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## **Congress Seeks Investigation of Ex-President Vicente Fox's Finances**

*by LADB Staff*

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The major opposition parties in Congress have requested the creation of a special commission to investigate whether former President Vicente Fox (2000-2006) used his position to increase his personal wealth. The two parties made the request following the publication of an article in the magazine *Quien*, which portrayed Fox's ranch in San Cristobal, Guanajuato state, as a luxurious mansion, complete with expensive furniture, a swimming pool, a lake, and immaculately kept grounds with deer and peacocks. Photos of the same ranch taken in 1999 show a smaller, more austere house with simple furniture and no swimming pool.

The Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), with full support from the Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD), requested that the Chamber of Deputies create a special commission to investigate Fox's finances. If the matter is not clarified, the party will not support the 2008 budget submitted by President Felipe Calderon (see other article in this issue of SourceMex), warned PRI legislators in the lower house.

Calderon and Fox are both members of the center-right Partido Accion Nacional (PAN), which has held the presidency since 2000. There was a move to incorporate members of the Senate into the lower-house commission or to have the Senate create its own investigative panel. It appears likely that the commission will include only members of the lower house.

Sen. Manlio Fabio Beltrones, who heads the PRI delegation in the upper house, said his party would not push for an investigative panel in the Senate because one legislative commission is sufficient. Some PRI members believe that Congress should not be involved in the matter and that the Procuraduria General de la Republica (PGR), the Secretaria de Funcion Publica (SFP), and the congressionally linked Auditoria Superior de la Federacion (ASF) should conduct the investigation. "I don't think it's proper for Congress to conduct the investigation, because this is a matter for the PGR," said PRI official and former federal legislator Carlos Flores Rico.

### ***Attorney General urged to conduct probe***

Some legislators have already made sure that the PGR becomes involved. PRD Sen. Ricardo Monreal filed a complaint against Fox with the federal prosecutor's office, charging the ex-president with illicit enrichment, corruption, and abuse of his office. Monreal asked the PGR to create a special commission to investigate Fox's financial dealings while in office.

The ASF, in the meantime, has started an exhaustive investigation of expenditures incurred by Fox and former first lady Marta Sahagun in 2006. The former president's expenditures totaled 1.63 billion pesos (US\$149 million) during his last year in office, said PRD Deputy Antonio Ortega Martinez, who chairs a committee that will have a major role in the probe. Some PAN legislators

have urged Fox to cooperate with the investigation and explain where the funds came from that were used to remodel his ranch. "The uncertainty could damage the party," said Sen. Federico Doring.

The ex-president has not spoken at length about the source of financing for the remodeling of his ranch but has hinted that funding was provided by private sources in conjunction with the construction of the Centro Fox, a think-tank that lies on ranch property. Fox denies that he broke any laws but promised to cooperate fully with any investigation.

Among other things, he has provided his tax returns for 2001 to 2006, the years in which he served as president. Until now, Fox had not been linked directly with any cases of financial corruption, although cases have involved the ex-president's associates or members of his wife's family.

Prominent among these was the case involving the ex-president's presidential election committee Amigos de Fox, which was charged with violating fund-raising statutes (see SourceMex, 2003-10-15). Charges also arose during the Fox presidency that Manuel and Jorge Bribiesca Sahagun, sons of first lady Marta Sahagun, received favorable treatment or otherwise used government contacts for personal enrichment (see SourceMex, 2006-02-22). [Note: Peso-dollar conversions in this article are based on the Interbank rate in effect on Sept. 26, reported at 10.92 pesos per US\$1.00]

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