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Abstract:

Urban Security Regimes, Migrant Detentions, and the Militarization of the Southern Mexican Border

Since 2008, multilateral security cooperation agreements such as the Mérida Initiative, and the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), have resulted in the transfer of billions of dollars worth of security equipment, personnel, and intelligence between the United States, Mexico, and Central America. Such developments have occurred in tandem with a shifting of domestic national security priorities spotlighting migration and cross-border flows, as evidenced by the recent development of the Peña Nieto administration's *Plan Frontera Sur* (which has substantially elevated border surveillance technology installations as well as the number of migrant detentions and deportations).

In this presentation, a critical urbanist and geographical lens will be used to shed light on the city-level impacts of these geopolitical security initiatives, contextualizing the particular case of Tapachula, Chiapas within the larger discourses of border militarization. It will present the case of Tapachula as an example of a type of "fortress city"-like urban configuration that may become more commonplace through the transnationalization of border securitization regimes. It will make the argument that Tapachula, a southern Mexican border city situated within overlapping political geographies, presents an example *par excellence* of the "new military urbanism" (Graham, 2008) that is emergent in our post-9/11 global historical juncture.

Using testimonies, anecdotes, and on-the-ground experiences as evidence, this presentation will engage the following questions: How has an influx and implementation of US-origin homeland security technologies re-shaped the contours of everyday urban life? Who suffers the brunt of this recent surge of militarization in Chiapas, and how is this militarization differentially spatialized vis-à-vis other examples? Finally, how does this recent wave of urban border militarization build atop previous iterations of imperialist and neoliberal warfare?

Krys Méndez Ramírez is a Ph.D. student in Ethnic Studies at the University of California, San Diego. His current research centers on the intersections of race, space, political economy and militarization. Prior to this, Méndez had worked as an educator and community organizer in New York City, where he spent several years working around issues related to gentrification, criminalization, and immigrants' rights.