

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menéndez

Security forces on alert

The U.S.-Mexico border becomes a focus of efforts to prevent outbreaks of terrorism.

This capital is still buzzing with reactions to the speech delivered by the Undersecretary of the Interior for security affairs, Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, in a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of President Lázaro Cardenas's birthday May 21, an occasion traditionally used by the government to deliver a key message to the nation. The security chief warned left and right forces now, inducing lack of confidence in national institutions that the government will not allow them to use the present economic weaknesses to provoke social discontent and chaos.

The speech was widely commented upon here in the press and among political circles. It came at a moment of heightened political tension fed by wild rumors of an eventual military coup and by bomb threats in several parts of Mexico City.

Gutiérrez Barrios' speech followed another warning a week before by the Secretary of Defense, Felix Galván López. In a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the execution of Hapsburg emperor Maximilian in 1867, Galván blasted those "who dream or rumor-monger about possibilities of military participation [in anti-government activities] . . . don't count on any of us soldiers! . . . [W]e shot Maximilian, but also—and let this be clear—Miramón and Mejía [the traitorous Mexican generals who collaborated with him—JM]"

The next day Galván showed that the commitment to maintain internal security was more than rhetoric. A contingent of 800 soldiers moved in to the Superior School of Agriculture in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, the city bordering El Paso, Texas. For several years, the school has been a seed-ground for terrorist gangs, and days before a group of students had kidnapped the director and taken over the school demanding increased federal funds.

In a message to other ultra-radical groups at several universities of the country, Galván López and Raúl Mendiola Cereceres, head of the Federal Judicial Police, personally oversaw the clean-up.

The move also signals security forces' awareness that the U.S.-Mexico border has become a flank for destabilization by radical and terrorist networks.

Security agencies on both sides of the border are now paying attention to two meetings of radical groups in the area. One is a meeting of the so-called National Liberation Movement and other ultra-radical groups in Denver, Colorado, according to propaganda leaflets, on May 28-30. The purpose is to map out a strategy to "liberate" Mexican-American, Puerto Rican and black populations from "U.S. occupation forces" in the South and Southwest of the United States. A topic of discussion will be how to confront the "repressive" forces of

the U.S. border patrol and other security forces.

NLM hooks up with the Comité de Defensa Popular (CDP) in Mexico, a Maoist movement based in squatter centers in several cities of Chihuahua. The CDP's modus operandi is to manipulate impoverished inhabitants of urban slums as a battering ram against Mexican authorities. They are seen here as a possible launching pad for urban chaos in the country.

Many attendees of the Denver meeting will go on to a second meeting of the American Indian Movement in the Papago reservation of Arizona, 40 miles away from the Sonora border, on June 3-13. Here they expect to manipulate the Papagos' old claim that the border line established by the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty of 1848 be changed because it dispossessed the Papagos of part of their ancestral land. Environmentalist, radical, and terrorist groups from all over the world will descend on Arizona for this meeting.

In this regard, collaboration between U.S. and Mexican security forces will be crucial. Such collaboration has already proven successful. Last month, U.S. intelligence agencies passed on a warning to Mexican authorities that Syrian, Palestinian, South American, Mexican and Chicano commandos would meet secretly in Ciudad Juárez to map out a strategy to destabilize the country. Mexican authorities placed the warning prominently in the local Juárez press. From there it was picked up in national and international wires, which noted that the information had "been processed" in New York and had been corroborated by the State Department.