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## **Mexican, U.S. Governments Confirm Death of Juarez Cartel Leader Amado Carrillo**

*by LADB Staff*

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In early July, Mexican and US law-enforcement agencies confirmed the death of Amado Carrillo Fuentes, who was considered one of Mexico's most powerful drug traffickers. Carrillo, who headed the Juarez drug cartel, was commonly known as Lord of the Skies (Senor de los Cielos) because of his use of Boeing 727 aircraft to transport large shipments of cocaine from Colombia to distribution points in northern Mexico, from where the drugs are sent to the US. Carrillo reportedly died in a hospital in Mexico City on July 4 after eight hours of plastic surgery. He checked into the hospital using the alias Antonio Montes Flores.

In a press conference on July 10, the Procuraduria General de la Republica (PGR) presented proof including fingerprint analyses and physical diagrams that the body belonged to Carrillo Fuentes. Authorities must yet release official cause of death Mariano Herran Salvatti, director of the PGR's drug-enforcement office (Fiscalia Especializada para la Atencion de Delitos contra la Salud), said the cause of death was still under investigation. However, he cast doubt on reports that Carrillo had been murdered at the hospital by one of his bodyguards or by medical personnel. "We want to stress that the plastic surgery that Carrillo Fuentes underwent was aggressive and high risk," said Salvatti. "The number of aesthetic changes that he wanted to make implies how determined he was to radically alter his appearance and avoid being apprehended by authorities."

Meanwhile, the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) also confirmed the identity of Carrillo's body. Speaking to reporters, deputy DEA administrator James Milford said the agency fingerprints taken from the corpse match those on a US border-crossing card issued to Carrillo in 1985. The DEA had considered Carrillo Mexico's top drug trafficker because of his control over a wide area of Mexico. The Juarez cartel reportedly controlled drug-trafficking activity in much of western Mexico, spanning an area from Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero in the southwest to Sonora, Sinaloa, and Chihuahua in the northwest.

Earlier this year, the government's special drug-enforcement official, Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo, was forced to resign because of his ties to Carrillo. That scandal forced President Ernesto Zedillo's administration to eliminate the drug-enforcement office and place all drug-enforcement matters under the PGR (see SourceMex, 02/22/97 and 05/21/97). US & Mexican officials discuss drug-enforcement strategy According to the daily newspaper El Universal, the subject of Carrillo's death and the future of the Juarez cartel were among the major topics during high-level meetings between US and Mexican government officials in mid-July. The meetings were attended by officials from the PGR; the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE); and the US Justice, Treasury, and State Departments. Sources close to the meeting said US officials asked the Mexican government for "greater maneuvering capabilities" and protection for DEA agents to perform their duties along the US-Mexico border.

In exchange, the US offered to increase surveillance by US customs agents to reduce the flow of firearms into Mexico. According to El Universal, Carrillo's death will generate a power struggle for control of the Juarez cartel, particularly among drug traffickers based in Sinaloa state. The paper said some civic groups and local law-enforcement leaders have asked the federal government for assistance to avert a wave of violence expected to result from the power struggle. According to El Universal, nearly two murders per day occur in Sinaloa state, many of which are related to drug trafficking. (Sources: The Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times, El Economista, 07/02/97; Novedades, 07/01/97, 07/02/97, 07/04/97; The News, 07/02/97, 07/04/97; Excelsior, 07/03/97, 07/04/97; El Universal, 07/02-04/97, 07/15/97, 07/16/97; La Jornada, 07/01-03/97, 07/16/97)

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