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## **President Zedillo Dismisses Attorney General Antonio Lozano**

*by LADB Staff*

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In early December, President Ernesto Zedillo dismissed Attorney General Antonio Lozano Gracia, citing the inability of the attorney general's office (PGR) to solve the assassinations of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio and governing party secretary-general Jose Francisco Ruiz Massieu in 1994. Lozano, a member of the opposition National Action Party (PAN), was replaced immediately by Jorge Madrazo Cuellar, the director of the national human rights commission (Comision Nacional de Derechos Humanos, CNDH).

A statement announcing Lozano's dismissal did not offer a reason for the move. However, a presidential spokesperson later told reporters Zedillo was clearly displeased with Lozano's performance. "The president took this decision because of the lack of results in most of the investigations and actions Lozano had taken," the spokesperson said. In addition to the lack of progress on the Colosio and Ruiz Massieu investigations, the presidential aide said Zedillo was displeased with Lozano's failures in combating drug trafficking. "We were very disappointed on the drug front," said the spokesperson. "The army has been fighting the drug war."

Presidential sources said the president was also concerned about highly publicized blunders committed by the PGR's office. Among these was a recent claim by the PGR's office that a body found buried at the ranch of Raul Salinas de Gortari belonged to former federal Deputy Manuel Munoz Rocha. Raul Salinas, the brother of former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari, has been held in a federal prison since March 1995 on charges of planning Ruiz Massieu's assassination (see SourceMex, 04/05/95). At the time the body was uncovered at Raul Salinas's ranch in early October, Lozano told reporters he was confident the remains belonged to Munoz Rocha. However, medical examiners who have studied the remains have raised doubts that the body belongs to the former legislator. In fact, there are some suggestions that the body was actually planted at Raul Salinas's ranch.

President Zedillo was said to be very uncomfortable with the contradictions presented by PGR officials in this case. In addition, a few weeks before Lozano's dismissal, the Zedillo administration received a formal protest from Swiss authorities claiming that the PGR had misused confidential bank information regarding Raul Salinas's bank accounts in that country. The Swiss government is in the midst of an investigation of possible money-laundering by Raul Salinas.

Still, the fact that Lozano was a PAN member added a political element to the dismissal. Members of the PAN called for Zedillo to offer a detailed explanation for Lozano's removal from office. "If so-called incompetence was the reason for the dismissal of one of the members of the cabinet, then Zedillo should take a closer look at the performance of all the other secretaries," said PAN president Felipe Calderon Hinojosa. Calderon suggested that Zedillo was forced to dismiss Lozano because of strong pressure from members of his own Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), who

are seeking ways to retaliate against the PAN and the opposition Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) for insisting on limits to campaign financing during the upcoming 1997 elections.

In November, the PRI-led Chamber of Deputies and the Senate dismantled political reforms agreed to by leaders of the four major political parties, and instead passed a watered-down electoral-reform initiative (see SourceMex, 11/13/96 and 11/20/96). In a piece published in the daily newspaper *La Jornada*, political columnist Nestor de Buen suggested many PRI members were also angry about losses to the PAN and the PRD during the municipal and local elections in the states of Coahuila and Mexico on Nov. 10. "PRI members, who have been battered by spectacular defeats, had been looking for someone to blame," said De Buen.

Some political analysts suggest the firing of Lozano may have damaged Zedillo's efforts to present himself as the candidate of political reform. Zedillo had appointed Lozano in hopes that a member of the PAN would bring a measure of impartiality to the PGR, one of the country's most corrupt and politically protective departments. "All of Zedillo's promises about change, political consensus, and new openings have turned to ashes," said political analyst Marco Rascon in *La Jornada*. "But rather than a perspective of deep changes, the government has imposed upon our country a future of ruptures."

For their part, members of the opposition PRD suggested that Lozano's firing represented the end of a PRI-PAN political partnership that emerged after former president Salinas narrowly defeated the PRD in the 1988 presidential race. PRD president Andres Lopez Obrador said the close relationship with the PRI may have kept Lozano from speaking out against any obstacles the ruling party placed in the investigations of the Colosio and Ruiz Massieu assassinations. "From the beginning, Lozano should have denounced any obstacles to the political investigations and presented his resignation," said Lopez Obrador. "Instead, he waited until he was run out of office."

In addition to Lozano, all six top PGR aides three of whom were PAN members also presented their resignations. These included Pablo Chapa Bezanilla, who was removed as chief investigator for the Colosio case in late August and replaced by former CNDH member Luis Raul Gonzalez Perez (see SourceMex, 09/25/96). Chapa was reassigned to head the investigations into the assassinations of Ruiz Massieu and Cardinal Juan Jesus Posadas Ocampo in Guadalajara in April 1993. According to official versions, Posadas was mistakenly killed as part of a power struggle among drug traffickers in Guadalajara. However, the government has failed to offer conclusive evidence on this theory, leading to some suggestions that Posadas was killed intentionally. With Chapa's exit from the PGR, Zedillo named Ismael Eslava Perez to head the investigation of the two cases.

Meantime, the appointment of Madrazo Cuellar to head the PGR was quickly ratified by the PRI-dominated Senate in a highly partisan vote the day after Zedillo presented the nomination. All members of the PAN in the Senate voted against Madrazo, while the PRD senators abstained. Madrazo, who is not affiliated with any political party, pledged to clean up the attorney general's office and said he would not allow politics to interfere with the law. He also promised to step up the fight against trafficking in illegal drugs. "My actions will always be guided by two principles in which I believe wholeheartedly: truth and the law," Madrazo told a news conference.

The new attorney general also promised that no individual or elected official would be "untouchable" during the investigations of the Colosio, Ruiz Massieu, and Posadas assassinations. "One of my duties will be to unravel the Colosio case, which continues to present many unanswered questions," Madrazo told reporters. In fact, Madrazo said the PGR plans to continue taking depositions from former president Salinas regarding the Colosio and Ruiz Massieu cases. In late November, a PGR team was sent by Lozano to take statements from Salinas, who is in a self-imposed exile in Ireland, regarding the Colosio murder.

In the depositions, conducted at the Mexican Embassy in Dublin, Salinas denied any role in the then PRI candidate's assassination in Tijuana in March 1994. PGR aides were scheduled to interview Salinas regarding the Ruiz Massieu case in early December. However, the deposition was postponed after Lozano was removed from office. Madrazo told reporters the PGR had postponed this interview until at least January.

Madrazo is the second head of the CNDH to be appointed as top prosecutor. In January 1993, former president Salinas appointed then CNDH head Jorge Carpizo MacGregor to replace Ignacio Morales Lechuga as attorney general (see SourceMex, 01/06/93). Under the leadership of Morales Lechuga, the PGR came under intense criticism for corruption and human rights violations. In addition, Morales issued a much-criticized report exonerating the state-run oil company PEMEX in the explosions that destroyed several city blocks in Guadalajara on April 22, 1992 (see SourceMex, 05/06/92 and 12/09/92).

Meanwhile, members of the PAN raised the possibility that Lozano could become the party's candidate in the first-ever elections for mayor of Mexico City in July 1997. A number of prominent politicians from several parties have been mentioned as possible candidates for this office, including former PAN presidential candidate Diego Fernandez de Cevallos, former PRD president Porfirio Munoz Ledo, and former mayor Manuel Camacho Solis. (Sources: Excelsior, 12/02/96; Reuter, 12/02/96, 12/03/96; Washington Post, Associated Press, 12/03/96; El Economista, Novedades, 12/03/96, 12/04/96; Spanish news service EFE, 12/03/96, 12/05/96; La Jornada, 12/03/96, 12/04/96, 12/06/96; El Financiero International, 12/09/96; El Universal, The News 12/03/96, 12/04/96, 12/11/96)

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