

Inter-American Dialogue

LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

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Featured Q&A With Our Board of Advisors

Q Passage by the US House of Representatives last month of a tough immigration bill, which includes a provision to build a hi-tech security fence along parts of the US-Mexico border, has sparked a furor in Mexico, which has vowed to fight the fence proposal. Do you think the House bill, including the proposed fence, would be effective in stopping illegal immigration? Why/why not?

A **Board Comment: Nicolás Mariscal:** "The proposal approved in the House of Representatives to build a fence along the Mexico-US border has caused broad irritation in Mexico. The construction of a fence would have little effect. It has been shown that this type of physical barrier does not significantly reduce migration but in fact produces bigger problems. The Berlin Wall is a good example. Over the years we have seen illegal immigrants find ways of overcoming obstacles. Probably, as has happened before, migration flows will move to areas where crossing the border is less difficult, and immigrants will certainly have to pay higher tariffs to *polleros* or *coyotes*, since criminal organizations dedicated to helping immigrants cross the border will be in greater demand and will invent new ways of entering the US illegally. The fence will increase tensions in the border region and, eventually, the incidences of violence and immigrant deaths. Migration flows to the

US are not going to stop with a fence. Let's recall that it is an economic-cultural phenomenon that has been taking place for more than a hundred years. One could say that it is routine among some of the country's poorest and most marginalized sectors, for whom it is the only option for survival."

A **Guest Comment: Tom Tancredo:** "I think [the security fence] is an important tool in fighting illegal immigration, but it is only part of the solution. Other measures that should be part of the solution include the use of

Continued on page 4

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, the Brazilian commander of UN peacekeeping forces in Haiti, was found dead on Saturday in what officials said was an apparent suicide. See story on page 2.

Agencia Brasil file photo.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Fujimori Registers for Presidential Election in Peru

Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori on Friday registered to run in the country's April presidential election. Fujimori's daughter, Keiko, turned in the registration documents to Peru's National Electoral Board on behalf of her father, who is in jail in Chile awaiting possible extradition to Peru on charges of corruption and human rights crimes. The Electoral Board is expected to decide next week whether he will be allowed to run. Fujimori's 10 years in office ended in 2000 amid a corruption scandal.

Source: Reuters.

Honduran Economy Grew 4.2 Percent Last Year

Honduras' economy grew 4.2 percent in 2005, despite three hurricanes and high oil prices, the Central Bank said Friday. "It's a good result considering the shock we have had from oil prices on international markets as well as the effects of rains and tropical storms in the country," Central Bank President Maria Elena Mondragon said. He predicted growth of more than 5.0 percent this year. The Central American country's economy expanded 5.0 percent in 2004.

Source: Reuters.

Chile's CCU Says Beverage Sales Volumes Rose 8.4 Percent in 2005

Chilean beverage maker CCU said Friday that total sales volumes rose 8.4 percent in 2005 to 12.26 million hectoliters. The company said beer sales in Chile and Argentina grew 9.5 percent and 7.9 percent, respectively, to 4.17 million and 2.22 million hectoliters. Sales of softdrinks in Chile fell 0.1 percent to 3.23 million hectoliters.

Source: company statement.

Political News**Haiti Sets February 7 as New Date for Elections**

Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council on Sunday set February 7 as the new date for presidential and legislative elections, Reuters reported. "For us this schedule is official and final. We discussed it with the government, which has no objection," Rosemond Pradel, secretary general of the Council, was quoted as saying. The elections, which have been delayed several times since November, were supposed to take place yesterday, but the Council canceled them last week amid logistical problems, rampant violence, and a wave of kidnappings. The head of the United Nations mission to Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes, said the new date was firm. "It will be final and the UN mission is ready to accomplish every task in its competence to make sure the new schedule is met," Valdes stated. If none of the 34 candidates competing in the presidential election win an outright majority on February 7, a run-off vote will take place on March 19 and a vote for local government officials on April 30, Pradel said. The elections would be the impoverished Caribbean nation's first since the ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004 amid an armed

rebellion. Since then, the country has been ruled by an interim government. Haitian interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue said last week he plans to step down as planned next month even though it appears unlikely the country's new leader will be in place before his final day.

Poll: Bachelet Enjoys Wide Lead Over Pinera in Chile

Socialist Michelle Bachelet of the ruling Concertacion coalition has a wide lead over her conservative opponent, Sebastian Pinera, ahead of this Sunday's second-round presidential vote, Reuters reported, citing a poll by **DataVoz** and published Saturday in local newspaper *La Tercera*. According to the poll, Bachelet would win 41 percent of the vote versus 29.7 percent for Pinera. DataVoz said 12.9 percent of voters were undecided and 9.2 percent did not respond. "To reverse this tendency, Pinera would have to capture something in the order of 70 percent of the undecideds and people who did not respond," the polling firm said. Bachelet, a former defense minister, finished first in the first round of the election on December 11 with 45.9 percent, but failed to get the more than 50 percent needed to avoid this Sunday's run-off. If elected, she would be the fourth straight president from the Concertacion since the end of military

UN Military Commander in Haiti Found Dead in Apparent Suicide

The military commander of the Brazilian-led United Nations peacekeeping forces in Haiti was found dead Saturday with a pistol shot to the head in what officials said was an apparent suicide.



Bacellar
Agencia Brasil file photo.

Brazilian Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacellar, who headed the 9,000-strong force since September, was found dead in his hotel suite on Saturday, dressed in shorts and T-shirt, his 9mm pistol by his side.

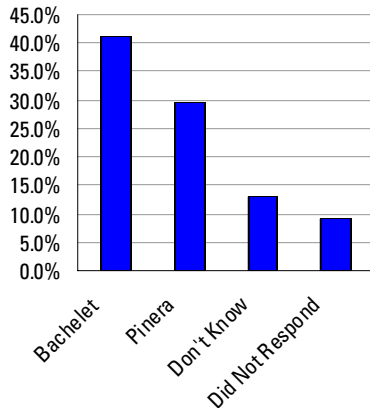
"According to the elements we've found, I'm 95 percent sure Gen. Bacellar committed suicide," said an unnamed UN police investigator.

However, Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim said he thought it unlikely Bacellar killed himself. The Brazilian government has sent a team to Haiti to conduct its own investigation into Bacellar's death.

Source: Reuters, Agencia Brasil.

rule in 1990 and the first woman president of Chile. The DataVoz poll was conducted between December 19 and January 4 and had a margin of error of 2.8 percentage points.

Chilean Presidential Poll



Source: Reuters, La Tercera, DataVoz.

Lopez Obrador Criticizes Fox's Reaction to US Border Fence Plan

Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the frontrunner in Mexico's July presidential election accused President Vicente Fox of being too timid in his response to a proposal in the US Congress to build a fence along parts of the US-Mexico border to keep out illegal immigrants, Reuters reported. Speaking to several thousand cheering supporters after formally registering as a candidate, the left-leaning Lopez Obrador of the opposition PRD party said the response by Fox to the US proposal has not been enough and blamed the president's pro-market policies for stimulating migration to the US. "It's infuriating to see how President Fox, because he is dedicated to maintaining economic policies that only benefit the elite, does not have the moral or political authority to confront the disgrace of a wall on the border or to protest the deaths of migrants," Lopez Obrador was quoted as saying. He said 2 million Mexicans have emigrated in Fox's five years in office. The US House of Representatives on December 16 passed a tough immigration bill calling for construction of 700 miles of fence along the 2,000 mile-long US-Mexico border. The bill would also make it

Special Announcement

Nicolás Mariscal, Chairman of Mexico's Grupo Marhnos, Has Joined the Latin America Advisor Board.



The *Latin America Advisor* is pleased to announce that **Nicolás Mariscal** has joined the Board of Advisors. Since 1985, Mariscal has been chairman of the board of Grupo Marhnos, which is one of Mexico's ten largest construction companies. Grupo Marhnos, which develops real estate and infrastructure projects, operates nationwide in Mexico and has participated in projects in the US, Guatemala, El Salvador, Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, and Chile. Mariscal also serves as a board member in **Afianzadora Aserta** and **SSA Mexico** (Stevedoring Services of America). He is an active member of several philanthropic organizations, including Union Social de Empresarios Mexicanos (USEM) and Unidos por Ellos and Impulsa (junior achievement). Recently, Mariscal was elected as one of the founding members of the Disaster Resource Network, an initiative sponsored by the World Economic Forum (WEF) to support relief efforts for countries affected by disasters. He is an active member of the WEF, the Chief Executives Organization (CEO), and the Inter-American Dialogue's Group of 50, among others. He has a civil engineering degree from Universidad Iberoamericana, a Master's degree in Construction Management from Stanford University, and has participated in several executive educational programs at the University of Chicago and at Harvard University.

a felony to live in the US illegally instead of a civil offense, toughen penalties against document fraud, and require employers to verify the legal status of workers. It also ignored a proposal by President George W. Bush to establish a temporary guest worker program that would allow Mexican immigrants to work legally in the US for three years. Fox labeled the fence proposal as "shameful" and his government has vowed to rally international support against it. Since taking office in 2000, Fox has sought an immigration accord with the US that would allow easier cross-border movements.

Economic News

Venezuela Expanding Fuel Assistance Program in US

The Venezuelan government said Friday it

would expand a program to provide cheap heating oil to poor people in the United States, the Associated Press reported. Venezuela's ambassador to the US, Bernardo Alvarez, said he would sign an agreement this week with the Penobscot, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians to provide the cheaper heating oil. **Citgo**, the US affiliate of Venezuela's state-owned oil company, **PDVSA**, has already begun selling discounted heating oil to low-income residents in New York City and Boston. Critics of the two Democratic congressmen who facilitated those deals, Reps. Jose Serrano (NY) and William Delahunt (MA), say they have helped Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, a fierce critic of the US and the Bush administration, score a propaganda victory. The two congressmen say they are only doing what they can to help their constituents heat their homes amid high world prices for oil and natural gas.

Featured Q&A*Continued from page 1*

armed border patrolmen and unmanned aerial vehicles. One reason it will be an effective tool is because of the way Mexico is reacting. They must believe it will be an effective barrier, or else they wouldn't be so apoplectic about it. Chances of the bill passing in the near future are good, better than 50 percent. It will be a tough fight in both the House and the Senate. The wall, besides the

“Chances of the bill passing in the near future are good, better than 50 percent.”

- *Tom Tancredo*

obvious benefits, is a good symbol. It's a symbol that this is the place where one country stops and another begins, and you shouldn't be entering the country into which you are crossing. We cannot solve the economic problems of Mexico. We are simply dealing with those problems, but I have no other choice, until Mexico divests itself from its holdings; Mexico still has a relatively socialistic government. That's a problem. Mexico also has corrupt policemen on the [border] beat. As long as those two things are existent, then the economic problems of Mexico will never be addressed or solved successfully."

A **Guest Comment: Carlos de Icaza:** "Definitely not. Building fences along the border is not, and has never been, a suitable way to address the complex migration phenomenon between Mexico and the United States. While the US has the sovereign right to implement its own laws, we must bear in mind that Mexico and the US are strategic partners that share democratic values, with two-way trade worth more than \$275 billion annually, as well as rising interdependence that must continue to be characterized by the construction of bridges along the border rather than divisive barriers.

Furthermore, our countries have developed unprecedented bilateral cooperation in security issues to fight transnational, organized crime and to prevent terrorism. As a result of decisive and coordinated actions, the two countries have strengthened their respective domestic security. During recent years, the emphasis on a law enforcement-only approach has proven to be insufficient and costly in solving the immigration issue, leading to strained border communities and to the tragic death of hundreds of innocent labor migrants. The Mexican government believes that this phenomenon should be solved in a comprehensive and bilateral manner, with a long-term perspective that provides for a legal, safe, orderly, and mutually beneficial migration between our two countries. Fences by themselves do not solve things, and certainly not between good neighbors. What we need is a comprehensive immigration reform that recognizes the contribution of immigrants to the economy of the US, protects their human rights, brings undocumented immigrants out of the shadows, reunites family, and includes a temporary worker program. Fortunately, there are voices within the US that support a comprehensive migration reform of this type."

Nicolás Mariscal is a member of the Advisor board and Chairman of *Grupo Marhnos in Mexico*.

Tom Tancredo is a Republican member of the US House of Representatives from Colorado and Chairman of the 92-member House Immigration Reform Caucus.

Carlos de Icaza is Mexico's Ambassador to the United States.

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Erik Brand,
General Manager, Publishing

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Editor

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Inter-American Dialogue:

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Viron Vaky,
Senior Fellow

Subscription Inquiries are welcomed at
fretrial@thedialogue.org

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