

The streets of Sinaloa are safe: Mexican Special Forces capture Chapo Isidro in Operation Murciélagos

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The capture of **Fausto Isidro Meza Flores**, known as **«El Chapo Isidro»**, which took place on the night of Friday, November 20, 2026, in **Guasave (Sinaloa)**, marks one of the most significant blows dealt by the Mexican armed forces to the leadership of drug trafficking. Cross-referencing reports from the Mexican press (*El Financiero*, *El País*) with official statements from the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. media outlets (*PBS*, *CBS News*) reveals an **elite surgical operation**, carried out by the **Mexican Army** thanks to close intelligence cooperation with Washington.

The military operation: «Murciélagos» and «Lobos» at the forefront

According to accounts by Mexican newspapers based on the bulletin issued by the **Segreteria della Difesa Nazionale (Sedena)**, the operation was not entrusted to regular units, but to the

most highly trained core of the **Mexican special forces**, relying entirely on the **«element of surprise»**:

- **Elite units on the ground:** The raid was carried out by the **«Murciélagos» (Bats) of the Army Special Forces** and the **«Lobos» (Wolves) of the National Guard**, in tactical coordination with special units assigned to the Sinaloa Secretariat of Public Security.
- **Simultaneous capture of the leadership:** Thanks to the speed of the raid, the **special forces** neutralized the boss's security detail, arresting not only **Meza Flores**, but also the cartel's entire operational command: **Germán «N»**, alias *«Serafín»* (the organization's second-in-command), and **José «N»** (the group's chief financial officer).
- **Immediate air extraction:** To prevent rescue attempts by local armed cells, the special units swiftly secured the three detainees, placing them aboard a **Mexican Air Force aircraft** at dawn on Saturday, November 21, bound for Mexico City, where they were handed over to the **Procura Specializzata in Materia di Delinquenza Organizzata (FEMDO)**.
- **Nighttime air support:** The capture was followed by fierce urban fighting in Guasave, with **roadblocks (*narcobloqueos*), cars and stores set ablaze** and gunfights that spread panic even among fans at Kuroda Park stadium during a baseball game. During this critical phase, **Mexican Army helicopters** opened fire **from above, in the dark**, to repel narco commandos and protect the operation's perimeter.

U.S. intelligence and the fentanyl dossier

On the North American front, the **Department of Justice (DOJ)** and **Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)** confirmed the decisive role of cross-border intelligence sharing, calling the operation «a major blow to one of Mexico’s most powerful cartel networks».

- **Bilateral cooperation:** As also confirmed by Security Minister **Omar García Harfuch**, the special forces raid benefited from **intelligence provided by the United States**, resulting from investigations by the *Homeland Security Task Force*.
- **Wanted by the FBI:** Added in February 2025 to the list of the **FBI's ten most wanted fugitives**, with a **reward of up to $5 million**, «Chapo Isidro» had already been charged in the United States (in 2012 and 2019) with international trafficking of **cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin**, as well as the use of military-grade weapons.
- **The record seizure:** According to *El País*, investigators linked his network to the **largest fentanyl shipment ever seized in Mexico**: more than one ton of drugs (equivalent to more than 20 million doses) intercepted in December 2024.

New balances in Sinaloa and Claudia Sheinbaum's strategy

A former senior lieutenant of the **Beltrán Leyva cartel**, Meza Flores had established an independent organization based in Guasave (known as the **Cártel de Guasave** or *Los Mazatlecos*). In the bloody internal war devastating the state of Sinaloa, his faction was a key military ally for **«Los Mayos»** (the heirs of Ismael «El Mayo» Zambada) against their rivals, **«Los Chapitos»** (the sons of Joaquín «El Chapo» Guzmán).
From a geopolitical standpoint, analysts see the direct and decisive deployment of the **army's special forces** as evidence of the more assertive approach imposed by President **Claudia Sheinbaum** and Minister **Omar García Harfuch**. Following the killing of Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes (*«El Mencho»*) in February 2026, the capture of «Chapo Isidro» directly responds to intense pressure from the **Donald Trump** administration, which had repeatedly raised the prospect of **unilateral U.S. military interventions** on Mexican territory to stop fentanyl trafficking. Alert levels on the ground now remain high over the risk of a new wave of violence linked to succession at the top of northern Sinaloa's trafficking routes.