

# *Gunfight Kills 22 Near Mexico City*

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Mexico City, July 1 (RHC) – Twenty-two suspected gang members were killed southwest of Mexico City early on Monday and one soldier was wounded, in one of the bloodiest shootouts with security forces since President Enrique Peña Nieto took power, the government said.

According to a Defense Ministry statement, the gunfight took place in Tlatlaya on the southern fringes of the State of Mexico, which borders Guerrero and Michoacan, states plagued by gang violence.

A spokesman for federal prosecutors said all the dead - 21 men and one woman - were believed to be gang members.

The shooting started after soldiers came under fire from the suspected gang members, resulting in a gunfight lasting several minutes, the government said.

Three women, alleged kidnapping victims, were freed and one soldier was wounded but is in stable condition, the statement added.

Peña Nieto took office in December 2012 pledging to quell gang violence that has claimed more than 90,000 lives since 2007. Total homicides are down in Mexico since he took over, but the death toll has risen in parts of the country.

The State of Mexico is the country's most populous region and Peña Nieto's home state, and there murders have risen by nearly 14 percent this year from 2013.

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