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Guatemala: On Presidential Candidates, Recent Poll

by Deborah Tyroler

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General elections in Guatemala are scheduled for Nov. 11. Political parties and coalitions, and their candidates for the upcoming election are summarized below. National Liberation Movement (MLN) and National Progress Front (FAN). Presidential candidate: retired colonel Luis Ernesto Sosa Avila, brother-in-law of former president Efraim Rios Montt. Vice presidential candidate: businessperson Luis David Eskenasy. Solidarity Action Movement (MAS). Presidential candidate: Jorge Serrano Elias. Vice presidential candidate: businessperson Gustavo Adolfo Espina. Guatemalan Christian Democrat Party (DCG). For president: former foreign minister Alfonso Cabrera. For vice president: economist and current director of the Central American Economic Integration Secretariat (SIECA), Marco Antonio Villamar Contreras. The nomination of Social Democrat Party member Villamar Contreras is perceived as an attempt by Christian Democrat leaders to improve the party's poor image after five years in power via a shift to the "left." The candidate served as a deputy for the Revolutionary Action Party in 1954, and represented Guatemala at the United Nations and the Central American Economic Integration Bank. His "resume" also includes imprisonment on eight occasions, and being forced into exile on three occasions. Another principal figure in the "National Unity Convergence" comprised of the Christian Democrats, certain Social Democrat Party leaders, former Catholic priest and agrarian leader Andres Giron, and the national federation of public employee unions (FENASTEG) among other organizations is Luis Zurita Tablada, leader of the United Guatemalan Movement, and former vice presidential candidate of the Democratic Socialist Party. Social Democrat Party (PSD) secretary general Mario Solorzano has expressed skepticism about the intentions of the Christian Democrats. Solorzano and other PSD leaders including Rene de Leon Schlotter, a founding member of the Christian Democrat Party argue that the PCD remains center- right in orientation and program. Cabrera reportedly recognizes the UCN as the Christian Democrats' most important opponent, having developed a "very significant" base in rural Guatemala, previously a Christian Democrat stronghold. At the conclusion of its general assembly meeting on Aug. 12, the party formally announced Cabrera and Villamar Contreras as its candidates for the November elections. National Vanguard Party (PAN). For president: former Guatemala City mayor Alvaro Arzu. For vice president: businessperson Fraterno Vila Betoret. Platform 90, a coalition comprised of Institutional Democratic Party (PID), Guatemalan Republican Party (PRG), and National Unity Party (FUN). Presidential candidate: retired general Efraim Rios Montt. Probable vice presidential candidate: businessperson Harris Wittbeck. Rios Montt's opponents argue that the Guatemalan constitution prohibits officers or other "caudillos" who have led military coups from occupying the presidency. The former general deposed Gen. Romeo Lucas Garcia in a 1982 coup. Rios Montt was overthrown in 1983. The former general has asserted nonetheless that he will register his candidacy before the Sept. 12 deadline. National Centrist Union (UCN). As of Aug. 12, party leader Jorge Carpio Nicolle has not yet announced his candidacy for president, nor selected a running mate. Emergent Concordance Movement (MEC). Presidential candidate: Gen. Benedicto Lucas. United Revolutionary Front (FUR). Presidential candidate: Leonel Hernandez. Results of a recent poll of Guatemalan voters conducted by the Chamber of Free Enterprise show Rios Montt and Carpio Nicolle in the lead with 18% and 17%, respectively. Poll results for other candidates

were as follows: Arzu, 9%; Cabrera, 4%; Serrano Elias, 1%; and, Sosa Avila, 0. The deadline for voter registration was Aug. 11. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, AFP, 08/12/90; Notimex, 08/19/90)

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