

7-21-2010

President Felipe Calderon Replaces Interior Secretary Fernando Gomez Mont, Appoints New Economy Secretary

Carlos Navarro

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

Recommended Citation

Navarro, Carlos. "President Felipe Calderon Replaces Interior Secretary Fernando Gomez Mont, Appoints New Economy Secretary." (2010). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/5419>

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.

President Felipe Calderon Replaces Interior Secretary Fernando Gomez Mont, Appoints New Economy Secretary

by *Carlos Navarro*

Category/Department: Politics, Elections

Published: Wednesday, July 21, 2010

In another major Cabinet shake-up, President Felipe Calderón replaced Interior Secretary Fernando Gómez Mont and Economy Secretary Gerardo Ruiz Mateos with low-profile insiders of the governing Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). Gómez Mont's departure was officially announced as a resignation, but political observers generally agreed that he was pushed out. The interior secretary butted heads with the PAN leadership on important matters, including the decision to form coalitions with center-left parties in several gubernatorial elections in early July. In another controversial move in July, Calderón nominated Mony de Swaan to the federal telecommunications commission (Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones, COFETEL). Opposition parties viewed the nomination of de Swaan, an aide to Communications and Transportation Secretary Juan Molinar Horcasitas, as an effort by Calderón to unduly influence COFETEL, which should be a neutral regulator.

Gómez Mont's departure is one of several major changes during Calderón's four-year tenure as president. Four men have served as interior secretary, including the controversial ex-governor of Jalisco, Francisco Ramírez Acuña. Calderón's confidant, Juan Camilo Mouriño, who replaced Ramírez Acuña, was killed in an airplane accident in Mexico City (see SourceMex, 2008-11-12). Other important Cabinet changes occurred in 2009, including the resignation of Edurado Medina Mora as attorney general (see SourceMex, 2009-09-09) and the designation of Ernesto Cordero as finance secretary, replacing Agustín Carstens, who was appointed chief governor of Mexico's central bank (see SourceMex, 2009-12-16).

Gomez Mont's ouster expected

Gómez Mont's departure was not a surprise, given his failed efforts at the nearly impossible task of curbing drug-related violence in Mexico and his very public battles with Calderón and PAN president César Nava regarding electoral strategy. With drug violence spiraling out of control in Mexico, Gómez Mont was considered a convenient scapegoat, since his ministry, the Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB), has oversight on domestic affairs. But many analysts believe that Gómez Mont performed as well as he could at SEGOB in battling organized crime and that his ouster was more related to political considerations within the PAN.

Gómez Mont sealed his fate in February, when he made public comments promising the opposition Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) that the PAN would not form alliances with center-left parties in gubernatorial elections. As Gómez Mont was making these statements, Nava was negotiating with Jesús Ortega, president of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), about forming coalitions in the gubernatorial races in half a dozen states.

As word spread that the alliances were close to fruition, Gómez Mont began to lose credibility. But rather than leave his post at SEGOB, he decided to end his affiliation with the PAN (see SourceMex, 2010-02-17). At the same time, he continued to attack the PAN alliances with the PRD and other

center-left parties. "Alliances are deeply undemocratic and weaken the relationship between politicians and society," Gómez Mont said in January. "We risk marketing becoming a substitute for a true political platform."

Even after his disagreements with the PAN, Gómez Mont remained in office because he was respected by the PRI and was a useful intermediary in the administration's dealings with the opposition party. But the July 4 election reduced his influence, as PAN coalitions with leftist parties won in the states of Oaxaca, Sinaloa, and Puebla (see SourceMex, 2010-07-07).

"Gómez Mont's political capital was drastically reduced after July 4, which left him in a very weak position," said Pedro de la Cruz, a political analyst at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

New interior secretary a relative unknown

Very little was known nationally about Gómez Mont's replacement, José Francisco Blake Mora, who becomes the fourth person to hold the post in the Calderón administration. "We don't even know his face," pollster Roy Campos said of Blake Mora, who recently served as government secretary in the administration of Baja California's PAN Gov. José Guadalupe Osuna Millán.

But the Mexico City daily newspaper Excélsior sang Blake Mora's praises. "He is known as one of the great experts in the area of security in Baja California," said the newspaper in its Frentes Políticos column. "Let us remember that he, along with the governor and several mayors, developed a strategy to reduce kidnappings and go after the major drug dealers in that state."

Excélsior also lauded Blake Mora for his strong role in bringing together key legislators and the various political parties while he was a staff member for the PAN in the Chamber of Deputies when Calderón was the party's floor leader in 2000-2003.

In his first public statements as interior secretary, Blake Mora said one priority would be to enter into agreements with all the political parties in Mexico. "I will be guided by the principles of dialogue, tolerance, justice and respect for plurality," the secretary said.

The changes implemented by Calderón also included the ouster of Patricia Flores, head of the Office of the President, who reportedly clashed with other key members of the executive branch. Flores, who basically served as chief of staff, was replaced by Gerardo Ruiz Mateos, who left his post as economy secretary after less than two years. Ruiz Mateos had served as head of the Office of the President before his appointment to the Secretaría de Economía (SE) in 2008 (see SourceMex, 2008-08-06).

Calderón appointed Bruno Ferrari García de Alba, recently head of the business-promotion organization ProMéxico, as the new economy secretary. Analysts said Ferrari's role in promoting Mexico in 136 countries will serve him well in the new SE post, which deals with trade policy and economic development.

Some analysts suggested that Calderón's move to surround himself with PAN insiders and loyalists was an attempt to put his party in a better position for the 2012 presidential and congressional elections. "All these [Cabinet] adjustments are part of the relaunching of the Calderón government toward the final stretch of a fundamental decision: the formation of the PAN's presidential

candidate," said commentator Joaquín López-Dóriga, who is also national news anchor for the Televisa network.

Appointment to telecommunications commission controversial

Calderón's decision to nominate de Swaan to the five-member COFETEL, replacing former commission president Héctor Osuna who resigned abruptly and left the regulatory body at the end of June, was controversial. Opposition legislators questioned the move because de Swaan was nominated after serving as Molinar's chief of staff on the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT). The outcry about the nomination was led by PRI Sen. Manlio Fabio Beltrones, who accused Calderón of nominating de Swaan with the intention of having him replace Osuna as commission president.

Unfortunately for the opposition parties, the Senate lost the power to ratify COFETEL commissioners in 2007, when Mexico's high court (Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación, SCJN) ruled that the commission is an entity of the SCT and, therefore, part of the executive branch.

The complaints by the PRI, the PRD, and other opposition parties in Congress have some merit. Shortly after de Swaan was nominated to COFETEL, commission members not only ratified him as a new member but also voted unanimously to make him president of the regulatory body.

Beltrones chided the commissioners for not questioning the nomination. "I am sure that if they had any sense of shame, some of the commissioners would have voted against the designation of de Swaan," said the PRI leader.

Some legislators raised the possibility of filing a lawsuit regarding the nomination because de Swaan did not have the proper legal qualifications. COFETEL statutes specify that a potential nominee is required "to have carried out in a distinguished manner professional, public service, or academic activities substantially related to the telecommunications sector."

Some observers said the opposition parties were mistaken in questioning de Swaan's qualifications because the new COFETEL president gained the needed experience through his work within the SCT on policies that affect telephone and television companies. "He has knowledge and experience working with labor as well as other areas of public policy, even though he has not been an attorney or a specialist," said José Yuste, an Excélsior columnist.

-- End --