

ACTION OCS-00

RELEASED IN FULL

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AMAD-00	CA-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	WHA-00	DS-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	NSAE-00	OIC-00	PA-00	TFBI-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	TEST-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00	/000W

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R 092027Z MAR 04
 FM AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1999
 INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
 AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ

UNCLAS CIUDAD JUAREZ 003789

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PHUM, SOCI, PGOV, KWMN, MX

SUBJECT: EACT FW: COMMISSIONER MORFIN DISCUSSES EFFORTS TO PREVENT
 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1. SUMMARY: On February 13, 2004, Consul General Parker met with Guadalupe Morfin Otero, the federally-appointed Commissioner to Prevent and Eradicate Violence in Ciudad Juarez. The meeting was held on the eve of V-Day marches and activities in the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez area, principally focussed on the disappearance or murder of more than 300 women over the last ten years, of which about 90 can be categorized as sexual crimes possibly of a serial nature. Morfin's role is that of coordinator seeking to bring together different Federal, state, and local government agencies to seek social improvements which will prevent the recurrence of the murders of women. She has an unfunded mandate, as her office depends on the largesse of other agencies, but she enjoys the full support of President Fox and Secretary Creel. But what Morfin lacks in resources she makes up for in sheer determination. END SUMMARY

2. Morfin opened the meeting by explaining that President Fox and Interior Minister Santiago Creel have the political will to confront the issue of womens' homicides in Juarez but not enough money in the budget. (Note: At this point her office is largely ceremonial and dependent on the largesse of existing federal agencies for any resources. This situation is reminiscent of the ill-fated "Border Czar" position created at the beginning of the Fox administration. Former Baja California governor Ernesto Ruffo Appel was appointed to a completely unfunded mandate, just as Morfin has been handed responsibilities with no budget. Ruffo's valiant efforts to coordinate border issues lasted two years - end note). By way of comparison she mentioned that the Federal Prosecutor for Women's Homicides, Maria Lopez Urbina,

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
 DATE/CASE ID: 06 JUL 2006 200502506

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whose budget comes from the Federal Attorney General's Office (PGR) is approximately 700,000 dollars, or one percent of the PGR's budget. Morfin's fledgling operation, by contrast, consists of one office in Mexico City and one in Ciudad Juarez, the latter with ten permanent staff members courtesy of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Development, and other Federal agencies.

3. Appointed to her position October 31, 2003, Commissioner Morfin's main job is to serve as a liaison between agencies of the Mexican federal government (e.g., Foreign Affairs, Health, Education, Social Development, Environment, and Public Safety). For example, she might be able to coordinate with various agencies to install street lights in some of the more vulnerable areas of Juarez slums. The scope of the problem she is charged with addressing also requires her to deal with Chihuahua local governments as well. However, both incumbents and candidates at the Chihuahua state and Ciudad Juarez municipal level are focussing their energies on the July elections, thus increasing the difficulty of Morfin's getting their attention. Even at the federal level, Morfin admitted that she is still unable to get appointments with people at the top levels. Coordinating the efforts of so many actors is a tall order given that Morfin lives in Mexico City and only visits Ciudad Juarez once every two weeks.

4. Making progress on this issue will require Morfin to establish links with the mothers of the murdered and disappeared women and with Juarez activist groups, allowing her to directly gauge the needs for social and physical infrastructure in the stricken areas. Just contacting the families is proving a formidable task. The whereabouts of some of the relatives of the victims are no longer known. Local authorities have provided her with contact information for 32 families presently living in Juarez, while 58 are unaccounted for.

5. Morfin made it clear that she is not involved in criminal investigations. While she has access to the 14 cases being investigated by the PGR, she has no direct access to the cases being handled by local authorities. She will be reviewing the PGR cases to review any possible human rights violations by Chihuahua state authorities in the initial stages of the investigations (e.g., police torture of detainees). Morfin said she has doubts about the guilt of the two suspects arrested in the Cotton Field case, as well as in the case of Amcit Cynthia Kiekcer; arrested in June 2003 on flimsy murder charges in Chihuahua City. Morfin acknowledged the negligence of Chihuahua state authorities in investigating the cases, but noted that over the last ten years neither the Federal authorities nor the municipal authorities have made significant

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efforts to solve these crimes. Federal authorities have ignored the women's issues focusing instead on drug trafficking and organized crime. Juarez municipal authorities have suffered political disorganization. Juarez has had 10 Mayors in the past 10 years and the last two elections disputed and annulled by electoral tribunals.

6. Morfin said she will seek to establish an official account of the victims and the details of each case in coordination with the office of Federal Prosecutor Lopez Urbina. Morfin said the official statistics she was provided show that there have been 321 women murdered from 1993-2003. Of that number, 90 can be categorized as sexual crimes possibly of a serial nature. The information on womens' murders in Juarez varies according to the source. According to the National Human Rights Commission

(CNDH), there have been approximately 258-263 women murdered or disappeared. Morfin noted that the CNDH's statistics do not include girls under age fourteen, who are considered children rather than women. Amnesty International claims that there have been 370 murders, of which 137 indicate a pattern of sexual violence. The Juarez border studies organization Colegio de la Frontera Norte reports approximately 363 women dead. Morfin's first task is to coordinate a unified list of victims.

7. Morfin pressed for greater information sharing between U.S. law enforcement authorities and her office on sexual offenders. Morfin said that she met the previous day with FBI officials in El Paso. Statistics show that in 2001 there were 756 sex offenders residing in El Paso county. She praised the efforts of El Paso authorities in continuing to monitor sex offenders after their release from prison. For example, U.S. authorities post web pages and alert neighbors in the areas where sex offenders take up residence, resulting in the offenders' being stigmatized. She believes that this follow up is one of the reasons that El Paso is the second safest city in the U.S. She implied, however, that there may be El Pasoans committing sex offenses with impunity in Juarez and returning to the U.S. She cited the case of Abdel Latif Sharif, a U.S. legal permanent resident of Egyptian origin convicted of sexual offenses in the U.S. who later tried for women's homicides in Juarez. Morfin underscored the need for greater bilateral information sharing on these issues.

8. Finally, Morfin requested U.S. assistance to provide management training to leaders of some of the Juarez NGOs which have sprung up around this issue. She noted a popular perception that NGOs are cynically exploiting the deaths of these young, poor women, normally immigrants from poorer Mexican

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states seeking employment in the maquiladora industry. Looking beyond the NGOs, she specifically criticized the state-run Chihuahua Women's Institute (ICHIMU) for using the mothers of the slain girls in media campaigns directed at improving the Chihuahua state government's tarnished image.

9. Summing up her vision of her role, Morfin said, "The challenge is very great. Probably there are significant forces that will not permit me to fulfill my mission. But I am a precursor. I am the central nucleus of different levels: the murders, justice, and impunity; the social fabric; and, on another level, the federal intervention."

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