

EIR Investigation

Helms' assault on Mexico helps drug mafia, PAN

by D. E. Pettingell

The May 12-13 hearings on Mexico by Sen. Jesse Helms's (R-N.C.) Subcommittee on Western Hemispheric Affairs, had the effect of a bomshell dropped over Mexico City by enemy forces. Far from trying to seek further cooperation with our southern neighbor on the War on Drugs that the Reagan administration claims to endorse, Helms's hearings were a diatribe of lies, slanders, and half-truths against a friendly nation. As a result, U.S.-Mexican relations have never been so tense.

It was the first time that top Reagan administration officials openly accused Mexican elected officials of running drugs. It was also the first time that a U.S. senator charged in public that relatives of Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid were involved in drug running. Although no evidence was presented at the hearings, it is believed to be part of "massive" classified information that U.S. agents claimed to have, but have not provided to Mexican authorities.

The May 13 open hearings were preceded by closed-doors hearings on May 12, sponsored by the same subcommittee. According to reliable sources, Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, Drug Enforcement Administration, and U.S. Customs Service agents presented what they claimed was "massive" and "unrefutable" evidence on Mexican officials' drug-related corruption. It is believed that much of the information used at the open hearings came from the previous day's secret sessions.

In announcing the purpose of the hearings, Helms intro-

duced the witnesses: U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliot Abrams, U.S. Customs Commissioner William von Raab, and DEA Assistant Administrator for Operations, David L. Westrate. The high government level of the witnesses gave "official character" to the hearings.

Hypocrisy

Senator Helms asserted during his opening remarks: ". . . I have the feeling that, at the root of the problems we have been outlining, is the failure of the democratic system in Mexico," and asked the audience: "Has the long-term political stability of Mexico been purchased at the price of political freedom?"

Helms quashed Mexico's request that the hearings be canceled due to their "interventionist" character.

"There have been strong attempts to thwart these hearings. It has been charged that these hearings are inappropriate and somehow interfere with Mexico's sovereignty. I object to that," he said, "I have been surprised at the efforts that have been made to get these hearings canceled," and concluded in a threatening tone: "Obviously, these persons don't know me."

Objections to the hearings came not only from the other side of the border. According to congressional sources, Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) tried to persuade Helms to postpone the hearings

until after the May 29-June 2 annual Mexico-U.S. Interparliamentary meeting at Colorado Springs. As of this writing it is not known what the Mexican parliamentarians will do at the meeting in light of strong condemnations against Helms by the Mexican House of Representatives.

Of the three witnesses invited by Helms, U.S. Customs head von Raab, characterized in political circles as a "technician" and not a politician, was the most vicious and slanderous of all against Mexican officials.

Asked by Helms whether he knew if drug kingpin Miguel Felix Gallardo, suspected in DEA agent Enrique Camarena's torture-murder in Mexico last year, "is being protected in a safehouse in the home of the governor of the [Mexican northern] state of Sonora?" von Raab replied: ". . . there have been some newspaper reports to that effect . . . the only information I have on the governor of Sonora is that he is alleged to own four ranches in Alamos, Sonora; in all four ranches marijuana and opium are grown." He added that the ranches are occasionally guarded by the Mexican Federal Judicial Police.

Shock in Sonora

The attack against Sonora Gov. Rodolfo Felix Valdes, a calculated lie, sent political shock-waves throughout Mexico. Felix Valdes is not only a former member of de la Madrid's cabinet but is known to be close to him. Mexican embassy spokesman Leonardo French immediately denied the charges and described Valdes as a "very well known, honorable person. . . ." The governor has announced his decision to take legal action against von Raab in U.S. courts.

But von Raab did not stop here. Asked by Helms whether he knew if a relative of President de la Madrid was involved in drug running, von Raab answered: "We have no comment on that in a public hearing," implying that the issue had been discussed at the secret sessions the previous day.

Asked whether he had provided the "evidence" to the proper authorities in Mexico, von Raab responded in the negative and argued that "there is an ingrained corruption in the Mexican law-enforcement establishment." He went on, "Corruption is so pervasive, that one has to assume every Mexican official is corrupt unless proven otherwise." He claimed to be afraid the "evidence" would make its way to the hands of the mafia, and that unless he is provided with a "list of non-corrupt Mexican officials" he refuses to hand over information.

Von Raab spent much time in describing the drug-immigration-related violence at the U.S.-Mexican border and argued that "there is no way to secure an 1,800-mile border. You have to be able to rely on the integrity of your neighbors."

Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.),
Trible (R.-Va.)
only other senator present at the hearings, suggested that the

best solution to the U.S.-Mexican border is to build an "Iron Curtain on the border like the one in Europe." Pell is a member of the Club of Rome and a fanatic proponent of its depopulation schemes, which are aimed against non-white populations in particular. Thus for Pell, the biggest security threat is the "population explosion" in the South.

Assistant Secretary of State Abrams avoided openly linking top Mexican officials to drugs but said that "the amount of money [owned by the mafia] is fantastic . . . the ability to corrupt officials is therefore fantastic." "We have told the Mexicans in no uncertain terms that we are deeply troubled by widespread drug-related corruption," he said. "We need to give Mexico's leaders a sense of how dangerous this is to the future of U.S.-Mexican relations."

Setting the stage for PAN

But Helms's "Mexico-bashing" festival had little to do with fighting drugs. Instead, the drug problem is being exploited to destabilize Mexico, overthrow President de la Madrid, and set the scenario for the Nazi-communist National Action Party (PAN)

insistence by Helms, the State Department, and even the White House, that Mexico be "democratized."

"Has the dominance of one party [the ruling PRI] for so long resulted in the breakdown of the checks and balances which any political system needs to counteract corruption . . . and despotism?" asked Helms. He compared the PRI with the "Communist Party of Russia."

Helms's office has ignored information proving that members of the PAN are deeply involved in drugs in northern Mexico. More recently, the PAN's newspaper *La Nación* has come out endorsing legalization of drugs. But Helms insists on believing that the PAN is the "counterpart" to the Republican Party.

On May 14, Mexico City ordered the Mexican ambassador to the United States to send an official protest to Secretary of State George Shultz characterizing the statements against Mexican officials as "slanderous" and "irresponsible" and the hearings "interventionist."

In responding to an *EIR* correspondent May 15, State Department spokesman Chuck Redman admitted having received the protest note but said it would be answered "at an appropriate time." In non-diplomatic terms this means "when we feel like it." Redman left no doubt that the anti-Mexican content of Helms's hearings was endorsed by the administration, calling them "candid, public, and balanced."

Helms himself went to the White House a couple of days later and briefed President Reagan. He asked Reagan for assurance that U.S. Customs head von Raab would not be dismissed for slandering Mexican officials. White House officials said that Helms got from Reagan what he wanted. Observers of the scene report that von Raab was welcomed "with open arms" at the White House by none other than

chief of staff Donald Regan, who has been accused of fostering massive drug-money laundering.

The administration endorsement of a confrontationist policy against Mexico orchestrated by both Helms and the liberals at the State Department leaves Mexico with no other option than to believe that the United States has no desire to fight a joint war on drugs but rather that its main purpose is to destroy political stability in Mexico.

Not long ago, on Jan. 3 of this year, President Reagan visited Mexico for a meeting with his counterpart, de la Madrid. Upon his arrival he said: "The trust and cooperation between our two countries are mirrored in the solid personal and professional relationships President de la Madrid and I have developed. . . . The good and decent people of both our countries have made a strong commitment to fight the scourge of narcotics and drug trafficking."

Publicly criticizing the efforts of countries which share identical objectives in the area of combating narcotics, only strengthens the position of the drug runners, stated a Mexican official as he was leaving the May 13 hearings. He could not have been more to the point.

Behind the hearings: Mexico can not pay!

by Carlos Cota

The offensive against Mexican institutions by their international creditors, which reached its public high point with Jesse Helms' so-called hearings on May 12-13, is purely and simply due to the fact that Mexico cannot pay its foreign debt.

This is broadly recognized on the Mexican side despite certain expressions in favor of "appeasement" in these times of head-on confrontation.

The "Helms hearings" are the culmination of a series of statements by spokesmen for Mexico's creditor banks, along the same lines as those discussed in Helms's subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs.

A World Bank official indicated that "the creditors reached the conclusion that the Mexican government changed its

The response of the Mexican government

The Mexican government instructed Mexican Ambassador to Washington Jorge Espinoza de los Reyes to deliver a strong protest to Secretary of State George Shultz on May 14. The embassy made available the full text. Excerpts follow:

"The Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs . . . held two hearings. . . . Although the first of these was a secret hearing, some of the statements were leaked to the media, a fact that must be considered a deliberate attempt by U.S. officials and legislators to accentuate the existing misinformation regarding the Mexican reality.

"In light of these considerations, I have been instructed by my government to submit to Your Excellency a formal and strong protest regarding these statements, which my country considers unfriendly and in total contrast with the spirit of cooperation shown by the government of Mexico. . . .

".. the interventionist character of the statements made in these hearings, apart from adulterating the truth and presenting a distorted view of the Mexican reality, are a clear and unacceptable violation of Mexico's sovereignty.

"The government of Mexico does not accept that U.S. officials take upon themselves to make statements on

Mexico's internal affairs, as these affairs concern only the Mexican people, and no government has the right to pass judgment on this matter.

". . . the Mexican government strongly rejects the accusations and calumnies pronounced against Mexico in the hearings. The capacity for slander and the political irresponsibility implied by these statements is surprising.

"Throughout its history as an independent nation, Mexico has always shown strict adherence to the principles and norms of international coexistence. Mexico's respect for other peoples' right to self-determination has been unequivocal; consequently, Mexico feels it has the moral authority and reason to demand that others respect its sovereignty."

Mexican Attorney General Dr. Sergio García Ramírez, delivered a letter May 16 to U.S. Ambassador to Mexico John Gavin. The text was made public by Mexican authorities. Quotes follow:

"It is our public knowledge that during the recently held U.S. Senate hearings, it was mentioned, explicitly or implicitly, that Mexican nationals might be involved in crimes. . . . I kindly request that any available information regarding criminal acts, whose prosecution concerns the Mexican authorities, be provided to us.

"I reiterate that, provided the existence of reliable information for the prosecution of criminal acts, no friendly, professional, or family relationship shall prevent a rigorous implementation of the law."