

Why Moon, Bush attack Mexico's Labastida

by Carlos Cota Meza

On Feb. 5, Day of the Mexican Constitution, the *Washington Times* published a slanderous attack against Mexico's new Interior Secretary, Francisco Labastida Ochoa, accusing him of having had ties to the drug trade. Bill Gertz, the author of the slander, which he alleges was drawn from a classified CIA document, wrote that when Labastida Ochoa was governor of the state of Sinaloa (1987-93), "he collaborated with drug traffickers, but denied having received payoffs. He has acknowledged privately that he had to reach unspecified agreements with traffickers."

In a letter to *Washington Times* editor Wesley Pruden, the Mexican minister denied the charges, and called Gertz's article "completely false." Pruden is a friend of former U.S. President George Bush and an employee and follower of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon. Despite Labastida's denial, the *Washington Times* repeated the lies in an editorial one week later, in which it warned that the "revelations" endangered the "certification" of Mexico's anti-drug efforts, which the Clinton administration is obliged to decide on by March 1. The decertification issue has long been one of the battle cries of the Bush-Salinas political apparatus, which it has repeatedly used to sabotage any political collaboration between the Clinton and Zedillo governments.

On Feb. 6, in parallel events in Washington and Mexico City, the governments of Mexico and the United States announced a Bilateral Cooperation Strategy against Drugs. Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.), the Clinton White House anti-drug director, stated that "there can be no doubt that Mexico's democratic institutions are under brutal internal attack by international drug criminals."

McCaffrey said that the success of programs such as the one he was signing, would depend on the so-called certification process "being buried" within the next five years. McCaffrey dismissed the *Washington Times* charges against Labastida: "I am not going to comment, at all, on U.S. intelligence reports," he said. He added that he had "no evidence of charges of this nature." He reminded his audience that the nomination of government officials is a "sovereign responsibility," and pointed out that when evidence of corruption appeared against former Mexican anti-drug director Gen. Gutiérrez Rebollo, President Ernesto Zedillo immediately dealt with it.

The chargé d'affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, Charles Brayshaw, refused to comment on the allegations, stating that "what is important is what we said to the press

last night, which is that we feel confident in working with the Interior Department, and directly with the Secretary [Labastida]." U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin said, "U.S. officials continue to have normal dealings with the Interior Secretary, and we see no reason to change that practice."

Also on Feb. 6, Secretary Labastida announced that he was talking with attorneys about a possible libel suit against the *Washington Times*. He charged, "These are the Moonies, a cult headed by a Korean, owner of the newspaper, who has several publications in various places and who was expelled from England because of his conduct and for intervention in the internal affairs of the country." In Chiapas, this cult operates in several communities, "and we are reviewing its operations," he added.

Gertz is known as the mouthpiece of Moon, and is considered the "spiritual guide" of Moon's Unification Church. Inside Washington, Gertz is viewed as the "property" of certain military and intelligence factions which are enemies of President Clinton.

Fuelling the Peru-Ecuador conflict

On Dec. 19, 1995, Gertz falsely charged in the *Washington Times* that Peru was about to buy Scud missiles from North Korea, for \$52.5 million, in response to weapons purchases by neighboring Ecuador. Gertz wrote, "Elliott Abrams, former Undersecretary of State for Latin American Affairs, stated that he doubted [President Alberto] Fujimori was ignorant of negotiations over the North Korean missiles, given his close ties to the military."

Various Peruvian newspapers at the time denounced Moon, accusing him of wanting to "unleash a weapons race in the region, from which the only winners would be the arms dealers, among them the industrial conglomerates of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon." Despite the denials of the Peruvian government, the *Washington Times* did not stop its provocations until war was ignited between Peru and Ecuador. With Moon, one never knows where his cult practices stop, and his business and politics begin.

During Nov. 20-25, 1996, Bush toured four Ibero-American countries; in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he was the main speaker at the launching of Moon's newest newspaper, *Tiempos del Mundo*. "I want to greet the Reverend Moon, founder of the *Washington Times* and of this new newspaper," he said. "Many of my South American friends don't know about the *Washington Times*, but it is an independent voice. The directors of the *Washington Times* tell me that this man of vision has never been involved in the administration of the newspaper, a newspaper which in my opinion brings sense to Washington. I am convinced that *Tiempos del Mundo* will do the same."

For his part, Moon, when not uttering blasphemies about the use of the sexual organ as "a basis for seeking God," said that his newspaper was "going to help solve the problems that organizations such as the United Nations and others have been unable to solve for many years."