

Two Americans kidnapped in Mexico found dead, officials say

Two killed, third person injured and fourth unharmed after quartet traveling for cosmetic surgery were seized in Tamaulipas



📷 Mexican authorities searched for evidence as they work to locate four Americans who were kidnapped shortly after crossing the border. Photograph: Reuters

Two of four Americans kidnapped in northern [Mexico](#) have been found dead, authorities said on Tuesday, while their two compatriots were found alive, bringing to an end the frantic search that had captivated media attention on both sides of the border.

The governor for Mexico's northern Tamaulipas state, Américo Villarreal, confirmed the news at a press conference on Tuesday afternoon, adding that one person who had been found watching over the victims was in custody.

The four Americans were discovered inside a wooden house on the outskirts of Matamoros, the governor said, adding that they had been moved around the city several times by their captors in order to evade the authorities.

The US citizens had traveled to Mexico for "cosmetic surgery", Villarreal said

The US citizens had traveled to Mexico for “cosmetic surgery”, Villarreal said.

The governor also said that a woman who was unhurt and a man who had been injured had been handed over to US authorities in Texas earlier in the day. The two survivors have been identified as Latavia McGee and Eric James Williams.

The Tamaulipas state prosecutor, Irving Barrios Mojica, said that the most likely cause for the kidnapping was a case of “confusion”, rather than a targeted attack against the group.

The four Americans had traveled from Brownsville in Texas across the border to Matamoros in Tamaulipas, where one of them reportedly planned on having a tummy tuck procedure. They were driving a white minivan with license plates from North Carolina. Not long after, they were fired upon and abducted by unidentified gunmen.

A Mexican woman was also killed during the kidnapping, according to authorities.

A video apparently captured at the scene which was shared on social media showed the gunmen, some wearing what look like bulletproof vests, escorting one of the hostages over to a white pickup truck. Two more people can be seen being dragged across the street and thrown into the truck.

The FBI had offered a \$50,000 reward “for the return of the victims and the arrest of those involved”.

Mexico’s president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, said on Monday that the Americans had crossed the border looking for medicine: one of the victim’s sisters, Zalandria Brown, later told the Associated Press that her younger brother, Zindell Brown, had gone to accompany a friend across the border who was planning on undergoing a tummy tuck procedure.

ABC News identified the fourth member of the group as Shaheed Woodard.

The incident, which sparked a firestorm of coverage in US media, has once again drawn attention to the violence that has swept through Mexico in recent years. In 2021 alone, more than 35,000 people were killed across the country, government figures show.

Tamaulipas, a northern state with a long stretch of border with the US, has long been one of the country’s most violent, roiled by conflict between rival factions of the powerful Gulf cartel. There were more than 380 “malicious homicides” in the state last year, according to federal data, and there were also 18 recorded kidnappings.

Late last month, Mexican soldiers killed five young men traveling home in a

Late last month, Mexican soldiers killed five young men traveling home in a pickup truck, in the city of Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, according to a local human rights group. At least two of the young men were shot in the back of the head while lying facedown on the pavement, according to witnesses, the organization said.

The US state department issued a travel warning for Tamaulipas last October, warning citizens not to travel to the state where “organized crime activity - including gun battles, murder, armed robbery, carjacking, kidnapping, forced disappearances, extortion, and sexual assault - is common along the northern border”.

Violence against Americans in Mexico is relatively rare, but there have been a series of grisly killings in recent months, including a California lawyer who was killed while on vacation with his wife in northern Mexico in January. A subsequent autopsy found that his skull had dozens of fractures.

In Washington, White House press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre described the attack as “unacceptable”. The attorney general, Merrick Garland, said: “We will do everything in our power to identify, find, and hold accountable the individuals responsible for this attack on American citizens.”

I hope you appreciated this article. Before you move on, I was hoping you would consider taking the step of supporting the Guardian's journalism.

From Elon Musk to Rupert Murdoch, a small number of billionaire owners have a powerful hold on so much of the information that reaches the public about what's happening in the world. The Guardian is different. We have no billionaire owner or shareholders to consider. Our journalism is produced to serve the public interest - not profit motives.

And we avoid the trap that befalls much US media - the tendency, born of a desire to please all sides, to engage in false equivalence in the name of neutrality. While fairness guides everything we do, we know there is a right and a wrong position in the fight against racism and for reproductive justice. When we report on issues like the climate crisis, we're not afraid to name who is responsible. And as a global news organization, we're able to provide a fresh, outsider perspective on US politics - one so often missing from the insular American media bubble.

Around the world, readers can access the Guardian's paywall-free journalism because of our unique reader-supported model. That's because of people like you. Our readers keep us independent, beholden to no outside influence and accessible to everyone - whether they can afford to pay for news, or not.

If you can, please consider supporting the Guardian today. Thank you.