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## Interpol Issues Red Alert for another Former Mexican Governor

by Carlos Navarro

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For the second time this year, the international law-enforcement organization Interpol has issued a red notice for a former Mexican governor, this time asking member countries to remain alert for the former governor of Chihuahua, César Duarte Jáquez, who fled the state rather than face charges of embezzlement.

A red notice is a request to locate and provisionally arrest an individual pending extradition. The action is issued by Interpol's General Secretariat at the request of a member country or an international tribunal based on a valid national arrest warrant. However, the measure is not an international arrest warrant.

Interpol earlier issued a red alert for former Veracruz governor Javier Duarte de Ochoa, who is no relation to César Duarte, on charges ranging from money laundering and corruption to embezzlement and association with criminal organizations ([SourceMex, March 1, 2017](#)).

Several governors, mostly from the governing Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) have been accused of corruption in the past several years, including Mario Marín of Puebla, Mario Villanueva of Quintana Roo, and Fausto Vallejo of Michoacán, ([SourceMex, Feb. 22, 2006](#), [May 12, 2010](#), [July 2, 2014](#)). PRI governors Andrés Granier Melo of Tabasco, Tomás Yarrington of Tamaulipas, Rodrigo Medina de la Cruz of Nuevo León, Humberto Moreira of Coahuila, and Roberto Borge of Quintana Roo have also been accused of corruption ([SourceMex, June 19, 2013](#), [March 9, 2016](#), [Aug. 17, 2016](#)).

Similarly, two governors from the conservative opposition Partido Acción Nacional (PAN), Luis Armando Reynoso Femat of Aguascalientes and Guillermo Padrés Elías of Sonora, have faced charges of corruption ([SourceMex, May 21, 2014](#), and [July 15, 2015](#)).

### *Accusations of embezzlement*

According to an investigation by the administration of Chihuahua Gov. Javier Corral Jurado, Duarte Jáquez misappropriated 6 billion pesos (US\$318 million) from the state treasury during his tenure in office between 2010 and 2016. Duarte Jáquez allegedly embezzled at least part of the money through payments to phantom companies and unauthorized purchases. The Corral administration uncovered evidence that some documents implicating Duarte Jáquez and his aides were altered, hidden, or destroyed.

"Six billion pesos is the damage that César Duarte is said to have caused to the treasury of Chihuahua," columnist Yuriria Sierra wrote in the daily newspaper *Excélsior*. "I find it hard to imagine how long a person would have to live to spend that amount of money."

Sierra attempted to put some perspective into the total, pointing out that 6 billion pesos is larger than the Senate's budget for a year, three times as high as the annual allocation for the federal telecommunications institute (Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones), and four times larger than

the funds appropriated for the semi-independent human rights commission (Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, CNDH).

Sierra made some comparisons between César Duarte and his namesake, the fugitive governor of Veracruz. "His kleptomaniac tendencies make him very similar to the other Duarte, Javier. During his term in office, he awarded public-works contracts without first soliciting bids, he squandered funds that were intended for the purchase of low-cost medications, he created phantom businesses and even created his own private bank," she wrote. "He also sold public property at below its real value, made unauthorized deductions from the salaries of state workers, and had more than 500 phantom employees on the payroll.

"César Duarte put in his pockets the money that symbolizes the right of the citizens of Chihuahua to have better streets, schools, security, health, and many other things," Sierra added.

Corral made the same argument in a prepared statement. "Those who steal from the government not only steal a few cents or a few millions, they steal opportunities, steal hope, steal the rights of people who aspire to a better life," he said.

### *Aides also charged*

Corral decided to move on the request for the red alert following reports that Duarte had fled the state after two of his aides were taken into custody. In making the request, Corral noted that Duarte had broken his promise to stay in the state to fight the charges of corruption.

The two aides who were originally arrested are Gerardo Villegas, former director of administration at the state finance ministry, and Ricardo Yáñez Herrera, former chief of the state housing commission. The two are under investigation for allegedly embezzling 246 million pesos (US\$13 million) from the state treasury. According to the Chihuahua state attorney general (Fiscalía General del Estado, FGE), Villegas and Yáñez participated in the design and execution of the embezzlement scheme by contracting training courses and workshops for parents and teachers and purchasing software.

A third aide, Antonio Enrique Tarín, who was in charge of acquisitions for the Duarte government, was charged four days after Villegas and Yáñez. Tarín attempted to gain immunity from prosecution through an appointment to the Chamber of Deputies. Under Mexican law, no sitting legislator can face prosecution while in office unless his immunity is stripped. Tarín was appointed to replace Deputy Carlos Hermosillo of Chihuahua, who died in a car accident earlier in the month.

Tarín traveled to Mexico City to take his spot in the Chamber of Deputies as a member of the PRI delegation. However, the PAN and the center-left opposition parties prevented Tarín from taking the oath of office and gaining immunity after a court issued an order for his arrest on March 27.

Duarte, for his part, is said to have gone into hiding in the US, possibly El Paso, Texas, where he owns a home worth US\$500,000, according to the weekly news magazine Proceso.

### *Duarte files human rights complaint*

Duarte has not remained entirely silent. His attorneys filed a complaint with the Chihuahua human rights commission (Comisión Estatal de los Derechos Humanos, CEDH) suggesting that the former governor is a victim of political persecution by a PAN administration. The complaint proposed that

the Corral government is using the financial resources of the state “to stain [Duarte’s] image and good name, as there are no concrete, specific facts against him.”

CEDH director José Luis Armendáriz González is scheduled to present his response to the complaint by mid-April, following which both Duarte and the Corral administration will have the opportunity to present evidence to support their positions.

In prior statements to the press, Duarte denied all allegations of wrongdoing. In an interview with journalist Carlos Loret de Mola on the Televisa network in August 2016, Duarte adamantly denied that he used his position to acquire property with state funds. He said the land and ranches that he owns were acquired before he was elected to office.

Corral, for his part, described Duarte’s human rights complaint as “cynical.” “Duarte is not the victim of political persecution, he is a fugitive from justice and is being prosecuted for embezzling. We are after him and what he stole, not after his political ideas or affiliation,” he said.

-- End --