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SENSITIVE

TREASURY FOR JOHN RALYEA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SNAR, KCRM, KJUS, CJAN, PGOV, PHUM, MX

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1. (U) THE FOLLOWING STORIES WERE SELECTED FROM THE MEXICO CITY PRESS WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO CONFIRM THEIR ACCURACY:

-- COCAINE CONSUMPTION UP BY 300 PERCENT
-- ASSESSING LABASTIDA'S RECORD
-- AG'S OFFICE SLAMS AMEZCUA'S RELEASE
-- UNEQUAL SALARIES AT CITY AG'S OFFICE
-- GOING AFTER A DEFENSE LAWYER'S FAMILY?
-- COURT SENTENCES COLONEL TO FIVE YEARS
-- POLICE ARREST TWO LONCHO GANG MEMBERS
-- CARDINAL PICKS UP THE GAUNTLET
-- THE AG ON THE CARDINAL CONTROVERSY
2. (U) COCAINE CONSUMPTION UP BY 300 PERCENT - OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS, COCAINE USE IN MEXICO HAS JUMPED 300 PERCENT AND THE USE OF OTHER DRUGS IS UP BY 30 PERCENT, ACCORDING TO A STUDY PRESENTED AT A MAY 25 PRESS CONFERENCE BY HEALTH SECRETARY JUAN RAMON DE LA FUENTE. AT THE SAME EVENT, AMBASSADOR MIGUEL RUIZ-CABANAS, HEAD OF NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS AT THE SECRETARIAT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, OPINED THAT THESE INCREASES WERE A CONSEQUENCE OF NARCO-TRAFFICKERS PAYING THEIR DEALERS IN KIND, WHICH IN TURN OBLIGATED THOSE DEALERS TO FIND MORE CUSTOMERS.

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3. (U) ASSESSING LABASTIDA'S RECORD - DURING FRANCISCO LABASTIDA'S 15-MONTH TENURE AS SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT, THE GREATEST NUMBER OF LEGAL REFORMS CAME IN THE AREA OF PUBLIC SECURITY. YET, CRIME NATIONWIDE DECREASED ONLY ABOUT 7 PERCENT, ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL STATISTICS. FURTHERMORE, DURING LABASTIDA'S ADMINISTRATION MORE THAN 45,000 STATE AND MUNICIPAL POLICEMEN AND PROSECUTORS WERE EVALUATED, THE FEDERAL PREVENTIVE POLICE WAS CREATED, A NEW NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM WAS ESTABLISHED, AND THE NATIONAL PUBLIC SECURITY COUNCIL WAS FORMED. SETTING-UP AND ANNOUNCING THESE INITIATIVES GAVE LABASTIDA THE OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH CONTACTS THAT WILL NO DOUBT BE ESSENTIAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. NONETHELESS, DESPITE ALL THIS ACTIVITY, LABASTIDA FAILED TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME, HIS FIRST PRIORITY AS GOVERNMENT SECRETARY. ("REFORMA," MAY 24)

4. (U) AG'S OFFICE SLAMS AMEZCUA'S RELEASE - ATTORNEY GENERAL JORGE MADRAZO DENIED ON MAY 20 THAT ADAN AMEZCUA'S RELEASE CONSTITUTED A FAILURE FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE (PGR) BECAUSE THE PGR HAD PRESENTED ALL THE EVIDENCE NEEDED TO CONVICT AMEZCUA FOR MONEY LAUNDERING. THE PROBLEM, ACCORDING TO MADRAZO, WAS JUDGE NICANDRO MARTINEZ'S FAULTY
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INTERPRETATION OF THE LAW. IN THE SAME VEIN, ON MAY 21, DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL EDUARDO IBARROLA AND

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ANTI-DRUG PROSECUTOR MARIANO HERRAN ACCUSED JUDGE MARTINEZ OF "OPENING SPACE FOR IMPURITY" AND ANNOUNCED THAT THE PGR WOULD FILE A COMPLAINT AGAINST THE JUDGE WITH THE FEDERAL JUDICIAL COUNCIL. ("REFORMA," MAY 21, MAY 22)

LOW PAY AND CORRUPTION

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5. (U) UNEQUAL SALARIES AT THE CITY AG'S OFFICE - NEARLY 1,500 EMPLOYEES OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE OF MEXICO CITY (PGJDF) EARN LESS THAN 2,755.28 PESOS (U.S. DOLLARS 278) MONTHLY, NOT EVEN ENOUGH TO BUY BASIC NECESSITIES, ACCORDING TO A RECENT STUDY. BY CONTRAST, MEXICO CITY ATTORNEY GENERAL SAMUEL DEL VILLAR EARNS 73,531.14 PESOS (U.S. DOLLARS 7,427) PER MONTH. APPRISED OF THIS SITUATION, THE PGJDF SAID IT WOULD BEGIN STUDYING HOW TO EQUALIZE PAY. ("REFORMA," MAY 26)

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6. (SBU) COMMENT: LOW PAY IS ONE OF THE KEY FACTORS IN THE WIDESPREAD POLICE CORRUPTION IN MEXICO. END COMMENT.

POLICE AND THE CHIHUAHUA MURDERS

7. (U) GOING AFTER A DEFENSE LAWYER'S FAMILY? - ON MAY 22, UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS SHOT AND WOUNDED EDUARDO RIVAS WHILE HE WAS DRIVING THROUGH DOWNTOWN CIUDAD JUAREZ, CHIHUAHUA. THE MOTIVE FOR THE SHOOTING REMAINS UNCLEAR. RIVAS' MOTHER, IRENE BLANCO, IS THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY FOR ABDEL LATIFF SHARIF WHO IS ACCUSED OF MURDERING SEVERAL YOUNG WOMEN IN THE CIUDAD JUAREZ AREA. SHE REPORTED RECEIVING THREATENING PHONE CALLS AND BLAMED THE AUTHORITIES FOR THE ATTACK ON HER SON. BLANCO FURTHER MAINTAINED THAT THE CHIHUAHUA STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE WAS HARBORING SOMEONE WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE INFAMOUS MURDERS OF YOUNG WOMEN IN THE AREA. ("REFORMA," MAY 23)

8. (SBU) COMMENT: BLANCO OFFERED NO EVIDENCE TO LINK THE POLICE TO THE ATTACK ON HER SON, REFUSED TO RELEASE THE NAME OF THE PERSON ALLEGEDLY BEING PROTECTED BY POLICE, AND DID NOT EXPLAIN THE POLICE'S MOTIVE FOR HIDING A MURDERER. NONETHELESS, GIVEN THE SERIOUS CRIMES -- FROM MURDER TO KIDNAPPING TO RAPE -- THAT THE POLICE IN VARIOUS LOCALITIES HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN, BLANCO'S THEORY OF POLICE COMPLICITY IN THE MURDERS OF MORE THAN 200 YOUNG WOMEN IN AND AROUND CIUDAD JUAREZ SINCE 1993 CANNOT BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND. WHAT SHE AND OTHER ADVOCATES WHO HAVE PUSHED THIS HYPOTHESIS LACK IS PROOF. END COMMENT.
9. (U) COURT SENTENCES COLONEL TO FIVE YEARS - ON MAY 26, A MILITARY COURT SENTENCED COLONEL PABLO CASTELLANOS GARCIA TO FIVE YEARS IN PRISON FOR ABUSING A PUBLIC OFFICE BY LEAKING SECRET FILES ON NARCO-TRAFFICKING WITHIN THE MEXICAN ARMED FORCES TO "PROCESO" MAGAZINE. RELATED CHARGES OF REVEALING SECRETS AND NOT FULFILLING HIS MILITARY DUTIES WERE DROPPED. A SECOND TRIAL FOR THE COLONEL ON OTHER CHARGES IS STILL PENDING. ("REFORMA," "LA JORNADA," MAY 27)

10. (U) POLICE ARREST TWO "LONCHO" GANG MEMBERS - ROBERTO ROBLES, COMMANDER OF SINALOA'S SPECIAL ANTI-KIDNAPPING UNIT, ANNOUNCED ON MAY 22 THAT TWO MEMBERS OF THE KIDNAPPING GANG LED BY JOSE ALONSO AVILA ("LONCHO") HAD BEEN ARRESTED. ROBLES ADMITTED, HOWEVER, THAT "LONCHO'S" GANG WAS SO BIG AND WELL-ORGANIZED THAT ITS ACTIVITIES WOULD HARDLY BE AFFECTED BY THESE ARRESTS. MEANWHILE, IN GUADALAJARA, JALISCO, ANOTHER SPECIAL ANTI-KIDNAPPING UNIT RESCUED A HOSTAGE AND KILLED TWO KIDNAPPERS IN THE PROCESS ON MAY 22. ("REFORMA," MAY 23)

THE CARDINAL POSADAS CASE
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11. (U) CARDINAL PICKS UP THE GAUNTLET - DURING A UNCLASSIFIED

MAY 26 INTERVIEW ON GUADALAJARA TV, CARDINAL JUAN SANDOVAL AGREED TO TESTIFY AT THE PGR REGARDING THE ROLE OF FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL JORGE CARPizo IN AN ALLEGED COVER-UP RELATED TO THE MAY 24, 1993, MURDER OF CARDINAL JUAN JESUS POSADAS OCAMPO (REF). HOWEVER, THE CARDINAL SAID HE WOULD DO SO ONLY IF HIS TESTIMONY IS BASED ON THE RECORD IN THE POSADAS CASE. ON MAY 24, THE CARDINAL HAD ACCUSED CARPizo OF MANIPULATING THE POSADAS INQUIRY WHILE HE WAS ATTORNEY GENERAL AND HIDING IMPORTANT EVIDENCE, NAMELY A VIDETAPE THAT SUPPOSEDLY SHOWS CARDINAL POSADAS' MURDER. TWO DAYS LATER, MEXICO CITY PAPERS PUBLISHED CARPizo'S OPEN LETTER DEMANDING THAT ATTORNEY GENERAL JORGE MADRAZO CALL ON SANDOVAL TO TAKE A LIE DETECTOR TEST WITH CARPizo TO SETTLE WHO WAS TELLING THE TRUTH. ("REFORMA," "LA JORNADA," MAY 27)

12. (U) THE AG ON THE CARDINAL CONTROVERSY - ON
MAY 26, ATTORNEY GENERAL MADRAZO SAID THAT HE FOUND

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CARPIZO'S PETITION TO HAVE CARDINAL SANDOVAL TAKE A
LIE DETECTOR TEST TO BE LEGITIMATE AND VALID.

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MADRAZO PROMISED TO STUDY CARPIZO'S REQUEST AND ACT
ON IT IN A WAY CONSISTENT WITH THE LAW. MADRAZO
ALSO SAID HE WAS "WORRIED AND SAD" THAT CARDINAL
SANDOVAL HAD CHosen NOT TO ACCEPT THE REPORT OF THE
INTER-INSTITUTIONAL GROUP ON CARDINAL POSADAS'
MURDER, EVEN THOUGH SANDOVAL'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE
GROUP HAD FOUND THE REPORT ACCEPTABLE. ("REFORMA,
"LA JORNADA," MAY 27)

13. (U) CASE UNCLOSED - IN HIS MAY 27 COLUMN,
SERGIO SARMIENTO POURED COLD WATER ON CARDINAL SANDOVAL'S J'ACCUSE. THE VIDEOS CARDINAL SANDOVAL REFERS TO RECORDED THE POSITIONS OF THE BODIES AFTER THE SHOOTING; VIDEOS THAT SHOW THE CARDINAL BEING MURDERED DO NOT EXIST, ACCORDING TO DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL JOSE LUIS RAMOS RIVERA. ALSO, CARDINAL SANDOVAL BELIEVES IT IS A "MORAL CERTAINTY" THAT CARDINAL POSADAS WAS ASSASSINATED ON PURPOSE. YET, RABAGO MARISCAL, WHO HAS CONFESSIONED TO SHOOTING THE CARDINAL, SAYS HE DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE CARDINAL WHEN HE OPENED FIRE AND BELIEVED HE WAS SHOOTING AT A RIVAL GANG MEMBER. ABSENT OTHER PROOF, THIS SHOULD SUFFICE TO CLOSE THE CASE. BUT THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN BECAUSE THE POPULACE LACKS FAITH IN ANY JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION, BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE FASCINATED BY CONSPIRACY THEORIES, AND BECAUSE CARDINAL SANDOVAL'S STATEMENTS ARE FEEDING POPULAR DISBELIEF IN THE OFFICIAL STORY. ("REFORMA," MAY 27)

THE TROUBLE WITH SURPRISE INSPECTIONS

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14. (U) ELEVEN INJURED IN PRISON RIOT - A MAY 26 RIOT AT THE NORTHERN PREVENTIVE PRISON IN MEXICO CITY INVOLVING 600 PRISONERS AND 400 SECURITY PERSONNEL LEFT SEVEN PRISONERS AND FOUR GUARDS INJURED. THE DISTURBANCE BEGAN AFTER PRISON AUTHORITIES MAKING A SURPRISE INSPECTION DISCOVERED MORE THAN 500 MARIJUANA CIGARETTES. THE PRISON DIRECTOR ADMITTED THAT DRUG CONTRABAND WAS A CONSTANT PROBLEM IN THE PRISONS AND ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 30 PERCENT OF THE PRISONERS WERE ADDICTED TO SOME KIND OF ILLEGAL SUBSTANCE. ("LA JORNADA," MAY 27)

15. (U) SUCCESS STORY - IN THE 20 DAYS SINCE "OPERATION SERPICO" BEGAN, TRUCK HI-JACKINGS AND CAR THEFTS HAVE DROPPED BY 25 PERCENT, ASSERTED MAURICIO TORNERO SALINAS, DIRECTOR OF MEXICO CITY'S JUDICIAL POLICE, ON MAY 27. IN MEXICO CITY, "OPERATION SERPICO" HAS TAKEN THE FORM OF POLICE ROADBLOCKS ON MAJOR HIGHWAYS LEADING OUT OF MEXICO CITY. ("REFORMA," MAY 29)

DAVIDOW