

# JUSTICE IN MEXICO

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## SPECIAL SECTION: MEXICO VOTE 2006

### MEXICO VOTE 2006

#### City authorities accused of skirting rule of law

The nearly month-long occupation of parts of Mexico City by supporters of leftist presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador has led to sharp criticism that city authorities are not following through with the rule of law. Media commentators accuse Mexico City Mayor Alejandro Encinas of actively encouraging the mass sit-ins, which have paralyzed traffic along major thoroughfares and impeded the business of government, especially around the city's main square, known as the Zócalo, where López Obrador has been holding massive rallies since losing the presidential election on July 2. To a much lesser extent, commentators blame President Vicente Fox with standing idle as AMLO supporters assume control over parts of the capital, saying the federal inertia rewards impunity.

A strong loyalist of López Obrador and a fellow Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) member, Encinas has sent out contradictory messages since AMLO convoked mass demonstrations to protest the official fraud and corruption that he says cost him the election. On the one hand, Encinas has called the actions of pro-AMLO sympathizers worthy exercises in democracy and has argued that the root problem is not the protesters but a fraudulent presidential election. On the other hand, he has sided with those who have criticized the demonstrators' occupation of a major city thoroughfare and has maintained that his office is occupied by a proper civil servant and not an interested AMLO supporter.

Apparently Encinas has opted to accommodate the protesters and to wink and nod as they occupy highly visible parts of the capital's downtown, while ensuring that alternate traffic routes exist for the blockaded streets (despite the obstruction of roadways being expressly prohibited in a local law known as "Banda Informativo Número 13," which was approved by López Obrador in December 2000). In a city that López Obrador won overwhelmingly, the protest has angered many residents who now face lengthy detours to go about their daily business. Encinas' public security chief, Joel Ortega, recently spoke to the occupation by protesters, asserting that only certain streets were in the hands of the demonstrators and that extraordinary efforts were being made to ensure the security of the lower-house congressional building, the airport, the federal electoral tribunal building, and the U.S. embassy building.

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Despite the assurances from city officials, however, the business of government has inevitably slowed due to the protests. For example, Supreme Court justices were mulling moving to an alternate and safer location in southern Mexico City, as their downtown chambers had been besieged by protesters. Meanwhile, the national human rights ombudsman said he would not issue rulings while protests were ongoing for fear that a particular verdict could be interpreted as partisan in the highly politicized climate.

In condoning the protests, Encinas has earned the enmity of not only everyday Mexico City residents but also of intellectuals, many of whom had campaigned for AMLO before the election. Last week the well-known social critic and formerly energetic AMLO supporter, Carlos Monsiváis, publicly criticized the protesters' blockading of Reforma boulevard – a criticism that followed the denunciation by some prominent intellectuals of López Obrador's other post-electoral tactics. Led by well-known political observers such as José Woldenberg, the former head of the Federal Electoral Institute, and well-known political observers, such as Jorge Castañeda and Denise Dresser, the intellectuals signed onto a public declaration that stated that no firm evidence existed to back up AMLO's claims of vote fraud. "In an election involving citizens, there can be errors and irregularities but not fraud," they wrote. While losing the support of the intellectual community, AMLO also has risked alienating members of his own party, and one newspaper reported that high PRD officials had opposed the decision to take over parts of Mexico City – a stance vetoed by López Obrador. "The upper reaches of the PRD resented and resisted the imposition of the massive sit-in by Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Reforma and in the Zócalo," the paper said, indicating that the decision to squat the capital was a "personal" one, made exclusively by AMLO.

Apparently, the incoming Mexico City mayor, an AMLO ally named Marcelo Ebrard, was not one of the PRD contrarians. Planning to take over from Encinas in the fall, Ebrard has rhetorically supported the mass mobilization and is now proposing that brigades of city personnel be deployed to assist the protesters, whose daily necessities are found to be lacking on the streets. Along with other PRD high officeholders, Ebrard has also fasted as part of a hunger strike in an attempt to get the nation's federal electoral tribunal, known as the TEPJF, to fulfill AMLO's central demand of a comprehensive, vote-by-vote recount of all polling sites, comprising around 41 million ballots.

However, the tribunal, which is the supreme adjudicator of electoral disputes and which formally declares the presidential winner, unanimously voted at a special hearing in late July in favor of only a partial recount of about 9 percent of polling stations (11,839). The recount could influence the final presidential vote tallies in 149, or about half, of the country's roughly 300 electoral districts. But it likely won't sway the election outcome. Hurting the AMLO cause, the tribunal ruled that the circumscribed recount was going forward because of "evident ballot errors;" it did not indicate a fraud investigation. The select recount began on Aug. 9, and the TEPJF is required to rule on all electoral disputes by the end of the month. It is scheduled to formally certify the presidential winner by Sept. 6.

The tribunal's endorsement of only a limited recount riled AMLO supporters last week, and they seized tollbooths on some federal highways for a short time Tuesday morning. The intention was to open the roads so that PRD supporters could motor in from outside the capital to swell a protest outside TEPJF installations in southern Mexico City. However the invaders desisted once word spread that federal authorities were deploying forces to wrest control. The tollbooths takeover followed last week's highly visible blockade of the stock market building in Mexico City – a symbolic protest against the powerful business interests that AMLO supporters say dashed their hopes by financing the campaign of the now putative president-elect, Felipe Calderón.

For its part, the Calderón's center-right National Action Party (PAN) does not appear worried about the TEPJF's certification decision Sept. 6, and party leaders have reiterated in the press they will honor the tribunal's rulings. Calderón himself seems more intent on strategizing policy, according to his chief adviser, than with formulating legal arguments to counter the PRD's electoral fraud charges. (The chief

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adviser, Josefina Vázquez Mota, told *Bloomberg* July 24 that Calderón was working to forge a congressional majority to pass security-related legislation, including laws to lengthen prison sentences for kidnappers, to consolidate Mexican police forces, and to enable crime victims and families to more easily sue for restitution.) Nevertheless, Calderón surrogates have attacked the PRD in print, with the party's national president calling the leftist party "schizophrenic," partly because of Encinas' chameleon-like behavior and partly because of the PRD's multi-pronged strategy to dispute the vote, which involves formal legal maneuvers, as well as popular social protest.

Outside of Mexico City, López Obrador's call for "civil resistance" in "defense of democracy" has not been as widely heeded. Nevertheless, PRD supporters in Chihuahua did constitute a significant enough risk to Fox's itinerary that a photo opportunity event was restaged while the president conducted a tour in the northern border state last week. In fact, it is reported that López Obrador's strategy calls for demonstrators to tail Fox, hectoring the president and disrupting media coverage of official activities. Farther south, leftist protesters in Oaxaca, who are waging an increasingly bold campaign to oust the sitting governor, may rejoice at the impact AMLO sympathizers have had in the nation's capital. (See *related summary*.)

For its part, the federal government has chosen to distance itself from the fray, and Fox has desisted from forcibly removing the protesters. Nevertheless one newspaper commentary noticed the incongruent fact that the president attended a ceremony last week at a Mexico City military base where troops are tasked with "responding to emergency situations in the Valley of Mexico and concretely with attending to and resolving civil disturbances."

Political observers fear that López Obrador's line could harden on the heels of the unfavorable ruling from the TEPJF and that he may sensationalize the protest to sustain its newsworthiness, marshalling supporters to block federal highways and occupy the capital's international airport. On this theme, one columnist suggested that following the TEPJF ruling, institutional channels that could have conceivably vaulted López Obrador into the presidency have been finally severed, making direct confrontation the former candidate's last viable strategy. "If what (López Obrador) seeks is civil insurrection and a direct and violent confrontation with the constituted order, then (my dear reader) López Obrador's strategy is correct," wrote the columnist. Further boding poorly for a peaceful de-escalation of tensions, López Obrador has called on his supporters to draw an intransigent line, and he has equated compliance with TEPJF decisions with psychological submission "to the few." Yet in the same breath López Obrador says "we don't want violence and that is why we fight for democracy." "We don't have to be ashamed of ourselves, nor do we have to bow our heads, because we are not in an intransigent posture. What we want is that there be transparency and that there be democracy," he is quoted as having said.

**SOURCES:**

- "Encuentra el Trife 'errores evidentes.'" *El Universal* 7 August 2006.  
"‘Esquizofrénico’, llama el PAN a López Obrador." *El Tiempo de México* 7 August 2006.  
"Garantizada, la movilidad en la ciudad: Ortega." *La Jornada* 7 August 2006.  
"Inician simpatizantes de Andrés Manuel ayuno frente al Tribunal Electoral." *Milenio* 25 July 2006.  
"Liberan Perredistas las Casetas de Cobro." *Omnia* 8 August 2006.  
"Obrador encabeza una masiva movilización." *Agence France-Presse* 31 July 2006.  
"Resumen de columnas de la prensa mexicana." *Reuters* 2 August 2006.  
["Resguardarán instalaciones del TEPJF." \*El Universal\* 7 August 2006.](#)  
[Botello, Blanca Estela. "Cumplir con la ley es obligación de todos, especialmente de los funcionarios públicos: Fox." \*La Crónica de Hoy\* 2 August 2006.](#)  
[Dehesa, Germán. "Hora de despejar." \*El Norte\* 3 August 2006.](#)  
[Díaz, Gloria Leticia. "Visita tempranera de AMLO a quienes pernoctan en campamentos." \*Proceso\* 2 August 2006.](#)  
[Fernández, Rubelio. "Trasladan rechazados su protesta a Juárez y Reforma." \*El Universal\* 7 August 2006.](#)  
[Goya, Leonardo. "Retiran perredistas bloqueo en BMV." \*El Norte\* 3 August 2006.](#)  
Gutiérrez, Miguel Ángel. "Izquierda México no pierde esperanza de recuento total de votos." *Reuters* 7 August 2006.

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Harrington, Patrick. "Calderon to Forge Congressional Majority on Crime, Vazquez Says." *Bloomberg* 24 July 2006.  
[López, Mayolo. "Piden escuchar llamado de intelectuales." \*El Norte\* 3 August 2006.](#)  
[Sarmiento, Sergio. "Aplicar la ley." \*El Norte\* 2 August 2006.](#)

## JUSTICE REFORM

### **Chihuahua: No backlog, says chief justice, citing technological advances**

The state chief justice reported no backlog in cases in any of Chihuahua's courts and applauded the introduction of technology to streamline trial proceedings, in an annual report. Jorge Luis Mancillas Ramirez noted the benefits derived from the use of audio and video recording equipment to preserve records of court proceedings. He also pointed out that videoconferencing equipment facilitates hearings by enabling authorities to more easily link incarcerated witnesses with the court.

### **State of Mexico: 'Oral argument' trials start**

Authorities have begun implementing an oral arguments phase in the trials of defendants charged with non-violent offenses. Officials in Tlalnepantla and state capital Toluca unveiled two new courtrooms that are specially equipped to handle the new trials. The state plans to open 16 new oral-argument courtrooms by Oct. 1 of this year.

#### **SOURCES:**

[Diaz, Cesar. "Inaugura Edomex salas de juicios orales." \*El Norte\* 1 August 2006.](#)  
[Talavera, Gabriel. "Dicen abatir rezago en juzgados penales." \*El Norte\* 2 August 2006.](#)

### **Baja California: More resources to fight crime**

The Baja California legislature approved an extraordinary, 15-million-peso increase to the state's crime-fighting budget, carrying out a proposal from the state attorney general's office.

#### **SOURCE:**

Dirección de Comunicación Social, Comunicado 549, Legislatura XVIII del H. Congreso del Estado de Baja California

## ACCOUNTABILITY

### **CORRUPTION**

#### **Official corruption still commonplace in much Mexican bureaucracy**

Official corruption remains a way of life in Mexico, with a total of \$69 billion forked over in 2005 in petty bribes, kickbacks, embezzlement, and influence-buying. However some novel measures such as new transparency laws and the use of the Internet to automate government services, as well as to provide an anonymous complaints structure, have helped Mexican states make inroads against the malfeasance.

Citing data gathered by Transparencia Mexicana, an arm of Transparency International, and CEESP, a Mexico City thinktank serving the private sector, a recent *Los Angeles Times* column pointed out the following:

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- 1 in 5 businesses operating in Mexico says it has made “extra-official” payments to obtain government contracts, cut red tape, or ignore regulations
  - “Corruption” swallowed up \$69 billion in 2005 – equal to the combined federal budgets for defense and education
  - In 2005 1 in 10 transactions for public services involved a bribe; in 2003, it was 1 in 12
  - Mexicans committed more than 115 million acts of corruption and paid \$2 billion in petty bribes to get driver’s licenses, to walk away from traffic tickets, to get vending licenses, etc.

“Corruption” represents an enormous and economically unprofitable blackhole that inhibits reinvestment, frightens off would-be business owners, and impedes much-needed job growth, the column added. However there is a silver lining. Mexico is currently experiencing a recent transparency push, and a landmark federal transparency law was passed at the outset of the current administration. Also, the expansion of the Internet has allowed governments from the local to the federal level to upload for universal consumption information that was previously obtainable only through filing a request with a bureaucrat. Thus more public records are freely accessible. Governments also are employing the Web to automate other public services, creating alternate channels that bypass the human bureaucracy and the attendant pitfall of corruption.

The advancements have particularly benefited the Mexican states of Queret aro and Chiapas, elevating them in 2005 to the No. 1 and No. 2 spots on the list of “cleanest” Mexican states, whereas they had rated only poor or mediocre in prior years, *Transparencia Mexicana* said.

**SOURCE:**

Dickerson, Marla. “The Bite of Corruption.” *Los Angeles Times* 6 August 2006.

**State of Mexico: City council approves questionable compensation**

The Atizap an city council is being criticized after council members voted themselves an extraordinary and possibly illegal severance payment. The council reportedly approved allocation for the payment in November and scheduled its disbursement upon termination of the current administration this fall. The 16 city councilpersons, as well as 104 other high municipal officials, would be eligible for the one-time payment, which is equal to more than a quarter of each official’s annual salary. At the November meeting, the city council also voted to direct 20 million pesos to a special fund, meaning that the average severance payout for each of the 120 eligible officials would equal 166,666 pesos. The extraordinary allocation may be illegal.

Elsewhere in the State of Mexico, the corruption case against disgraced former Gov. Arturo Montiel on fraud and embezzlement charges is in an evidence-gathering phase, and prosecutors are petitioning state officials for records related to public registered assets that may be owned by Montiel.

**SOURCES:**

[Alfaro, Efr n and Arturo Espinosa. “Disfrazan ‘bono de salida’ en Edomex.” \*El Norte\* 2 August 2006.](#)  
[“Analizar n 170 registros en torno al caso Montiel.” \*El Universal\* 7 August 2006.](#)

**IFAI orders government to release data on welfare beneficiaries**

Mexico’s public information agency, known as IFAI, unanimously voted Aug. 9 to order the major government welfare program Oportunidades to publicly disclose the names of all beneficiaries. Officials representing Oportunidades, which is run by the Social Development Ministry, had argued that the names of adult applicants and heads of household, as well as other data, already were largely available online, and that it did not have to honor a request to disclose more information about all beneficiaries. Oportunidades authorities also argued that the release of personal information, possibly that of minors, could also compromise the confidentiality of the participants in its rural-poverty assistance programs. However IFAI, whose acronym stands for the Federal Information Access

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Institute, ruled that Programa Oportunidades would have to disclose the information, citing taxpayers' right to know.

**SOURCE:**

Barajas, Abel. "Ordenan abrir padrón de Oportunidades." *Reforma* 9 August 2006.

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### DISCRIMINATION

A law mandating equality between the sexes went into effect. The General Law for Equality between Women and Men prohibits gender-based discrimination. The law requires federal, state, and municipal governments to foment economic, political, and social equality between the sexes.

**SOURCE:**

[Alcántara, Lilita. "Entra en vigor ley en favor de la igualdad de sexos." \*El Universal\* 3 August 2006.](#)

### WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Four women were reported murdered in July in Ciudad Juarez, the border city infamous since the 1990s for unresolved killings of women. Authorities said they were pursuing various lines of investigation in the killings of Abigail Rodríguez Rincon, 29, whose beaten body was found on a roadside, and Claudia Rodríguez López, 32, who was evidently shot while driving. In the case of Elsa Aglae Jurado Torres, 23, friends and relatives are offering a 50,000-peso reward to find her killer. Jurado died after being burned by a man who poured gasoline on her at a street corner. Ciudad Juarez officials recorded 14 murders of women for the first half of 2006 versus 16 for January-July 2005.

In related women's news along the border, civil society groups in Tamaulipas are asking the military to withdraw checkpoints around Matamoros that they say intimidate female travelers and slow commerce. The request is made following the death of a Tamaulipas citizen that the civil society groups attribute to the checkpoints. The local chamber of commerce and employers confederation argue that the checkpoints are unnecessary nuisances and endanger lives rather than enhance security.

In another development, the Coahuila state human rights ombudsman is formally requesting that local soldiers be punished for allegedly raping sex workers, as well as for beating municipal police who were responding to the call. The alleged crime took place at a brothel located in a "zone of tolerance" in the municipality of Castaños.

**SOURCES:**

["A una voz, organismos de derechos humanos pedirán castigo contra militares." 6 August 2006.](#)

["Aumentan recompensa por asesino." \*El Diario de Chihuahua\* 28 July 2006.](#)

["Matan a otra mujer." \*Reforma\* 1 August 2006.](#)

### VICTIMS' RIGHTS

#### **Mrs. Wallace continues crusade against kidnapers**

The mother of a kidnapped businessman who is feared dead continues a one-woman investigation to capture her son's assailants. Isabel Miranda de Wallace wants authorities to investigate police officers

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in the state of Morelos, who she says formed part of an organized crime ring that kidnapped and killed Hugo Alberto Wallace and other victims. Mrs. Wallace has made national and international news as she crusades to find the assailants of her son, who disappeared in July 2005. She has placed billboards around Mexico City featuring likenesses of the suspects she accuses of taking her son.

**SOURCES:**

[Miranda, Justino. "Piden avanzar en caso Wallace." \*El Universal\* 2 August 2006.](#)

Olais, Agustín. "Isabel Miranda atrapar  a polic es implicados en la desaparici n de su hijo." *Proceso* 2 August 2006.

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## ORDER

### OAXACA

#### **Situation worsens as leftist group invades police headquarters, radio and TV stations**

Hostilities between a rebellious leftist confederation and the embattled state government intensified during the biweekly reporting period, with the leftists invading a police station and commandeering local broadcasters. Meanwhile anti-leftist gangs were said to have invaded the newsroom of an independent newspaper and were implicated in shooting up a building at a large public university. Federal Preventive Police agents appear to have been deployed to guard some government installations, and state police were said to have fired weapons into the air to disperse protesters outside of city hall in Oaxaca City. Despite the disorder, presidential spokesman Rub n Aguilar expressed confidence that the tensions in Oaxaca would be resolved within the confines of the law.

Anti-government protests in Oaxaca are escalating, even as the original spark of the protests, a large-scale public school teachers' strike, appears to be fading. In fact, most of the striking teachers appeared to have supported a prominent union leaders' call last month to return to the classroom to finish up the dwindling school year. Nevertheless a leftist confederation of social groups has continued the demonstrations, sustaining a now months-long protest-occupation of downtown Oaxaca City, which has severely hurt the tourism industry and impeded the business of government. APPO, as the leftist confederation is known, has drawn a hard line against the sitting governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, of the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), and is calling for his resignation. APPO views Ruiz Ortiz as autocratic and charges him with defrauding voters in the 2004 gubernatorial election. Facing a political juggernaut of immense proportions but unwilling to step down, Ruiz Ortiz has attempted to reframe the conflict as a labor disagreement between the state employer and the striking public school teachers. But it appears that the situation has irrevocably transformed itself into a much wider dispute, and the negotiating committee formally dissolved Aug. 3.

During the biweekly reporting period, APPO escalated protests. In the most notable action July 22, an estimated 500 APPO activists and dissident teachers broke into a stationhouse and freed from police custody 10 members who they said were being unfairly detained. During the invasion, the vigilantes took as hostages two police officials, treating one for physical injuries sustained in the vigilante action and then transporting both to APPO headquarters at the local state university. The two officers were later released to the Red Cross.

It was a pro-APPO radio station at the university, the Benito Juarez Autonomous University of Oaxaca, that APPO members said pro-government vigilantes fired on in an act of intimidation July 23. The shooting, allegedly committed by balaklava-clad commandos, may have prodded APPO to take over other broadcasters. And a large contingent of female APPO activists took over for about eight hours a state-run television and radio broadcaster on Aug. 1, taking station employees hostage and

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succeeding in broadcasting a communiqué that reiterated the group's demand that Ruiz Ortiz resign. Though no serious injuries were reported from the occupation of the CORTV broadcaster, a journalist for an online newspaper based in Puebla state reported that the APPO women harassed and threatened herself, the station employees, and correspondents from national newspaper *Reforma* and state-funded wire service *Notimex*. On the heels of the occupation, the local affiliate of national broadcaster TV Azteca took steps to forestall a similar invasion, and two Oaxaca City newspapers, accused by APPO of a pro-government bias, also shut down operations.

Noisy female APPO activists also amassed Aug. 1 in front of a downtown hotel where government representatives were meeting. Banging on pots and pans, the women attempted to drown out the talks going on inside. They held similar protests at a main Oaxaca City plaza, as well as outside government offices.

**SOURCES:**

- [Altamirano, Genaro. "Libres, jefes de la policía tomados como rehenes." \*El Universal\* 24 July 2006.](#)  
[Altamirano, Genaro. "Radicalizan en Oaxaca acciones contra medios." \*El Universal\* 3 August 2006.](#)  
[Martínez, Ixtli. "Toman mujeres de la APPO instalaciones de CORTV." \*e-puebla.com\* 2 August 2006.](#)  
[Matías, Pedro. "Toman mujeres sistema de radio y TV de Oaxaca." \*Proceso\* 1 August 2006.](#)  
["Confía Presidencia en solución legal en Oaxaca." \*Notimex\* 24 July 2006.](#)  
["Detiene PGJE de Oaxaca a integrante de APPO." \*El Universal\* 7 August 2006.](#)  
["El conflicto en Oaxaca se resolverá dentro de la ley: Presidencia." \*Notimex\* 24 July 2006.](#)  
["Libera Appo a campesino de cuartel." \*El Porvenir\* 24 July 2006.](#)  
["Rescatan en Oaxaca a campesino detenido por intentar inmolarse." \*La Jornada\* 24 July 2006.](#)  
["Siege Continues at Mexican TV Station." \*Associated Press\* 3 August 2006.](#)

**Mexico military, police invest in hardware**

Mexico has purchased a state-of-the-art radar system to monitor air and sea traffic around its southern Gulf oil installations, the Navy and state-run oil monopoly Petroleos Mexicanos said. *Jane's Defence Weekly* also reports Mexico is in talks to buy 12 Russian fighter jets, a purchase aimed at guarding Mexican seacoast and waters from terrorism.

Mexico City police officials also are budgeting hardware purchases to fight crime. The city's public security director said the Federal District was spending more than 230 million pesos to buy 346 vehicles, two helicopters, and necessary gear. The purchases were partly financed by new city parking-meter revenue. However, it is unclear what kind of effect the hardware purchases will have on real crime rates in the capital. Many crime analysts say authorities should concentrate budgets on uprooting the structural causes of crime rather than expend monies on showy vehicles and equipment.

**SOURCES:**

- [Barajas, Abel. "Refuerza México vigilancia aérea." \*Reforma\* 24 July 2006.](#)  
Servin Vega, Mirna. "La SSP se refuerza contra el hampa." *La Jornada* 7

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## ORGANIZED CRIME, DRUGS, and VIOLENCE

### **Mexico: Lawmakers support resolution on wave of drug-related violence**

The recent spate of gangland slayings in Mexico has led federal lawmakers to support a resolution urging the government to implement emergency plans to arrest the violence. Among other points, the resolution asks the country's security cabinet to investigate the mercenary bands that are blamed with a rash of commando-style hits throughout the country. In particular, the lawmakers are seeking information on the presence in Mexico of former Guatemalan special forces soldiers, known as *Kaibiles*, who are reportedly in the pay of the Gulf cartel. The congressmen also want information on the Salvadoran Mara Salvatrucha gang members who are believed to work for the Sinaloa cartel.

A legislator from the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which sponsored the resolution, said the country's security situation is dire. "We demand once and for all that the authorities halt the alarming number of executions, killings, kidnappings, robberies, and other crimes, the majority of which are related to either large- or small-scale drug trafficking, which in recent days are being committed throughout the Mexican Republic," lawmaker José Carlos Cota said. Presidential spokesman Rubén Aguilar said the Fox administration welcomed the resolution.

Cota added that he thought the public safety situation in Mexico was out of control. "It's been a while since the red lights have been on, but now they are redder than ever due to organized crime that has given now innumerable examples of drastic and unparalleled violence," he said. However members of the center-right National Action Party (PAN) came to the defense of the current administration, acknowledging the "very grave" violence but labeling as exaggeration Cota's claim that the system was "out of control." Further hoping to allay fears, the *panistas* added that the recent violence doesn't endanger the lives of "millions of Mexicans," the implication being that the victims of the murder and mayhem are not innocent, everyday Mexicans but rather guilty drug traffickers.

However this line of thinking is disputed in an editorial in national *El Universal* newspaper, which noted that law enforcement officials number prominently among the victims of gangland murders. The editors added that all of Mexican society suffers from the terror of "being held hostage" by "thugs," even if most everyday Mexicans will never suffer directly from mafia-related violence. The editorial goes on to heavily criticize Mexican authorities, claiming that "the State has been incapable of guaranteeing its security." The editorial faulted Mexican politicians with spending too much time courting favorable media coverage and not enough effort attacking the root causes of crime.

#### **SOURCES:**

[Salazar, Claudia. "Urge la Permanente a frenar la violencia." \*Reforma\* 2 August 2006.](#)  
["Alto, ya, a la violencia." \*El Universal\* 25 July 2006.](#)  
["El conflicto en Oaxaca se resolverá dentro de la ley: Presidencia." \*Notimex\* 24 July 2006.](#)

### **Military, law enforcement, and government officials targeted in gangland slayings**

Drug traffickers and their mercenaries continued to target military personnel, high-level law enforcers, and other government officials during the biweekly reporting period. The most high-profile case took place in northern Nuevo León where a federal tax agent, freely traveling with some suspected drug traffickers, was gravely injured in an ambush by a rival gang. Also in the border north, a state police commander in Chihuahua was gunned down, apparently by gangland mercenaries. In the south, Guerrero state, which has suffered a wave of violence for months, saw no cessation in the number of drug-related murders occurring within its boundaries.

### **Nuevo León: Potentially compromised federal tax agent nearly killed in ambush**

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The most notable case from the biweekly reporting period was the ambush and near-slaying of a federal tax agent in Monterrey, in the state of Nuevo León, which was reported in the press July 24. At the time of the attack, federal tax administrator Verónica Palacios was freely traveling in the company of two brothers, identified as Tomas Efrain and Roberto López de la Cruz, when their SUV came under AK-47 fire from some 15 gunmen, according to news accounts. The ambush left two people dead, an unidentified woman and one of the López de la Cruz brothers, and Palacios was shot in the lung. The assailants were believed to belong to the northeastern Gulf cartel, while subsequent news reports linked the López de la Cruz brothers with the Pacific Coast Sinaloa cartel. The two gangs have been waging a protracted war throughout Mexico to dominate drug shipping routes.

Along with three other occupants from the SUV, Palacios was taken to a local hospital where she remains under house arrest, although doctors cleared her for release. She is expected to make a declaration to federal investigators soon in Chihuahua, as she is apparently too weak to travel to the PGR's central interrogation facility in Mexico City, her lawyer says. Palacios is expected to testify that her relationship with the López de la Cruz brothers was limited to an incipient romance with Tomas Efrain and that she knew nothing of their alleged criminal association with Sinaloa cartel capo Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.

About a week after the ambush, the case took a twist when the decapitated body of a man presumed to be a cousin of the López de la Cruz brothers surfaced in Monterrey, according to papers from July 31. Attached to the body of the 18-to-20-year-old man, a note linked Palacios and the López de la Cruz brothers to the Sinaloa cartel and blamed them for killings in Nuevo Laredo and Guadalajara. The note indicated that "heads would continue to roll" if the government didn't act soon to capture Sinaloa cartel lieutenants Edgar Valdez Villarreal and Arturo Beltran. (Coincidentally during the biweekly reporting period, the PGR transported to a Mexico City detention center nine suspected members of the Sinaloa-affiliated Milenio cartel, which is based in Michoacan.)

The Nuevo León governor, Natividad González Parás, has labeled the murders part of the same "package of vengeance killings," implying that the slayings are the result of inter-cartel rivalries, not damaging to society at large and hurting only the community of drug traffickers and mercenaries. Additionally, he exhorted federal authorities to better coordinate the anti-drug fight with their subnational counterparts, echoing similar demands from several other state- and municipal-level officials in recent months.

**SOURCES:**

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[García, Adán. "Dejan en ejecutado recado para Cártel." \*Reforma\* 1 August 2006.](#)  
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**Guerrero: Drug-related crimes continue**

Drug-related slayings and rampant street crime persisted in Guerrero during the biweekly reporting period, prompting a traffic-stopping demonstration by bus and taxi drivers and spurring the governor to promise 100 million more pesos in police funds. Among the killings, an Acapulco condominium manager was shot to death in the lobby of his building the morning of July 24, with a calling-card note left at the crime scene that read, "Here the Zeta concession is paid." Zetas are a mercenary band in the employ of the northeastern Gulf cartel. In another case, the body of an unidentified middle-aged man was found floating in the water off the beach at the tourist resort of Ixtapa – that death also

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believed to be the work of organized crime. Following the highly publicized murders of a Navy intelligence officer and a high-level Acapulco security official last month, military troops continued to make rounds throughout Guerrero, and a joint military-federal police force took gunfire while executing a search warrant in Zihuatanejo.

In a related development, the Navy officially announced that the intelligence officer who disappeared in Acapulco last month and shortly turned up dead was in fact an undercover agent who had infiltrated the area drug mafia. *Please see Report 9: "Guerrero: Consternation in military brass after kidnapped officers turn up dead."* In impromptu comments to the Mexico City press earlier this month, Navy secretary Marco Antonio Peyrot eulogized the officer, Marcelino Marcelo García Nava, as "having died for the Navy and for Mexico." Peyrot said García had been officially listed as having died in the line of duty, putting paid to the speculation that he was involved in criminal activity and was killed for double-dealing. García's kidnapping and death came the same week as that of another military figure, a former Army captain named Eusebio Palacios Ortiz, who had served as security chief for the Acapulco city hall. His killing also has been attributed to organized crime.

In other Guerrero-related news:

--Rampant street crime persuaded Acapulco's bus and taxi drivers to park their vehicles in protest Aug. 5, bringing weekend traffic to a standstill in the busy port city's downtown. The chauffeurs, who claim they are frequent victims of muggings and assaults, called on the city government of Felix Salgado Macedonio to rectify what they fear is an out-of-control crime situation. The demonstrators held up traffic for more than two hours, forcing locals and tourists to endure summer temperatures while trapped in traffic. The taxi and bus drivers' chief complaint is the high incidence of muggings and robberies that they say plagues their industry. The chauffeurs say they suffer an average of 40 such crimes per day.

--Federal Guerrero Gov. Zeferino Torreblanca promised an extra 100 million pesos to go toward police salaries, hiring more officers, and upgrading equipment, as part of a "complete restructuring" of the state's investigative police department. He added that a portion would go toward beefing up security at state government offices and at Acapulco city hall. "A reconversion of the ministerial police is needed," Torreblanca said. Additionally, federal authorities said recently they would audit the employment rolls of the Guerrero state police and of the Acapulco municipal police, in an effort to weed out officers with criminal records and those potentially associated with criminal gangs. Widespread corruption in the corps is spurring the move, a federal official seemed to acknowledge, according to a newspaper account.

--Four members of a state agrarian rights movement ended a month-long hunger strike, which was begun to protest their allegedly illegal imprisonment, after a prison official promised to include three of them in an early-release program. The land activists are members of the Emiliano Zapata Revolutionary Agrarian League of the South. *See Report 8: "Agrarian Rights: Family members petition Guerrero governor on behalf of hunger-striking relatives."*

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#### **Jalisco: High-ranking Gulf cartel member jailed**

An alleged high-ranking member of the northeastern Gulf cartel, Mateo Díaz López, appears to have begun serving a prison sentence after he was convicted on drug-, firearms-, and organized crime-related charges. He is incarcerated in a federal maximum-security penitentiary in western Jalisco state. Díaz López is believed to be a founding member of the Zeta mercenary band and is said to hold a high-level post in the Gulf cartel. He was arrested last month in Tabasco, one of many southern states where he oversaw the cartel's drug-trafficking operations, and was quickly transported to Mexico City after his henchmen failed to break him out of a local jail. See Report 9: "Tabasco: Police repel attempted jailbreak by 'Zeta' mercenaries; military steps in."

**SOURCE:**

["Hallan más cadáveres de presuntas víctimas del crimen organizado." \*La Jornada\* 24 July 2006.](#)

#### **Federal District: Police commander shot dead**

Four police officers were killed and one was injured July 23, when a heavily armed group of "commandos" seized a warehouse that was stocked with pseudoephedrine, a key ingredient in the manufacture of illegal methamphetamine drugs. The criminals got away with about 1 metric ton of the substance. The police officers were said to have been stabbed to death. Businesses in Mexico City frequently hire police officers to guard their premises.

In a related development, a federal agent was admitted to hospital with gunshot wounds after being ambushed by mercenaries outside of his Mexico City home Aug. 1. The agent, Mauricio Flores Martínez, was said to belong to SIEDO, the special prosecutor's office for organized crime. Speculation was that he was being punished for surveillance work he had conducted against regional cartels in Guerrero and other states.

**SOURCE:**

["Comando mata a cuatro policías durante robo de laboratorios." \*El Universal\* 24 July 2006.](#)

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#### **Chihuahua: Police commander shot dead**

In another northern state, a government official was attacked by suspected drugdom mercenaries, but unlike in the Palacios case, this victim, a state police commander, did not survive. Marco Arturo Nasar Contreras was shot to death outside of his home in the border city of Ciudad Juárez Aug. 6, bringing to four the number of high-level law enforcement officials killed in Chihuahua since June 2005. Also unlike the Palacios case, the victim was not believed to be illicitly connected to organized crime, and a colleague of Nasar's suggested that moles and saboteurs had infiltrated the state public prosecutor's office, enabling hitmen to better target him. Apparently Nasar, 45, headed up a state investigative police unit in Ciudad Juárez and may have been attempting to implement a directive to clean house in public prosecutor's offices throughout Chihuahua. One news report suggested that he may have been killed in retaliation for the dismissals of 30 agents from the state investigative police on suspicion of organized crime ties.

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