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Federal Government Investigates Toxic Waste Management Problem In Mexicali

by Steven Ranieri

Category/Department: General

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On Aug. 5, Santiago Onate, an attorney employed by the government's environmental protection agency a division of the Social Development Ministry (SEDESOL), told reporters that officials are investigating reports of "illegal traffic in toxic waste from the US to Mexico." He said numerous inhabitants of northern Mexico had submitted complaints on the absence of adequate facilities for managing approximately 30,000 metric tons of hazardous waste materials. Next, Onate told reporters that he had requested information from the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Justice Department on the identity of waste suppliers and the location of "processing" facilities in Mexico. Antonio Garcia Torres, deputy attorney general for the northern region, told reporters on Aug. 6 that only one formal complaint had been filed in Mexicali, Baja California Norte state. According to Garcia, 17 companies in the border area are authorized to treat toxic waste. On Aug. 8, SEDESOL officials and maquiladora plant managers convened to begin implementation of a program for more rigorous controls on toxic waste management in the area. Onate emphasized that under Mexican law, toxic waste generated in the use of imported inputs during maquiladoras' production processes must be returned to the country of origin. Onate said government investigators found that several maquila plants in Mexicali had service contracts with Mexaco, a toxic waste processing facility which was recently closed down result of high risk to local inhabitants. He added that maquiladora managers are attempting to locate another enterprise capable of processing hazardous materials for shipment to countries of origin. (Sources: Agence France- Presse, 08/05/92; Notimex, 08/06/92, 08/08/92)

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