

HELICOPTER PATROLS

1,000 CAMERAS AND NO BLINDSPOTS

ASSIGNED A PERSONAL SNIFFER DOG

FLOORS LINED WITH STEEL

MOVED TO 5 CELLS OVER 7 NIGHTS

THE COST OF KEEPING

EL CHAPO CAGED

After his escape went viral, El Chapo is back behind bars. *ShortList* looks at the ultra-high security prison keeping him in, and the new life awaiting him

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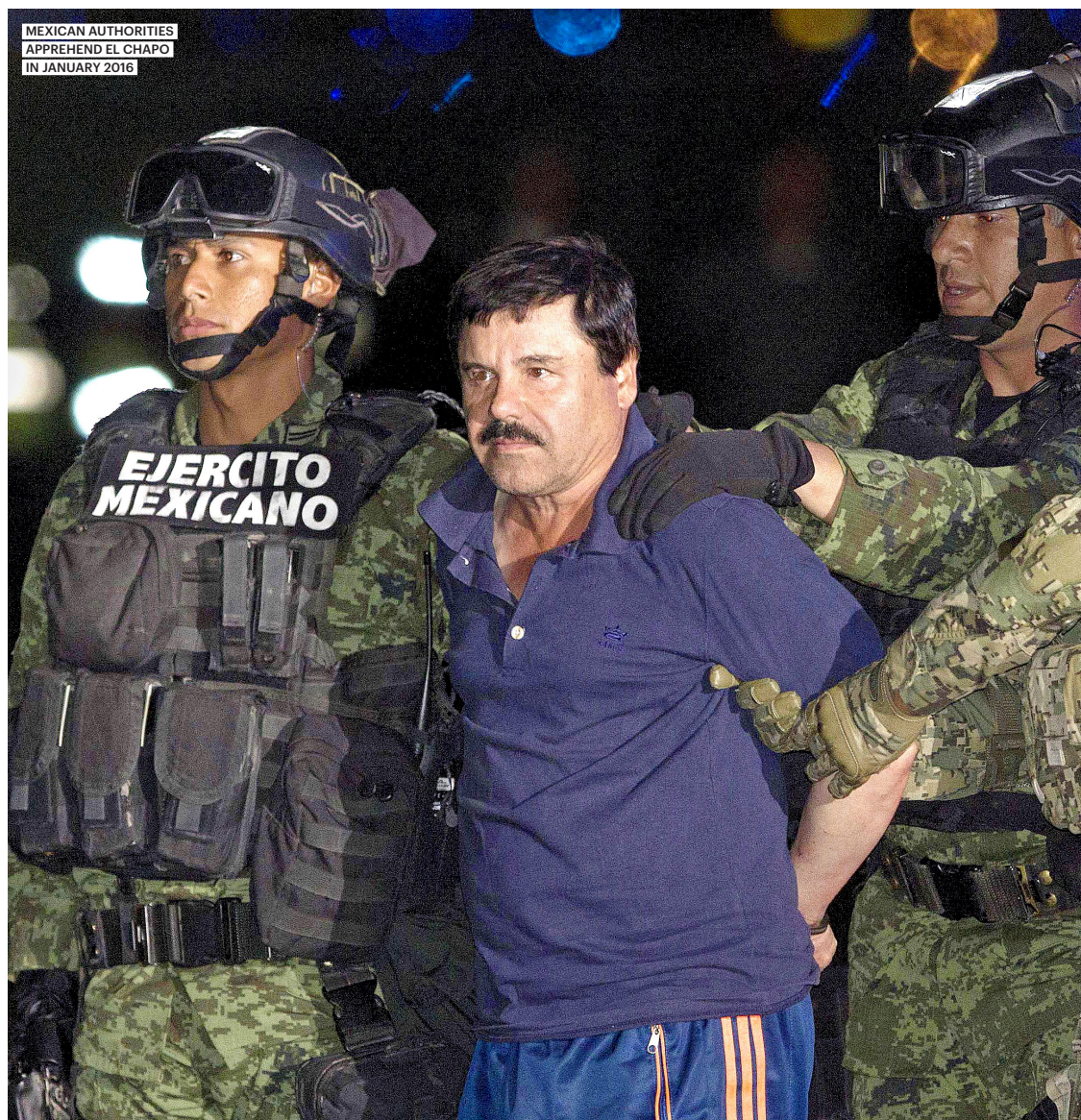
ucking behind his cell's concrete shower block, Joaquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán – the head of the murderous Sinaloa drug cartel and alleged handler of thousands of tonnes of cocaine – momentarily disappeared from view. As guards watched on the 24-hour CCTV at Altiplano prison they waited for him to reappear. He never did. Moments later El Chapo, busting through to a waiting tunnel, climbed aboard a motorcycle attached to rails and sped away down a 4,921ft underground runway to safety. As he flashed through the tunnel, he may have seen the electric lights, a generator and masonry cutting equipment his gang had used to bust him out. It was the second prison escape of El Chapo's career, but this time the drug lord wasn't out for long.

Now, eight months after his first escape, El Chapo is back inside Altiplano. After a much-publicised interview with Hollywood actor Sean Penn, El Chapo was caught in a deadly shoot out in his home state of Sinaloa – five of his stooges and a Mexican marine were killed – and is awaiting extradition to the US for drug charges.

This time, however, there will be no second escape. Unlike his last visit to Altiplano, Mexican authorities this time have El Chapo locked in airtight.

El Chapo doesn't dream of escape – for a start, he can't even sleep. Guards enter his cell every few hours, disturbing him on the hour, every hour, and twice during the night. Guzmán has almost been driven insane by the barking of a guard dog – attuned to his scent should he escape – whose howls echo around the corridors. Under 24-hour guard, Guzmán paces the short walk of his tiny cell, the floors lined with 0.75in thick steel and was moved to other similar cells five times in his first seven nights alone – to stop anyone knowing where he was.

A total of 1,000 cameras now operate in the jail, with all blind



MEXICAN AUTHORITIES
APPREHEND EL CHAPO
IN JANUARY 2016

"THERE WASN'T ANY VIOLENCE. PERHAPS A BIT OF DAMAGE TO THE BATHROOM FLOOR"



THE SHOWER AREA FROM
WHICH THE DRUG LORD
ESCAPED LAST JULY

spots removed. Even the guards who attend to him daily wear head-cams – not only to watch him but also to record their own behaviour. Upon Guzmán's last escape, dozens of staff members at Altiplano prison were sacked for

their duplicity. Inmates had complained of drilling under their feet for days yet the governor, on El Chapo's request, responded by turning the music up and carrying out superficial building work to cover the din. Sensors to detect

drilling – which were switched off during his escape – have been reinstalled, and a tracking bracelet, deactivated on the day of his first escape, has been put back on.

FINALLY CAGED

So harsh are his current conditions that his lawyer, Juan Pablo Badillo, has lobbied successfully to stop "practices of torture, cruel or degrading treatment" towards his client. Cruel and degrading are words you could apply to how El Chapo treats his enemies – some 100,000 victims have been butchered in Mexico's cartel wars and 22,000 are missing.

Badillo, though, speaking to *ShortList* from his Mexico office, insists Guzmán is a good man. "He is an exceptionally intelligent man. A hero to his people. He fears extradition because he will almost certainly be killed. That's why he escaped the first

time. It is inhuman the way he is being treated now."

A few months before our contact, Badillo even compared Guzmán to Tom Cruise. "If this escape happened in the US, it would be on the big screen in Hollywood. It already would have raked in a billion dollars in the first weekend, with Tom Cruise [playing him]. It was a clean escape. There wasn't any violence. Perhaps a bit of damage to the bathroom floor but a plumber could easily fix that."

Now, Guzmán – who previously averaged one visitor per day in his last stint at Altiplano, including lawyers, actresses and prison dignitaries – faces a life of total confinement. Larry Levine, a prison consultant who advises soon-to-be cons at Wall Street Prison Consultants, has himself spent 10 years in the federal prison system, large parts of it sweating it out in 'The Hole'. "You don't know what time of day it is – all you're really doing is eating, sh*tting and sleeping. Guzmán won't know how long he's slept, if it's midnight or what. You count your meals to get an idea of how long you're in there. But guards will deliberately mess with you. Meals start arriving at any crazy time. You might be given a newspaper but you have no idea if it is a week old or not."

Now, when Guzmán showers he has to back up towards his own door with his hands behind his back. A guard then cuffs him before he is led out – backwards – to a separate cell for a shower. "In solitary you suffer completely

AFTER A MUCH-PUBLICISED INTERVIEW WITH SEAN PENN, EL CHAPO WAS CAUGHT IN A DEADLY SHOOTOUT

controlled movement and restraint," says Levine. "It's boring, it's hot and extremely humid. There are no items in your room bar a shelf and a bed. You scream out just to hear a human voice."

Altiplano may contain the man, but it won't cage his ego. As well as attempting to make a Hollywood film of his life within weeks of his last escape, Guzmán has previously tried to trademark the names 'El Chapo Guzmán' through his daughter. Mexican journalist Annabel Hernández, author of *Narcoland: Mexican Drug Lords And Their Godfathers*, alleges El Chapo's life in a previous prison, Puente Grande, was a gilded one. "He had Christmas parties that lasted five days for all his family and any guests he liked. The prison director – who regularly partied with him – let prostitutes into the prison for Guzmán's use all the time. He was able to do what he wanted."

BEYOND ALTIPLANO

Guzmán now faces the fate he feared most of all – extradition to the US, a realm his powers can't



tamper in. Previously, Mexican authorities had resisted attempts to transport him across the border, but now, after his recent embarrassing escape, they are keen to get rid.

His lawyer's only tactic now is to stall the process, says former FBI investigator Joe Navarro. "In any case where you are attempting to get a suspect back from Mexico, lawyers and judges who can be on their payroll will try every trick. Documents can go back and forth for years. 'Oh this document is only signed by the attorney's assistant,' they say 'We need it signed by the district attorney himself.' They

appeal everything from the court you will sit in to every member of the jury."

The US wishes to charge Guzmán with importing some 500 tonnes of cocaine from Mexico since the Eighties, and talks are already underway for a show trial in New York before the end of the year. If he's found guilty – or fails to cut a deal – a temporary spell in Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Centre awaits, before a life sentence in Colorado's 'supermax' ADX Florence, an entirely underground, 490-berth facility which houses Boston bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev and hook-handed terrorist Abu Hamza.

If Guzmán feels his liberties are infringed now, they are soon to be removed entirely says Levine. "ADX Florence is a no-contact institution. You don't get your mail, it's scanned in and shown to you on a screen. You can't even hold the paper your wife wrote to you on. They pipe in sunlight because you are so far underground. You exercise in a sort of empty swimming pool with armed guards looking down from the sides. Need a shower? You turn your back, your door opens and a shower slides in on a track. You wash, then it goes away again. You don't speak or talk to anybody. You don't even see your guards. That's you until the end of your life."

Guzmán now stares at the walls praying for another breakout – if he can't escape before his extradition, there is no way he'll ever spring free in the US.

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EL CHAPO IN NUMBERS

- 3 billion** His net worth in dollars
- 450,000** Number of kilos of cocaine the Sinaloa cartel has exported into the US from Mexico
- 67** His ranking in *Forbes* magazine's most powerful men in the world
- 25** Per cent of the illegal drug trade in the US his cartel are responsible for
- 78** Number of accomplices alleged in his first break out – inside a laundry basket – in 2001
- 58** His reported age
- 18** Age of his most recent wife when they married in 2007
- 9** Years he has spent in prison

POLICEMEN KEEP WATCH AT THE ALTIPLANO FEDERAL PENITENTIARY

