Report Details Advances In Mexican Customs System

Carlos Navarro

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On March 15, the Finance Secretariat (Secretaria de Hacienda y Credito Publico, SHCP) released a new report which cites major improvements in customs practices under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's government. The new SHCP study clearly states that the customs system has traditionally been hampered by poor administration and weak regulations, often caused by inadequate budgets. In addition, regarding customs regulations, the report admits that under past governments agents were given "too much discretion" in the decision to grant entry permits. Under Salinas, however, the report says the customs service has increased collection of duties and tariffs, despite a 53% cut in the number of customs employees, from 8,708 in 1989 to 4,083 in 1992. According to the report, customs collections in 1992 totaled more than US$7 billion, an increase of 63% from 1989. The Salinas administration simplified processing of imports by reducing the number of categories for customs transactions to just three, compared with 17 in 1989. At the same time, the government streamlined customs processing through automation of tasks previously done manually, with a greater reliance now on computers and code-bar scanning equipment. To continue the modernization effort, on March 10 the SHCP announced plans to spend 100 million nuevo pesos (US$32.3 million) to upgrade customs stations along the Mexico-US border. (Source: Notimex, 03/10/93, 03/15/93; El Financiero International, 03/22/93)