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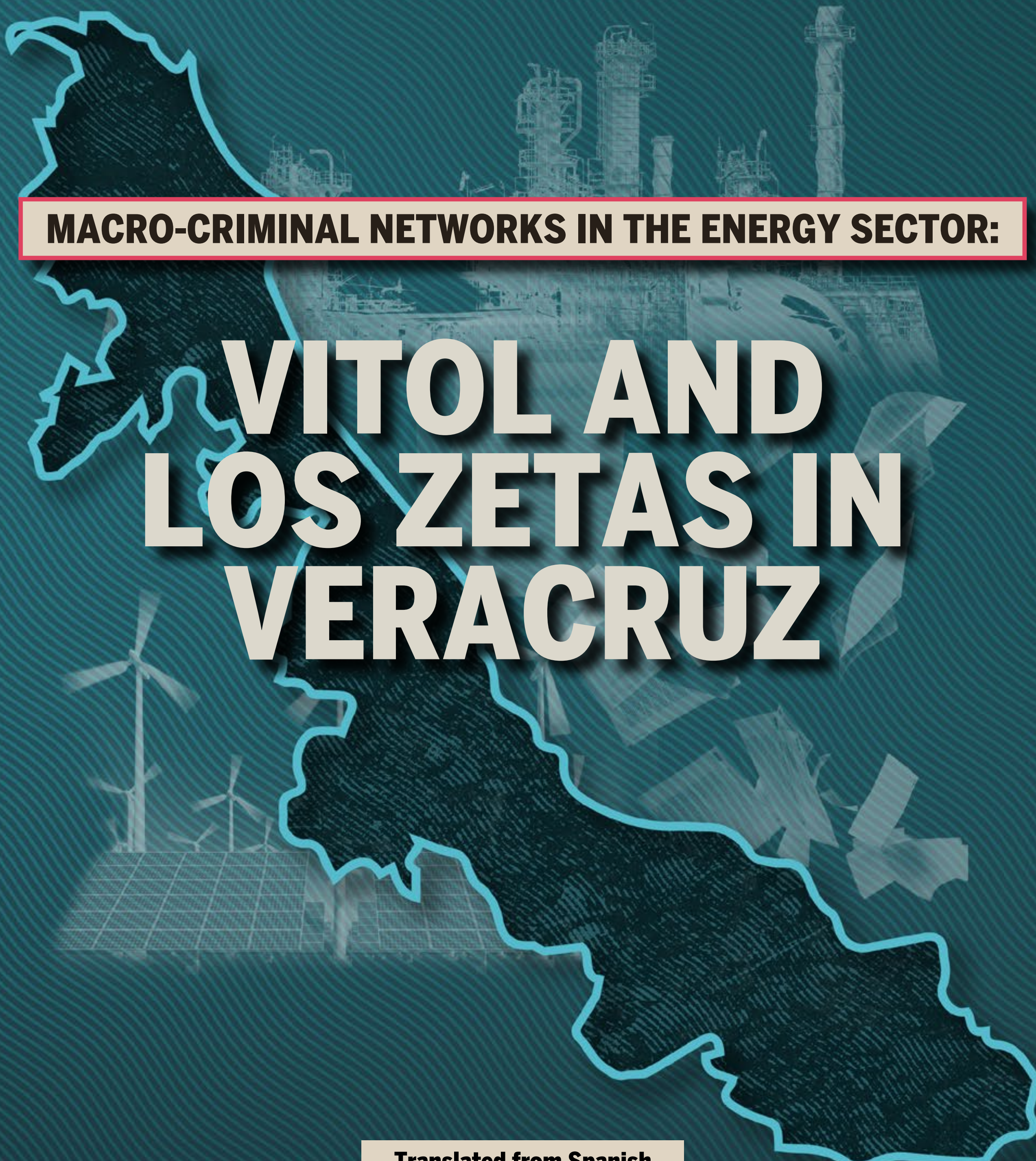

MACRO-CRIMINAL NETWORKS IN THE ENERGY SECTOR:

VITOL AND LOS ZETAS IN VERACRUZ

Translated from Spanish

EMPOWER LLC

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This report was prepared by Empower, with the assistance of Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER) and Servicios y Asesoría para la Paz, A.C. (SERAPAZ)

EMPOWER LLC

For any matters related to this document, please write to:
info@empowerllc.net.

Research for this project can be consulted at:
crimenesgraves.empowerllc.net

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AIATG	Activo Integral Aceite Terciario del Golfo (Gulf Full Tertiary Oil Asset)
CED	UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances
CIEP	Integrated Exploration and Production Contract
CJNG	Jalisco New Generation Cartel
CNB	National Search Commission for Missing People
CNDH	National Human Rights Commission
FGEV	Veracruz Attorney General's Office
FGR	Attorney General's Office
PEMEX	Petróleos Mexicanos
SCJN	Mexico's Supreme Court of Justice
SEDENA	Secretariat of National Defense
SEGOB	Department of the Interior
SEMAR	Mexican Secretariat of the Navy
SSP-VERACRUZ	Veracruz Public Security Secretariat
UIF	Financial Intelligence Unit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, Empower began collaborating with human rights organizations by assisting family members of victims of grave crimes, particularly relatives of missing people. As a result of this work, in 2019 the project "*La Pista del Dinero: Crímenes corporativos, flujos ilícitos y violencia en México*" {"The money trail: Corporate Crimes, illicit flows and violence in Mexico"} was launched. Its purpose was to learn whether violence is sustained by a financial structure that allows criminal organizations to launder illicit proceeds by partnering with the public and private sectors.

For "The Money Trail," investigations were conducted into the state administrations of Coahuila and Veracruz, which were accused of multimillion-dollar embezzlement of public funds and collusion with criminal organizations, while serious human rights violations were being committed against the civilian population. In the case of Veracruz, the results show that even when the structural processes of criminality and violence surpassed the state, new dynamics of complicity were generated among companies, political and economic elites, government authorities, unions, and organized crime groups to appropriate the economic flows from the extraction of natural resources, following the 2013 legislative reform in the energy sector.[1]

To complement the 2019 investigation, Empower has now analyzed the legal and illegal economic networks of entrepreneur Francisco Colorado Cessa, also known as Pancho Colorado, who established a number of relations with organized crime groups, businesspeople, members of different political parties and public officials, from both the Government of Veracruz and the Mexican Federal Government. By means of such relationships, Colorado and his family obtained public notary powers, ran for public office and incorporated companies that were later awarded public bids in several economic sectors.[2]

In March 2018 Pancho Colorado passed away in his United States[3] prison cell, after the Western District of Texas Court sentenced him to 20 years in prison in December 2015 for "conspiracy" to launder drug trafficking proceeds from the Los Zetas[4] criminal organization. As per the legal investigation, between 2004-05 Los Zetas gave Colorado money for his company ADT Petroservicios, S.A. de C.V.[5] to procure machinery and win public contracts with Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex). Thereafter, Colorado purchased racehorses using ADT Petroservicios as a front.[6]

Prior to his passing, Colorado established economic ties with a number of business owners in the Mexican power sector. These individuals include Francisco Silva Ramos, who was a partner of Pancho Colorado in several companies and someone he trusted deeply. Silva Ramos was the brother of Alberto Silva Ramos, public relations coordinator for the administration of Veracruz Governor Javier Duarte de Ochoa (2010-16) and is believed to have created shell companies to obtain government contracts.[7] Businessman Luis Roca Ramisa, Venezuelan by birth and naturalized as a Mexican citizen in 2005, was another partner of Pancho Colorado at the company RRL Oilfield Services, S.A. de C.V., founded in 2009.[8]

In February 2011, Silva Ramos and Roca Ramisa founded the company MTTM Servicios Petroleros, S. de R.L. de C.V., also engaged in the energy sector.[9] From May 2012 to 2018, Roca Ramisa was the CEO of Vitol Energy México,[10] a subsidiary of the Dutch company Vitol, which started operating in Mexico in 2009.[11]

In June 2012, Pancho Colorado was arrested in the United States for his ties to Los Zetas.[12] Just a month later, Roca Ramisa withdrew from MTTM Servicios Petroleros[13] by selling his shares. This sequence of events might suggest that Roca Ramisa was trying to distance himself from MTTM Servicios Petroleros to cover up his business relationship with Pancho Colorado.

While Roca Ramisa was never the controlling shareholder of the companies in which he was associated with Pancho Colorado y Silva Ramos,[14] both ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros got multiple public contracts with Pemex and the government of Veracruz during the times these three individuals maintained business relations.[15] This may suggest that, during the time Pancho Colorado was using ADT Petroservicios as a shell company to launder money for Los Zetas, both ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros —where Roca Ramisa was a shareholder— acted jointly to get public contracts.

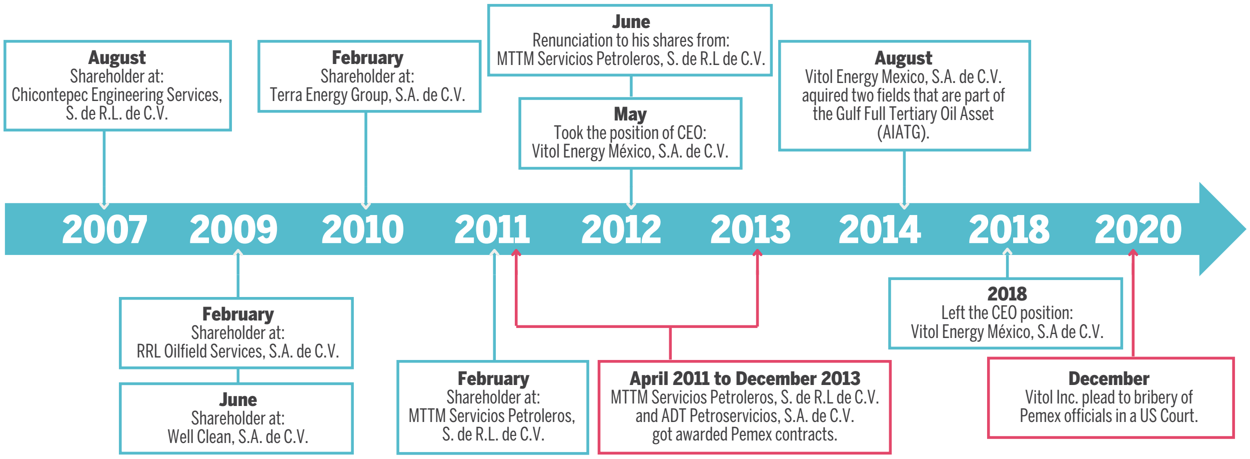
In August 2014, when Roca Ramisa held a top position in Vitol Energy México, this company and two of its subsidiaries —Petrolera Miahuapan, S.A.P.I. de C.V. and Petrolera Amatitlán S.A.P.I. de C.V.— signed contracts with Pemex to exploit hydrocarbons in the Amatitlán and Miahuapan mature fields, both located in Veracruz.[16] These fields are part of the Activo Integral Aceite Terciario del Golfo (AIATG), owned by Pemex;[17] in other words, they are part of the same asset that Pemex contracted out to ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros between 2011-13 to provide measurement services in hydrocarbon wells.[18]

In December 2020, Vitol Inc., the American subsidiary of Vitol, pleaded guilty in a United States Court to bribery of Pemex officials between 2015-20 in order to obtain energy sector contracts in Mexico.[19]

Based on this evidence, it can be affirmed that companies in the same sector with common individuals got contracts in the Mexican hydrocarbon industry over the same period of time. It is also probable that Vitol took advantage of the corporate and personal networks that Pancho Colorado used –through Roca Ramisa– to get public contracts in the hydrocarbon industry and gain access to corrupt Pemex officials that facilitated those contracts, thereby profiting from the Mexican energy sector.

The graph below (Figure 1) is a timeline showing companies Roca Ramisa founded in Mexico, focused on the energy sector, and the role this individual played in Pancho Colorado's corporate network, as well as the positions he held in Vitol. The blue lines show shareholdings or management positions, while the pink ones show contracts that private entities got from Pemex, as well as bribes from Vitol to Pemex officials.

FIGURE 1. | ROCA RAMISA'S INVOLVEMENT IN COMPANIES



Source: Empower, with data from Pemex and the Mexican Public Registry of Commerce (RPC).

In this investigation, Empower explores the large-scale corruption system Vitol created to get public contracts from Pemex in the Mexican energy sector. It is likely that such schemes lead Vitol to engage with Luis Roca Ramisa, a partner of Pancho Colorado, and Francisco Silva Ramos in a number of companies that also held contracts in the Mexican power sector. To this aim, Empower examined commercial records filed before the Mexican Public Registry of Commerce (RPC) entered by companies linked to Vitol and operating in Mexico, as well as Pancho Colorado's corporate network.[20] Moreover, contracts signed by these entities with Pemex and other Mexican government agencies were reviewed, to include legal documents from United States Courts against Pancho Colorado and Vitol.

By way of context, during the time that Colorado's corporate network and Vitol were awarded contracts in the Mexican hydrocarbon industry, the country was implementing strategies to fight organized crime by order of President Felipe Calderon (2006-12): the so-called war on drugs. In Veracruz, the war begun during the administration of Javier Duarte de Ochoa (2010-16) by means of extremely violent operations executed by the Veracruz Public Security Secretariat (SSP-Veracruz) backed by the military, to combat criminal organizations.[21]

The toll of these security strategies amounts to thousands of missing people, hundreds of clandestine graves and several lawsuits against state and federal law enforcement for serious human rights violations against the civilian population. For more information, please consult *Crímenes Graves en Veracruz: Fosas clandestinas y desaparición forzada* {Grave Crimes in Veracruz: Clandestine graves and forced disappearances}. At the same time, the violence associated with the war on drugs served to conceal large-scale corruption and impunity within the Duarte administration, particularly among high-ranking SSP-Veracruz officials who created shell companies and networks of straw people to divert public funds. Further information can be consulted in *Corrupción a Gran Escala en la Secretaría de Seguridad Pública de Veracruz: Elementos económicos para entender las graves violaciones a derechos humanos*. {Large scale corruption in the Veracruz Public Security Secretariat: financial elements to understand the serious human rights violations}.

The ties between companies linked to Los Zetas and a multinational corporation like Vitol exemplify how organized crime, as a social analysis category, can be traced and analyzed by observing the dynamics of alliances established by multiple legitimate and illicit players, such as drug cartel members, paramilitary personnel, small criminal gangs, businesses and businesspeople, public officials, politicians from different parties, law enforcement personnel, judges, lawyers, public notaries, and others.[22] Such networks, also referred to as "macro-criminal networks,"[23] allow private players to collaborate with each other for economic gain, while scenarios of brutality and extreme violence are taking place in a given territory, thus enabling them to control the local population, dominate various sectors and launder illicit proceeds by using the legally established economic apparatus.[24]

This makes it necessary to consider the links between Vitol, Roca Ramisa and Pancho Colorado's corporate network from an economic angle. This report, therefore, is part of a series of investigations that Empower has conducted since 2019 to analyze the violence resulting from the strategies to fight organized crime in Veracruz. The introduction provides an overview of the main findings and the context to understand what Vitol was and how it became associated with the network of companies linked to Francisco "Pancho" Colorado Cessa. The section "Criminal Networks in the Veracruz Hydrocarbon Industry" introduces Pancho Colorado and the legal and illegal relations he established with politicians, businesspeople and Los Zetas criminal organization. This section also includes Luis Roca Ramisa's ties to other businesspeople in the Mexican hydrocarbon industry and the positions he held in Vitol's subsidiaries. The third part of the document, "Opaqueness and Illegality in Vitol's Contracts," aims to explain how Vitol secured public contracts in countries with institutional weaknesses, either due to armed conflicts or because their economic and political elites had been liked to corruption scandals. This chapter has a subsection that explains how Vitol managed to build companies in Mexico using a series of subsidiaries incorporated in tax havens that were awarded multimillion-dollar contracts with the Mexican power sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2020, Vitol Inc. —the American subsidiary of the Dutch company Vitol, the largest private energy producer in the world [25]— accepted in United States courts that for over 15 years (2005-20) it had bribed officials at state-owned oil companies such as Petróleos Brasileños S.A. (Petrobras) of Brazil, Petróleos Mexicanos (Pemex) of Mexico, and EP Petroecuador from Ecuador, in exchange for privileged information that would secure profitable public contracts for the company.[26] As described in this report, this case is yet another in the long history of irregularities to secure public bids that were characteristic of Vitol's business operations in countries with institutional weaknesses, either because of armed conflicts or governments prone to corruption.

In Mexico, Vitol's bribes to Pemex officials presumably began in 2015 and continued until 2020. In early 2021, Vitol publicly announced that it intended to recover damages to the Mexican government by paying 30 million USD –17 million in cash and the remainder in services for Pemex. In return, Vitol would not disclose the names of bribed officials.[27]

Despite this attempted agreement between August and September 2021, Pemex cancelled three contracts it had with Vitol for the procurement of butane gas, naphtha, and propane.[28] However, as per information from the news outlet Quinto Elemento Lab, Vitol held 91 contracts between 2013-20 alone with Mex Gas Supply, a subsidiary of Pemex Transformación Industrial.[29]

In June 2022, Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018-24), announced that Vitol had disclosed the names of public officials it had bribed.[30] Nonetheless, by October 2022, neither Pemex nor any other Mexican government agency had made public any of the contracts held by subsidiaries of Vitol in Mexico.[31]

Vitol started doing business with the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) in 2009. Empower found information on payments Vitol received from 11 contracts with CFE and Pemex totaling over 549.6 million USD (without considering information on the 91 contracts with Mex Gas Supply) for hydrocarbon exploration and extraction, selling of natural gas, ethane gas, gasoline, jet fuel, and fuel oil, among other natural resources.[32]

One of the strategies used by Vitol to obtain public contracts in Mexico involved bringing in former high-ranking officials from Pemex, CFE or regulatory entities such as the Energy Regulatory Commission (CRE).[33] In 2012, however, Vitol's story had a turning point when Luis Roca Ramisa [34] was appointed CEO of Vitol Energy México. This businessman, born in Venezuela and naturalized in Mexico in 2005, was a partner of Francisco "Pancho" Colorado Cessa at the company RRL Oilfield Services.[35] According to the American justice system, Pancho Colorado was a financial operator for Los Zetas, who laundered drug money by means of the contracts the company ADT Petroservicios was awarded by Pemex and the government of Veracruz between 2002-11.[36]

While RRL Oilfield Services is not listed as an entity tied to Pancho Colorado's money laundering transactions, the relationship Roca Ramisa had with other partners of Colorado is key to the schemes that allowed Colorado to get public contracts in the hydrocarbon industry. In February 2011, Roca Ramisa incorporated the company MTTM Servicios Petroleros with Francisco Silva Ramos, who was a partner and a highly trusted person in Pancho Colorado's business network.[37] MTTM Servicios Petroleros' corporate purpose was engineering and drilling oil and natural gas wells, and it played a key role in the business network Colorado utilized to secure public contracts in the Mexican hydrocarbon industry, as will be further analyzed in this report.

The ties between Vitol and Los Zetas' partners may lead one to hypothesize that territories experiencing violent conflicts –such as those in Veracruz– can be utilized by domestic and international businesspeople, corrupt public officials and members of criminal organizations to obtain profitable contracts for the exploration of natural resources. Vitol may have used the relationship between Roca Ramisa and Pancho Colorado to gain access to corrupt Pemex officials who facilitated the awarding of contracts in the Mexican energy sector. This may lead to reflections on new ways of understanding the economic reasons for serious offenses, such as large-scale corruption and crimes against humanity in Veracruz, as phenomena with a common goal, including territorial domination and numerous economic activities, both licit and illicit, all while the violent security strategies of the war on drugs were unfolding.

2. CRIMINAL NETWORKS IN THE VERACRUZ HYDROCARBON INDUSTRY

This section analyzes the ties established by Francisco Colorado Cessa, also known as Pancho Colorado, Francisco Silva Ramos, and Luis Roca Ramisa in a number of companies that got contracts with Pemex and the government of Veracruz between 2002-11. During this time, Pancho Colorado developed economic relationships by incorporating companies in the energy sector with several prominent members of the Mexican political class, public officials, and businesspeople.[38] Such companies became essential to launder drug money and other illicit proceeds for Los Zetas. Some partners of the network gradually linked themselves to international power sector companies, as Luis Roca Ramisa did with Vitol.

It should be noted that during the time Colorado's corporate network and Vitol subsidiaries were awarded contracts in the Mexican hydrocarbon industry, the country was undergoing security strategies implemented as part of the war on drugs, first deployed in 2006. In Veracruz, the war unfolded parallel to the transition between the state government of Fidel Herrera Beltrán (2004-10) and that of Javier Duarte de Ochoa (2010-16), and not only did it significantly raise the levels of violence in the state, it also helped redefine or initiate new impunity pacts among large international corporations, local businesspeople, politicians, and public officials.

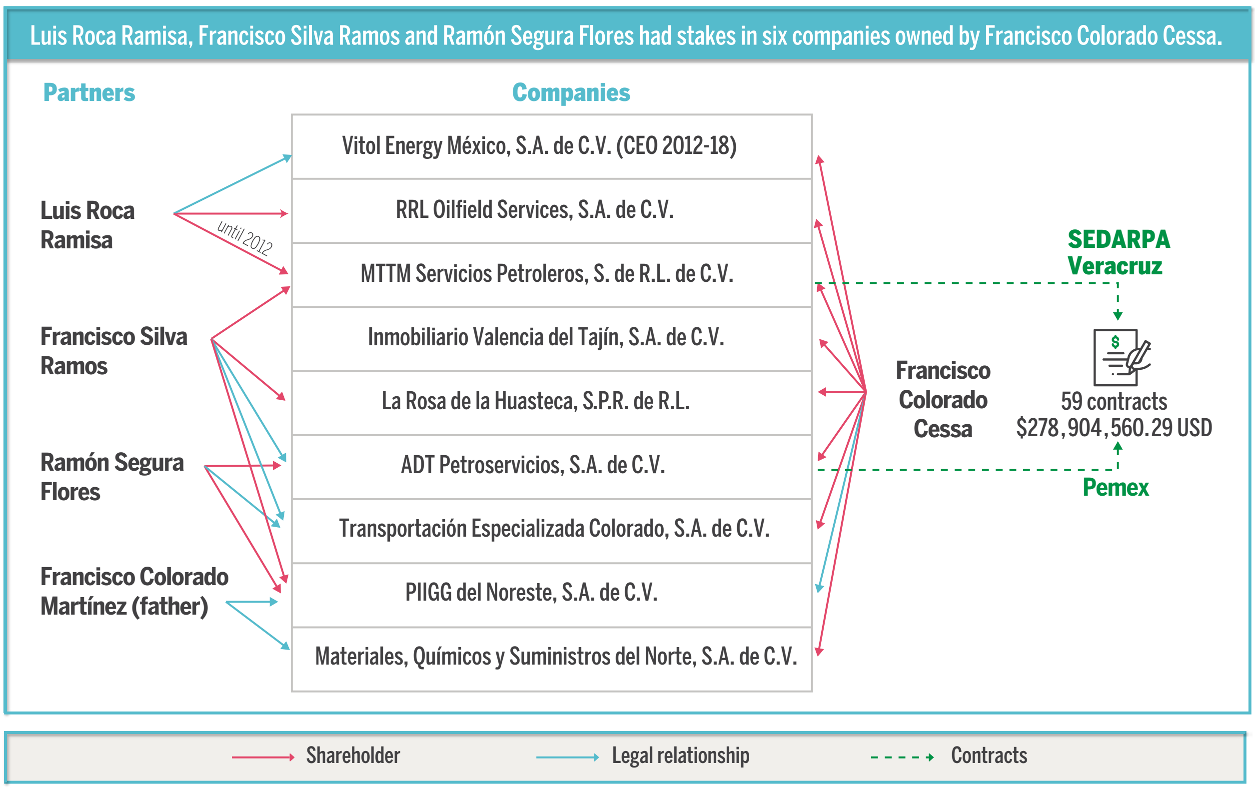
2.1 Pancho Colorado's Economic Ties

During the Herrera and Duarte Administrations, criminal pacts were either consolidated or redefined among organized crime groups, businesspeople, and public officials, with the purpose of controlling financial flows from various economic sectors. Francisco "Pancho" Colorado Cessa, a Veracruz businessman and financial operator for Los Zetas, is the best example of this process.

According to the Western District of Texas Court, between 2004 and 2005, Colorado received 12 million USD from drug trafficker Efraín Teodoro Torres, also known as Z-40, to put into Herrera's campaign for Governor of Veracruz.[39] Moreover, Colorado received 6 million USD from Los Zetas for his company, ADT Petroservicios,[40] to procure machinery and compete in Pemex[41] bids. As per the legal investigation, Colorado used ADT Petroservicios to triangulate illegal financial transactions, and thus launder drug money for Los Zetas, by integrating illicit transactions into contracts with Pemex.[42]

Figure 2 describes the relationships Pancho Colorado established while being a partner or board member at six different companies in the power, transportation, real estate and livestock sectors with three others: Francisco Silva Ramos, Ramón Segura Flores, and Luis Roca Ramisa.[43] The pink lines represent share ownership by an individual, the blue lines portray legal relationships between a corporation and an individual (a CEO or board member) and the green lines illustrate public contract awards. Two of the companies, ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros, were used by Colorado to secure 59 contracts with Pemex and the government of Veracruz totaling over 278.9 million USD.[44]

FIGURE 2. | FRANCISCO COLORADO CESSA COMPANIES AND PARTNERS



Source: Data from the RPC, Pemex, and the Veracruz State Government.

In June 2012, Pancho Colorado was arrested in the United States[45] and sentenced in December 2015 for "conspiracy" to launder drug money for Los Zetas.[46] In 2013, Colorado was put on trial for the second time, for attempted bribery of an American federal judge. For both charges, he was sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2016;[47] however, he died from a heart attack in his prison cell in 2018.[48]

The attempted bribery of a federal judge count also involved his son, Francisco Colorado Cebado, and Ramón Segura Flores; as per data from the RPC, the latter was a shareholder of ADT Petroservicios[49] and a member of the oversight board at Transportadora Especializada Colorado, S.A. de C.V. Pancho Colorado was the controlling shareholder of both companies.[50]

Some of the evidence to convict Pancho Colorado, Francisco Colorado Cebado, and Ramón Segura includes several phone calls where the names Héctor Yunes and Pepe Yunes are mentioned as presumed middlemen for contracts between Pemex and ADT Petroservicios.[51] According to the Texan Court, the names make reference to former Senators[52] Héctor Yunes Landa,[53] cousin of the former Governor of Veracruz, Miguel Ángel Yunes Linares (2016-18),[54] and José Yunes Zorrilla (2012-18).[55]

In 2019, Empower documented the ties Colorado and his family had with the political elite in Veracruz and with federal government officials.[56] Because of such relationships, the Colorado family received notary public offices, ran for public office, and incorporated companies with relatives of politicians to obtain public contracts in several economic sectors. One example of this network of economic interests is the company PIIGG del Noreste, S.A. de C.V., incorporated in Poza Rica, Veracruz, in 2005 before Notary Public Francisco Colorado Martínez, the late father of Pancho Colorado.[57] Shareholders of PIIGG del Noreste were Ramón Segura Flores and Francisco Silva Ramos, while Pancho Colorado was appointed company attorney in 2009.[58]

According to documents filed at the RPC, Francisco Silva Ramos, brother of the well-known politician from Veracruz, Alberto Silva Ramos,[59] is either a shareholder or has some legal position in three other companies whose controlling shareholder was Pancho Colorado: Francisco Silva was the ADT Petroservicios company attorney (2005-10), attorney for Transportadora Especializada Colorado (2009), and shareholder and company attorney for the agricultural company La Rosa de la Huasteca, S.P.R. de R.L. (2005-10).[60] In this manner, Silva Ramos emerged as an extremely trusted figure in Pancho Colorado's corporate and business network.

In February 2011, Silva Ramos incorporated the company MTTM Servicios Petroleros in Poza Rica, Veracruz, with Luis Roca Ramisa, these two being the only shareholders.[61] By May 2012, Roca Ramisa was appointed CEO of Vitol Energy México[62] and, in June 2012 —just a month after Colorado's arrest in the United States— Roca sold his shares and resigned from all positions with MTTM Servicios Petroleros.[63]

In early 2018, Luis Roca Ramisa left Vitol.[64] On June 13, 2022, Empower contacted Roca Ramisa over the Petroglobal phone listing; this company appeared on his LinkedIn page. The call was to inform him that we were conducting an investigation on his ties with Pancho Colorado, to which Roca explicitly answered that "he was just a consultant for Colorado" because Colorado was a "well-known figure in the Mexican oil circle." When told that we had corporate records issued by the governments of Mexico and Veracruz confirming his involvement as Colorado's partner in an oil company, Roca replied that the "next phone call would be taken by his attorney" and then hung up.[65]

Based on this evidence, the ties between Roca Ramisa and Pancho Colorado were not only happening through a common partner (Francisco Silva Ramos), but also by incorporating common corporations. In February 2009, Colorado incorporated the company RRL Oilfield Services[66] in Poza Rica; other shareholders included Roca Ramisa himself[67] and José Cruz de León Mojarro, who was a former oil well drilling and maintenance manager for the Pemex

PEP northern region.[68] Through MTTM Servicios Petroleros and RRL Oilfield Services, Pancho Colorado managed to develop a relationship with Roca Ramisa and integrate him into the network of companies that secured Pemex public contracts.

While Pancho Colorado was not identified as holding positions in MTTM Servicios Petroleros, his involvement as shareholder or board member at other companies that also had Francisco Silva Ramos (La Rosa de la Huasteca and PIIGG del Noreste)[69] and Roca Ramisa (RRL Oilfield Services) as partners points to the fact that ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros acted in concert to secure public contracts in the Mexican energy sector. This idea is supported by statements made by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Special Agent Michael Fernald, who told Reuters that MTTM Servicios Petroleros was created to "dodge" the ban the Mexican Office of the Civil Service (SFP) imposed on ADT Petroservicios in 2009 for fraud in cleanup services of an oil spill in Veracruz.[70]

Between 2002-11, ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros secured 59 contracts with the government of Veracruz and Pemex totaling over 278.9 million USD. Of these contracts, 21 were awarded to ADT Petroservicios and signed by its legal representative,[71] Francisco Silva Ramos, with the Veracruz Secretariat of Agricultural, Rural, and Fisheries Development (SEDARPA).

Of 38 contracts awarded by Pemex, two were granted to MTTM Servicios Petroleros (#424011819 and #424011853), one as a joint-venture with ADT Petroservicios, during the time Francisco Silva Ramos was the legal representative for both companies.[72] The purpose of the contracts was to make measurements in production wells in the Activo Integral Aceite Terciario del Golfo (AIATG) project, owned by Pemex until December 2013.[73] This means that by the time MTTM Servicios Petroleros secured contracts with Pemex, Roca Ramisa (because of his shareholder position) had access to privileged information on resources available at the AIATG hydrocarbon fields.

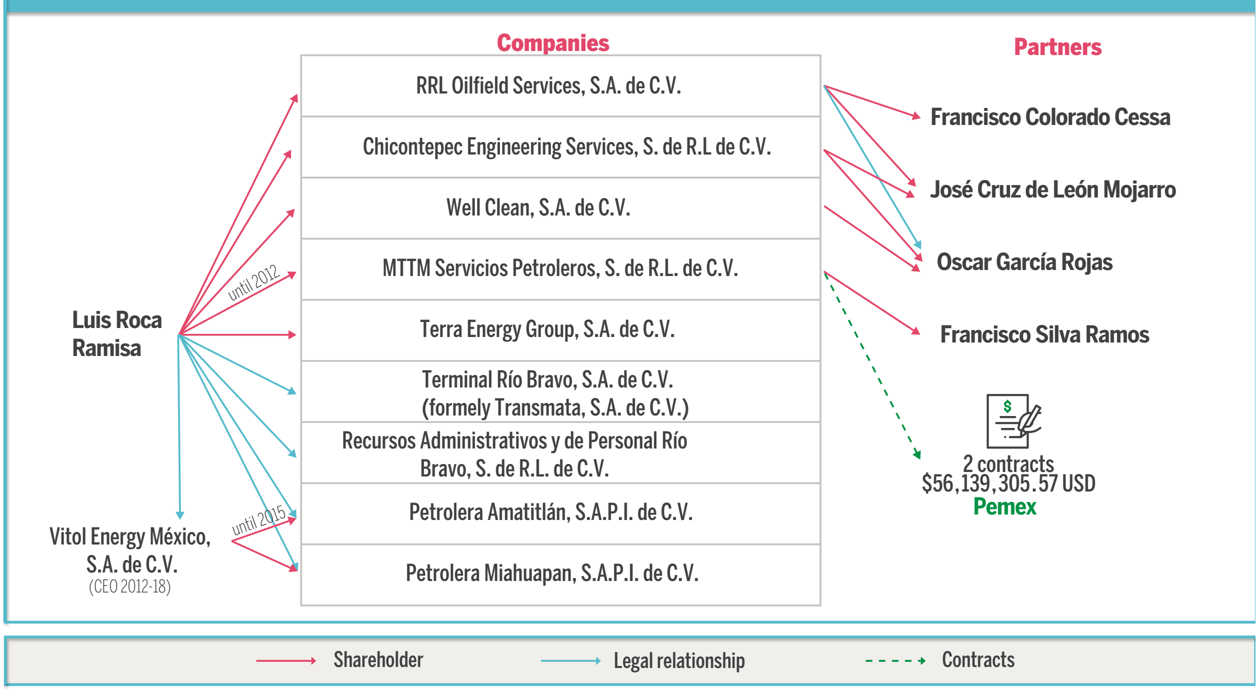
As explained in the section below, Vitol won contracts with Pemex in 2014 to explore hydrocarbons at two fields that were part of the AIATG, which is where ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros had been contracted since July 2011. Perhaps the network of relations Pancho Colorado had with public officials such as former Senators Héctor Yunes Landa and José Yunes Zorrilla[74] is the key to understanding why ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros won 59 public contracts with Pemex and the Veracruz state government, all while Colorado was laundering money for Los Zetas. At the same time, such relations may serve to understand the role Roca Ramisa had at Vitol Energy México, the Mexican subsidiary of the Dutch company Vitol. The section below discusses the role Roca Ramisa had in MTTM Servicios Petroleros when this company and ADT Petroservicios secured contracts with Pemex in the AIATG. Sometime later, two of the AIATG fields were handed over to Vitol.

2.2 The Vitol — Roca Ramisa Connection

As mentioned before, Roca Ramisa was Pancho Colorado's partner at the company RRL Oilfield Services from 2009 until the latter passed away in 2018 while serving prison time in the U.S. for laundering money for Los Zetas.[75] Between 2011-12, Roca Ramisa was also a partner at the company MTTM Servicios Petroleros with Francisco Silva Ramos; the latter was a trusted person in Pancho Colorado's corporate network. In May 2012, Roca Ramisa became the CEO of Vitol Energy México, a subsidiary of the Dutch company Vitol until 2018.[76] Several of the contracts Vitol signed over the time it recognized having bribed Pemex officials (2015-20)[77] coincided with Roca Ramisa's tenure at the Mexican subsidiary of the Dutch multinational (2012-18).[78]

FIGURE 3. | ROCA RAMISA COMPANIES AND PARTNERS

Luis Roca Ramisa was a partner of Francisco Colorado Cesa in RRL Oilfield Services, S.A. de C.V. and of Francisco Silva Ramos in MTTM Servicios Petroleros, S. de R.L. de C.V. during the same period in which he joined Vitol Energy México, S.A. de C.V. as CEO.



Source: Empower with data from the RPC, Pemex, and the Veracruz State Government.

Figure 3 shows the positions Roca Ramisa held at Vitol subsidiaries, as well as the companies where he partnered with Pancho Colorado, Francisco Silva Ramos, and other former Pemex employees. The pink lines represent share ownership (a shareholder of) by an individual in a corporation, the blue ones portray legal relations between a corporation and an individual (a CEO or Board Member) and the green ones illustrate public contract awards.

As per transactions filed with the RPC, as of June 2005 Roca Ramisa was designated as Mexican by naturalization, having been born in Venezuela.[79] In the 2000s he was employed by the oil company Schlumberger Limited (NYSE:SLB).[80] Between 2012-18, Roca was either a board member or held top positions in five Mexican subsidiaries of Vitol: [81] he was Secretary of the Board of Directors and Company Attorney of Vitol Energy México (2018); [82] Company Attorney of Petrolera Amatitlán (2014) and Petrolera Miahuapan (2014-17); [83] Company Attorney of Terminal Río Bravo, S.A. de C.V. (February-June 2018 formerly known as Transmata, S.A. de C.V.); and Secretary of the Board of Directors at Recursos Administrativos y de Personal Río Bravo, S. de R.L. de C.V. (April-June 2018).[84]

Because of this experience, Roca Ramisa was appointed CEO of Vitol Energy México while being a partner of Pancho Colorado and Silva Ramos at the companies RRL Oilfield Services and MTTM Servicios Petroleros. This means that Roca Ramisa was linked to the network of companies that allowed Colorado to launder money for Los Zetas. This network would use the contracts ADT Petroservicios was awarded (some as joint ventures with MTTM Servicios Petroleros) in the Mexican energy sector to conceal drug trafficking proceeds.

Prior to joining Vitol, between 2007-11, Roca Ramisa incorporated five companies in Mexico to do business in the hydrocarbon sector: Chicontepec Engineering Services, S. de R.L. de C.V. (2007); RRL Oilfield Services, S.A. de C.V. (2009); Well Clean, S.A. de C.V. (2009); Terra Energy Group, S.A. de C.V. (2010); and MTTM Servicios Petroleros, S. de R.L. de C.V. (2011) (See Figure 3).[85]

In two of them —Chicontepec Engineering Services and Well Clean [86] — Roca Ramisa partnered with José Cruz de León Mojarro and Óscar García Rojas, both former Pemex officials.[87] At RRL Oilfield Services, Roca engaged with Pancho Colorado and De León Mojarro [88] as a shareholder, while García Rojas was the sole Director. At MTTM Servicios Petroleros, Roca was a shareholder with Francisco Silva Ramos (2011-12); [89] the latter was the controlling shareholder.[90]

Between April and June 2011, MTTM Servicios Petroleros won two contracts (#424011819 and #424011853) with Pemex, totaling over 56.1 million USD. One was a joint venture with ADT Petroservicios.[91] Both were signed by Francisco Silva Ramos with the purpose of conducting measurements at the AIATG wells until December 2013.[92] In July 2012, Roca Ramisa sold his shares and resigned from his positions at MTTM Servicios Petroleros; nonetheless, contracts with Pemex had already been signed.[93]

Two months prior, in May 2012, Roca Ramisa joined Vitol Energy México in a top position.[94] By August 2014, Vitol Energy México and its subsidiaries, Petrolera Amatitlán and Petrolera Miahuapan, had been awarded two oil extraction contracts for the Amatitlán and Miahuapan mature fields in the AIATG, owned by Pemex.[95]

Both MTTM Servicios Petroleros and ADT Petroservicios were working at the Amatitlán and Miahuapan fields, but it is not known whether Vitol obtained privileged information about field reserves through Ramisa. What is known is that Vitol hired as its CEO in Mexico an individual who was a MTTM Servicios Petroleros shareholder (Roca Ramisa); that this company was contracted to conduct hydrocarbon measurements in the AIATG wells; and that, three years later, in 2014, Vitol secured two contracts to extract hydrocarbons from the same fields in the AIATG where both MTTM Servicios Petroleros and ADT Petroservicios had been contracted. The foregoing suggests there may have been collusion between Pancho Colorado, Francisco Silva Ramos and Luis Roca Ramisa's companies and Vitol businesses in Veracruz.

In order to investigate this hypothesis, the State — through Pemex, the Attorney General's Office (FGR), and the Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF) under the Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) — would have to conduct official investigations.

The relationships established by Roca Ramisa, Colorado and Silva Ramos through the companies RRL Oilfield Services and MTTM Petroservicios during the time Colorado was laundering money for Los Zetas and Vitol was bribing Pemex officials exemplify the large networks of shared economic interest that bent the boundaries between the legal economy and illicit businesses. These types of relationships may be the key to explaining the extra-legal structures that weakened —and continue to wear down— institutions in Veracruz, with the aim of committing financial crimes, while perpetrating serious offenses against the civil rights of the population.

The section below analyzes Vitol's profile in different countries where it has operated. A number of these countries were undergoing violent conflicts or had governments prone to corruption at the time Vitol started operating, such as when Vitol was awarded contracts in the Mexican hydrocarbon industry in Veracruz.

3. OPAQUENESS AND ILLEGALITY IN VITOL'S CONTRACTS

This section analyzes what Vitol is and its corporate conduct in the various locations where it operates. Vitol is the largest private energy trading conglomerate in the world. In December 2020, Vitol admitted that some of its subsidiaries bribed Pemex officials to secure public contracts. Empower traced Vitol's operations in Mexico back to the company's local incorporation in 2009, which is the year that Pancho Colorado businesses secured contracts with Pemex and the government of Veracruz to launder Los Zetas' proceeds.

In Veracruz, Vitol's operations began in the midst of the Mexican war on drugs, when violent security strategies were deployed to combat "organized crime," leading to a toll of thousands of missing people and hundreds of clandestine graves; moreover, several law enforcement officers have been suspected of committing serious human rights violations against the civilian population. The violent conditions in Veracruz were likely ideal for Vitol to engage with Los Zetas partners, such as Luis Roca Ramisa, while bribing Pemex officials. As outrageous as this assumption may seem, Vitol's corporate history has been filled with irregularities in securing public contracts in countries undergoing armed conflicts or where the political and economic elites are prone to corruption.

3.1 How Vitol does Business

Vitol is a privately-held conglomerate that focuses on trading, extracting, refining, and transporting oil and gas, and generating renewable energies.[96] The corporation was founded in Rotterdam, Holland, in 1966 and its parent company is Vitol Holding II S.A., a company based in Luxembourg.[97] Luxembourg is considered a tax haven because companies registered there are not compelled to disclosing the identity of ownership, nor submit annual reports or any other type of corporate information.[98] By being a privately-held company whose parent company is incorporated in a tax haven, Vitol does not register financial statements, making it practically impossible to trace its subsidiaries.

In 2020, the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic caused a 57% reduction in global oil demand.[99] Despite this event affecting the commodity most traded by Vitol, the company still reported sales of 140 billion USD,[100] making it the largest private energy producer on the planet.[101] By 2021, Vitol's revenues grew to 279 billion USD worldwide.[102] One of the reasons Vitol got stronger during the pandemic was its business model, based on a network of subsidiaries with the ability to buy low-cost products and resell where demand and prices were higher.[103]

While this business model is normal for a raw materials trader and speculator, Vitol also made purchases in armed conflict zones and in countries with governments prone to corruption.[104] In 1996, for instance, Vitol paid 1 million USD to the paramilitary leader Željko Ražnatović for acting as a middleman in a secret agreement with the Serbian company Orion. The agreement provided for Vitol to supply oil to Orion so that, in turn, it would sell it to Jugopetrol AD, the Yugoslavian state-owned oil company (now Serbia's). Around that time, Yugoslavia was facing an oil embargo from the United Nations (UN) on account of the Balkan war.[105]

In 2007, Vitol pleaded guilty before the New York Supreme Court to "theft" and for having paid 13 million USD in bribes to officials from the National Iraqi Oil Company in exchange for oil trading contracts.[106] At that time, Iraq was facing sanctions because of its 1990 invasion of Kuwait and could only sell oil in exchange for food and drugs under UN supervision.[107]

In yet another example, Vitol's CEO, Ian Taylor, flew to Libya in 2011 to close oil supply deals with rebel factions of Muammar Gaddaffi's government.[108] When the rebels overthrew the government, Vitol secured deals to trade Libyan oil, claiming that it had bid on equal terms with other competitors.[109] A year later, in 2012, Vitol used its subsidiary network to procure oil from Iran. By that time, the European Union and the United States had imposed an oil embargo on Iran due to its failure to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.[110]

In addition to these cases in conflict zones, there are other issues linking Vitol to episodes of corruption in several countries. According to the Swiss organization Public Eye, Vitol provided funding totaling over 5.2 billion USD to the Kazakhstan state-owned company, KazMunayGas, between 2015-18. In return, it acquired the rights to exploit several of the country's largest oil fields. Vitol's subsidiary operations in Kazakhstan are tied to Timur Kulibayev, President Nursultan Nazarbayev's son-in-law, who presumably profited from Vitol's agreements with that country's government.[111]

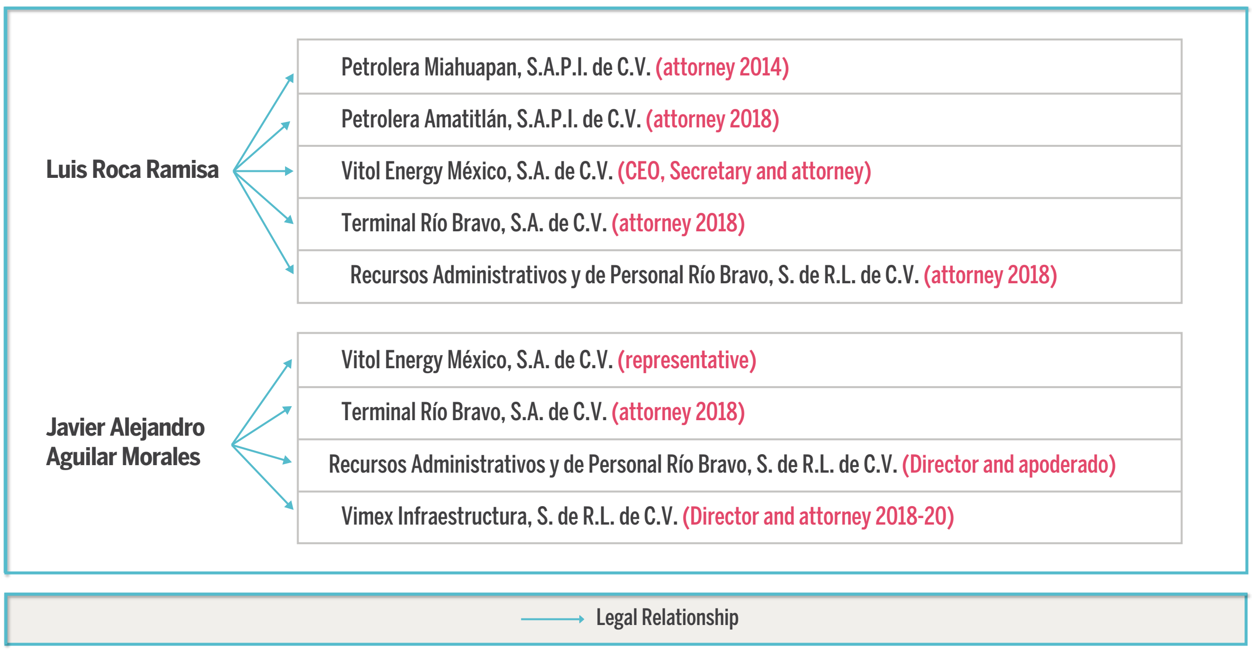
In 2018, the Brazilian Attorney General's Office accused Vitol of being involved in the operation[112] "Lava Jato"[113] and of having bribed Petrobras officials with 8 million USD between 2005-14 to secure contracts that returned 33 million USD in revenue.[114] As a consequence of such offenses, Vitol agreed to settle a 135 million USD fine for violating the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. According to the Department of Justice, the American subsidiary of Vitol, Vitol Inc., had also paid bribes totaling 2 million USD to Pemex and EP Petroecuador officials.[115]

In the Mexican case, Vitol transferred bribes to Pemex officials' accounts between 2015-20, using shell companies controlled by a citizen of Curaçao.[116] Mexican officials are not named in the sentence, but a Mexican national residing in Houston, Texas,[117] Javier Alejandro Aguilar Morales (company Attorney for Vitol Inc.), is named as the middleman in the bribery network; he was also the legal representative for Vitol Marketing México in 2017.[118]

In addition to Vitol Marketing México, Aguilar Morales held a number of board positions at three Mexican subsidiaries of Vitol: sole administrator, attorney and legal representative (February-December 2018) of Terminal Río Bravo;[119] sole administrator and attorney (April-June 2018) of Recursos Administrativos y de Personal Río Bravo;[120] and Chairperson of the board, attorney and sole administrator (October 2018 - September 2020) of Vimex Infraestructura, S. de R.L. de C.V.[121]

Figure 4 illustrates the positions Aguilar Morales held at Terminal Río Bravo and Recursos Administrativos y de Personal Río Bravo, coinciding with the period when Luis Roca Ramisa —former partner of Pancho Colorado and Francisco Silva Ramos— acted as Company Attorney and Secretary of the same companies.[122]

FIGURE 4. | VITOL COMPANIES TIED TO ROCA RAMISA AND AGUILAR MORALES



Source: Empower with data from the RPC.

3.2 Vitol and Its Operations in Mexico

As mentioned before, the consortium's parent company (Vitol Holding II S.A.) is based in a tax haven (Luxembourg) that does not require disclosing shareholder names or stock information, which makes it very difficult to identify the number of its subsidiaries. In 2016, however, the Texas Court of Appeals in the First District pointed out —in a divorce lawsuit against one of its top executives— that Vitol had at least 400 subsidiaries in the world.[123]

Vitol first started operating in Mexico in 2009, when its Swiss subsidiary, Vitol S.A.,[124] was awarded an international bid for 156.9 million USD to supply coal to the CFE.[125] Ever since —according to documents consulted at the Mexican Public Registry of Commerce (RPC), the Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF)[126] and public records from Holland, Luxembourg, and the U.S. State of Delaware [127]—, Vitol had incorporated at least nine companies in Mexico using its network of subsidiaries based in tax havens.

These subsidiaries operate as follows: Vitol Holding II S.A. (VHIISA) is based in Luxembourg and is the parent company. VHIISA is the holding company for the Netherlands Coöperatief U.A.,[128] which in turn owns Vitol Holding B.V. (VHBV).[129] The former controls Vitol B.V. (VBV),[130] which in turn owns Vitol E&P B.V. (VEPBV).[131] The former three companies (VHBV, VBV, and VEPBV) are based in Holland.

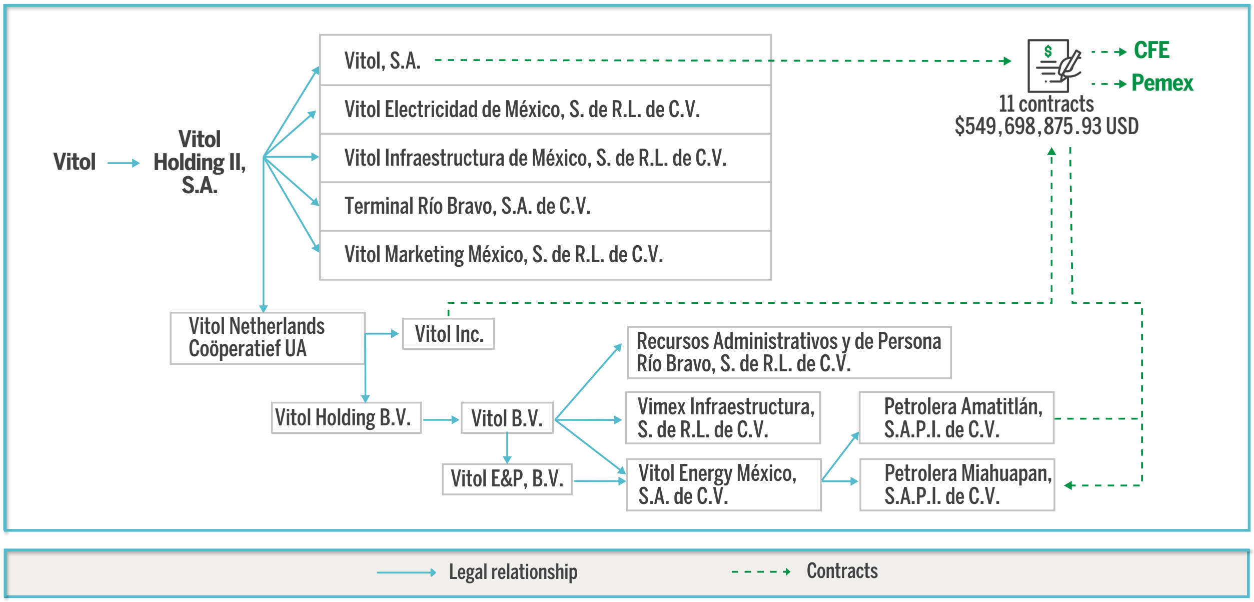
As per RPC data, VBV and VEPBV are the main shareholders of the following companies incorporated in Mexico: Vitol Energy México, Recursos Administrativos y de Personal Río Bravo, and Vimex Infraestructura.[132] Likewise, Vitol Energy México owns 90% of Petrolera Miahuapan's shares, and by 2015, it held 10% of Petrolera Amatitlán's shares.[133]

VHIISA is also the main shareholder of Vitol Electricidad de México, S. de R.L. de C.V.[134] and Terminal Río Bravo.[135] Additionally, according to the Federal Economic Competition Commission (COFECE) and the GLEIF, Vitol Marketing México, S. de R.L. de C.V. is part of Vitol.[136] Finally, Vitol Infraestructura de México, S. de R.L. de C.V. is a Netherlands-based company that has the same corporate address in Mexico as Vitol Electricidad de México, Vimex Infraestructura, and Vitol Marketing México.[137]

Figure 5 illustrates Vitol's subsidiary ownership structure and the contracts that subsidiaries were awarded by State-owned companies such as CFE and Pemex. The pink lines represent share ownership among legal entities, while the green lines represent public contracts with Mexican government agencies.

Empower found that, between 2009-18, four of Vitol's subsidiaries —Vitol S.A. (Switzerland); Vitol Inc. (United States); Petrolera Miahuapan and Petrolera Amatitlán (Mexico)— secured 11 contracts with Pemex and CFE totaling over 549.6 million USD (see Figure 5).[138]

FIGURE 5. | **CORPORATE STRUCTURE OF VITOL SUBSIDIARIES IN MEXICO**



Source: Empower , with data from the RPC, Vitol, and GLEIF.

The most profitable contract (#5100430982) was signed in 2018 by and between Vitol Inc., and Pemex Etileno for the supply of ethane gas to the Pajaritos Shipping Terminal in Veracruz for a two-year term; the contract was worth over 231 million USD.[139] This contract was tendered to address an ethane gas shortage caused by the amount of gas being supplied to the Etileno XXI plant, located in Veracruz.[140] Pemex had committed to supplying this gas in 2010 when it entered into a contract[141] with Braskem, a subsidiary of Odebrecht (currently Novonor).[142]

Not only has Vitol profited from public contracts for the supply of raw materials such as gas and coal in Mexico, but since 2014, it also entered the extraction business by signing two contracts with Pemex for the extraction of hydrocarbons at the mature Amatitlán and Miahuapan fields, both located in Veracruz.[143]

Contracts awarded to Vitol in Amatitlán and Miahuapan were under a sort of public-private joint venture known as the Integrated Exploration and Production Contract (CIEP) enabling the extraction of gas and oil from mature Pemex fields for a period of up to 35 years.[144] It should be emphasized, though, that by that time Veracruz was undergoing one of the most serious episodes of violence ever seen in Mexico due to strategies deployed by the Veracruz Public Security Secretariat against corganized organized crime, particularly against Los Zetas.

In order to exploit these fields, Vitol Energy México partnered with the company GPA Energy, S.A. de C.V., based in the state of Coahuila,[145] and together they created the companies Petrolera Amatitlán and Petrolera Miahuapan (see Figure 5). It is notable that Vitol owned 10% of the shares in Petrolera Amatitlán and 90% in Petrolera Miahuapan.

Map 1 uses the geographic coordinates of the Amatitlán and Miahuapan fields, assigned to Vitol in 2014, as published by the National Hydrocarbon Commission (CNH).[146] In the map's web version, several layers can be selected, including the number and location of clandestine graves located in Veracruz between 2000-20, clandestine taps on Pemex pipelines during the same period, hydrocarbon extraction projects, and construction of power infrastructure—both from Pemex and private entities— implemented since the 2013 energy reform, as well as security operations deployed by the SSP-Veracruz between 2016-19.

Vitol's fields in Veracruz are located in the following municipalities: Álamo Temapache, Chicontepec, Ixhuatlán de Madero (Amatitlán), Castillo de Teayo, and Tihuatlan (Miahuapan).[147] The purple geometric figures represent the Amatitlán and Miahuapan fields. The green figures symbolize hydrocarbon extraction concessions owned by Pemex, while the yellow figure denote blocks that have been explored by the private sector since the 2013 energy reform. Circles represent clandestine graves found by the FGEV, the Mexican Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR) and the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA).

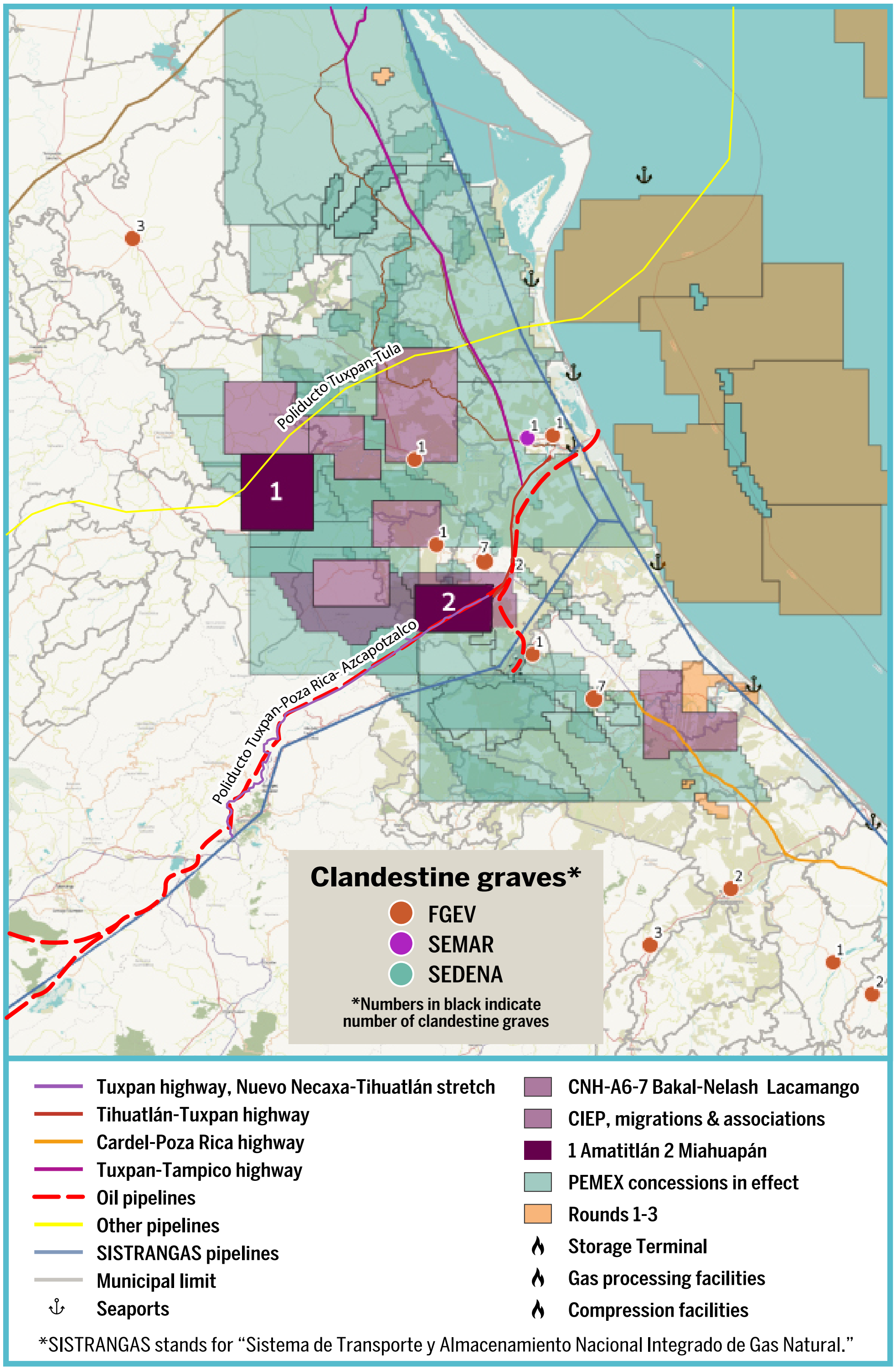
The Tuxpan–Tula (yellow line) pipeline, which connects to the Tuxpan-Texas gas pipeline, crosses the Amatitlán block. Both gas pipelines were planned parallel to the 2013 energy reform.[148] The first is being developed by TransCanada, a subsidiary of the Canadian company TC Energy Corporation (TSX:TRP).[149] Meanwhile, the Tuxpan-Texas gas pipeline started operating in 2019 and was built by the companies TC Energy Corporation and Sempra Energy (NYSE:SRE) through its Mexican subsidiary Infraestructura Energética Nova, S.A.B. de C.V. (BMV:IENOVA).[150] The Tuxpan-Azcapotzalco (red line) pipeline, owned by Pemex (see Map 1), crosses the Miahuapan block.

On July 13, 2015, Vitol sold its Petrolera Amatitlán shares to GPA Energy. Thereafter, in December of the same year, GPA Energy sold its shares to Lumex Amatitlán and Lumex Holding B.V., both subsidiaries of the Russian oil company Lukoil (MCX:LKOH).[151] In January 2017, Lukoil came to an agreement with Reinassance Oil Corporation (TSXV:ROE) to jointly exploit the Amatitlán block.[152] Vitol remains the biggest shareholder of Petrolera Miahuapan.

By May 2021, it was publicly known that Vitol had bribed Pemex officials. Even so, the CNH approved a new Pemex investment plan for the Miahuapan block worth between 14 and 70.5 million USD.[153] Despite the fact that between August and September 2021, Pemex cancelled three of its contracts with Vitol for the procurement of butane gas, naphtha and propane, it has never made reference to the Miahuapan block contract.[154] This means that the federal government continues paying for the extraction of hydrocarbons at those fields (as per the official documents consulted), where Vitol appears to still be contracted through Petrolera Miahuapan and Vitol Energy México.

For all of the reasons outlined here, Empower concludes that the violence Veracruz has experienced—and continues to experience— was not an obstacle for the Dutch conglomerate to conduct business and receive payments for the extraction of hydrocarbons.

MAP 1. | HYDROCARBON EXTRACTION IN MATURE VERACRUZ FIELDS



Source: Empower, 2022, *www.crimenesgraves.empowerllc.net*.

Vitol likely chose to start operations in Veracruz due to its prior experiences in armed conflict zones or where governments are prone to corruption, such as in Iraq, Iran, Yugoslavia (now Serbia), Libya, and Brazil. This hypothesis makes sense given that Vitol hired Luis Roca Ramisa as its CEO (2012-18) in Mexico; this individual was linked to a network of companies that enabled Pancho Colorado to secure contracts with Pemex and the government of Veracruz [155] totaling over 278.9 million USD, while laundering money for Los Zetas.[156]

The ties between Vitol and Los Zetas partners suggest that there are new economic reasons for serious offenses such as large-scale corruption and crimes against humanity in Veracruz, and that these phenomena can be seen as having interconnected goals: territorial domination, diversification of licit and illicit economic activities, and capital accumulation.

With this report, Empower encourages Mexican government agencies such as Pemex, FGR, and UIF to conduct public investigations, in which civil society may take part, in order to understand the macro-criminal networks that allowed Pancho Colorado's partners to work with Vitol while Vitol was bribing public officials to secure multimillion-dollar contracts in the Mexican energy sector.

CONCLUSIONS

The large-scale corruption that Vitol engaged in with Petróleos Mexicanos to secure public contracts may have led this company to use the same network of relationships and contracts that Francisco "Pancho" Colorado Cessa used to obtain contracts in the hydrocarbon industry, while Colorado was also laundering money for the Los Zetas criminal organization. Vitol linked up with Colorado's network through Luis Roca Ramisa (CEO of Vitol Energy México between 2012-18), who in turn was a partner of Pancho Colorado at RRL Oilfield Services and of Francisco Silva Ramos at MTTM Servicios Petroleros. In turn, Colorado and Silva Ramos were partners at several other companies.

In May 2012, Roca Ramisa joined Vitol and, two months later (in July 2012), sold his shares in MTTM Servicios Petroleros. Exactly one month before this, in June 2012, Pancho Colorado was arrested in the United States and charged with laundering money for Los Zetas by using his company, ADT Petroservicios, as a shell company for the criminal group. The sequence of events may indicate that Roca Ramisa was trying to distance himself from MTTM Servicios Petroleros to cover up his business relationship with Colorado.

Roca Ramisa never held shares in ADT Petroservicios, but he did hold shares in MTTM Servicios Petroleros. In 2011, ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros were jointly awarded Pemex contracts for measuring resources in oil wells within the Activo Integral Aceite Terciario del Golfo (AIATG). Roca Ramisa was still a shareholder of MTTM Servicios Petroleros at the time. The Amatitlán and Miahuapan fields are also located in this asset in Veracruz, and are the same sites where Vitol Energy México won Pemex contracts in 2014 for the extraction of hydrocarbons.

The technical annexes in each contract confirm that MTTM Servicios Petroleros and ADT Petroservicios did work at the Amatitlán and Miahuapan fields, but there is no evidence that Roca Ramisa provided privileged information to Vitol regarding the resources available at those fields. This coincidence, however, may suggest that Vitol benefited from information acquired by ADT Petroservicios and MTTM Servicios Petroleros at the AIATG through Roca Ramisa. The foregoing may indicate collusion between the companies of Pancho Colorado, Francisco Silva Ramos, and Luis Roca Ramisa and Vitol's businesses in Veracruz.

As mentioned above, in December 2020, the American subsidiary of Vitol, Vitol Inc., pleaded guilty before U.S. courts to having bribed Pemex officials to secure contracts in the Mexican energy sector between 2015-20. Indeed, Vitol had reported to the Mexican government which officials were bribed. The Mexican government has neither disclosed the names of these corrupt officials, nor the totality of contracts Vitol has in the country. However, Empower was able to document that Pemex contracts were not the only ones Vitol was awarded in Mexico. Vitol also has other contracts with the Federal Electricity Commission and permits from the Energy Regulatory Commission for the production or sale of electricity and petrochemicals.

To understand Vitol's corruption case in Mexico, the relationship between Roca Ramisa and Pancho Colorado and Francisco Silva Ramos must be further explored. A fundamental consideration for new inquiries into this case are the ties companies associated with Los Zetas had with a global company like Vitol. These relationships may illustrate how organized crime engages in different arrangements whereby legally established economic players partner with illegal economic actors (such as drug cartels or paramilitary groups) for economic profit, and how such arrangements may be related to different types of crimes, such as large-scale corruption, influence peddling, money laundering, and even crimes against humanity.

We should not overlook the fact that, while companies tied to Pancho Colorado and Vitol were securing public contracts with the Veracruz power sector, the state was experiencing one of the most brutal and violent episodes Mexico had seen since the war on drugs began in 2006. In that sense, the violence exercised by law enforcement to combat crime may have allowed Vitol to engage with Los Zetas partners in Veracruz and thus gain access to key Pemex officials who were bribed by the criminal group.

While this report attempts to reveal the criminal networks developed in Veracruz, Empower recognizes that agencies of the Mexican State, such as Pemex, the Attorney General's Office and the Financial Intelligence Unit of the SHCP must get involved to provide further clarity. If official investigations are not conducted, it will never be known whether Vitol utilized Los Zetas-controlled companies to secure contracts in the hydrocarbon industry, and the impunity that usually accompanies corruption in Mexico will prevail.

To learn more about Empower's research linking the brutality and impunity in Veracruz committed by public security forces and organized crime groups to private economic interests, please see the following links:

- *Crímenes Graves en Veracruz: Fosas clandestinas y desaparición forzada.*
- *Corrupción a Gran Escala en la Secretaría de Seguridad Pública de Veracruz: Elementos económicos para entender graves violaciones a derechos humanos.*

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[23] Economic macro-criminality allows to identify how economic licit and illicit channels comingle, by linking organized crime actions —drug trafficking, smuggling, kidnapping, extorsion, fraud and money laundering— with the structural market processes of the State. It is different from organized crime or mafia concepts because it necessarily entails the – willing or defaulting – engagement of top state authorities and politicians with domestic and transnational corporate entities, such as corporations, banks and investment funds, as well as organized crime elements such as drug cartels and paramilitary groups. In: Omar Rodrigo Escamilla Haro, "Consolidación de Territorios Criminales. La Inmersión Criminal de Odebrecht en la Industria Energética Mexicana," in: Fabiola Escárzaga, et al., Reflexiones sobre las Violencias Estatales y Sociales en México y América Latina, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM), 2021, casadelibrosabiertos. uam.mx/gpd-reflexiones-sobre-las-violencias-estatales-y-sociales-en-mexico-y-en-america-latina.html. Accessed on 13 September 2022; and, Pilar Calveiro, Violencias de Estado. La Guerra antiterrorista y la guerra contra el crimen como medios de control global, Siglo XXI, México, 2012.

[24] Claudia Gamboa Montejano, "Lavado de dinero. Estudio Teórico Conceptual, Derecho Comparado, Tratados Internacionales y de la nueva ley en la materia en México," Dirección General de Servicios de Documentación, Información y Análisis, H. Congreso de la Unión, 2013, www. diputados.gob.mx/sedia/sia/spi/SAPI-ISS-01-13.pdf. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[25] "Vitol 2020 volumes and review," Vitol, 2020, www.vitol.com/vitol-2020-volumes-and-review. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[26] "United States of America vs Vitol Inc.," U.S. Department of Justice, *Op.Cit*.

[27] "Versión estenográfica de la conferencia de prensa matutina del Presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador," Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), 2021, www.lopezobrador.org.mx/2021/03/03/version-estenografica-de-la-conferencia-de-prensa-matutina-del-presidente-andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-481. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[28] Even in October 2020, Pemex classified two contracts awarded to Vitol's subsidiaries between 2018-19 for the procurement of jet fuel, jet gas, gasoline and diesel. In: "Respuesta a solicitudes de acceso a la información dirigidas a Pemex Transformación Industrial. Folio 1867900039720," Platforma Nacional de Transparencia (PNT), 2020, tinyurl.com/ydwbwv4y. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

29 "Vitol mantiene contrato con Pemex; su exdirector general en México fue socio de fallecido operador financiero de Los Zetas," Empower, junio 2022, empowerllc.net/esp/vitol-pemex-roca-ramisa-colorado. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

30 "Versión estenográfica de la conferencia de prensa matutina del presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador," AMLO, 19 May 2022, lopezobrador.org.mx/2022/05/19/version-estenografica-de-la-conferencia-de-prensa-matutina-del-presidente-andres-manuel-lopez-obrador-738. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

31 According to press reports, these contracts with Pemex alone could amount to more than one Billion USD. In: "Pemex cancela contratos con Vitol tras escándalo de corrupción," *Forbes*, 15 September 2021, www.forbes.com.mx/pemex-cancela-contratos-con-vitol-tras-escandalo-de- corrupcion; and, Adriana Barrera, Ana Isabel Martínez and Stefanie Eschenbacher, "Exclusiva-México busca mejores términos comerciales con Vitol tras escándalo de sobornos," *Reuters*, March 2021, www.reuters.com/article/energia-mexico-vitol-idLTAKBN2BE1DW. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

32 "Contratos de Vitol y subsidiarias con Pemex y la CFE, 2009-2018," Empower, 2021, archive.org/details/contratos-vitol. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

33 Such cases include Luis Islas Tapia, who was Pemex Commercial Coordinator 1998-2018, and joined Vitol in 2018 as the Industrial Development Director; Yolanda Alicia Villegas, former International Legal Affairs coordinator for Pemex between 2012-13 and then Legal Department Head at Vitol from 2018-20; Eduardo Arriola Jiménez, former assistant director for Generation and Unregulated Business with CFE from 2016-18 to then take the Director position at Vitol México in 2019; and Ramiro François, former head of the economic analysis unit for CRE gas pricing unit from 2012-15 and then, commercial operations head at Vitol México from 2018. In: Darío Celis, "Los meganegocios de Vitol," *El Financiero*, 11 March 2021, www.elfinanciero.com.mx/opinion/dario-celis/los-meganegocios-de-vitol; "Alicia Villegas, CV," LinkedIn, 2021, mx.linkedin.com/in/yolandavillegas; Guillermo Cruz, "Funcionario señalado por corrupción denuncia a la CFE por despido injustificado," *Julio Astillero*, 2020, www.julioastillero.com/funcionario-senalado-por-corrupcion-denuncia-a-la-cfe-por-despido- injustificado; and, "Ramiro Francois, CV," LinkedIn, 2021, www.linkedin.com/in/ramirofrancois. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

34 "Luis Roca Ramisa, CV," LinkedIn, *Op.Cit.*; and, "Audiencia de Migración Miahuapan. Vitol Energy México," CNH, *Op.Cit.*

35 "RPC. RRL Oilfield Services S.A. de C.V. FME:7240. Oficina Registral PozaRica. M4. Fecha de inscripción 16/02/2009. Número de documento:18543," RPC, 2009; and "RRL Oilfield Services S.A. de C.V. FME: 7240. Oficina Registral Poza Rica. M10. Fecha de ingreso: 17/11/2010. Número de documento: 152," RPC, 2010, www.documentcloud.org/documents/21063242-rrloilfield-m4_m10. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

36 "Federal Jury in Austin Convicts Mexican Businessman in Money Laundering Conspiracy Involving Los Zetas Drug Distribution Proceeds," U.S. Department of Justice, Western District of Texas, *Op.Cit.*

37 "Empresas constituidas en México donde Francisco Colorado Cessa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 11-13.

38 "United States of America vs Jose Trevino-Morales, Francisco Antonio Colorado-Cessa, Fernando Solis-Garcia, Eusevio Maldonado-Huitron, Jesus Maldonado-Huitron. Docket No. A 12-CR-210 SS," U.S. Department of Justice, Western District of Texas, 2013, www.documentcloud.org/documents/1149732-April-Transcripts.html. Accessed on 13 September 2022. Pgs. 140-61 and 183.

39 *Ibid.* Pg. 150.

40 "United States of America vs Jose Trevino-Morales, Francisco Antonio Colorado-Cessa, Fernando Solis-Garcia, Eusevio Maldonado-Huitron, Jesus Maldonado-Huitron. Docket No. A 12-CR-210 SS," U.S. Department of Justice, Western District of Texas, *Op. Cit.* Pg. 150; and, "Empresas constituidas en México donde Francisco Colorado Cessa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 17-20.

41 "United States of America vs Jose Trevino-Morales, Francisco Antonio Colorado-Cessa, Fernando Solis-Garcia, Eusevio Maldonado-Huitron, Jesus Maldonado-Huitron. Docket No. A 12-CR-210 SS," U.S. Department of Justice, Western District of Texas, *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 140-61.

42 ADT Petroservicios is currently included in the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List, or SDN List with the Office of Foreign Assets Control, (OFAC) under the U.S. Department of Treasury. Whenever individuals or corporations are listed, it means that they are engaged in activities such as terrorism or drug trafficking and their assets are blocked; moreover, American individuals or corporations can not have business dealings with listed entities. In: "Sanctions List Search," OFAC, 13 August 2021, sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/Details. aspx?id=15015; "Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SND) Human Readable List," U.S. Department of the Treasury, 13 August 2021, www.treasury.gov/ofac/downloads/sdnlist.pdf; and, "Federal Jury in Austin Convicts Mexican Businessman in Money Laundering Conspiracy Involving Los Zetas Drug Distribution Proceeds," U.S. Department of Justice, Western District of Texas, *Op.Cit*.

[43] "Empresas constituidas en México donde Francisco Colorado Cessa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit*.

[44] "Contratos de ADT Petroservicios y MTTM Servicios Petroleros con Pemex, 2002-11", Pemex, *Op.Cit*.; and,"Contratos de ADTPetroservicios con SEDARPA, 2006," SEDARPA, O*p.Cit*.

[45] Carmen Álvarez, "Pancho Colorado declara en Corte en Texas," *Excelsior*, *Op.Cit*.

[46] "Federal Jury in Austin Convicts Mexican Businessman in Money Laundering Conspiracy Involving Los Zetas Drug Distribution Proceeds," U.S. Department of Justice, Western District of Texas, *Op.Cit*.

[47] "Jury Convicts Defendant in Los Zetas Money Laundering Case of Conspiracy and Bribery Charges," U.S. Department of Justice, 28 January 2016, www. justice.gov/usao-wdtx/pr/jury-convicts-defendant-los-zetas-money-laundering-case-conspiracy-and-bribery-charges. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[48] "Muere Pancho Colorado de un infarto en una prisión de EU," confirma su hijo, *Proceso*, *Op.Cit*.

[49] "Empresas constituidas en México donde Francisco Colorado Cessa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit*. Pgs. 17-20.

[50] *Ibid*. Pgs. 23-26.

[51] "United States of America vs Francisco Antonio Colorado Cessa. Criminal No. A-14-CR-458 DEW," U.S. District Court, 2015, www.documentcloud.org/documents/1532265-govt-memo-in-colorado-sentencing.html. Accessed on 13 September 2022. Pgs. 8, 11 and 21.

[52] *Ibid*. Pg. 1.

[53] "Perfil del Legislador: Héctor Yunes Landa," Sistema de Información Legislativa, 2018, www.sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/Librerias/pp_PerfilLegislador.php?Referencia=9222228. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[54] Fabiola Martínez, "Elige el PRI a José Yunes Zorrilla como precandidato en Veracruz," *La Jornada*, 2017, https://web.archive.org/web/20201109035540/https://www.jornada.com.mx/2017/12/27/politica/010n1pol. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[55] "Perfil del Legislador: José Francisco Yunes Zorrilla," Sistema de Información Legislativa, 2022, sil.gobernacion.gob.mx/Librerias/pp_PerfilLegislador.php?Referencia=9227660#Perfil. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[56] "Flujos ilícitos y macrocriminalidad en Veracruz: La captura de la transición energética en el estado," PODER and Empower, *Op.Cit*.

[57] Francisco Colorado Martínez was granted Public Notary Office #4 in Poza Rica by Miguel Ángel Yunes Linares, when the latter was the Secretary of Government during the Patricio Chirinos administration (1992-98). In: *Ibid*.

[58] Company dedicated to the acquisition and construction of rural properties. In: "RPCPIIGG del Noreste, S.A. de C.V. FME: 6772. Oficina Registral: Poza Rica. M4. Fecha de Inscripción 24/02/2006. Número de documento: 34030," RPC, 2006; and, "PIIGG del Noreste, S.A. de C.V. FME: 6772. Oficina Registral: Poza Rica. M10. Fecha de ingreso: 26/01/2009. Número de documento: 15091," RPC, 2009, www.documentcloud.org/documents/21062990-piigg-del-noreste. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

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[60] The movements registered in the RPC are not accurate, since the positions held by a person within the board of directors of the companies are not updated. Even so, the latest positions and movements reported in the RPC were taken into account, since they constitute the latest official information available. In: "Empresas constituidas en México donde Francisco Colorado Cessa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit*. Pgs. 13-16, 21-22 and 23-28.

[61] "Empresas constituidas en México donde Luis Roca Ramisa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit*. Pgs. 6-13.

62 "Luis Roca Ramisa, CV," LinkedIn, 2021; and, "Audiencia de Migración Miahuapan. Vitol Energy México,", CNH, O*p.Cit*.

63 Corporate filing for such transaction (M2 document number 729) was filed with the RPC in July 2012. This document mentions the sale of 15 'shares' but does not specify the name of the seller. According to the RPC, the only shareholders in MTTM Servicios Petroleros until that moment were Roca Ramisa and Silva Ramos, Roca holding 15 shares. In: "Empresas constituidas en México donde Luis Roca Ramisa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit*. Pgs. 6-13.

64 Emails to Vitol from Empower, Empower, *Op.Cit*.

65 Phone call made by the journalism team to Luis Roca Ramisa on June 13, 2022 in Mexico City.

66 "RRL Oilfield Services S.A. de C.V. FME: 7240. Oficina Registral Poza Rica. M4. Fecha de inscripción 16/02/2009. Número de documento: 18543," RPC-SIGER, *Op.Cit.*; and, "RRL Oilfield Services S.A. de C.V. FME: 7240. Oficina Registral Poza Rica. M10. Fecha de ingreso:17/11/2010. Número de documento: 152," RPC, *Op.Cit*.

67 "Luis Roca Ramisa, CV," LinkedIn, Op.Cit.; and, "Audiencia de Migración Miahuapan. Vitol Energy México," CNH, *Op.Cit*.

68 Within this scheme, Óscar García Rojas was designated sole director in 2010. Prior to that, García Rojas was the head of the Superintendent's Office for Material Resources, Drilling and Maintenance of Pemex Exploración y Producción wells (a subsidiary of Pemex) based in Poza Rica de Hidalgo, Veracruz. In: Arturo Zárate, "Protegen con Subterfugios a Directivos de Pemex," *El Universal*, 2003, archivo.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/101218.html; "Padrón de Jubilados y Pensionados. Tercer Trimestre 2020," Fondo Laboral de Pemex, 2020, www.pemex.com/inai/pemex/Fraccion%20II/Jubilados/Padr%C3%B3n_Jubilados_PM_03_Trim2020/ Padr%C3%B3n_Jubilados_Pensionados_03_Trim2020.pdf. Pg. 327; and, "Pemex Exploración y Producción. Gerencia de Perforación y Mantenimiento de Pozos. Subgerencia de Administración y Finanzas. Licitación Pública Internacional. Convocatoria 033," Diario Oficial de la Federación (DOF), 2003, www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=726592&fecha=27/05/2003&print=true;r%C3%B3n_Jubilados_Pensionados_03_Trim2020.pdf. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

69 "Empresas constituidas en México donde Francisco Colorado Cessa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit*. Pgs. 1-5, 13-16, 17-22, 23-31 and 32-39.

70 Elinor Comlay, Mica Rosenberg and M.B Pell, "México mira hacia otro lado mientras contratistas despluman a la petrolera Pemex," *Reuters*, 2015, www.reuters.com/article/negocios-petroleo-mexico-pemex-idLTAKBN0KW22G20150123. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

71 "Contratos de ADT Petroservicios y MTTM Servicios Petroleros con Pemex, 2002-11," Pemex, *Op.Cit.*; and, "Contratos de ADT Petroservicios con SEDARPA, 2006," SEDARPA, 2006, *Op.Cit*.

72 "Contrato No.424011819. MTTM Servicios Petroleros, S. de R.L. de C.V. en Propuesta Conjunta con ADT Petroservicios, S.A. de C.V. y Asesoría en Ingeniería de Petróleos de México, S. de R.L. de C.V.," and "Contrato No. 424011853. MTTM Servicios Petroleros, S. de R.L. de C.V. en Propuesta Conjunta con Asesoría en Ingeniería de Petróleos de México, S. de R.L. de C.V.," Pemex, 2011, *Op.Cit*.

73 *Ibid*.

74 "United States of America vs Francisco Antonio Colorado Cessa. Criminal No. A-14-CR-458 DEW," U.S. District Court, *Op.Cit*. Pg. 1.

75 "Federal Jury in Austin Convicts Mexican Businessman in Money Laundering Conspiracy Involving Los Zetas Drug Distribution Proceeds," U.S. Department of Justice, Western District of Texas, *Op.Cit*.

76 Emails to Vitol from Empower LLC, Empower, *Op.Cit*.

77 "United States of America vs Vitol Inc.," U.S. Department of Justice, *Op.Cit*.

78 Since Vitol does not publish financial or annual reports, nor does it disclose its executive team, it is not possible to determine with certainty whether Roca Ramisa still holds a director position at Vitol Energy México. In: "Luis Roca Ramisa, CV," LinkedIn, *Op.Cit.*; "Audiencia de Migración Miahuapan. Vitol Energy México," CNH, *Op.Cit.*; and, "Contratos de Vitol y subsidiarias con Pemex y la CFE, 2009-2018," *Op.Cit*.

[79] "Empresas constituidas en México donde Luis Roca Ramisa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, Op.Cit. Pg. 1; "Luis Roca Ramisa, CV," LinkedIn, *Op.Cit.*; and, "Oilfield Review," Schlumberger, 2004, web.archive.org/web/20150425011106/ https://www.slb.com/~/media/Files/resources/oilfield_review/spanish04/spr04/colaboradores.pdf. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[80] According to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Schlumberger is a company incorporated in Curaçao, but has headquarters in four countries. In: "Annual Report, Form 10-K," SEC, 2021, www.sec.gov/ix?doc=/Archives/edgar/data/87347/000156459021002477/slb-10k_20201231.htm. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[81] "Luis Roca Ramisa, CV," LinkedIn, *Op.Cit.*; and, "Audiencia de Migración Miahuapan. Vitol Energy México," CNH, *Op.Cit.*

[82] "Empresas constituidas en México donde Luis Roca Ramisa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit.* Pg. 28.

[83] He was a legal representative for Petrolera Amatitlán for just one year because Vitol sold its shares in 2015. In: "Contrato para Producción de Hidrocarburos, en el Área Contractual Amatitlán entre Pemex Exploración y Producción, Petrolera de Amatitlán, S.A.P.I. de C.V.," and "Contrato para Producción de Hidrocarburos, en el Área Contractual Miahuapan entre Pemex Exploración y Producción, Petrolera Miahuapan, S.A.P.I. de C.V.," Pemex, *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 8 and 90.

[84] "Terminal Río Bravo, S.A. de C.V. was formerly known as Transmata. In: "Empresas constituidas en México donde Luis Roca Ramisa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 30-56.

[85] *Ibid.* Pgs. 1-27.

[86] *Ibid.* Pgs. 17-23 and 24-27.

[87] "Pemex Exploración y Producción. Gerencia de Perforación y Mantenimiento de Pozos. Subgerencia de Administración y Finanzas. Licitación Pública Internacional. Convocatoria 033," *Op.Cit.*, Arturo Zárate, "Protegen con Subterfugios a Directivos de Pemex," *El Universal, Op.Cit.*; and, "Padrón de Jubilados y Pensionados. Tercer Trimestre 2020," Fondo Laboral de Pemex, *Op.Cit.*

[88] De León Mojarro was the well drilling and maintenance manager for PEP's northern Pemex region. There is no information as to when he stopped working for Pemex; in 2008, however, he surfaced as the representative for Key Energy Services de México, S. de R.L. de C.V., a subsidiary of the American company, Key Energy Services Inc. (OTCMKTS:KEGX). In 2016, this company was suspected of bribing Pemex officials between 2010 – 2013 to obtain privileged information to secure contracts. According to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Key Energy used its subsidiaries Key Energy Services de México and Recursos Omega, S. de R.L. de C.V. to pay the bribes in Mexico. There is no information available confirming that De León Mojarro was part of this corruption network. In: Arturo Zárate, "Protegen con Subterfugios a Directivos de Pemex," *El Universal, Op.Cit.*; "Acta de la Tercera Junta de Aclaración de Dudas de la Licitación Pública Internacional TLC No. 18575051-022/08, Concurso No. 021/08-Touspc-P, Referente a Trabajos de Reparación y Mantenimiento de Pozos, en los Activos de la Región Norte," Pemex, June 2008, web.compranet.gob.mx:8002/HSM/UNICOM/18575/051/2008/022/ja08022003.doc; and, "Accounting and Auditing Enforcement- Release No. 2016. Administrative Proceeding. File No. 3-17379. In the Matter of Key Energy Services, INC.," SEC, 2016, www.sec.gov/litigation/admin/2016/34-78558.pdf. Accessed on 13 September 2022.

[89] "Empresas constituidas en México donde Luis Roca Ramisa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 1-13.

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] "Contratos de ADT Petroservicios y MTTM Servicios Petroleros con Pemex, 2002-11," Pemex, *Op.Cit.*;

[92] "Contrato No.424011819. MTTM Servicios Petroleros, S. de R. L. de C.V. en Propuesta Conjunta con ADT Petroservicios, S.A. de C.V. y Asesoría en Ingeniería de Petróleos de México, S. de R.L. de C.V.," and "Contrato No. 424011853. MTTM Servicios Petroleros, S. de R.L. de C.V. en Propuesta Conjunta con Asesoría en Ingeniería de Petróleos de México, S. de R.L. de C.V.," Pemex, *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 4 and 151.

[93] "Empresas constituidas en México donde Luis Roca Ramisa es o fue socio o miembro del consejo de administración," RPC, *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 6-13.

[94] "Luis Roca Ramisa, CV," LinkedIn, *Op.Cit.*; and, "Audiencia de Migración Miahuapan. Vitol Energy México," CNH, *Op.Cit.*

[95] "Contrato para la Producción de Hidrocarburos, en el Área Contractual Amatitlán entre Pemex Exploración y Producción, Petrolera de Amatitlán, S.A.P.I. de C.V," and "Contrato para Producción de Hidrocarburos, en el Área Contractual Miahuapan entre Pemex Exploración y Producción, Petrolera Miahuapan, S.A.P.I. de C.V.," Pemex, *Op.Cit.* Pgs. 32 and 179.

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