



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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MEX40734.E

Mexico: Government's efforts to purchase land from landowners in the Texcoco de Mora municipality, near Mexico City, for the purpose of building an airport; whether a meeting in which the government made an offer to the landowners took place; whether the landowners refused this offer and subsequently staged a protest march on 10 March 1999, which was violently suppressed by the police; whether in the months following the march, landowners involved began to disappear, in particular the individual named in the Request (1998-2003)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No information about a meeting between the government and landowners regarding an offer to purchase land for an airport, and a subsequent 10 March 1999 protest march, or whether landowners, specifically the individual named in the Request, began to disappear could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the following provides information about 1999 plans to build an airport in Texcoco, and protests held in 2001 and 2002 against building the airport.

According to a June 1999 article in *La Jornada*, the Mexican government's plans to build a new Mexico City international airport near Texcoco were in dispute due to significant concern about the impact of the planned airport on the local ecology, health and quality of life of the local community (21 Jun. 1999). Moreover, a study by the environmental organization Mexico, Communication and Environment (Mexico, Comunicacion y Ambiente, MCA) concluded that building an airport in the area of the former lake of Texcoco was "not viable" (*inviabile*) (*La Jornada* 18 Oct. 1999).

The Mexican State government responded to these declarations with their own study concluding that airport construction was technically and ecologically viable (*La Jornada* 14 Dec. 1999). The deputy secretary of State Urban Facilities (Equipamiento Urbano estatal), Manuel Ortiz Garcia, rejected the claims by environmental groups because they did not have access to the technical information being used by government planners such as the Secretary of Communications and Transport (Secretaria de Comunicaciones y Transportes) (*ibid.*).

With regard to protest marches, according to *Country Reports 2001*,

[o]n November 28, an estimated 1,500 residents of San Salvador Atenco and Texcoco marched on Mexico City to protest the selection of their community as the site for Mexico City's new international airport (4 Mar. 2002).

A 29 November 2001 article in *Reforma* reported that "[s]ome 800 peasant farmers brandishing machetes, clubs, and pipes marched from Texcoco to the Interior Secretariat to protest the expropriation of their lands" for the new international airport.

In July 2002, *Reforma* stated that protestor-led riots resulted in the taking of a number of government officials and police officers as hostages (13 Jul. 2002a), and that the Mexico State Office of the Prosecutor had charged "nine peasants who participated in the clash with state policemen ... and charged them with rebellion, injury, attacks on the local means of communication, and bearing banned weapons" (13 July 2002b).

A later *Reforma* article of July 2002 reported that the protestors agreed to meet with the government secretariat on 24 July to "dialogue" about the construction of the proposed airport (20 Jul. 2002). On 1 August 2002, the federal government decided to cancel the proposed expropriation of farmer's lands for the purpose of building the airport (Es Mas 2 Aug. 2002). While the decision was seen as a victory by communal landowners (*ejidatarios*), the Governor of the State of Mexico, Arturo Montiel, expressed disappointment at the cancellation of the project in Texcoco since it would suspend an investment of 2 billion dollars into the state's economy (*Reforma* 2 Aug. 2002).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

IRB databases

World News Connection (WNC)

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