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Mexico City Begins Tough Anti-pollution Campaign

by Carlos Navarro

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On Dec. 2, under a new anti-pollution initiative, authorities in Mexico City detained 160 drivers because their vehicles were causing too much air pollution. According to a spokesperson for Mexico City's mayoral office, the violators drove private and public passenger vehicles as well as government-owned cars. Violators were given up to 30 days to correct the problem and present the car for inspection. Those who fail to comply face a fine equivalent to about US$105 per day. The spokesperson said that about 120,000 vehicles produced before 1970 will not be allowed on the streets of the Mexican capital, effective in January. A new emission inspection system will be implemented that month. According to the Metropolitan Commission for Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution (Comision Metropolitana para la Prevencion de la Contaminacion, CMPC), about three million cars circulate in the Mexico City metropolitan area, emitting about 3.3 million metric tons of the 4.3 million MT of contaminants that accumulate in the atmosphere over the city each year. On a related matter, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) on Dec. 1 reported that Mexico City is the most polluted of any city with a population of 10 million or greater. The report, released in Geneva, said automobile emissions contribute significantly to high contamination levels in the Mexican capital and 19 other similar-sized cities. Industrial pollution, domestic wood-burning stoves and electric generators were also blamed for the problems. According to the WHO, the air in Mexico City contains twice the amount of harmful elements as the acceptable norm and poses great health risks for inhabitants of the city. (Sources: Spanish news service EFE, 12/01/92, 12/02/92)

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