



Investigation Into Fatal Shooting on Mexico-Texas Border Lake

The Zapata County, Texas Sheriff's Office, along with the Texas Rangers and other agencies, are continuing their investigation of the recent fatal shooting of a man who was fishing on the U.S. side of Falcon Lake, which straddles the U.S.-Mexican border. Six years ago, an American man jet skiing on the Mexican side of the same lake with his wife was shot and killed after entering an area of the lake that was a battleground between two rival drug gangs, the Gulf Cartel and the Zeta. It has not yet been determined if drug cartel members were responsible for this latest shooting.



In this latest incident, which occurred on December 6, two men in their 20s, Oscar Eduardo Garza and Javier Armando Gonzalez, were fishing on the lake when they heard someone yelling at them to get off their boat. Gonzalez, who survived the attack, described the other boat as "all blacked out."

A December 14 report from KGBT, the CBS News affiliate in Harlingen, Texas, cited statements from the Zapata County Sheriff's Office noting that Gonzalez, who was behind the wheel of the boat, tried to drive away immediately after he noticed one of the men on the other boat holding what appeared to be an AK-47. He then heard gunshots being fired at them as they attempted to flee.

Gonzalez said he jumped off the boat and attempted to swim to the shore, and was able to reach a buoy, which he clung to while calling for help. He then saw the blacked-out boat head to the Mexican side of the lake. Rescuers took Gonzalez to a local hospital, where he was treated for hypothermia. Garza's wound was fatal.

Zapata County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Raymundo Del Bosque said his office is working with Texas Rangers and other law-enforcement agencies to investigate the incident and to determine who was responsible. Because of the fatal attack six years ago, which was linked to the Mexican drug cartels, investigators will look at the cartels as suspects in the recent killing, as well.

Back in 2010, an American couple, David and Tiffany Hartley, traveled on their Jet Skis to the village of Guerrero on the Mexican side of the lake to take photographs of an old church there. Mrs. Hartley told reporters in interviews that after they had visited the church and started back across the lake, armed men in three small boats raced toward them from shore. The couple tried to speed away, but the gunmen opened fire and Mr. Hartley was shot in the head.

She tried to haul her unconscious husband onto her own Jet Ski but was not strong enough. "I tried pulling him up, and you cannot imagine how awful it was not being able to help him," she told ABC News.

Authorities suspected that the David and Tiffany Hartley had inadvertently entered an area of the lake



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 27, 2016

that was a battleground between two rival drug gangs.

In a December 27 article about the recent Garza killing, Britain's *Daily Mail* reported that the investigation into the attack on the Hartleys was dealt a blow in October 2010, when Mexico's lead investigator, Rolando Flores, was decapitated. Flores's severed head was delivered in a suitcase to a military post near Mexico's border with Texas.

Two years later, police rounded up Salvador Alfonso Martinez Escobedo, a Zetas cartel leader is known as "Commander Squirrel," who they believed was behind the killings.

Escobedo is also linked to numerous other crimes, such as the escape of 151 prisoners in 2010 from a jail in the city of Nuevo Laredo and the flight of 131 prisoners in the city of Piedras Negras in 2012.

The Mexican Navy said in a statement quoted by the *Daily Mail*: "Squirrel is credited with being the mastermind of the deaths of 72 undocumented migrants in San Fernando." Moreover: "[He] is the alleged perpetrator of the narco graves found in Tamaulipas state, with more than 200 bodies and the execution of more than 50 people by his own hand in different parts of the republic, *as well as* the murder of David Hartley, an American citizen killed at Falcon Dam on September 30, 2010." (Italics added.)

While this information was valuable in helping to solve the Hartley murder, the *Daily Mail* noted: "It is not yet clear whether the Zetas cartel is behind the latest murder [of Garza]."

KRGV, Channel 5 News, an ABC affiliate in the Rio Grande Valley, recently interviewed former Zapata County Sheriff Sigifredo Gonzalez Jr., who was in office when David Hartley was killed. In a December 20 report, the news reporter asked Gonzalez about the recent fatal attack on Garza. "Falcon Lake is very safe. Falcon Lake is a very good lake to fish, just don't go to Mexico," said the former sheriff.

Channel 5 News reported that Gonzalez is familiar with the area, which is largely known for heavy drug trafficking. It noted that half of Falcon Lake is in the United States and the other half is in Mexico — but the Mexican side is controlled by a Mexican drug cartel.

"If something were to ever happen over there, our government, our country, city, state or whatever cannot go out there and do anything," Gonzalez said.

Continuing to speak about the Garza murder, Gonzalez said: "There should be no excuse for our government not to look into what really may have happened."

He believes that the information needed to solve the case will eventually come forward, just as it did in the Hartley case. "Our government will find out what happened, who did it. And it's just going to be a matter of putting things together and packaging up evidence to be able to prosecute those individuals," said the former sheriff.

Gonzalez hopes investigators can soon make an arrest in the case.

Photo: U.S. Coast Guard searches Falcon Lake in 2010, after the murder of David Hartley



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