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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: Mexican Political Highlights January 28-February 3, 2012

REF: A) 11 MEXICO 4552;

NATIONAL POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

1. (SBU) Veracruz Governor's Aides Caught with USD 1.9 Million in Cash Employees of the state of Veracruz were caught transporting \$25 million pesos (USD 1.9 million) in cash on an official state plane. The employees were flying to Toluca, near Mexico City, and upon arrival, agents from PGR discovered the cash. The employees were unable to explain where the money came from or where it was going, and they were briefly detained. The Governor of Veracruz, Javier Duarte (PRI), quickly told the media that the money was payment for a company in Mexico City that is helping the state organize a number of cultural events. The national press has slammed Duarte for what at best appears to be an improper financial transaction by the state, while opposition parties have suggested the money was intended as illegal support to PRI presidential candidate Enrique Pena Nieto. The state treasurer resigned in the wake of the scandal.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Don Holm, Senior Reviewer

2. (SBU) PGR Investigates Three Former Tamaulipas Governors

On January 30, Mexican press reported that the Attorney General's Office (PGR) is investigating three former Tamaulipas governors. The investigation reportedly has been ongoing since early 2009, and stems from the arrest of Zeta founding member Miguel Angel Soto Parra, although the GOM has not revealed the charges against the ex-governors. Manuel Cavazos (Governor 1993-1999) until recently served as PRI Secretary of Electoral Action, and currently is seeking a Senate seat. Tomas Yarrington (Governor 1999-2004) is seeking a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, and Eugenio Hernandez (Governor 2005-2010) is pursuing a Senate seat, although pundits speculate that PRI presidential candidate Enrique Pena Nieto will only give the nod to Cavazos. PRI leaders say the investigation reflects a "dirty war" against them, and that the GOM is exploiting PGR for political purposes. Pena Nieto visited Tamaulipas on February 2 to launch his campaign in the state.

3. (SBU) AMLO Outlines Some of his Cabinet, Explains Security Policy

Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), in various pre-campaign appearances, has now named thirteen people that he plans to make cabinet secretaries, if he is elected. His list includes prospective heads of the secretariats of labor, agrarian reform, science and technology, and tourism, but he has not publicly mentioned who he plans to make his secretaries of foreign relations, security, or the armed forces. In a speech at a forum about public security and human rights in Durango, he entitled his security proposal "Abrazos, no Balazos" (hugs, not bullets), and outlined his plan to fight corruption, combat all criminal groups equally, and demand better coordination between the armed forces and police. He also said that Mexico's intelligence agency (CISEN) is presently used to spy on political adversaries.

4. (SBU) Spring Session of Congress Opens with Legislators Looking Toward their Next Job

Mexico opened its Spring session of Congress on February 1, but most legislators are more focused on finding their next job, than on the current session. Mexico does not permit consecutive reelection, and in what is referred to as the "grasshopper effect," many legislators jump between the Chamber of Deputies and Senate. More than one-quarter of the 500 deputies elected in 2009 have either already requested, or are about to request, a leave of absence to compete for another elected office. About 28 percent of the 128 senators elected in 2006 have done the same. The Electoral Code requires anyone who wants to run in the July 1 elections to separate from their "publicly held" position by April 2, although most parties require their members to do so earlier.

5. (SBU) Calderon Interrupted during Speech with Questions about Security During Felipe Calderon's speech at the launch of the "Creative Digital City" in Guadalajara, an audience member interrupted the president with questions about his security strategy shouting, "How many more deaths? When will the war end?" Calderon defended his strategy by saying that the high murder rate is because of criminal

organizations, not the government, and he will not surrender the country to Chapo Guzman. He further said that it would be naive to believe that if the government did nothing there would be no violence, and such attitudes have allowed criminals to become powerful. He then brought his remarks full circle, saying more opportunities for high-paying employment, like the "Creative Digital City," would limit the ability of criminal organizations to recruit youth. Calderon's remarks were well received by the invitation-only audience; in fact, some opponents have said his answer seemed so well prepared that that this, and similar recent outbursts, have been staged by Calderon's staff.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

6. (U) State Court Issues Arrest Warrant for Police who Allegedly Killed Protestors

A judge in Guerrero issued an arrest warrant for two policemen from the State Attorney General's Office who are accused of killing protestors during a violent student demonstration in December 2011 (reftel). The officers have claimed they are innocent.

7. (SBU) SEDENA General Faces Trial for Corruption and Human Rights Violations

General Jesus Moreno Avina, former head of the Army garrison in Ojinaga, Chihuahua, was accused this week with systematic abuses, including accepting bribes from narco traffickers, planting weapons on detainees, conducting raids without judicial approval, and authorizing seven extrajudicial killings between 2008 and 2009. At least 50 statements testifying to various abuses have been collected and, in addition to General Moreno, --one of the highest ranking officials to have been charged with crimes of this nature-- two other high-ranking officers, 6 lower officers and 22 soldiers are implicated in various acts. The Supreme Court will now have to decide where to hear the case and a SEDENA spokesman said the Army would support the court's mandate.

8. (SBU) Seven More Freed in Relation to Acteal Massacre

The Supreme Court announced on February 1 that an additional seven members of the indigenous Tzotzile tribe previously convicted for their participation in the 1997 massacre in Acteal, Chiapas will be released on the grounds that evidence used in their trials was tainted or fabricated. (Note: In 2009 the Court freed 20 others on similar grounds. End note.) The massacre returned to the international spotlight in September 2011 when family members of the victims filed charges of crimes against humanity against then President Ernesto Zedillo in a U.S. court. The GOM has asserted Zedillo's right to immunity from prosecution.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

9. (SBU) Arrest Warrants Issued for Four Conspirators in Qadaffi Scandal On January 31, arrest warrants were issued for four individuals implicated in a plot to smuggle Saadi Qadaffi, third son of the

late dictator Mummar Qadaffi, into Mexico. The suspects have been held in detention (arriago) since the plot was exposed in November of last year, and now await trial and sentencing on charges of organized crime, terrorism, trafficking in persons, and illicit financing. Investigators believe there was at least one other conspirator involved in the plot, but have not released further information.

10. (U) Mexican Ambassador to Venezuela Safe Following Kidnapping
Late on the evening of January 29, Mexico's Ambassador to Venezuela, Carlos Pujalte, and his wife were kidnapped by an unknown group and held for several hours. The couple was taken while leaving a dinner party just before midnight and was released unharmed following payment of an unknown sum several hours later. SRE has requested that Venezuela conduct a full investigation and Pujalte has resolved to remain in Venezuela to assist in the effort.

REGIONAL POLITICS

11. (U) President Calderon Brings Food to the Tarahumara
Bringing 110 tons of food and supplies with him, President Calderon visited three small municipalities in southern Chihuahua on February 2, promising that no Tarahumara family would go without food or water. Calderon announced that the Mexican army would deliver another 223 tons of food in the coming days. Joined by his wife Margarita Zavala, who is the current president of the national Agency for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF), Chihuahua Governor Duarte, and SEDESOL Secretary Felix Guerra, Calderon's visit was meant to deliver humanitarian aid and address news reports of massive hunger and poverty in the indigenous communities of the southern Chihuahua mountains.

12. (SBU) "Todos Somos Juarez" Funds Still Trickling In, Four New Schools Inaugurated
Two years after the Calderon Administration launched its "Todos Somos Juarez" (We are all Juarez) social development program, the federal government is still delivering projects to the city but at a reduced pace. With an initial burst of federal funds, 160 projects were identified in Juarez which were intended to help mend the "social fabric" of the city and address its unmet urban development needs. The scale of activity under the initiative has waned, but some projects continue. On January 31, the Public Education Secretariat (SEP) inaugurated four new schools in four marginalized neighborhoods on the outskirts of Juarez. The buildings will double as junior high schools and vocational schools that teach students technical and work-related skills. The federal government has invested USD 38.9 million under Todos Somos Juarez to build and equip the schools over the past two years. (Note: USAID has provided some assistance to Todos Somos Juarez as well. End note.) A total of 3,000 students are expected to attend the new schools. According to the 2010 census, 30% of Juarez youth aged 15-17 do not attend school.
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