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Costa Rica: Legislative Commission Investigates Election Campaign Contributions By Drug Traffickers

by Deborah Tyroler

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A special legislative commission investigating links between drug traffickers and politicians and businesspersons in Costa Rica recently reported it had sufficient evidence that traffickers contributed to the 1990 election campaigns of candidates pertaining to the ruling Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC) and the National Liberation Party (PLN). Cuban-American Floyd Rubin and Costa Rican pilot Gerardo Dan contributed to President Rafael Calderon's election campaign. Cuban-American Fernando Mello, Colombian George Morales and Duran, made contributions to PLN candidates' campaigns. Shortly after taking office in May 1990, Calderon appointed Rubin to the post of honorary consul to Panama. Spokespersons for both parties said contributors' involvement in illegal activities was not known at the time the contributions were made.

Commission member Deputy Rodrigo Gutierrez attributed the phenomenon to the rising costs of running a successful political campaign in Costa Rica. Candidates, he said, are led to a "desperate search for [campaign] funds." During the last electoral campaign, the PLN and PUSC together spent nearly US$30 million, half of which came from private donations. President Calderon made a personal appearance before the commission to refute allegations of ties between the PUSC and international drug traffickers. Calderon said Rubin's honorary consul appointment was revoked as soon as officials were informed he was under indictment in the US for fraud and drug trafficking. He added that Rubin was never installed in the post. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 01/22/92)

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