

August 26 - September 2, 2008

Topics

- **Presidential Informe highlights security**
- **Delivery in writing marks end of an era**
- **Massive marches against crime in 55 cities**
- **Citizen's anti-crime watchdog to be created**
- **Narco billboards appear across the country**
- **Coordinator of National Security System resigns**

President Calderón delivered his **second Informe** to Congress, and the government inundated the airwaves with media spots highlighting its accomplishments. Security took top billing, with the *Informe* cataloging the arrest of drug traffickers, the seizure of record quantities of drugs, and the modernization of the armed forces. According to the *Informe*, 45,000 soldiers were deployed against the traffickers in 21 major operations during the second year of the government. The report also highlighted last year's tax reform and record levels of infrastructure investment. (Reforma 9/2)

Marking the end of an era, **the Informe was delivered in writing** by Government Secretary Mouriño, rather than by the President as part of the ceremony opening the new Congressional session. At least until the Salinas presidency (1988-1994), the *Informe* was the most visible display of the cult of the President. The various Congressional commissions will invite the cabinet secretaries to appear and answer questions under oath, and the President will also have to respond to specific written questions. (Reforma and Universal, 9/2)

More than 150,000 people in Mexico City and 54 other cities across the country **marched to demand government action against crime**. The marchers dressed in white, with a candle in one hand and photographs of crime victims in the other. The unofficial rallying cry was "If you can't do it; resign," quoting Alejandro Marti, the father of Mexico's most famous murder-kidnap victim. Mexico City Police Chief Manuel Mondragon tried to join the march, but had to flee after hundreds of marchers started yelling at him. (Reforma 8/31 Reuters 9/1)

President Calderón met with organizers of the march in Los Pinos the following day. They agreed to create a **Citizen's Institute for the Prevention of Crime** that will evaluate the effectiveness of governmental action against crime. "Together—society and government—we can end this cancer which is affecting and hurting our Mexico," said the President, with his left arm in a sling after a cycling accident. Noted columnist Miguel Angel Granados Chapa, "Let's hope that the good news that the march has generated an institutional response ... will not be diluted by confusion and misunderstandings....[Those who marched] want to know that their voices were not a passing cry but a means for permanent participation." (Presidencia 8/31, Reforma 9/2)

In a demonstration of their reach, gangs—presumably part of the Beltran Leyva cartel—placed at least 27 **'narco billboards'** in a dozen cities in a near simultaneous operation. The banners were placed in full daylight by heavily armed men traveling in SUVs. They accused the federal and state governments and the military of protecting members of the Sinaloa Cartel, particularly its leader, El Chapo Guzman, who escaped from prison during the Fox government. "If you want violence to stop, stop protecting El Chapo Guzman," read one of the banners placed outside the Municipal Palace of Monterrey. (Proceso 8/28, Reforma 8/29)

The Ministry of Public Safety (SSP) announced the **resignation of the executive director of the National Security System**, Roberto Campa. The former PANAL candidate for President in 2006 was responsible for coordinating the activities of the SSP with state and local governments. He had come under fire for delays in carrying out the program to install radio frequency ID chips in all vehicles in Mexico. He is being replaced by Ricardo Márquez Blas, the agency's head of planning. (Universal 9/2)

Key Dates

- 9/8: Budget submitted to Congress**
- 9/28: Coahuila state elections**
- 11/14: Deadline for budget approval**

Polls

The latest Mitofsky survey showed the continued gradual slide in President Calderón's approval rating, with the figure reaching 58.8% in August 2008, compared to an all-time high of 65.9% in August 2007. More than 6 in 10 respondents mentioned economic issues as the most important problems, while 1 in 3 highlighted security-related issues.

www.consulta.com.mx

