

## Mexican police storm town where 2 agents were burned by mob



*In this television image, Victor Mireles Barrera identifies himself as a Mexican federal agent before a mob burns him alive.*

### *THE ASSOCIATED PRESS*

MEXICO CITY - Hundreds of federal agents stormed a town on the Mexican capital's southern outskirts Wednesday night, breaking down doors of homes in an effort to collar the leaders of a mob that burned two federal agents to death in the area.

A long convoy of government vehicles sped into San Juan Ixtayopan just before sunset, carrying 600 federal operatives as well as hundreds of city police officers who sealed off streets, then went house-to-house to look for suspects, said Elizabeth Juarez, a spokeswoman for the federal attorney general's office.

Mexico City authorities said at least 20 people had been arrested, and the swarm of police forced dozens of others to run to their houses and shut off the lights in an effort to keep from attracting attention. Juarez said she couldn't confirm reports authorities were using explosive- and weapon-sniffing dogs as part of their search.

Throughout the day, all major television networks replayed chilling images of a young man, his face bloody and swollen, struggling to tell a television reporter that he is an undercover federal agent. A short time later, a mob burned him and another officer alive on camera.

The horrific footage from the killings Tuesday night put a spotlight on growing vigilante justice in Mexico, where police are viewed as inept at best and corrupt at worst and where many people say they must take security into their own hands as crime soars.

The officers' deaths came amid rumors that children had been kidnapped from an elementary school in San Juan Ixtayopan, a neighborhood of 35,000. When people saw three men taking photos and staking out the school, they took action.

One after another, residents set off dozens of crude, rooftop bullhorn alarms that serve as a backup security measure in some poor districts. Neighbors poured into the streets, where they cornered and then beat the men. Onlookers cheered and shouted obscenities as they were splattered with blood.

Reporters arrived, and the assailants pushed the victims before TV cameras so they could

be interviewed. Barely conscious and struggling to talk, they nodded and gave one-word answers when asked if they were federal agents.