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Salinas Institutes Cabinet Reshuffle

by Carlos Navarro

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On Jan. 4, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari replaced his Attorney General, Interior (Gobernacion) Secretary and Energy Secretary, in what was seen as a move to address charges of human rights violations and election fraud. The most prominent cabinet member dismissed was Attorney General Ignacio Morales Lechuga, who was replaced by Jorge Carpizo MacGregor, formerly head of Mexico's National Human Rights Commission. The attorney general's office, whose duties include the war on drugs, has consistently led the list of agencies criticized for rights violations. In addition, Morales Lechuga was widely criticized for a report exonerating the state-run oil company PEMEX in the explosions that destroyed several city blocks in Guadalajara on April 22, 1992. Salinas also replaced Interior Minister Fernando Gutierrez Barrios with Chiapas state governor Jose Patrocino Gonzalez Garrido. The Interior Ministry has been criticized for not doing enough to prevent fraud in recent gubernatorial and local elections. The country has been torn by opposition claims of voting fraud, including charges that Salinas's 1988 election and several gubernatorial votes since then were rigged. The Mexican congress is slated to consider electoral reforms in April. Gonzalez Garrido's appointment has been received with mixed reactions. The nominee has been heavily criticized for human rights violations in Chiapas, although the number of political killings and religiously motivated expulsions has dropped significantly under his administration. Salinas also said Fernando Hiriat, head of the Ministry of Energy, Mines and State-run Industries (SEMIP), will be replaced by the head of the Social Security Institute, Emilio Lozoya Thalman. Lozoya is expected to speed restructuring of PEMEX. (Sources: Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, 01/04/93)

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