatzingan municipal headquarters in the violence-plagued southern state of Michoacan.

According to local press, about 50 armed men took over the municipal headquarters on December 24th and vowed to remain there until the leader of the Knights Templar Drug Cartel had been captured.

However, a local priest, Gregorio Lopez -- also known as Padre Goyo -- said that those who took over the municipal headquarters were not members of civil defense groups but elements of the criminal gang Los Viagra.

In the aftermath of the shootout, at least one soldier was reported among the dead, while officials say 44 members of the self-defense group have been arrested. Illegal firearms and 20 vehicles were also seized.

The self-defense groups which emerged in violence-stricken areas of Mexico as protection against drug cartels claim that the federal government's plan to restore peace to the region has been a failure.

In January 2014, the Mexican government signed an agreement that would allow these armed civilians to keep their arms as long as they had permits. Three months later, however, the government announced its intention to remove all weapons from civilian hands in Michoacan state.

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