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Published January 05, 2010 12:15 am - Many of the football fans who headed to El Paso to witness OU's Sun Bowl victory last week didn't cross the border into Mexico. In better times, that side trip would have been an obligatory tourist adventure.

Mexican drug traffickers killing lure of Sun Bowl

Many of the football fans who headed to El Paso to witness OU's Sun Bowl victory last week didn't cross the border into Mexico. In better times, that side trip would have been an obligatory tourist adventure.

But Mexico's drug cartels have put a stop to that with the hundreds of homicides taking place across the border in Juarez. Few tourists made the short trip this year. That's too bad because a trip to Mexico was what helped build the Sun Bowl.



Sun Bowl officials had hoped for about 10,000 out-of-town visitors. The stadium was mostly full. Many were local residents and soldiers from a nearby army post.

Juarez merchants said tourism traffic is down about 80 percent in their city. The drug turf war is being waged by the Juarez cartel and Sinaloa cartel.

El Paso itself is a safe city. In fact, one magazine rated it as the second safest city in the country with 18 homicides last year, compared to 57 in Oklahoma City and 50 in Tulsa.

But perception often becomes reality. The police chief in El Paso told the local newspaper visitors need not worry about safety unless they go to Juarez. The city averages seven killings per day and is the world's homicide capital.

"I would not trust my safety to the law-enforcement community over there because right now, it appears they are inefficient," El Paso Police Chief Greg Allen told the El Paso Times.



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