



**Statement for the Record to the House Foreign Affairs Committee,  
Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and  
International Organizations on:**

***Ritual Abuse (Torture) and Sacrificial Killings  
within an Epochal Context***

For the Hearing Taking Place 10:00 AM in 2200 RHOB on 19 September 2023  
Efforts to Address Ritual Abuse and Sacrifice in Africa

Submitted on 17 September 2023 by

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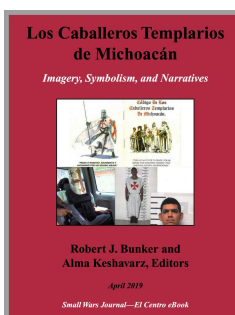
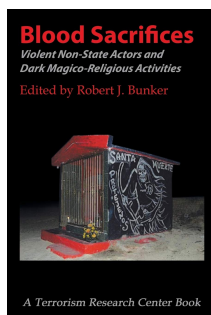
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The statement will follow a question-and-answer format with the questions generated by Mary Vigil, Subcommittee Staff Director. I would like to thank her for reaching out to me on these important national/homeland and international security subjects and incorporating my expertise in support of the hearings being conducted related to them. While it includes some of these activities as taking place in Africa, it is meant to be a more far-ranging testimony with both a domestic United States and global focus on these horrifying crimes and the epochal context in which they are taking place:

**1. What is your education, training, and area of expertise and experience on the topic?**

My education encompasses five-college degrees in history, social science, anthropology-geography, behavioral science, and government along with a PhD in political science from the Claremont Graduate University. My further training is derived from multiple decades of law enforcement, military (& paramilitary), and intelligence-based courses related to counter-terrorism, counter-gang, and counter-narcotics activities. With regard to my expertise, I have been researching and writing on violent non-state actors (VNSAs), illicit economies, and future war and conflict for more than three decades. As Minerva Chair at the Army War College, Carlisle, PA, my research project was on “Dark Globalization”—the ways in which globalization was going terribly

wrong. My two stints with the Behavioral Science Unit (BSU; later BSIU), FBI Academy, Quantico, VA, as Futurist in Residence (FIR) focused on advanced weaponry threats and VNSA related concerns which incorporated dark spirituality issues. Specifically related to the topic of “Ritual Abuse (Torture) and Sacrificial Killings,” I have published a number of articles and research notes on dark spirituality/magico-religious activities as well as cartel/gang violence and the use of torture, and have been editor of the books *Blood Sacrifices: Violent Non-State Actors and Dark Magico-Religious Activities* (Terrorism Research Center, 2016) and co-editor of *Los Caballeros Templarios de Michoacán: Imagery, Symbolism, and Narratives* (Small Wars Journal—El Centro, 2019):



For the last four years or so, I’ve been producing research notes (at *Small Wars Journal—El Centro* with Dr. John P. Sullivan along with various *C/O Futures* series) and collecting information for an eventual follow-on dark spirituality anthology focusing on Mexican cartel and Central American gang activities (including some Brazilian criminal-evangelical ones) which concerns much of this subject matter as it relates to these activities taking place in the Americas.

My research utilizes an ‘epochal paradigm’ analytical filter which will be touched upon in the next and a later section of this statement for the record due to its pertinence to the threats being assessed. The intent of my education, training, and professional activities is *to further and protect liberal-democratic values and institutions—both public and private—in the face of disruptive systemic level change taking place during the transition from the modern to post-modern epochs of human civilization*. My focus in these efforts seeks to support the United States of America and her allies in navigating the increasingly challenging international and domestic security environments now emerging.

## 2. What is your concern with ritual abuse and sacrifice?

My primary concern related to ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings is that, as the global security environment further changes and (de)evolves during the transition from the modern to the post-modern epochs of human civilization, we may see a marked rise in such behaviors and activities. The pre- and post-modern characteristics of this transition—which witnesses dominant state form fragility and even failure along with institutional breakdown in healthy states—are seeing small episodic breakouts of ‘neo-barbaric’ spirituality. Amorality, dark magico-religious transactional relationships, and extremist cults (including pseudo-Christian ones and those with Aryan/Teutonic/Neo-Nazi expressions) are appearing increasingly on the margins. These perceptions are tied to a sizeable body of theory, literature, and historical datapoints related to neo-

Feudalism, transformation of war, deviant and dark globalization, and related international security environment projections.

The Fourth Epoch ‘paradigm’ co-developed by the author in the late 1980s was specifically created for applied US governmental use. It views the historical changes presently being seen as equivalent to the shift from the Classical to Medieval and Medieval and Modern epochs in human civilization. The inter-state form paradigm shifts (as opposed to intra-state form shifts) witness high levels of disruptive activity across all elements of ‘human social and political organization.’ During these shifts (epochal transitions) crime and war blurs, mercenaries/armed non-state actors once again appear on the battlefield *en masse*, advanced weaponry/technologies appear, new space-time dimensionality capabilities emerge, and societies and their governments face a loss of political/ideological consensus. Historically in the area of religion and spirituality we have witnessed a shift from polytheism (Greco-Roman) during the Classical epoch, to a universal monotheistic church (Catholicism in the West; Orthodox in the East) during the Medieval epoch, to a reformed (capitalist utilitarian) form of Christianity during the Modern epoch. The macro strategic trending (indications and warning) points to the prementioned ‘neo-barbarism’ becoming a concern as we continue to transition over the course of many decades into still emerging post-Modern civilizational patterns.[1] Such ‘neo-barbarism’ based spirituality/magico-religious expressions offer a competitor narrative/form of ‘human social and political organization’ to traditional (mainstream) global religions/values embodied in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, et al. The fight for the future is about how humans will live, interact, and the value systems they hold dear. It will not just be about Westphalian centric state sovereign prerogatives though they will still be a component of future war and conflict running parallel to the bigger fight taking place.

### **3. How prevalent do you think it is in the US and globally?**

I view the prevalence of ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings within the United States as currently extremely minimal due to our strong political capacity and rule of law traditions supported by highly effective policing, law enforcement, judicial, and incarcerative institutions. At the same time, I view these activities as more prevalent in certain regions of the globe that contain states with low political capacity and/or state fragility, more pronounced illicit economies, and greater numbers of/more sophisticated violent non-state actors (VNSAs) operating within them. The extent to which this is the case is as of yet understudied.

What we want to avoid under all circumstances, is falling into a repeat of the ‘Satanic Panic’ (Satanic Ritual Abuse; SRA) scare of the 1980s and 1990s (who can forget the McMartin preschool trial) which can be traced back to patterns of hysteria as far back as the Salem, Massachusetts, and European Witch trials of the later Middle Ages and Early Modern periods. Such positions are born out of ignorance and superstition. We need to actively balance such cautions with the recognition that ritual torture and killings that are religious-magico based, as well as other horrendous activities such as child prostitution, cult-like grooming for sexual exploitation, and human body parts trafficking, readily exist to varying extents in our contemporary world. Denying such activities is out of touch with global street realities. Men, women, and even children (once groomed and

criminally indoctrinated) have the capacity under certain circumstances to engage in horrific activities against their fellow human beings.

In regard to domestic US concerns, we have documented cases of MS-13 members engaging in sacrifices ‘to the Beast,’ a demonic and/or extreme criminal form of Santa Muerte worship. The February 2017 Genesis Cornejo-Alvarado killing in Houston, Texas stands out as does the killing of a rival gang member (whose heart was cut out) in March 2017 in a remote area of the Los Angeles National Forest in California.[2] Further torture killings engaged in by MS-13 members, while more secular in nature—such as the July 2003 Brenda La Paz (who was four months pregnant) killing in Shenandoah County, Virginia—follow both the MS-13 ethos of *Mata, Roba, Viola, Controla*, (Kill, Steal, Rape, Control) and dark spirituality influences played out ideologically.[3] We additionally have a few domestic incidents in which narcotics and human traffickers have engaged in beheadings linked to some form of spiritual component. These homicides appear related to punishment for noncompliance, betrayal, internal theft, and intergroup conflict, such as examples from Chandler, Arizona (October 2010) and Sullivan City, Texas (September 2011). Further, the Gulf-Zetas Cartel sicario crew composed of Gabriel Cardona Ramirez and Rosalio ‘Bart’ Reta, operating out of South, Texas during 2005 and 2006, should be mentioned. Their activities included the drinking of human blood as a toast to Santa Muerte and the tattooing of the death saint on their bodies.[4] Finally, the Carina Saunders beheading incident in October 2011 in Bethany, Oklahoma and the even earlier June 2008 incident—in which a young girl was raped and beheaded by a Mexican gang in the Florida panhandle, both linked to sex trafficking must be considered.[5] Individual (non-group based) psychopathy-driven incidents also take place from time-to-time. These may fall under the sexual gratification mantle of ritual abuse and killing causation (both with and devoid of spiritual motivations) as these relate to typically home-grown sexual predators and serial killers (Zodiac, BTK, Son of Sam, Milwaukee Monster, Night Stalker, et al).

With regard to international concerns, the numbers of incidents and data points are far more prevalent. While gang, cartel, and individual (psychopathy) derived behaviors may be generally constrained in the United States, this is not the case globally outside of the more advanced liberal-democracies (North America, the UK, European Union, Australia-New Zealand, Japan, South Korea et al). In Latin America, enclaves of ritualized behaviors and activities exist, at a minimum, within Mexico (predominantly), the Northern Triangle area of Central America, and Brazil. Focusing on Mexico, we can trace this activity back to the notorious March 1989 Matamoros, Tamaulipas incident involving the killing of Mark Kilroy. He was murdered for dark ritual purposes by *Narcosatánicos* (Narco Satanists)—in actuality a syncretic-occultist (mixing religious forms) marijuana smuggling gang—led by Adolfo de Jesús Constanzo. Since then, quite a number of incidents of ritual killings related to the extreme criminal form of Santa Muerte worship have taken place in the region. The Zetas Cartel placed Santa Muerte shrines throughout their territory marking it and over time adopted the deity as their own—first ideologically, and for many members, later spiritually. I was involved in the interview of a Zetas deserter (a former foot soldier tattooed with Santa Muerte imagery and branded with a Z) who had been arrested in the United States. He confirmed the ‘Smoking Man Ritual’ in which the ashes of your enemy are mixed with tobacco/narcotics and smoked to gain their power. Individual kill team members (*sicarios*) of the cartels have also gone over to the extreme form of Santa Muerte worship. This has been reported

on and documented in incident after incident and highlighted in a *sicario* interview posted at *Small Wars Journal-El Centro*:

Before a hit, he prays to Santa Muerte that all goes well. ‘I actually sacrifice people for my Santa Muerte. The thing is that I kill for ordering, but I talk to her and say, hey, I go to a job. Just make me hit, I am gonna give you that life, it is for you.’[6]

Hence, in some cases, the souls are reaped for the deity in a transactional understanding with the cartel assassin. Her amoral and non-judgmental values sync well with individuals whose day jobs are to torture, kill, and sometimes melt the remains of their victims in acid baths. The *Huachicoleros* (fuel thieves) in Mexico also seem to now be falling under Santa Muerte’s allure.[7] In Mexico, we also have the activities of *La Familia Michoacana* (LFM; The Family Michoacan) followed by the successor cartel *Los Caballeros Templarios* (The Knights Templars) spanning 2006 through roughly 2018. The ‘Divine Justice’ meted out by the original group began with five heads thrown onto the disco floor in Uruapan, Michoacán, signifying a coming out statement. Allegations of ritualized sacrifice and cannibalism—in which new recruits would hunt down their prey, cook, and consume them or simply eat their raw hearts as a rite of passage into the cartel have been reported.[8] Essentially quasi-Christian narcocults, both variations linked to Nazario Moreno González, aka *El Más Loco* (“The Craziest One”), saw the latter group devolve into narcos wearing medieval robes and helmets, carrying around AK assault rifles and praying at black cross shrines to their resurrected god Nazario. Nazario was said to supernaturally wander the countryside at night in his ghostly white attire. Atrocities committed by these cartels were divinely sanctioned with rules and rituals of the latter cartel solidified in an actual manual of their code of conduct.[9] A documented crucifixion—which involved sexual abuse and torture—likely carried out by one of these cartels took place in September 2012 in Contepec, Michoacán.[10]

In the case of the Northern Triangle (comprising El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), some of the members of the *maras*—MS-13 and *Barrio 18* (18<sup>th</sup> Street)—have also had their dark spiritual activities documented. Tattoos, small shrines, narrative accounts, and even artwork of torture killing examples, exist.[11] However, actual incidents involving ritual abuse (torture) and killings are sporadic at best. One example is given in a statement by a MS-13 *sicario* operating in El Salvador during 2012-2014:

“They put tourniquets on El Horse’s arms and legs. It’s amazing what young gang members know about human anatomy when it comes to torture. They hacked off his arms. They hacked off his legs. It’s called the vest cut. But the Beast wanted more...They cut out his tongue...They gouged out his eyes...The Clown slowly slid in his machete, carefully feeling the heart beating through the blade. He slid it further in. A clean cut above the abdomen. He pulled out the machete and slipped in his hand. His fingers curled over the weak, fragile heart.”[12]

Further, in Brazil, we have the phenomena of evangelical gangsters emerging. They represent a fusion of street gang criminality, pseudo-Christianity, and cult spirituality. The criminal *evangélicos* (evangelicals) are engaging in territorial control (such as establishing the *Complexo de Israel* in Rio’s *favelas*) and have launched a ‘holy war’ against local Afro-Brazilian religious



worshippers along with the desecration of their buildings and symbols.[13] The extent, nature, and frequency of this organized ritual violence has not been documented in English to my knowledge.

Further afield, such as in Africa and the Middle East, two other clusters of magico-religious expression which at times may incorporate torture and ritual killings exist. The first resides mostly in Central African animist spirituality which views physical items imbued with inherent power (*mana*) such as talismans and human body parts which can be utilized for their magical benefits. As a result, an indigenous trade in albino human body parts exist in this region with hundreds killed over the past decades. It is said that “Their mutilated bodies are often found later without hands, feet, breasts, genitals, skin, eyes or hair — depending on the spells to be cast.”[14] Nigerian and Ghanaian human traffickers engaging in witchcraft, *Poros* secret societies in Sierra Leone (who ingest body parts of their prisoners), and the horrors of Okija shrine activities, such as one discovered in Nigeria in 2004, are related to such amoral animist traditions.[15] On the edges exist straight up pseudo-Christian cultism mixed syncretically with African ‘witch doctor’ traditions as exemplified by Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The group has engaged in child sexual abuse, acts of mutilation, cannibalism (at least one incident documented), and the use of child soldiers who have been indoctrinated with cultist spirituality and adhere to various magico-religious practices. Many of the faithful view themselves as possessed by the ‘holy spirit’ and seek to gain ‘divine protection’ in battle which includes coating their chests with shea butter.[16] The second magico-religious cluster is Jihadi derived and linked to Al Qaeda, Islamic State, and Boko Haram spiritual traditions. The ritual killings of individuals by means of beheading, stoning, crucifixion, and immolation (fire) have all been documented. The later three forms of ritualized killing can be extremely painful with crucifixion—carried out by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria—representing a long-suffering death. Further, the underlying apocalyptic narrative espoused by these extremist groups is derived from Islamic eschatology. The end of times battle will take place in Dabiq, Syria against the Romans (Christians). Jihad for these groups has little to do with overcoming internal suffering or the fight against sin in its modern interpretation and instead reverts back to the classical definition viewed as holy war with the enemies of Islam.[17]

Commonalities across ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings activities appear to be derived from the amoral or dark (evil power seeking) transactional nature of the relationship between the worshiper and the spirit (deity) being petitioned and/or served. The worshiper offers something to the deity (such as a human life; body parts and/or a soul which may include the infliction of intense pain as a component of the ritual) in return for divine blessing such as protection, powers, or some other physical and/or immaterial benefit. The sacrifice can be ‘to the spirit (deity; god)’ or ‘for the spirit (deity; god)’ if the worshiper is functioning as their avatar (holy warrior). Jihadi (Salafist; radical ‘Sunni’ Muslims) operate slightly differently in that their sacrifice—for example, the act of martyrdom such as that undertaken by a suicide bomber—is an act of *self-sacrifice for their god* as an expression of their deep faith rather than *the sacrificing of another individual to their god* for some magico-religious benefit. When the worshiper views themselves as god’s chosen avatar on Earth, the actual sacrifice of another may have either *to* or *for* spiritual (deity; god) elements to it. When looking at animist spirituality, such as in Central Africa, the body parts utilized have power (*mana*) in themselves which results in a variant magico-religious orientation. All of these forms of amoral or dark spiritual orientations are, however, pre- and post-modern in orientation

and exist well out of the modern religious paradigms of Judeo-Christianity, Islam, or other dominant mainstream faiths.

**4. What are the known and unknown factors about this issue? What do you think we could do more as USG (United States Government) to collect better data?**

The known factors are that ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings are taking place domestically but at an exceedingly small level. A strict accounting, based on an operationalization of the definition of a ‘dark or amoral magico-religious transaction’ would likely be in the single digits yearly as an intuitive guesstimate (actual numbers could conceivably be higher) out of 16,425 murders taking place in the US in 2019 per FBI data.[18] If the ‘deviant sexual fantasies’ of murders/serial murders (who may follow their own repetitive rituals with/or without spiritual/magico-religious delusions) are brought into this operationalization, these yearly numbers would be slightly increased.[19] Ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings are taking place internationally at greater levels (with wide national and regional variations) but still appear very low in frequency vis-à-vis secular criminal (non-spirituality derived) abuse and violence. Hundreds of incidents probably occur internationally each year, but specifics are still unknown due to a lack of concrete data to form adequate baselines. Datasets and incident tracking related to such activities appear to be sporadic, haphazard, and localized. A more developed tracking approach (unvetted by the author), however, appears to be indexed by the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) focusing on Nigerian ritual-related deaths.[20]

**Policy Suggestions:** Some form of ‘open source/access’ review of ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings frequencies (numbers) within the US and internationally should be mandated by the United States Government for baselining purposes. Utilizing ‘open source/access’ can help to drive public awareness and public policy/security discussions on this matter. The most reasonable course of action is to task and fund the Congressional Research Service (CRS) to compile an initial report on this subject matter. Domestically, the purview of tracking and responding to domestic serial killers and ritualized killings, however, may fall under the auspices of the FBI’s Behavioral Research and Instruction Unit (BRIU; the successor to the older Behavioral Science Unit; BSU) in Quantico, VA though such information would not get released for public consumption or policy debate purposes. Additionally, the secular versus ritualized aspects of the femicides in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua (Northern Mexico) needs to be analyzed by the CRS or another US governmental body in an open disclosure forum given its proximity to our Southern border.

**5. What population is conducting these abuses? Who do you think is most at risk for ritual abuse and sacrifice?**

The *perpetrator population* is clustered around both individuals and/or within certain criminally organized (and violent) groups. Within the United States it primarily draws from:

- An extremely small number of serial killers/abusers exhibiting psychopathy both tied to deranged spiritual motivations but also devoid of them who engage in rituals (which may only have secular obsessive-compulsive components) while committing their crimes.

- Extremist cults—such as the Branch Davidians in Texas and the People’s Temple which moved from Indiana to Guyana—whose leaders engage in the sexual abuse of children (ritualized within the pseudo-religion) and hold apocalyptic world views that may result in mass death as an act of devotion to their messiah (i.e., the leader) and to god.
- An exceedingly small number of MS-13 gang members who have internalized the gang’s spirituality linked to ‘the Beast’ (a demonic entity) and/or the extreme criminal variant of Santa Muerte worship (as a stand-alone death deity).
- An exceedingly small number of human traffickers and cartel members (linked to the Mexican cartels) who adhere to the extreme criminal variant of Santa Muerte worship (as a stand-alone death deity).
- *Note—As aforementioned, perpetrators engaging in Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) does not represent a viable concern.*

Internationally, it draws from:

- Serial killers/abusers exhibiting psychopathy tied to deranged spiritual motivations (but also devoid of them) who engage in rituals (which may only have secular obsessive-compulsive components) while committing their crimes. The extent/size of this international population (which may or may not have lower/greater frequencies as found in the US) is unknown to the author. From an individual psychopathy perspective, in the Tepito district in Mexico City, some years ago, an extreme Santa Muerte adherent at one point is said to have kidnapped/sacrificed children and virgins to gain power via dark magico-religious rituals for his criminal activities.
- More generally in Mexico the perpetrators come from primarily two populations—one organizationally more often tied to the extreme criminal form of Santa Muerte worship and the other from two linked cult-cartels. These Santa Muerte adherents have belonged to the Gulf-Zetas cartel (then just the Zetas cartel), to the Beltrán-Leyva Organization (BLO), to independent kill teams, and *sicarios* (assassins) working for various cartels/gangs as well as individually contracted ones. The cult-cartels, under the leadership of Nazario Moreno González, *La Familia Michoacana* (LFM; The Family Michoacan) and its successor cartel *Los Caballeros Templarios* (The Knights Templars) also have members who have engaged in ritualized abuse (torture) and killings.
- In Central America, the *maras* (gangs)—specifically MS-13 and *Barrio Ocho* (18<sup>th</sup> Street) have members from some of the various *clicas* (cliques) who have internalized the gang’s spirituality linked to ‘the Beast’ (a demonic entity) and/or the extreme criminal variant of Santa Muerte worship (as a stand-alone death deity).
- In Brazil, the emergence of evangelical gangsters engaging in ‘holy war’ in the slums of Rio de Janeiro raises concerns over the extent of the ritualized violence taking place derived from a fusion of pseudo-Christianity and criminality.
- In Central Africa, we have seen both animist (*mana*) based spirituality tied to indigenous African witchcraft traditions and sects along with an extremist cult—the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) under Joseph Kony which has fused pseudo-Christianity with local traditions—engaging in these activities.



- In the Middle East and Central Africa, some of the ritual activity related to Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and Boko Haram have taken on extremist cult-like behaviors related to incidents of torture (abuse) and killings, especially beheadings but including other activities. The actual number of perpetrators engaging in these activities represent a small minority of the membership of these groups.
- *Note—Concern exists regarding the secretive group the Order of the Nine Angles (ONA) which has Satanic ties. Found in the United Kingdom, Mexico, and other countries enough blood imagery has been tied to its activities to make it prudent to take a deeper look into possible extreme criminality associated with its behaviors.*

The *at-risk population* varies but typically can be viewed as the weak, vulnerable, and those belonging to outlier groups. In regard to the vulnerable, this can include the children of extremist cult members who get preyed upon by the group's leader, refugees, minority group members being targeted in a conflict, or trafficked individuals. An outlier group based on genetics would be representative of albino individuals found across Central Africa. However, much of the cartel and gang-based violence associated with ritualized torture and sacrificial killing is also primarily directed against their criminal competitors. This form of violence and abuse, however, only accounts for a very small percentage of the overall secularized criminal incidents (including torture killings) taking place. Gang and cartel members inflicting pain, suffering, and death on their rivals (as well as state military and law enforcement and local police forces personnel) is quite common in Latin America but ritualized (dark spiritual) components to it are not and seemingly happen in an ongoing trickle of incidents over time.

In some instances, the abused (*at-risk population*) can also readily become the abuser (*perpetrator population*). This is seen in domestic US based prostitution where in a trafficked woman (or young girl) becomes so socialized into 'the life' by her pimp—who has groomed and conditioned her via a cult-like process of physical, sexual, and mental/emotional abuse—that she eventually becomes his 'bottom' (top girl) who then functions as both an enforcer and willing partner in the abuse and trafficking of other women (and young girls). These abused individuals therefore require extensive trauma counseling and mental health intervention. From a more extreme perspective, certain individuals abused and traumatized at a young age could conceivably develop similar psychopathy, but this would be a rare occurrence.

## **6. What more do you think the USG can do to address this issue?**

With regard to ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings, the most important thing the USG can do is to first obtain accurate baseline data and incident information as well as determining who the perpetrator and victim populations have been and presently are. Once initial studies are undertaken, only then can policy options begin to be formulated. We must accept that some level of dark magico-religious and psychopathy (sexual deviancy tied to delusions and/or repetitive rituals) will always take place domestically and internationally. While it is difficult to consider any target level of occurrence 'acceptable,' nonetheless at some point the law of diminishing returns is in effect when trying to enact our response policies. Also, in the process of studying the ritual abuse and killing phenomenon, we cannot demonize or other minority groups within the US, such as the vast majority of the more mainstream Santa Muerte followers who exist outside of the extreme and

criminalized gang (*maracultura*) and cartel (*narcocultura*) forms that have emerged.[21] We need to fully respect US Constitutional guarantees concerning freedom of religion and belief though such rights end for any religious orientation/faith when criminal felonies linked to the ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings of humans are involved.

**Policy Suggestions:** The USG needs to obtain and analyze historical and current baseline data related to these activities. This can be done initially unilaterally and later collectively with US allied states and also with communities of interest (different sectors/working groups) within the United Nations. The gathering and analysis of this data will inform the US government about the extent and geographic parameters of such crimes and how and what unilateral and collective responses should be developed.

## **7. In the larger picture of events, how do you see this when it comes to TOC (Transnational Organized Crime), including cartels and terrorist groups, etc.?**

Perceptions derived from the Fourth Epoch theoretical paradigm suggest that VNSAs can be representative of either Modern Epochal (Westphalian state dominance) or post-Modern Epochal (loss of Westphalian state dominance) civilization. This dichotomy can be readily viewed when comparing the old Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO; Fatah) under Yasser Arafat versus HAMAS. The former is secular, corrupt, and willing to work within the nation-state paradigm (and attempt to co-exist with Israel; administer its own mini-nation state) while the latter rejects Israel's very right to exist and would rather impose a pre-modern type of Islamic political body—such as an Emirate—on its lands in Gaza than mimic a Western-based political form.

The VNSAs that exist within and are representative of the Modern Epoch are more symbiotic with Westphalian states and do not seek their downfall or to replace them with a qualitatively different (out of paradigm) form of political governance. Historic mob bosses taking over the docks and trash industry in New York viewed themselves as patriotic US citizens (albeit with criminal/illicit based family businesses) and, while willing to meddle with local politics didn't want to take the political system down and replace it with something fundamentally different. Similarly, the Viet Cong (albeit tied to Ho Chi Minh's northern Communist state) sought to replace the South Vietnamese state with another Westphalian state and operated within the constraints of our modern paradigm. Even the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico as a long existing cartel from the later 1980s tends to be symbiotic with the Mexican state—and while often enjoying high levels of impunity in Culiacán, Sinaloa and other strongholds—thus works within the system. The religious and spiritual expressions of these VNSAs are more traditional and mainstream.

The VNSAs that exist within and are representative of the post-Modern Epoch are an altogether different grouping. Transnational organized crime (TCO) groups (such as some of the Mexican cartels and gangs) as well as some terrorist/insurgent groups (like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State) and extremist cults (such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)) are far more dangerous. They do not seek to operate within traditional political and social systems or respect them if their power aspirations are achieved but instead wish to dismantle them and replace them with pre- and post-Modern forms of human social and political organizations. They can literally be considered early

examples of ‘Westphalian state killers.’ The religious and spiritual expressions of these VNSAs ultimately also exist outside of the Modern paradigm (with both pre- and post-Modern attributes). As discussed in the rest of this statement, their spirituality and magico-religious activities can readily be considered anathema to Modern civilized values and basic human rights and as such may include ritual abuse (torture) and sacrificial killings.

The aforementioned fight for the future related to ‘human social and political organization’—over what the dominant post-Modern state form will look like (and the values it adheres to)—presently appears to be a three-way one. On one hand we have the liberal-democracies representative of Westphalian states led by the United States and her allies squaring off against resurgent authoritarian states with China (which represents a mini-civilizational area and less so a modern state form) attempting to take the global lead and with Russia, Iran, North Korea, and others presently loosely aligned. Into this global competition, the post-Modern Epoch VNSAs—the emerging ‘Westphalian state killers’ are now in play. They may unilaterally engage in this conflict, such as, in the case of the Islamic State’s Caliphate, representing such an existential threat that both liberal-democracies and authoritarian states tenuously worked together to cooperatively dismantle it. Such unilateral action is also found in Latin America with gangs and cartels extending their grip across many cities and regions as a vast criminal insurgent network that is still gaining momentum. A strategic concern related to this fight for the future—beyond the dark and amoral spirituality and related ritual abuse and sacrificial killing activities of these new types of VNSAs—is that we may also begin to see alliances and cooperation between them and authoritarian states against liberal-democratic states. We have already seen a bit of this with China engaging in past illicit trade with the Mexican cartels—supplying them with precursor chemicals (for synthetic narcotics production) and weaponry in exchange for natural resources (like timber and iron ore) and hard currency. At that point we could conceivably have a full-scale US national security threat developing on our hands in addition to having to contend with the heinous ritualistic crimes committed by some of these VNSAs and/or individuals associated with them.

#### **8. You also mentioned the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of interventions and not doing more harm? How well are we evaluating our programs?**

What seems to ‘bite us’ time and time again are the second order effects related to the implementation of our national and homeland security policies vis-à-vis illicit economies and VNSAs—especially the post-Modern ones. I can give three quick examples in this regard to illustrate what I am getting at. The first example is the interdiction and shutdown of the flow of illicit narcotics (primarily cocaine) through the South Florida/Caribbean route combined with the targeting and dismantlement of the Medellín and Cali cartels in Colombia during the 1980s and mid-1990s. While a highly successful combined strategy, the second order effect was to push the flow of illicit narcotics (primarily cocaine) via the land route through Mexico into the United States and cause the eventual rise and empowerment of the Mexican cartels. The second example is the deportation of foreign national youth (non-US citizens) who were members of the MS-13 and 18<sup>th</sup> Street gangs in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan region during the mid-1990s and early 2000 period. While this helped to greatly clean up the local streets, jails, and prisons the second order effects resulted in these gangs (*maras*) fully entrenching themselves in Central America (Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador) and then later establishing themselves on the US East

Coast via new migrant waves into our country. The third example, which is more about opportunity cost and policy ineffectiveness, is the US invasion of Afghanistan post 9/11 which went beyond a ‘render safe’ operation against Al Qaeda, and their Taliban hosts, and attempted to engage in a societal reengineering (and nation-building) program as was undertaken with Germany (Western) and Japan after their unconditional surrenders following Second World War. No hope ever existed of bringing Western liberal-democratic institutions to Afghanistan within the context of the ‘constraints’ operated under, with the effort turning into a ‘mugs game’ of corruption that enriched others at US taxpayers’ expense. After a two-decade debacle, we correctly extricated ourselves from that quagmire with a considerable loss of treasure (\$2.3 Trillion) and some blood (6,240 US deaths).[22] We now witness the Taliban back in control of Afghanistan, much enriched with a vast mass of war materials incomprehensibly left behind and not destroyed, along with Al Qaeda once again enjoying a sanctuary in which they can attempt to reconstitute themselves so that they can more effectively engage in terrorist activities.

**Policy Suggestions:** The highlighted examples suggest that as a nation—when responding to illicit economies, VNSAs, and related extreme and heinous forms of criminality (including ritual abuse and killings, body parts trafficking, et al.)—we really need to up our game. When formulating national and homeland security policies, some sort of mechanism or process needs to be adapted that brings in an evaluation component. Feedback loops are a basic component of the public policy process which allow for evaluating policy effectiveness and subsequent implementation modifications to be undertaken. For whatever reason in this venue, they appear to be underutilized. Further, prior to passing US security related policies, the plausible second order effects which may come about need to be at least considered if not proactively red teamed via a devil’s advocate process. Another methodology may be to build in ‘sunset clauses’ to terminate policies that do not achieve certain levels of effectiveness. The intent should be to follow a ‘do no harm’ directive as sometimes undertaking a policy may cause more damage than doing nothing. Politically, this may be counterintuitive, but we must not let short-term political gain be viewed as acceptable vis-à-vis a longer-term strategic loss or failure.

Once again, I would like to give thanks for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations on the important national/homeland and international security matters discussed here in.

## Endnotes

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