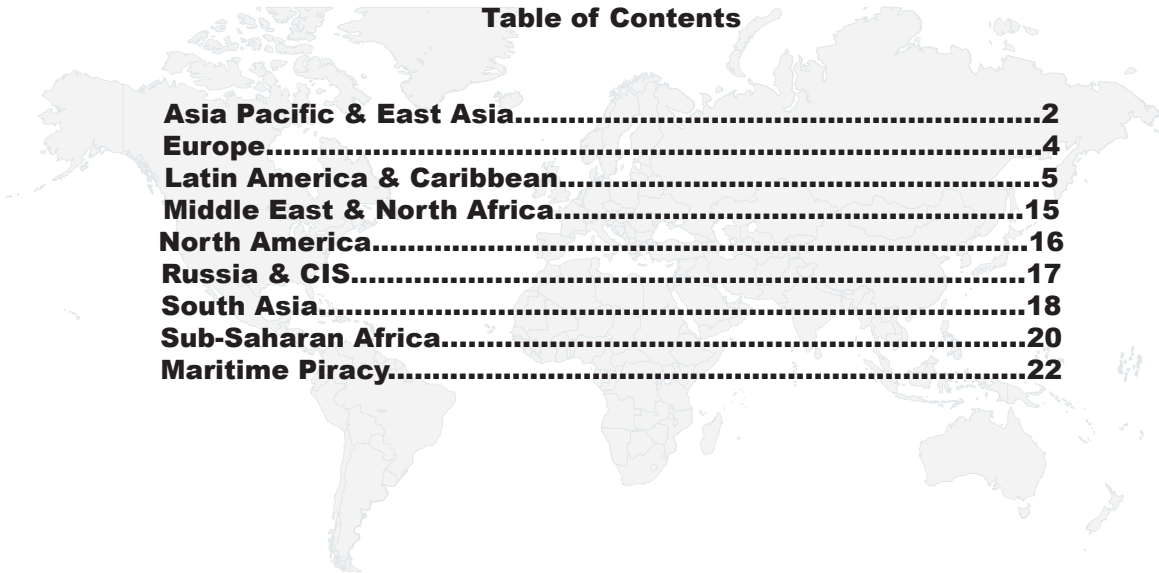


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ASIA PACIFIC & EAST ASIA

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China

7 December 2009: There is increased concern that students at elite schools in the southern city of Shenzhen are being targeted for kidnapping for ransom after at least five such incidents were reported over the past six months. The ransom amounts are known for two of the incidents, being respectively 2.1 and 3.9 million Hong Kong dollars (approximately US\$270,000 and US\$503,000). On at least two occasions the kidnapers are believed to have killed their victims despite the fact that the parents paid ransom. It is probable that the schools are being targeted because many of the students are from well-to-do families. Also, while both male and female students have been targeted, the former are believed to be at higher risk, because kidnapers believe that families are more likely to pay ransom for a son. Schools have increased security in response, installing CCTV systems, barring strangers from entering school premises without registration and urging parents to pick up students from school.

Philippines

20 January 2010: Security officials stated that extortion is likely behind a 19 January bombing that targeted the residence of the mayor of Lamitan City in Basilan province. The explosion caused injuries to a passer-by. Officials stated that the mayor had likely refused to pay protection money to one of the militant groups or to common criminals who are active in Basilan.

6 January 2009: On 5 January kidnapers released a 19-year-old man in Zamboanga del Norte province. The

kidnapers, who remain unidentified, seized the victim on 27 August inside a family-owned gas station in the town of Liloy, located in Zamboanga del Norte. The victim is the grandson of a former mayor in this province. The family paid a ransom of 50,000 pesos (approximately US\$1,100), but a local official stated that pressure applied on the kidnapers by police and army operations also helped to secure the release.

18 December 2009: On 17 December members of the communist rebel group New People's Army (NPA) attacked a road project in Boston, located in Davao Oriental province, on the eastern side of Mindanao Island. An army official stated that personnel working on the project had received several extortion demands from the NPA, and the aim of the attack was to destroy construction equipment and harm personnel. The NPA often resorts to destroying equipment to reinforce its extortion demands. The official added that troops foiled this objective; however, one civilian and two members of a citizens' militia -- who were securing the site along with the army -- were killed.

11 December 2009: Suspected members of the militant Islamist group Abu Sayyaf kidnapped a college official near his residence in Isabela, located on Basilan Island. The militants have demanded a ransom of 20 million pesos (approximately US\$432,000), including an immediate payment of 100,000 pesos (more than US\$2,100) from the man's family.

In a separate development, the severed head of a Philippine worker whom Abu Sayyaf had kidnapped on Basilan in November, was found on 9 De-

cember. Abu Sayyaf had demanded a ransom of 1.5 million pesos (approximately US\$32,400) for the release of the worker and two of his colleagues who were kidnapped at the same time. The other two individuals are free, but it is not known how their release came about.

6 December 2009: On 6 December police officers in Calumpit, located in Bulacan province on the island of Luzon, killed six individuals who were involved in the 3 December kidnapping of an Indian businessman in Quezon City, Metro Manila. The man was seized while driving in his vehicle along Luzon Avenue. The kidnapers initially demanded a ransom of 5 million pesos (more than US\$107,000), but eventually agreed to a payment of 75,000 pesos (approximately US\$1,600). Police officers monitored the handover of the money, and a fire exchange occurred at that point; the businessman -- who is involved in the loan business -- was unharmed.

Thailand

20 December 2009: On 19 December police officials arrested two Korean men who in November kidnapped a countryman who owns a used-car business in Bangkok and held him until he paid a ransom of 780,000 baht (more than US\$23,000). It is not known where the kidnapers seized the victim, but they held him in a house in Bangkok's Soi Lat Phrao area. They initially demanded 5 million baht (nearly US\$150,000), claiming that the victim's brother had borrowed that amount from them and had not returned it, but eventually released him after he paid the lower amount. After his release, the

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business owner reported the incident to police officials, leading to the arrests.

15 December 2009: Thai police officials have rescued four of the five members of a Singaporean family who were kidnapped in Bangkok in late November for ransom and have arrested six suspects in the case. On 24 November the kidnappers seized a husband and wife -- who are owners of a textile business -- when they arrived to Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport to research business opportunities. One day later, the kidnappers seized the couple's two children and the woman's mother when they flew in from Singapore. The abductors subsequently transferred the younger woman back to Singapore, where she is still in captivity. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of 30 million baht (nearly US\$904,000) and had already forced the man to hand over 900,000 baht (approximately US\$27,000).

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EUROPE

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Bulgaria

1 December 2009: According to an English media source, members of the criminal underworld recently made an extortion demand for more than US\$825,000 from a Bulgarian soccer player who plays professionally for an English club, threatening to kidnap his wife and daughter if he did not pay. The player allegedly cut a deal with the extortionists and immediately flew his wife and daughter to England.

3 December 2009: On 2 December law enforcement officials in the north-eastern province of Treviso arrested a 33-year-old man from Sernaglia della Battaglia, located approximately 30 mi/50 km northwest of Venice, for extortion. The suspect had demanded 15,000 euros (more than US\$22,000) from a local businessman, warning of him of unspecified negative consequences for his business if he did not pay. Officials arrested the extortionist as he attempted to collect the payment.

Italy

16 January 2010: Law enforcement officials arrested six Chinese nationals who were attempting to extort money from a business in Osannoro, a village located in Sesto Fiorentino municipality in Italy's Tuscany region. Five other members of the group escaped. The targeted business produces leather goods and is run by Chinese nationals. The extortionists visited the premises on at least four different occasions since 10 December; the amount they demanded is unknown. The leader of the extortion gang was a former colleague of the owner's.

21 December 2009: Law enforcement officials recently arrested 22 suspected organized crime figures for extorting protection money from merchants and small-scale business owners in Ercolano, a town located southeast of Naples. Some of those arrested are suspected of having attacked with explosives the establishment of a business owner who refused to pay. Details on when these acts occurred or the amounts that were extorted are not available.

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LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

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Brazil/Paraguay

16 December 2009: A woman recently reported the kidnapping of her husband, a businessman from the Brazilian state of Parana. The kidnapping occurred on 23 November, but the woman reported the case after she made a US\$108,000 payment on 2 December and her husband did not return. The payment occurred on Paraguayan territory, but no information is available on the kidnappers' nationalities or on where the victim is located at present. A Paraguayan police official stated that the victim was known to Brazilian police as a "trafficker."

Colombia

26 January 2010: On 25 January Colombian authorities rescued a woman and her daughter who were kidnapped on 13 January and were being held in the city of Riohacha, located in the department of La Guajira, on the Caribbean coast. Authorities arrested two Venezuelan citizens who were guarding the hostages. The kidnappers had demanded a ransom of 1 billion pesos (approximately US\$500,000).

26 January 2010: Law enforcement officials rescued in Ocana, located in Norte de Santander department, a farm owner who had been in captivity since 29 October 2009. The kidnappers seized the man from his farm, located in San Martin, in the southern part of Cesar department, and had demanded a ransom of 10 billion pesos (approximately US\$5 million).

24 January 2010: Colombian authorities recently rescued a Swiss woman who was kidnapped two weeks

earlier in the city of Dibulla, located in the Guajira department, in the northern part of Colombia. The kidnappers had demanded a ransom of US\$350,000. A shootout occurred during the rescue operation, but there were no reports of injuries. The kidnapped woman resides and works in Colombia.

22 January 2010: Suspected members of the left-wing rebel group National Liberation Army (ELN) recently kidnapped a farm owner in a rural area of Tibu, located in the department of Norte de Santander. The kidnappers released the victim approximately 30 minutes after seizing him, after coming under pressure due to a rescue operation launched by army troops.

13 January 2010: Army personnel rescued two kidnapping victims who were being held in the municipality of Valdivia, located in the department of Antioquia. One of the victims had been kidnapped on 5 January from his farm in the municipality of Briceno, and the kidnappers were demanding a ransom of 50 million pesos (approximately US\$25,000). No additional information is available on the other victim. According to a local media report, the kidnappers were common criminals, not members of one of Colombia's rebel groups.

9 January 2010: Security forces in the department of Huila rescued a 15-year-old boy several hours after he was kidnapped in Gigante municipality. The kidnappers seized the victim as he was riding his motorcycle near the Bucaros recreational center; it is not known if the kidnappers demanded a ransom.

8 January 2010: According to police figures, in 2009, there was a 51-percent reduction of kidnappings in Colombia, with 214 recorded cases, compared to 437 in 2008. In 2009 there were 155 cases of what are classified in Colombia as "extortive kidnappings" (a category that includes kidnappings for ransom and those that are perpetrated in order to extract some political concession), 198 such kidnappings were recorded in 2008. The largest decreases in kidnapping occurred in the departments of Bolivar (100 percent), Antioquia (76 percent), Meta (61 percent) and Valle (54 percent); the capital city of Bogota experienced 37 percent fewer kidnappings than in 2008. Officials also stated that a total of 63 kidnapping victims remain captive in the country.

Meanwhile, a study by the non-governmental organization Security and Democracy Foundation that was released in mid-December 2009 and was based on figures for January-October 2009 showed that criminal groups were responsible for 59 percent of extortive kidnappings in the country, while the left-wing rebel group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) accounted for 26 percent. Recently formed gangs conducted 7 percent of kidnappings; these groups' share of extortive kidnappings experienced an increase in 2009 compared to 2008.

21 December 2009: On 21 December suspected members of the left-wing rebel group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) kidnapped the governor of the southern department of Caqueta. The rebels attacked the governor's residence in the departmental capital of Florencia, exchanging fire with members of the governor's

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security detail. The governor's body was found on 22 December in a rural area of the department. It is not known if FARC ever made any demands.

10 December 2009: On 7 December armed individuals kidnapped a merchant who is based in Santander de Quilichao, located in Valle de Cauca department. The abductors seized the man at a ranch he owns in Timba, located approximately 12 mi/20 km northwest of Santander de Quilichao, and escaped toward the municipality of Buenos Aires, a mountainous area located south of Timba. The kidnappers have not made any demands thus far.

6 December 2009: Army and police forces in the western department of Putumayo rescued a 49-year-old gold mine owner on 5 December, approximately 18 hours after he was kidnapped. The kidnappers had demanded a ransom of 80 million pesos (approximately US\$40,000). The abductors seized the man on the premises of his mine, located in Vereda San Pedro, in the municipality of Villagarzon; government troops freed him in the municipality of Perto Guzman, located approximately three hours away from where he was kidnapped.

5 December 2009: According to Fondelibertad, a government agency that tracks kidnapping statistics, 138 people were kidnapped in Colombia in January-November 2009, compared to 181 during the first 11 months of 2008, a decline of almost 24 percent. The number of foreigners kidnapped through the end of November 2009 was two, down from five in 2008.

Ecuador

23 January 2010: On 22 January police officers rescued an 8-year-old girl who was kidnapped on 11 January in Quito and for whom the kidnappers were demanding a ransom of US\$1 million. No further details are available about this incident.

Meanwhile, Ecuadorean authorities stated that during 2009 there were 537 reports of kidnappings for ransom in the country.

12 December 2009: On 11 December law enforcement officials rescued a 53-year-old woman who was kidnapped on 22 October. The kidnappers seized the woman as she was traveling to her residence, located in Amaguana, Pichincha, and transferred her to a location on the Calacali-La Independencia road, northwest of the capital city of Quito. The kidnappers had demanded a ransom of US\$2 million, but no money was paid. A shoot-out resulted during the rescue operation, during which one of the kidnappers was killed.

El Salvador

9 January 2010: A 16-year-old boy who was kidnapped on 6 January has been released unharmed, evidently after his family paid ransom. The kidnappers seized the boy on Jose Alberto Masferrer Avenue in El Calvario, located in the municipality of Santiago Nonualco, in La Paz department. They demanded ransom from the family, but the amount is unknown.

9 January 2010: On the morning of 8 January five armed individuals kidnapped a sugar cane cultivator in the

residential area of Santa Isabel, located in El Pedregal, in the municipality of El Rosario, La Paz department. The kidnappers also seized one of the victim's employees, who was riding in the same vehicle, but released him shortly thereafter. The kidnappers have contacted the family to demand a ransom, but the amount is unknown.

Guatemala

21 December 2009: The Guatemalan press has reported about a series of kidnappings conducted in relatively well-to-do areas of Guatemala City. The perpetrators are well dressed and drive luxury vehicles and do not look out of place in the areas where they operate. They gain access to residences by claiming that they need to use the telephone or by asking assistance for some kind of problem and then hold the occupant(s) hostage, while calling family members to demand ransom. According to the press reports, the perpetrators have usually scouted out the residences they target and may have assistance from service personnel. The reports did not identify the areas of Guatemala City where such incidents have occurred.

16 December 2009: Criminal gangs that extort money from public bus operators have increased the amount of money they are demanding during December as a way to provide themselves with a "Christmas bonus." The average monthly demand is of approximately US\$180; that amount has been increased by approximately 50 percent ahead of the Christmas holiday season.

Gangs extort approximately US\$10,000 a day from bus operators; so far in 2009,

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more than 170 bus drivers and conductors have been killed for non-payment.

Honduras

28 January 2010: On 27 January several individuals kidnapped a 6-year-old boy who is a U.S. citizen in La Lima, located in the Cortes department. The boy was visiting family in the city and was walking along with several other children in La Lima's Sitraterco neighborhood when he was abducted. The kidnappers have contacted the family to demand ransom; according to a media report, the demanded amount is "large," but an exact figure is not available. Family members stated that the kidnapping may have been an act of revenge by an unidentified person with whom the boy's mother has a long-standing conflict.

26 January 2010: At approximately 2330 local time on 26 January gunmen kidnapped the 24-year-old son of a Tegucigalpa businessman as he was attending a soccer game at a venue located on Morazan Boulevard. The gunmen killed the victim's bodyguard, who attempted to foil the abduction. It is not known if the kidnappers have contacted the family to demand a ransom.

20 January 2010: At approximately 1440 local time on 18 January several armed individuals kidnapped a 16-year-old boy in Ocotepeque, located in the western part of the country, as he was traveling in a vehicle with a family member. The kidnappers have demanded a ransom of 4 million lempiras (approximately US\$208,000).

13 January 2010: On 12 January kid-

nappers released the 23-year-old son of a local zSan Pedro Sula businessman who had been in captivity since 24 December. The kidnappers seized the man in a neighborhood called Ideal, as he left an automotive repair shop owned by his father. The family paid a ransom of 500,000 lempiras (approximately US\$26,000) to secure his release.

13 January 2010: On 11 January kidnappers seized a 31-year-old woman in San Pedro Sula's Moderna neighborhood as she left a restaurant owned by her father. The kidnappers have contacted the family to demand a ransom of 10 million lempiras (approximately US\$520,000).

10 January 2010: According to official statistics, 111 kidnappings were recorded in Honduras in 2009, compared to 79 in 2008 and 42 in 2007.

3 January 2010: The body of a 26-year-old man who was kidnapped on 31 December was found in the early hours of 3 January; the incident occurred in La Lima, located in the northern department of Cortes. The kidnappers seized the victim in La Lima's neighborhood of Los Pinos and demanded a ransom of 300,000 lempiras (approximately US\$15,600). The kidnappers and the family eventually agreed on 200,000 lempiras (approximately US\$10,500), which the family paid. The kidnappers apparently killed the victim shortly after collecting the ransom.

10 December 2009: On 9 December security forces rescued a farm owner who had been kidnapped three days earlier while leaving his farm near the northern city of La Ceiba. The kidnap-

pers were holding him at a location on the Nombre de Dios mountain range, located south of La Ceiba; they initially demanded a ransom of 5 million lempiras (approximately US\$260,000), which they eventually lowered to 1 million (approximately US\$52,000). Law enforcement officials arrested one of the kidnappers as she attempted to collect the ransom. She revealed the spot where they were holding the victim. Authorities encountered three other kidnappers, one of whom was killed during the rescue operation; the victim was not hurt.

8 December 2009: On 7 December law enforcement officials rescued a 19-year-old university student and son of a businessman who was kidnapped one day earlier in Villanueva, located in the department of Cortes. The kidnappers had demanded a ransom of 10 million lempiras (approximately US\$520,000), but no money was paid. The kidnappers were holding the victim in a village in the municipality of San Manuel, located approximately 6 mi/10 km northeast of Villanueva.

Mexico

30 January 2010: An Italian citizen was reportedly kidnapped on the evening of 28 January in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo. No further details are available about the circumstances of the kidnapping; it is also not known if the victim was a traveler or resided in Mexico.

26 January 2010: On 24 January police officers in Mexico City rescued a kidnapped woman who was being held in the Topilejo community, located in the Tlalpan borough. Police officers

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recovered the ransom money, but the amount is unknown; reports also did not specify how long the woman had been in captivity. A fire exchange occurred during the rescue operation in which a police officer was killed and a suspected kidnapper was injured; the kidnapping victim was unharmed.

24 January 2010: Three armed individuals shot and killed a businessman in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, during a kidnapping attempt. The kidnappers tried to seize the man at his residence, located in the San Martin neighborhood and shot him when he resisted; the victim was involved in auto sales.

24 January 2010: Late on 19 January armed individuals kidnapped a merchant as he was leaving a nightclub in Tapachula, located in the state of Chiapas, near the border with Guatemala. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of 5 million pesos (approximately US\$385,000) from the man's family. The victim escaped on 21 January, after realizing that his captors were asleep.

18 January 2010: On the night of 17 January law enforcement officials in Tijuana rescued a 2-year-old child who had been kidnapped on 15 January. The kidnappers seized the child from a vehicle that his mother was driving; the woman was assaulted during the kidnapping. The perpetrators had demanded a ransom of 300,000 pesos (approximately US\$24,000) from the child's family.

17 January 2010: Law enforcement authorities arrested in Ciudad Juarez's Campestre Virreyes neighborhood three individuals who on 13 January

kidnapped a 20-year-old man. Authorities recovered 3,000 pesos, part of the 20,000-peso (approximately US\$1,600) ransom the family paid to secure the victim's release.

17 January 2010: Police officers in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, foiled an attempted kidnapping, rescuing the female victim and arresting one of the three abductors. The abductors seized the woman on Matamoros Street, in the central part of the city, as she was entering her vehicle. A police patrol witnessed the incident and chased the kidnappers as they drove away in the victim's car. Two of the perpetrators escaped.

16 January 2010: On 14 January law enforcement officials in Leon, Guanajuato, arrested four individuals who had kidnapped a local businessman in the city's Hacinda Arriba neighborhood and were demanding a ransom of 1 million pesos (approximately US\$79,000). The businessman is now free; it is not known if any ransom was paid to secure his release. Officials are also investigating whether the suspects were involved in another kidnapping in Leon on 4 January. The victim was later released; no information regarding ransom is available. The four arrested individuals have no known links to drug trafficking and do not appear to have any prior run-ins with the law.

15 January 2010: An employee of a telephone company was kidnapped at approximately 1300 local time in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon. The kidnappers demanded and received a ransom of 20,000 pesos (approximately US\$1,600), after which they released the victim unharmed. Army troops sub-

sequently arrested a police officer after receiving an anonymous tip that he was involved in the kidnapping.

14 January 2010: According to Chihuahua's top justice official, kidnapping fell in the state in 2009 but extortion increased; she did not cite any specific figures, but stated that the decline in kidnapping has been especially noticeable in Ciudad Juarez.

10 January 2010: On 9 January police officers arrested two individuals in Ciudad Hidalgo municipality -- located in the eastern part of the state of Michoacan -- who in early December kidnapped a local businessman for ransom and subsequently attempted to extort money from him. The kidnappers seized the man, who is involved in the agricultural sector, on 4 December in the community of San Antonio Villalongin shortly after he left his residence. They initially demanded 2 million pesos (approximately US\$158,000); when the man's wife convinced the kidnappers that the family did not have the financial means to pay the ransom, they lowered the demand to 500,000 pesos (approximately US\$40,000) and eventually agreed on a payment of 68,000 pesos (US\$5,400). A few days after receiving the ransom and releasing the victim, the kidnappers contacted the family again to demand the payment of 150,000 (approximately US\$12,000), which the businessman allegedly promised them while he was in captivity. The extortive phone calls continued periodically until the two suspects' arrest.

7 January 2010: At approximately 1700 local time on 6 January, army troops intervened to foil the kidnapping

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of a businessman's son in Acapulco. The kidnapers seized the victim from an upscale restaurant near Acapulco's port. The kidnapers then encountered an army patrol that gave chase and engaged in a shootout with the abductors. The victim was rescued unharmed; four kidnapers were arrested, one of whom sustained gunshot injuries. The shootout occurred in the vicinity of Fiesta Americana Hotel and Mangos restaurant. This area is popular with tourists, and several tourists -- most or all of whom were Mexicans -- witnessed the incident, but there is no indication that any bystanders were affected.

7 January 2010: According to the Committee for Law and Human Rights, A.C., an average of 675 cases of express kidnapping occur every day in Mexico City; official figures are much lower, but the Committee contends that 98 percent of cases go unreported. In approximately 85 percent of cases, the targets of express kidnappings are taxi users, and drivers are often accomplices. Other common targets are ATM users and frequenters of restaurants, cafes or nightclubs. One new trend the Committee has noted is for would-be kidnapers to offer vehicles for sale in order to lure victims.

4 January 2009: On 26 December a local businessman was kidnapped in the city of Aguascalientes. The kidnapers have contacted the family to demand ransom, but the amount is unknown. The family has not solicited the help of the authorities.

4 January 2009: The kidnapers of a rancher in the southern state of Chiapas have contacted his family to demand a ransom of 8 million pesos (approx-

mately US\$615,000). The abductors seized the man in December 2009 outside his ranch in Santa Teresa, located in the municipality of Juarez, near the border with Guatemala.

23 December 2009: According to Jalisco's attorney general's office, 18 kidnappings were reported in the state during 2009, compared to 12 in 2008. Officials stated, however, that some of the incidents occurred at the end of 2008 but were not reported until the beginning of 2009. Authorities also stated that all but three of the 18 cases have already been resolved, without specifying in how many of those cases there was a ransom payment.

23 December 2009: According to a local media report that quoted local officials, seven kidnappings have been recorded in Mexico City in the 10-day period since 13 December; in four of the cases the kidnapers released the victims after receiving ransom, while the other three cases are still ongoing. Based on the fact that the ransom amounts have been under 120,000 pesos (approximately US\$9,300), city officials believe that the kidnappings are conducted by recently formed gangs, composed of individuals who are attempting to raise funds quickly during the year-end period. In all, authorities recorded 192 cases of false imprisonment in Mexico City from the beginning of the year until 13 December, compared to 87 cases in 2008. This statistic includes not only kidnappings for ransom, but also express kidnappings, telephone extortions (virtual kidnappings) and "auto-kidnappings," i.e. incidents staged by the supposed kidnapping victims themselves.

22 December 2009: Residents and local officials in the municipalities of Ecatzingo and Tlalmanalco in the state of Mexico have expressed concern about recent cases of kidnapping and telephone extortions in these communities. Statistics about the number of incidents are not available, but residents are allegedly avoiding leaving their residences after 2000-2100 local time due to security concerns. Local officials have requested the presence of army personnel to increase security in these areas.

18 December 2009: On 17 December law enforcement officials in Acapulco rescued a 23-year-old female teacher who had been kidnapped the day before and for whom the kidnapers had demanded a ransom of 1 million pesos (approximately US\$77,000). The abductors seized the woman at approximately 2040 local time, while she was walking in the Jardin Palmas neighborhood in the western part of Acapulco. The kidnapers appeared to assault the woman's fiancé, who was with her at the time, but authorities later established that the attack was staged and the man was the kidnapping's intellectual author. He and four other people were arrested during the rescue operation.

14 December 2009: According to a local media report that cited statistics from judicial authorities, 146 kidnapping cases were reported in Ciudad Juarez in January-November 2009, compared to 44 in all of 2008. Authorities have tracked kidnapping cases in the city since 2004; in that year there were two reported incidents, followed by four in 2005, six in 2006, eight in 2007 and 44 in 2008.

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13 December 2009: Two separate kidnappings occurred on 13 December in Balacán and Tenosique, located in the state of Tabasco. The victim in Balacán was a young businessman, who was seized while driving on the El Triunfo-Balacán road. The kidnappers are not known to have made any demands so far. In the second incident, armed individuals entered the Hotel Los Azulejos in Tenosique, demanded that hotel staff reveal the names of guests and seized a man whom they appeared to have specifically targeted. The victim is believed to be involved in transporting illegal immigrants.

Meanwhile, a businessman who was seized on 30 November while leaving his residence in Reyes Loma Alta remains in captivity. The kidnappers have demanded 15 million pesos (approximately US\$1.2 million), and the family has reportedly asked for time to raise the money.

11 December 2009: According to the attorney general of the state of Tamaulipas, 14 kidnappings have occurred so far this year in Tampico, the state's major city. In September, however, a state police official put the number of kidnappings at 15; the reason for the discrepancy is unknown. The attorney general also stated that 21 kidnappings have occurred in three of the state's northern municipalities: Reynosa (15), Nuevo Laredo (5) and Valle Hermosos (1).

11 December 2009: A police official in the state of Morelos stated on 11 December that authorities are aware of three individuals who are currently being held by kidnappers in the state. The official stated that the kidnappings

occurred in the course of December but revealed no further details.

10 December 2009: On 9 December four individuals kidnapped a businesswoman of Spanish origin and Dutch citizenship in Cancun. Police officers intervened and freed the woman shortly after she was seized (within minutes, according to one report), and in the process exchanged fire with the abductors. The woman had come to Cancun to assist her son, who is being held in a local jail after a bar fight. The fiancé of another inmate had reportedly demanded money from the woman to guarantee her son's protection in jail; the abduction evidently occurred when she refused the pay.

8 December 2009: On 5 December a university student was briefly kidnapped in the Paseos de Taxquena neighborhood of the Mexico City borough of Iztapalapa. The kidnappers released the student shortly thereafter, after establishing that he was not the son of a merchant at the wholesale market, as they had originally thought. Wholesale market merchants and their family members are often targeted by kidnapping gangs. The latest incident indicates that the threat persists despite the arrests of kidnapping gang members in recent months.

8 December 2009: Federal police officers recently rescued a businessman who was kidnapped on 17 November in Acapulco and was being held in the nearby city of San Agustín. The victim was a 29-year-old man involved in the sale of heavy machinery. Federal officials stated that the kidnappers had demanded a high sum as ransom but did not reveal the amount; no money was

paid. Officials arrested four suspects in the kidnapping; they stated that members of this gang typically seized victims at their place of business and used violence and threats of violence to extract ransom payments.

4 December 2009: Security forces arrested five people in the municipality of Tlaltizapan in the state of Morelos as they attempted to collect a ransom of 300,000 pesos (more than US\$23,000) for a building sector businessman whom they had kidnapped on 26 November. The kidnappers initially demanded 1.5 million pesos (more than US\$118,000), but lowered the demand. The kidnappers also agreed to release the man on 28 November so that he could raise the money and attend to his health issues, while threatening his wife and daughter if he failed to pay. Investigators stated that the kidnappers used to pose as construction workers in order to collect information on prospective victims; they were active in Tetecalita, Pueblo Viejo and the municipality of Emiliano Zapata.

3 December 2009: At approximately 2045 local time on 2 December, armed individuals kidnapped a physician and union leader from his family's residence in Tijuana, Baja California.

Reports on 14 December indicated that authorities rescued the victim, who was being held in a house in the Hipodromo Burocratas neighborhood. The kidnappers were demanding a ransom of US\$300,000.

1 December 2009: On 1 December law enforcement authorities in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, rescued a 15-year-old female who had been kidnapped earlier

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in the day while going to school in the Rodriguez neighborhood. The two kidnapers demanded a ransom of 200,000 pesos (more than US\$15,000) from the girl's family. The family agreed to pay 40,000 pesos (approximately US\$3,100), but also alerted police officers to the incident. Officers were present at the scene of the hand-over of the money, and gave chase when the kidnapers attempted to escape. The kidnapers got into a traffic accident, killing one of them. The second suspect revealed the location where they were holding the victim. The girl was sexually abused while in captivity.

1 December 2009: Police officers in the Ecatepec municipality of the state of Mexico rescued a 42-year-old man who was the victim of an express kidnapping. According to police sources, the man had frequented a club, and two women asked to accompany him home. Upon entering his vehicle, the two women threatened the man, and then two accomplices entered the vehicle, forcing the victim into the trunk of his car. The suspects used the victim's bank card at several ATMs and told investigators that they also intended to call his family to demand ransom. At one point the man managed to signal for help, and police officers freed him in the Rustica Xalostoc neighborhood, arresting the four suspects.

Panama

20 January 2010: A Panamanian Cabinet minister confirmed on 20 January that there had been a plot to kidnap President Ricardo Martinelli. Two members of the Institutional Protection System (SPI), the agency that is tasked with providing security for the presi-

dent, his family and the presidential building, have confessed their involvement in the plot. The two were evidently approached by a Puerto Rican individual, who tasked them to kidnap the president. The Puerto Rican is now in the custody of Panamanian authorities and stated under investigation that the intent was to demand a ransom of US\$10 million. The kidnapping was supposed to occur during an official ceremony on a public plaza, but the time and location are unknown. Officials have also not disclosed when the contact between the Puerto Rican and the two SPI agents occurred.

13 January 2010: In the early morning hours of 12 January, two armed individuals kidnapped the owner of a discotheque and two of his employees while driving near Parque Lefevre in Panama City. The kidnapers abandoned the hostages shortly thereafter, as they were being pursued by police officers. Officials have arrested one suspect; authorities believe that the abductors intended to demand ransom for the hostages.

Paraguay

24 January 2010: Late on 23 January a 14-year-girl was kidnapped in Itaugua, which is located in Central department, approximately 18 mi/30 km from the capital city of Asuncion. The girl went missing after she left her family's residence in San Lorenzo to go to a relative's house in Itaugua; several hours later, her father received a phone call demanding several million guaranies (approximately US\$210,000) in ransom. The family reported the kidnapping to authorities, who rescued the victim and arrested the suspected kidnapper.

22 January 2010: On the night of 20 January, three police officers abducted a 19-year-old man in Fernando de la Mora, which is part of Asuncion's metropolitan area. The youth was a suspect in two robberies; the officers seized him outside his residence and held him while demanding a ransom of US\$10,000 from his father. Police officers found the location where the youth was being held and rescued him before the money was paid. The three officers who perpetrated the kidnapping were arrested.

18 January 2010: On 17 January a rebel group calling itself the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP) released a wealthy rancher whom they held captive for 94 days. As part of the negotiations for the rancher's release, his family donated 30 cows to three impoverished communities, but it is not known if the family paid the US\$5-million ransom the kidnapers had demanded.

Peru

14 December 2009: According to a report that merged on 14 December, three individuals kidnapped a 12-year-old child as he exited United Kingdom Great Britain school in the community of Huaycan, located in the eastern part of the province of Lima. It is not known if the kidnapers have made any demands.

Venezuela

29 January 2010: In the early hours of 29 January, police officers found the remains of a kidnapped businessman south of Maracay, in the state of Aragua. Kidnapers seized the man from

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his place of business at approximately 2000 local time in 22 January. It is not known if any ransom was demanded or paid. Merchants in Maracay's Santa Rosa neighborhood have expressed concern about several recent cases of kidnappings in this area.

23 January 2010: According to a local media report six people have been kidnapped in the state of Zulia in the first 22 days of 2010, and 10 other kidnappings have been foiled. The latest known victim was a 31-year-old Italian merchant, who was kidnapped on 21 January in Maracaibo's Sambil commercial center. At least two of the known victims have family members who were kidnapped in 2008, and authorities believe that the authors of those kidnappings also perpetrated the most recent ones.

12 January 2010: On 12 January an Italian businessman who was kidnapped on 24 October was freed in Caracas. It is not known if ransom was paid to secure his release.

9 January 2010: Police officials in the city of Petare rescued a taxi driver and arrested three individuals who were holding him hostage in the trunk of his own car. Officers stopped the vehicle when they noticed the occupants acting suspiciously. The driver told officials that the suspects seized him and his vehicle under threat of violence and intended to call his family to demand a ransom.

9 January 2010: On 7 January four armed men kidnapped a 32-year-old woman as she was going to her place of business in the municipality of Miranda in the state of Aragua. The kid-

nappers have allegedly demanded a ransom of 1 million strong bolivares (approximately US\$385,000), but this has not been confirmed. Security forces freed the victim, in the process arresting one of the kidnappers and recuperating 500,000 strong bolivares (approximately US\$192,000).

Meanwhile, security officials stated that they received 75 reports of kidnappings in the state of Aragua in 2009 and that 73 of the victims are already free.

5 January 2010: In the final days of 2009 kidnappers released a local businessman whom they kidnapped on 22 December. The victim is a merchant of dairy products; armed individuals seized him at approximately 1900 local time, as he was going to his residence, which is located in the Lajas Azules area of the town of Carora, in the state of Lara. The kidnappers demanded ransom but the amount is not known; the family allegedly paid to secure the man's release.

5 January 2010: On three separate occasions on 30 December law enforcement officials in the state of Aragua rescued kidnapping victims shortly after they were seized. Two victims, a 28-year-old male army officer and a 24-year-old female were kidnapped in the city of Maracay, respectively in the areas of Santa Rosa and La Pedrera. On both occasions, the kidnappers demanded what local media described as high ransoms, but the amounts are unknown. According to officials no money was paid. The third incident occurred in the city of Villa de Cura, located in Zamora municipality. Ransom was also reportedly demanded but not paid on that occasion.

31 December 2009: On 30 December a 45-year-old Portuguese businessman was kidnapped at approximately 0830 local time in Caracas, as he was going to a supermarket he owns. It is not known if the kidnappers have made any ransom demands thus far. Sources of the Portuguese community in Venezuela stated that at least 150 community members were kidnapped in the country since the beginning of 2009; the number is likely higher as most incidents go unreported.

29 December 2009: According to the National Federation of Venezuelan Ranchers (Fedenaga), 360 ranchers were kidnapped in Venezuela from the beginning of 2009 through 16 December. Federation officials stated that the threat of kidnapping is adversely affecting the ranchers' business activities.

Also according to a Fedenaga count, 1,810 people have been kidnapped in Venezuela over the past 47 years, and 1,505 of those kidnappings occurred during the administration of President Hugo Chavez, who assumed office in 1999.

28 December 2009: According to official statistics as of 23 December, 70 kidnappings occurred in the state of Aragua between the beginning of 2009; 67 of the victims were rescued either as a direct result of police operations or because the kidnappers came under police pressure.

28 December 2009: At approximately midday on 27 December law enforcement officials in the Jesus Enrique Losada municipality of the state of Zulia foiled the attempted kidnapping of a woman of Italian origin. Five

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kidnappers seized the woman inside a business establishment owned by her son in the neighborhood of La Concepcion; the kidnappers told the woman's son that he would have to pay a ransom of 5 million strong bolivares (approximately US\$2.3 million). Police officers -- who had been alerted to the ongoing incident -- intervened, arresting three of the kidnappers; two suspects escaped.

24 December 2009: Late on 22 December kidnappers released a female journalist whom they kidnapped at approximately midnight on 21 December as she left the television studio where she works, which is located in Los Caobos, Caracas. The kidnappers had demanded a ransom of 100,000 strong bolivares (approximately US\$46,500), but authorities stated that no money was paid and that the kidnappers abandoned the victim after coming under pressure from security forces. Authorities also stated that the kidnappers chose the victim at random.

23 December 2009: In the early hours of 21 December two individuals kidnapped a 26-year-old university student from his residence in the Pueblo Nuevo area of the city of Anaco, located in the state of Anzoategui. The student is the nephew of a local businessman; reports did not specify whether he was targeted for this reason. The kidnappers have demanded a ransom of 500,000 strong bolivares (more than US\$232,000).

In all, 76 kidnappings have been reported so far this year in the state of Anzoategui; of those 16 were in Puerto La Cruz, 48 in Simon Rodriguez municipality and 12 in Anaco.

21 December 2009: Law enforcement officials announced on 21 December that in recent days they rescued three kidnapping victims in separate operations in the states of Miranda and Tachira. In the first incident, officials rescued a man of Arab origin who had been kidnapped on 6 December in Los Ocumitos, Miranda. The kidnappers were demanding a ransom of 2 million strong bolivares (approximately US\$930,000); authorities arrested eight suspects in the case.

The victim in the second incident was an Ecuadorian merchant, who had been kidnapped on 14 December in Petare, which is also located in the state of Miranda and is part of greater Caracas. Kidnappers in that case had demanded a ransom of 300,000 strong bolivares (approximately US\$140,000).

In the state of Tachira, law enforcement officers rescued on 19 December a 23-year-old university student who had been kidnapped on 23 November from his residence in San Cristobal. He was being held in a mountainous area of the Independencia municipality. No details are available about any ransom demands.

21 December 2009: At approximately 0500 local time on 19 December, armed individuals kidnapped a businessman at a motor-car racing track in San Carlos, capital of the state of Cojedes. The victim owns a furniture store and is also the brother-in-law of the chief executive of the municipality of Ezeuiel Zamora. It is not known if the kidnappers have contacted the family to demand a ransom.

17 December 2009: Kidnappers have released the 20-year-old son of a local businessman who was kidnapped on 8 December in Barquisimeto, capital of the state of Lara. A local media report stated that the kidnappers demanded a high ransom but did not specify the amount. According to a law enforcement official no money was paid, but the kidnappers had to release the victim because they came under pressure from security forces, who located the house where he was being held.

16 December 2009: On 15 December law enforcement officials rescued two kidnapped youths who were being held in San Cristobal, Tachira. One of the victims is the son of a local business owner and the other is an employee of the firm; three individuals who posed as police officers kidnapped them on 5 December in the town of Michelena. The kidnappers demanded ransom but the amount is unknown. During the rescue operation, officials killed one of the kidnappers and arrested two others, both of them women.

15 December 2009: According to a local media report, the twin cities of Guarenas and Guatire have become a focus of kidnapping activities; the perpetrators favor them due to their proximity to the capital city of Caracas and because they are a gateway for travel to the eastern part of the country. So far this year, authorities have received 30 reports of kidnappings, but officials believe that the real figure is more than 90. In an estimated 90 percent of the cases the targets are merchants of foreign origin, who are often seized while leaving their stores after closing for the night.

15 December 2009: Law enforcement officials in the state of Falcon res-

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cued a 6-year-old girl who was being held in the Playa Blanca area of Puerto Cumarebo, located approximately 25 mi/40 km east-northeast of Coro. Three individuals kidnapped the girl at approximately 0700 local time on 10 December, as her father was taking her to school. It is not known how much ransom the kidnappers demanded. Authorities set up a payment on 14 December, at which point they arrested some of the perpetrators, who then led authorities to the location where the girl was being held. Authorities have arrested 11 suspects in the case, including at least one member of Falcon's state police.

Meanwhile, authorities are investigating the kidnapping of a man of Palestinian origin, who was kidnapped in Coro during the first week of December. No further details are available.

14 December 2009: At approximately 2200 local time on 12 December armed men kidnapped an 11-year-old child in Upata, located in Bolivar state, approximately 75 mi/120 km east of Ciudad Bolivar. The child and his family were visiting friends when armed men -- who identified themselves as members of the Colombian rebel group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) -- broke into the residence, stole valuables and left with the child. They contacted the family shortly thereafter to demand a ransom of 1.5 million strong bolivares (almost US\$700,000). The child's father stated that the family does not have the means to pay the ransom. Government officials maintain that the kidnapping was likely the work of common criminals, stating that the modus operandi did not fit that of FARC and that the rebels are not known to operate in the area where the kidnapping occurred.

A report on 16 December stated that the child had been released; it is not known if the family paid ransom.

13 December 2009: Law enforcement officials in the state in Miranda rescued a 77-year-old man who was kidnapped in Caracas' Los Chaguaramos area and was being held in Gurupera, a rural location in Araira, Miranda state. Officials believe that the kidnappers mistakenly targeted the man, confusing him with a well-to-do local merchant. It is not known if the abductors made any ransom demands during the three days that the victim spent in captivity.

10 December 2009: According to a Venezuelan human rights organization, 518 kidnappings were reported in the country in September 2008-September 2009, an increase of more than 40 percent over the previous one-year period, during which there were 366 cases.

7 December 2009: Security officials in the state of Zulia freed a farm owner as he was being transported by his kidnappers, who seized him at his farm, located in the Paraguaipoa area. Police officials stated that the perpetrators belonged to a kidnapping gang composed of Colombians, which had carried out other kidnappings in the area during 2009.

4 December 2009: At approximately 0330 local time on 2 December four armed individuals kidnapped two men, ages 35 and 31, as they left a McDonald's restaurant in Las Delicias, located in the state of Aragua. The kidnappers contacted one of the victims' mothers, demanding what a local source claimed was a large ransom; however, the vic-

tims were released at around 0130 local time on 3 December, apparently without paying ransom. Officials stated that the release came about due to the pressure exercised by security forces.

3 December 2009: According to security officials, 12 employees of the oil sector were kidnapped in the state of Anzoategui in October, November and the first day of December. The latest kidnapping occurred on 1 December, when a 39-year-old man was seized at around midday in the municipality of Miranda. Kidnappers released the man on 3 December in return for a ransom of 20,000 strong bolivares (approximately US\$9,300). Authorities stated that they cannot exclude the possibility that some elements from within PDVSA, the Venezuelan oil company, are involved in the kidnappings.

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MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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Algeria

20 January 2010: On the morning of 19 January suspected militants kidnapped an Algerian businessman in Toudja, located approximately 25 mi/40 km north of Bejaia, capital of the province of the same name. The militants had previously kidnapped two of the businessman's employees, releasing them after 10 hours with a warning that their employer had to pay 6 million dinars (approximately US\$82,000) or he would be kidnapped. It is not known if the businessman did not receive the message or chose to ignore it.

6 January 2010: On 4 January armed assailants kidnapped an Algerian engineer who was working on an infrastructure project for a Canadian firm. Insurgents with links to al-Qaeda, who have carried out similar abductions in Algeria in the past, were blamed for the kidnapping. According to an Algerian media source, four armed men dressed in "Afghan style" clothes conducted the kidnapping. The kidnappers seized the victim as he was traveling to work in Djebahia, which is located in the Bouira region, approximately 75 mi/120 km from Algiers. The abductors initially also seized the man's driver, but later released the driver and the vehicle.

The kidnappers released the engineer on 7 January, reportedly without a ransom payment. There is speculation that the kidnappers may have mistaken him for a foreigner because he was traveling in a company vehicle.

Israel

7 December 2009: On 4 and 7 December police officers in Herzliya and the Galilee region arrested three individuals who attempted to extort 1 million new shekels (approximately US\$263,000) from a fast-food chain. The suspects had a tape that purportedly showed poor hygienic conditions in the chain's restaurants in Israel; police officials believe that the tape is a fake.

Lebanon

12 January 2010: At approximately 0230 local time on 12 January four gunmen kidnapped two youths in Badaro, a residential neighborhood in east Beirut. The kidnappers initially forced the victims to withdraw money from a bank then called the families to demand ransom. The perpetrators released the two youths unharmed at approximately 0500 local time, after receiving the ransom payment; the amount is unknown.

Yemen

14 January 2010: According to a report that emerged on 14 January, an unidentified group that is holding hostage five Germans and one Briton in Yemen is demanding a ransom of US\$2 million, the release of several suspected al-Qaeda members who are being held by the Yemeni government and immunity from prosecution. Yemeni officials have told their German counterparts that they are engaged in negotiations with the kidnappers to obtain the hostages' release, but some German officials have expressed skepticism, pointing out that since September 2009 there has been no evidence that the hostages are still alive.

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NORTH AMERICA

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United States

22 January 2010: On 21 January armed individuals kidnapped at least two construction workers in San Antonio for the purpose of extracting ransom from their employer and their families. One of the two captives escaped and alerted authorities, who freed the other man and arrested two suspects. According to one of the captives, the kidnapers intended to demand US\$40,000. The perpetrators timed the kidnapping to coincide with pay day.

29 December 2009: According to figures released by police officials in Phoenix, Arizona, there were 302 kidnappings in the city in January-November 2009. If the pace established during the first 11 months holds, Phoenix will see a slight decline in kidnappings compared to 2008, when there were 359 incidents; it would be the first time since 2005 that kidnappings have fallen. A breakdown of the types of kidnappings is not available, but officials state that smugglers of drugs and illegal immigrants perpetrate most incidents. The victims are often rivals, associates or their family members, and ransoms range from US\$30,000 to US\$1 million.



Azerbaijan

8 January 2010: According to a report issued on 8 January, four Chinese nationals have been detained for kidnapping a Chinese resident of the Lokbatan settlement in the Baku area. The woman was abducted while walking outside a friend's house at approximately 1400 local time on 5 January; her car was also taken. The next morning, the woman's abductors contacted her husband and demanded a US\$300,000 ransom. The assailants had cut off the woman's finger and left it in the yard where she was taken; they threatened to kill her if their demands were not met or if the authorities were contacted. The husband then contacted the Department for Organized Crime and the arrests were made the same day.

Georgia

20 December 2009: A special operation succeeded in detaining three members of a criminal group suspected in the kidnapping of a Turkish citizen on or about 15 December. The suspects had prepared a vehicle with a mechanism designed to receive the ransom, although details were not reported. The kidnapped man has been released; the circumstances of his initial abduction are not known.

16 December 2009: Reports indicate that a Georgian national was kidnapped from the village of Nabakevi in the Gali district, which is part of the separatist region of Abkhazia. The kidnappers have demanded a ransom of US\$100,000.

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SOUTH ASIA

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Afghanistan

18 January 2010: The Taliban have claimed responsibility for kidnapping two Chinese engineers and four Afghans on 16 January. The kidnapping occurred in the Qaysar district of the northern province of Faryab, where the Chinese were working on a road-construction project; the Afghans were their drivers and bodyguards. The Taliban stated that an Islamic court will decide what should be done with the hostages.

3 January 2010: Two French journalists and three Afghans who were accompanying them were kidnapped on 30 December in the Shinkai district of Kaipasa province, located approximately 70 mi/120 km northeast of Kabul. A colleague of the journalists blamed the Taliban for the abduction, but a Taliban spokesman denied responsibility. According to a report that emerged on 6 January, a local Taliban commander contacted the authorities to claim responsibility for the kidnapping, demanding the release of a militant who is being held by the United States and the payment of an unspecified amount of money.

India

26 January 2010: On 22 January two men kidnapped an 11-year-old boy as he was being driven in his family's car near his school, which is located in Rohini, a residential area in North West Delhi. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of 20 million rupees (more than US\$430,000). The boy's father paid 15 million rupees (approximately US\$325,000), and the kidnappers released the boy on 24 January. Police

officers arrested the perpetrators on 25 January and recovered most of the ransom money. One of the kidnappers worked for a friend of the victim's father, a position which he used to gather information on the family.

Police officers stated that the same two suspects attempted to kidnap a businessman in Pitapura, a residential area in North Delhi, in 2009. Officials stated that the suspects were dressed as police officers during the attempted kidnapping; there have been several such incidents recently, prompting authorities to require stores that sell police-style uniforms to keep a record of purchasers.

21 January 2010: On 19 January police officers in Delhi rescued a 2-year-old boy who was kidnapped from his family's residence on the night of 30 September-1 October 2009. The kidnappers were demanding a ransom of 4 million rupees (approximately US\$87,000) and had already received 400,000 rupees (approximately US\$8,700). During the rescue operation authorities arrested four kidnappers; they planned and conducted the kidnapping after learning that the child's father had obtained a 4-million-rupee inheritance.

Among the kidnappers were the child's uncle and his wife. According to a local media report, in 32 of the 33 kidnap for ransom cases that were recorded in 2009, the kidnappers were the victim's relatives or friends.

6 January 2010: On 5 January police officers arrested a 23-year-old man who attempted to extort 5 million rupees (approximately US\$108,000) from a garment factory owner in south

Delhi. The suspect threatened to physically harm members of the businessman's family if he did not pay, but there were no actual incidents of violence.

27 December 2009: According to a local media report, Maoist rebels have increased the level of "protection" money they extort from building projects in order to keep up with increased costs for weapons and ammunition. The rebels are now charging 5-10 percent of the total project cost, compared to 2-5 percent previously. The Maoists extort the "protection" money on a variety of projects, including construction of roads, bridges and community centers, as well as laying or repairing of rail lines; the amount charged varies by the nature of the project. According to a government official, Maoists extort a total of 20 billion rupees (approximately US\$427 million) annually. They are active mostly in rural areas in various eastern states, including Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal.

21 December 2009: On 20 December police officers arrested a resident of Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh, for kidnapping a young mentally handicapped person on 10 December in an attempt to extort a ransom of 1.5 million rupees (approximately US\$32,000) from the victim's family. The perpetrator kidnapped the victim in the Hauz Khas area of southern Delhi and held him in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. He chose the victim based on the fact that the latter's father is well-to-do and was due to receive 2 million rupees (approximately US\$42,500) from a court case. The main suspect had three accomplices, who remain at large.

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20 December 2009: On 12 December suspected militants kidnapped a Manipur state official from his residence in the Mantripukhri area of Imphal, the state capital. The kidnapers contacted the family the next day to demand a ransom of 10 million rupees (approximately US\$212,000). No further details are available. A local media source stated that kidnappings are increasing "by the day" in Manipur, but cited no statistics.

16 December 2009: According to a local media source, a Maoist rebel leader has been extorting contractors in the Sonebhadra district of Uttar Pradesh state since early December. The man sustained injuries during a clash with a rival rebel leader and is now attempting to raise money for his treatment. Information on the amount of money he is demanding from the contractors is not available.

6 December 2009: On 3 December suspected militants kidnapped an engineer who works for the Manipur public health and engineering department as he was going from his office, located in the Khoyathong area to his residence in Imphal East. The kidnapers have allegedly demanded a ransom of 50 million rupees (approximately US\$1.1 million) from the victim's employer.

5 December 2009: A local merchant was kidnapped on 2 December in Sector-38 of the northern city of Chandigarh. The kidnapers demanded 50,000 rupees (more than US\$1,000), but they released the victim after he paid 5,000 rupees (more than US\$100) and promised to pay the rest later. Police officers arrested four suspects in the kidnapping on 3 December. The kidnapped

merchant claimed that the suspects had previously extorted money from eight other local merchants. There was a wave of extortions in Chandigarh in 2002, masterminded by an individual who used to threaten to kidnap merchants' children, but the perpetrator was arrested and, according to a local report, the city has not experienced this phenomenon since then.

Nepal

4 January 2010: According to industrialists and businesspeople, political parties and underground groups have stepped up extortion activities in the eastern districts of Sunsari and Morang. The organizations involved in this activity typically demand payments of at least 200,000 rupees (approximately US\$2,700), although it is unclear whether this is a one-time payment or a "contribution" that businesses must make periodically. According to the business owners, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist is the most active in extortion activities, but at least one other party and five underground groups are also involved. Businesspeople in the area often refuse to meet strangers or answer calls from unknown numbers due to fear of extortion.

Pakistan

5 January 2010: In December 2009 police officers in Lahore rescued a local pediatrician and arrested six members of a kidnapping gang, including the gang leader. The pediatrician, who is a resident of Wahdat Colony, Lahore, was kidnapped on 22 August, and his kidnapers were demanding a ransom of 30 million rupees (approximately

US\$350,000); no money was paid. Under investigation, the suspects stated that they conducted the kidnapping under instructions from the Lashkhar-e-Islami militant group -- which is based in Khyber Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) -- and that the ransom money was to be used to finance jihad. The gang members also confessed to having kidnapped five other people who were transferred to FATA; it is not known when those kidnappings occurred or how they were resolved.

Sri Lanka

20 December 2009: The end of the civil war in Sri Lanka appears to have already had positive effects on the kidnapping rate in the eastern district of Batticaloa. According to the Foundation for a Peaceful Co-Existence, a local non-governmental organization, 31 people have been kidnapped for ransom so far in 2009, and most of the victims have been released. This compares to 137 kidnappings in 2008; 19 of the victims were killed. Most of those kidnapped were business owners.

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SUB - SAHARAN AFRICA

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Africa regional

23 December 2009: The Israeli Counter Terrorism Bureau has warned Israelis against traveling to Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Mali and northern Nigeria. The warning comes in response to information that al-Qaeda may be planning to kidnap and conduct attacks against Israelis in these areas, as well as recent abductions targeting other foreign nationals in Africa.

Cameroon

12 January 2010: According to a report dated 12 January, two students of Universite des Montanges, located in Bangangte -- in the Nde division of West region -- were recently kidnapped and then released after their families paid ransom. A total of 5 million Central African Francs (nearly US\$10,500), were paid for the two victims, but the individual amounts are unknown.

Chad

11 December 2009: According to a report dated 11 December an individual claiming to speak on behalf of the Eagles of the Liberation of Africa -- a group that claims to have kidnapped three French citizens in Chad and the Central African Republic in November -- gave the French government a one-week deadline to begin direct talks with the group. If Paris does not respond favorably, the alleged spokesman threatened that the group will execute one of the hostages. The group also threatened to target French forces in Chad and French diplomats for assassination.

Meanwhile, on 14 December a Chad-

ian military official stated that he is "certain" that the kidnappers were acting on behalf of Sudanese intelligence services. He claimed that the Sudanese government conducted the kidnappings in order to foment instability in Chad and the Central African Republic.

Ghana

25 January 2010: According to police statistics, six kidnappings were recorded in Ghana in 2009. Three of the cases occurred in June, and one each in October, November and December. No details are available regarding the kidnapping incidents. A local media source reported that the phenomenon is new to Ghana and is causing worry among the population.

Mali

11 January 2010: In an online statement dated 10 January, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) threatened to kill a French hostage unless five of its members who are imprisoned in Mali are released within 20 days. The statement also demanded the payment of a monetary ransom of unspecified amount. The Frenchman was abducted on 27 November from a hotel in the town of Menaka, located approximately 900 mi/1,500 km northeast of the capital city of Bamako.

A report that emerged on 31 January stated that AQIM has postponed the deadline. A Malian man who serves as intermediary stated that there is no new deadline for the moment, but that a solution must be found quickly. He added that AQIM continues to insist on its demand for the freeing of prisoners but denied that the kidnappers have demanded a monetary ransom.

Mauritania

20 December 2009: An Italian couple and their Ivorian driver are believed to have been kidnapped in eastern Mauritania on 19 December. The Italians were on their way to Burkina Faso; their vehicle was discovered abandoned and riddled with bullets on 19 December near the Mali border in eastern Mauritania. Local residents in Kobenni, a town located approximately 5 mi/8 km from the border, reported gunfire during the evening hours of 18 December, but it is not known if the gunfire was related to the disappearance. Militants are known to operate in the area in which the disappearance occurred, and it is possible that the couple was kidnapped.

According to a report that emerged on 28 December, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for the kidnapping, stating that it was in retaliation for the "crimes" committed by the Italian government in Afghanistan and Iraq, likely referring to the Italian military presence in those countries. It is not known if AQIM has made any demands for the hostages' release.

Niger

30 December 2009: A 28 December attack on a group of Saudi tourists in western Niger, near the border with Mali, was a kidnapping attempt. An arms smuggler leading a group comprised of ethnic Arabs is believed to have perpetrated the attack on the Saudis, who were in Africa on a bird-hunting trip. The group had planned to sell the men to an al-Qaeda branch in Africa; however, fighting ensued when

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the targeted men attempted to defend themselves using their hunting rifles. Four of the travelers were killed, while two were injured.

Nigeria

26 January 2010: On 24 January gunmen kidnapped a high-ranking Anglican clergyman in his residence in Benin City. The kidnappers trailed the clergyman from the cathedral of St. Matthew, where he celebrated mass, and then overcame a guard at the residence before seizing the victim. The perpetrators have demanded a ransom of 50 million naira (more than US\$325,000).

Kidnappers released the clergyman on 27 January; it is not known if any ransom was paid. The victim was said to be in good physical condition and was reportedly not mistreated while in captivity.

15 January 2010: A government official was kidnapped at approximately 2200 local time in Abuja's Garki Area 1. According to a family member, as of 14 January the kidnappers had not made any contact. No further details are available.

13 January 2010: Kidnappers recently attempted to seize an Abia state official in Umuahia, the state capital. Local reports stated that the attempted kidnapping occurred as the official was watching a soccer match, but did not specify whether this took place at his residence or at a stadium or other public venue. A member of the official's security detail was shot and was in serious condition; reports also indicated that the official was hospitalized, but

the extent of his injuries is unknown.

12 January 2010: On 12 January unidentified gunmen kidnapped four expatriates -- three British nationals and one Colombian -- who were on their way to work. The kidnapping victims were reportedly contractors working at a power plant near Port Harcourt. During the attack in which the four were kidnapped, a Nigerian security officer was killed. According to a report that emerged on 14 January, the kidnappers have demanded a ransom of 300 million naira (US\$2 million).

Nigerian police officials stated on 18 January that the four hostages had been freed. It is not known if ransom was paid to secure their release.

20 December 2009: On the evening of 13 December gunmen kidnapped a 60-year-old tire merchant in the northern city of Kano as he was traveling to his residence. The kidnappers initially demanded a ransom of 60 million naira (approximately US\$397,000), but eventually released the businessman on 14 December in return for a payment of 10 million naira (approximately US\$66,000).

In a separate incident earlier in December, police officers freed a kidnapped affluent business owner. The rescue became possible after the kidnappers' vehicle developed a malfunction as they were attempting to take the victim out of Kano. There have reportedly been other kidnapping incidents in Kano, raising concerns among the local population and law enforcement authorities that the phenomenon of kidnapping -- typically associated with southern Nigeria -- is now spreading to the north.

3 December 2009: Security officials in the state of Bayelsa recently arrested eight former militants and three other individuals for engaging in extortion and other criminal activities in the state capital city of Yenagoa. According to a local media source, the detainees set up a "barricade" in the city's Kpansia area, where they extorted money from members of the public. They are also accused of having threatened the life of the head of a federal government agency. It has been a constant concern in southern Nigeria that militants who laid down their weapons as a result of amnesty deals with the government could turn to criminal activities if they are unable or unwilling to find gainful employment.

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Maritime Piracy

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Bangladesh

8 December 2009: On 4 December a group of 25-30 pirates attacked a fishing boat in the Bay of Bengal, off the coast of Cox's Bazar. Two of the fishermen, who were part of the 18-man crew, stated that the pirates assaulted the crewmembers and threw them overboard. Another fishing boat rescued the two, but the other 16 crewmembers are still missing.

Gulf of Aden

1 January 2010: On 1 January Somali pirates captured a chemical tanker in the Gulf of Aden. The vessel is owned by a Norwegian company but had been leased to an Indonesian firm. The Singapore-flagged tanker had a crew of 24, including 17 Indonesians, five Chinese, a Nigerian and a Vietnamese.

29 December 2009: Somali pirates seized a British-flagged chemical tanker and a Panamanian cargo vessel in the Gulf of Aden on 28 December. The British-flagged ship was en route from Thailand to Spain with 26 crewmembers from Bulgaria, Georgia, India, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. The Panama-flagged vessel was en route from the United States to India with a 19-man crew. Most of the crewmembers are believed to be Filipinos.

8 December 2009: On 6 December an Indian navy ship foiled an attempted pirate attack on a tanker in the Gulf of Aden. The navy ship deployed helicopters in response to a distress call from the tanker, forcing the pirates to abandon the attack. The pirates fired on the tanker's crew with small arms, but there were no reports of injuries.

Nigeria

2 December 2009: The Ghanaian navy recently rescued a Nigerian oil ship that pirates had hijacked near Lagos. The pirates escaped. One of the 29 crewmembers was found dead, after apparently having been beaten by the pirates.

Philippines

18 December 2009: According to a report dated 18 December, three crewmembers of a hijacked tugboat were released near Zamboanga City in southern Philippines. The assailants, who remain unidentified, attacked the boat and took the crew hostage on 21 November, as they sought shelter from a storm in Siocon, located in the Zamboanga del Norte province. The hijackers demanded a ransom of 5 million pesos (approximately US\$107,000); it is not known if any money was paid.

Seychelles

5 December 2010: According to reports on 5 January, Somali pirates released a Pakistan-flagged vessel, the Shazaib, and its crew of 29 approximately 1,000 mi/1,600 km north of the Seychelles on 2 January. The pirates seized the vessel on 6 December approximately 370 mi/600 km east of the island of Socotra and used it as a mother ship for smaller speedboats to launch attacks on more valuable ships, including a U.K.-flagged vessel that was en route from Singapore to Saudi Arabia with 2,300 Kia and Hyundai vehicles. The vessel has 25 crew members, including eight Bulgarians, 10 Ukrainians, five Indians and two Romanians. Somali pirates are currently holding at least 13 foreign vessels and nearly 300 crew members.

Somalia

18 January 2010: Somali pirates have released a Greek tanker that they had been holding since late November 2010. Media reports place the ransom amount paid for the tanker anywhere between US\$5 and US\$7 million; these reports have not been confirmed. The vessel was one of the largest ever seized by Somali pirates.

9 January 2010: Pirates who have been holding a British couple since October stated that they will kill the two unless they receive US\$3 million in ransom; the pirates established a two-month deadline beginning on 1 January. The pirates seized the couple in October 2009 as they were sailing in their yacht from the Seychelles toward Tanzania.


31 December 2009: Somali pirates attacked a Kuwaiti-flagged oil tanker with automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades approximately 900 mi/1,400 km east of the northern coast of Somalia on 30 December. The pirates were unable to seize the ship, and the attack, which lasted for approximately 30 minutes, caused no damage.

28 December 2009: According to the Chinese government, 25 Chinese sailors and the Singapore-flagged freight vessel they were manning are free after a two-month captivity in the hands of Somali pirates. The pirates seized the vessel in October 2009 in Seychellois waters. According to the pirates, they received a US\$4-million dollar ransom.

10 December 2009: On 10 December Somali pirates released a Maltese-flagged Greek cargo ship and its 24

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Ukrainian crewmembers. The vessel was seized on 2 May as it was sailing from the Middle East to Brazil with a cargo of soya beans. The pirates stated that they received a ransom of more than US\$2 million; the ship's owner confirmed that there had been a ransom payment but did not disclose the amount.

9 December 2009: On 8 December Somali pirates hijacked a Pakistani-flagged fishing vessel with 29 crewmembers onboard. No further details are available.

5 December 2009: On 3 December Somali pirates released a New Zealand-flagged ship they had seized on 13 June. The pirates also released the three Philippine and seven Sri Lankan crewmembers. Philippine officials made no mention of a ransom payment, but stated that the release came about after "prolonged and difficult negotiation."

3 December 2009: Reports on 3 December stated that Somali pirates had released a German container vessel and its 10-man crew, which they seized in the Gulf of Oman on 12 June. A local source stated that ransom was paid to secure the release, but the amount is unknown.