

3-5-1997

U.S. President Clinton, Key Legislators Disagree on Mexico Drug Certification

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex>

Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "U.S. President Clinton, Key Legislators Disagree on Mexico Drug Certification." (1997).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/3710>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in SourceMex by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

U.S. President Clinton, Key Legislators Disagree on Mexico Drug Certification

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Mexico

Published: 1997-03-05

In a controversial decision, US President Bill Clinton announced on Feb. 28 that he would recommend certification of Mexico as an ally in the fight against drug trafficking. Clinton's decision was immediately criticized by members of both parties in the US Congress, who charged that Mexico has made insufficient progress in controlling the flow of drugs across the US border to merit certification. Following Clinton's announcement, members of the House and Senate proposed resolutions to rescind the president's certification of Mexico.

A bipartisan opposition to Mexico's certification was especially apparent in the Senate, where Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Sen. Paul Covordell (R-GA) have jointly introduced legislation to withdraw the certification from Mexico. Feinstein and Covordell acknowledged that President Ernesto Zedillo's administration had made some good-faith efforts to control drug trafficking but said Mexico had failed to take sufficient steps to merit certification.

"Have we received full cooperation? Not even close," said Feinstein during a Senate session. In the House, the resolution to rescind Clinton's certification of Mexico is sponsored primarily by Republicans, who are led by Clay Shaw (R-FL) and John Mica (R-FL). However, the certification has also been opposed by House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO) and other prominent House Democrats. President plans to veto resolutions to overturn certification

According to political observers, President Clinton is likely to veto any resolutions to withdraw Mexico's certification. On the other hand, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle told reporters that enough Democratic and Republican senators oppose Mexico's certification to muster a two-thirds majority to override the veto. The prospects for an override are not yet clear in the House. The Clinton administration has also scheduled a series of meetings between cabinet officials and leaders of both parties in an attempt to avoid a showdown with Congress over Mexico's certification. At the same time, key members of Clinton's cabinet have defended the certification as a necessary move to gain Mexico's full cooperation in the effort to control the flow of drugs into the US. "We expect Mexico to work with us to meet a series of objectives that have emerged from our cooperation in the past," said US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Despite certification, the Clinton administration presented a report to Congress last month acknowledging that Mexico has failed in several areas in the fight against drugs, including failure to dismantle any of the major drug cartels operating in its territory. The report also stated that the government has hindered the work of US drug enforcement agents. Report says Mexico offered concessions to gain certification According to an article published by the Washington Post, the Clinton administration agreed to recertify Mexico in exchange for an agreement from the Mexican government to allow US law enforcement agents to carry guns on cross-border operations involving drug trafficking.

The report said President Zedillo also offered formal promises of greater cooperation in extraditing drug lords, shutting down money-laundering operations, and attacking corruption in the government.

Similarly, the US weekly news magazine Time reported that Zedillo also agreed to US recommendations to replace the national drug enforcement institute (Instituto Nacional de Control de Drogas, INCD) with an agency that has greater law-enforcement powers. The INCD has come under significant criticism in the past several weeks after institute director Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo and two of his top assistants were arrested for accepting bribes to protect one of Mexico's top drug traffickers (see SourceMex, 02/26/97).

The Time article said Mexico's new drug control agency would be modeled after the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). In fact, the DEA and other US law enforcement agencies, such as the FBI and CIA, would serve as advisors to the new agency. Both the article on the possible demise of the INCD and the reports that the US had imposed conditions on Mexico in exchange for certification caused an immediate uproar in Mexico.

Critics said these measures represented another example of US efforts to violate Mexico's sovereignty. Zedillo administration denies compromising principles. Because of the strong criticism in Mexico, key Zedillo administration officials were forced to issue statements to explain the discussions held with the Clinton administration in the days before Mexico's certification was announced. In testimony before the Chamber of Deputies, Foreign Relations Secretary Jose Angel Gurria Trevino offered assurances that Mexico did not compromise any principles in the discussions. "Our nation's government did not accept pressure, blackmail, or conditions set by the US to receive certification," said Gurria.

For his part, Attorney General Jorge Madrazo Cuellar disputed the report in Time that the INCD would cease to exist. "At no time have I, or anyone in my office, said anything to this effect," he said. On the other hand, the attorney general acknowledged that the Zedillo administration was reviewing proposals to make significant structural changes to the INCD. "Clearly, our organization needs to be restructured, and we are working intensively on this," Madrazo told reporters. (Sources: Washington Post, 03/01/97, 03/02/97; Time magazine, *Proceso*, 03/02/97; Reuter, 02/28/97, 03/02/97, 03/03/97; Spanish news service EFE, United Press International, Christian Science Monitor, Los Angeles Times, 03/03/97; Associated Press, 02/28/97, 03/01-04/97; El Universal, 02/28/97 03/03/97, 03/05/97; Novedades, 03/03/97, 03/05/97; La Jornada, 03/03-05/97; Excelsior, The News, 03/04/97, 03/05/97)

-- End --