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Two former governors accused of aiding drug traffickers and other serious violations could be an embarrassment for the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) during the campaigns leading to the July 2 presidential and congressional elections. Mario Villanueva Madrid, former chief executive of Quintana Roo state, and Jorge Carrillo Olea, former governor of Morelos state, have resisted the government’s efforts to bring them to justice. Both former governors recently told reporters they felt betrayed by their party and by the political system after years of loyalty. Villanueva, who remains in hiding, went so far as to threaten to expose corruption among high-level party members unless the federal government dropped drug-trafficking charges against him. Villanueva denies charges of drug trafficking Villanueva, the highest-ranking Mexican official to be accused of drug trafficking and racketeering, disappeared just days before he was scheduled to complete his term as governor of Quintana Roo state in April 1999 (see SourceMex, April 14, 1999).

US and Mexican prosecutors allege the former governor accepted bribes in return for protecting cocaine transshipments through Quintana Roo. In many instances, the governor is said to have used state police to protect these drug shipments. The former governor, who is said to be hiding somewhere in the jungles of Central America or southern Mexico, had not made any public statements since his disappearance. However, he granted confidential interviews to the weekly news magazines Milenio and Proceso. In both interviews, Villanueva acknowledged that corruption was tolerated and encouraged during his administration. In an interview with Isabel Arvide, who wrote the Milenio article, Villanueva acknowledged he pocketed millions of dollars in kickbacks and bribes and engaged in other corrupt acts. For example, he said, he received US$1.6 million from a business group that won the concession to provide water to the resort city of Cancun. This deal, he said, was negotiated by former Chiapas interim governor and current Agrarian Reform Secretary Eduardo Robledo. But Villanueva also used the interviews to deny the government’s charges that his wealth was obtained from drug traffickers. "I am not a drug trafficker," Villanueva told Proceso writer Martin Morit. "Others yes, but not me."

Still, the former governor acknowledged that money from the drug cartels has been used in recent years to build up Cancun. "Imagine when the true owners of the large hotels and businesses in Cancun are identified," he said. Villanueva also acknowledged helping ensure victory for the PRI in elections in Quintana Roo. "I did my part," Villanueva told Arvide. "I made all the party’s candidates win. I gave them money. I ran campaigns for them. I controlled the state." In both interviews, a defiant Villanueva threatened to expose some higher-level PRI officials who turned on him near the end of his governorship. "I have a lot of information, documents, and tapes, which I consider my leverage," he told Proceso. The former governor did not present any of this evidence during the interviews with the two magazines, but said some key figures like Yucatan Gov. Victor Cervera Pacheco and Interior Secretary Diodoro Carrasco gave him advice or assistance to escape arrest during the last days of his administration. Asked by Proceso if he had made many...
enemies during his political career, Villanueva said, "I don't have many enemies but the ones I have are heavy hitters." He specifically mentioned President Ernesto Zedillo, Attorney General Jorge Madrazo, Mexico's top drug-enforcement officer Mariano Herran Salvatti, and others. "I don't know if [Zedillo] has something against me, or if its something else," he said. "But one thing is for sure. In Mexico, if the president never lifts a finger, nothing can happen. Zedillo knew that the allegations that I was involved with drug traffickers were lies."

**Supreme Court ruling supports Carrillo's impeachment**

The governing party could also receive some negative publicity from Carrillo Olea, who is on leave of absence as governor of Morelos state. Carrillo has openly defied Mexico's highest court (Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nacion, SCJN) and has refused to return to his home state to face impeachment charges. Under the impeachment statutes, Carrillo would not be subject to criminal penalties, imprisonment, or fines. But if convicted, he would be barred from holding any federal or state public office for at least 12 years. Carrillo requested a leave of absence in May 1998 after authorities charged his administration with human rights violations and corruption. Charges against Carrillo include condoning prisoner torture, protecting drug traffickers, and violating state and federal constitutions in nominating candidates to high posts (see SourceMex, April 22, 1998, May 20, 1998). Carrillo appeared to have won a victory when a state court ruled in June 1999 that the state constitution prohibited impeachment of a sitting governor. But that ruling was overturned by the SCJN in February of this year, opening the door for the state legislature to proceed with impeachment proceedings against Carrillo, whose term would conclude in June of this year. As an initial step toward Carrillo's impeachment, the opposition-controlled state legislature asked for a court order to force Carrillo to be held under house arrest. But the governor has defied the order and refused all warrants to appear in court. He has even traveled outside the country on several occasions in defiance of the court order. "The house arrest order is very newsworthy, but insignificant because my political trial has already begun house arrest or no house arrest," Carrillo told reporters. Later, in an interview with the daily newspaper Excelsior, Carrillo said his ouster from the Morelos statehouse was the result of a compromise between the federal government and the opposition parties. "This is the result of the deterioration of the political climate," he said. Carrillo's actions have also been scrutinized closely by federal legislators. In 1998, a special subcommittee in the Chamber of Deputies voted to support impeachment proceedings against Carrillo, Gov. Victor Cervera of Yucatan, and Gov. Roberto Madrazo Pintado of Tabasco on charges of corruption or violation of the Mexican Constitution (see SourceMex, April 22, 1998). However, the full Chamber of Deputies failed to act on the subcommittee's resolution. Carrillo's name even came up during debate in the US on whether Mexico should be certified as an ally in the fight against drug trafficking. In testimony before the US Congress, US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) international operations director William Ledwith commended the Mexican judicial system for ordering Carrillo's arrest on drug charges and human rights violations. At the same time, Ledwith criticized the Procuraduria General de la Republica (PGR) for allowing Carrillo to remain free despite the charges. (Sources: Milenio, 02/13/00; The Washington Post, 02/14/00; Reforma, Novedades, 02/04/00, 02/15/00; The New York Times, 02/15/00; Excelsior, 02/15/00, 02/16/00; Associated Press, 02/04/00, 02/13/00, 02/20/00; El Universal, 02/04/00, 02/08/00, 02/14-16/00, 02/22/00, 02/23/00; Proceso, 02/20/00, 02/27/00; The News, 02/17/00, 02/28/00; La Jornada, 02/04/00, 02/11/00, 02/15/00, 02/18/00, 03/01/00)