

Mexican priest dies after being caught in cartel-military crossfire

by [Tom Baldwin](#)

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Mexico City, July 6 (ENInews)--A Catholic priest died of his wounds last week after being caught in the crossfire of a shootout between drug cartel gunmen and the military in Matamoros, across the border from Brownsville, Texas, authorities said.

The Father Marco Antonio Duran Romero, 48, pastor of the St. Robert Bellarmine Parish and host of a local television program, was shot in the chest after encountering the shootout while out driving on Saturday, said Father Alan Camargo, spokesman for the Diocese of Matamoros, according to a news release from the Latin America and Caribbean Communication Agency.

Father Duran, who had just left a prayer meeting in his parish, died after emergency surgery.

"He was very dynamic, creative, very charismatic and had a way being very open and direct with young people," Father Camargo said. A funeral Mass was celebrated 4 July.

The death was the latest difficulty for the Catholic Church as it serves regions of Mexico rife with violence from drug cartels and organized crime. One priest in the Diocese of Matamoros said he fled a violent region of Tamaulipas state earlier this year due to threats from drug cartels, which are disputing a region coveted for its smuggling routes to the United States.