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## **Tabasco Governor Sues Federal Prosecutor for Launching Electoral Investigation**

*by LADB Staff*

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In late August, Tabasco Governor Roberto Madrazo Pintado of the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) filed a lawsuit against Attorney General Antonio Lozano Gracia charging that the country's top prosecutor overstepped his constitutional authority when he agreed to investigate electoral irregularities in the Tabasco gubernatorial race held in November of 1994. Lozano's decision to launch an investigation into the matter was based on a complaint filed by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the opposition Democratic Revolution Party (PRD). In the complaint, Lopez Obrador, who narrowly lost to Madrazo, charged that members of the PRI in Tabasco had far surpassed spending limits in order to ensure the election of the PRI candidate.

To support their allegations, Lopez Obrador and other PRD officials presented 16 boxes of documents and other evidence to the Attorney General's Office (PGR) in June of this year. According to the documents, the PRI spent 237 million nuevo pesos (US\$37.6 million) on Madrazo's campaign, far surpassing the spending limit of 4 million nuevo pesos (US\$637,000). In a preliminary investigation of the PRD complaint, the PGR compared the records brought by Lopez Obrador and his supporters to bank records in Tabasco. The PGR then ruled that the PRD records and the bank statements were similar enough to warrant a deeper investigation. The PGR said PRI officials would be summoned to Mexico City to explain the origin and final purpose of those resources.

Based on those statements, the PGR would determine whether a law was actually broken. Upon learning of the PGR's decision, Madrazo immediately flew to Mexico City to file his lawsuit against the federal government. In taking the action, Madrazo attempted to paint the lawsuit as a constitutional dispute between state and the PGR, a federal entity led by a member of an opposition party. Attorney General Lozano belongs to the PAN. "We are sure that the Attorney General is not competent to proceed in this matter," Madrazo told reporters. However, the text of Lozano's lawsuit also named President Zedillo as a defendant, which in effect pitted the Tabasco PRI against the national PRI leadership. Madrazo at first denied that Zedillo was named in the lawsuit. He later explained that Lozano, and not Zedillo, was the principal target of the lawsuit.

To make matters worse, Madrazo told reporters that during his trip to Mexico City to file the lawsuit against Lozano, he was kidnapped by several men claiming to be police officers. Madrazo told Mexico City authorities the abductors forced his car off a road south of Mexico City and threatened to kill him. He was allegedly held for more than seven hours. Gonzalo Altamirano Dimas, leader of the PAN in Mexico City, described Madrazo's kidnapping claim as a "trick" to draw attention away from his legal problems stemming from the Tabasco elections. "There is no other alternative than to believe that this was a maneuver planned by Madrazo to prevent authorities from fully investigating the illegal acts associated with his rise to the governor's seat in Tabasco," Altamirano said.

Indeed, in his lawsuit against Lozano, Madrazo had requested that the PGR immediately suspend its investigation about the election irregularities. However, Vicente Auguinaco Aleman, president of the Mexican Supreme Court (Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nacion, SCJN), denied the request that the investigation be suspended. On the other hand, Auguinaco also instructed both Lozano and Zedillo to present a written response to Madrazo's demand. Madrazo's lawsuit was just one of several embarrassments for the ruling PRI during August. That month, the PRI was also forced to answer allegations that party officials pressured Mexico's largest airline, Aeromexico, to make a huge campaign contribution to then-candidate Ernesto Zedillo's presidential campaign (see SourceMex, 08/23/95).

During August, the PRI also was forced to make a change in party leadership. Federal Deputy Maria de los Angeles Moreno was apparently forced out as party president after holding the office for less than a year. Officially, Moreno's departure was described as a resignation. However, political analysts claim that Moreno became the scapegoat for the PRI's gubernatorial losses to the PAN in Baja California, Guanajuato, and Jalisco states earlier this year. Moreno was replaced as president of the PRI by Labor Secretary Santiago Onate Laborde. In addition to Moreno, the PRI removed party secretary Pedro Joaquin Coldwell and replaced him with federal senator Juan Millan.

Indeed, the Tabasco case brought greater focus to a joint effort by the PRD and the PAN to launch electoral reforms in Mexico. In a press conference on Aug. 21, PRD president Porfirio Munoz Ledo and PAN leader Carlos Castillo Peraza issued a 10-point document calling for sweeping electoral reforms in Mexico, including the establishment of strict limits on campaign spending. The document also called for elections to be nullified if the spending limits are surpassed. A key demand in the PAN-PRD proposal is for the various political parties and the government to create a completely independent federal election institute to monitor elections at every level of government. [Note: Peso-dollar conversions in this article are based on the Interbank rate in effect on Aug. 30, reported at 6.29 nuevo pesos per US\$1.00] (Sources: Notimex, 08/21/95, 08/23/95; Deutsche Press Agentur, 08/21/95; Reuter, 08/21/95; Associated Press, 08/21/95, 08/22/95; La Jornada, 08/22/95; Agence France-Presse, 08/19-23/95; Excelsior, 08/21/95, 08/23/95; La Jornada, Excelsior, Reforma, 08/24/95, 08/25/95)

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