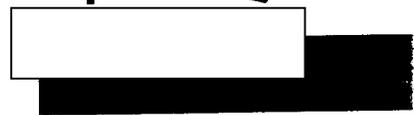


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DATE: APR 2008

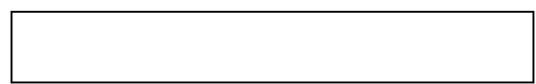
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MEXICO: THE ZUNO KIDNAPING

The kidnaping of Jose Guadalupe Zuno, President Echeverria's father-in-law, clearly shows that terrorist groups remain capable of carrying out sensational acts of political violence despite stepped-up security measures.

Security officials believe that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the People, the group that claimed it kidnaped former US consul general Leonhardy a year ago last May, is responsible for the abduction. Three of its members have been arrested. Little is known of this group; its members may be associated with the 23rd of September Communist League and with a radical student organization based in Guadalajara. The 23rd of September group, which—unlike most others—operates in many parts of the country, kidnaped a wealthy industrialist and an honorary British consul in Guadalajara last October and in January attempted to spark an armed uprising of peasants and students in Sinaloa State.

At midweek authorities believed that Zuno was still alive and that he and his kidnapers were



Echeverria informed of kidnaping

still in Guadalajara. Unconfirmed reports [] reported that the Zuno family was prepared to meet a \$1.6 million ransom demand. The kidnapers have also called for the release of ten imprisoned guerrillas and a plane to fly them to a place of their choice. Government officials say they will not accede to this demand.

The available facts point to a terrorist act intended to demonstrate that the government is unable to protect even persons closest to the President, but Zuno's background raises another possibility—that the kidnapers are political rivals of the Zuno family. In any case, the choice of the victim is a strange one. The Zuno clan has a history of extreme leftist political thinking, []

[] Zuno's sons have blamed "US imperialism" for their father's abduction. The government has issued a statement dissociating itself from this opinion.

The government denies that the guerrillas can have any "revolutionary" motive, contending that it—and it alone—is the revolutionary force in the country. Any threat, it is argued, must therefore come from regressive or rightist forces. Echeverria put it this way in his annual state of the union speech on September 1: "The violence is sponsored by counterrevolutionary forces, by those who feel threatened by a progressive regime. The sources of terrorist activity may be obscure, but the terrorists' intention is clear: to stimulate repression and dissension."

At present, the guerrilla groups are not waging a sustained, well-organized conflict with the government and are no threat to political stability. But the outlook is for continued sporadic violence inasmuch as the government's responses to the problem—increased security efforts, public spending to upgrade social and economic conditions, and rhetoric—have to date been largely ineffective. []