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U.S. Ambassador dismisses possibility that fight against crime lets up during the 2012 elections.

U.S. Trusts Anti Drug Fight Will Continue

Diplomat points out that it is difficult to explain the success of the fight against drug trafficking with the rising death toll.

Jose Diaz Briseno.

Washington.- U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Carlos Pascual dismissed the risk that the current fight against drug trafficking in Mexico lets up during the 2012 presidential election, noting there is a consensus [in Mexico] that the fight must continue.

During a visit to Washington to participate in the meeting of U.S. ambassadors in the hemisphere, Pascual assured Mexican media that he does expect a normal debate about the different components of the antidrug strategy.

"I don't see the risk that some have pointed out about the possibility that perhaps with the 2012 [presidential] elections the fight against drug trafficking will become lax," said the diplomat who presented his credentials in October. Pascual, former vice president of the Brookings Institution before he went to Mexico, highlighted his discussions with representatives of the PAN, PRI and PRD. "I have spoken with representatives of the three main political parties and all have reaffirmed that this fight against drug traffickers must continue," said the U.S. ambassador in the meeting with the Mexican media.

"We will see political debates about tactics and ways to design the [antidrug] strategy and that is fair. Anywhere you go there must be a political debate about the most effective ways to lead public policy," he said referring to what is expected to happen in 2012.

Asked whether he believed that drug trafficking could directly influence the presidential election, Pascual stated that the three parties acknowledge that such threat is present in the municipal level.

“It’s the same whether you talk to the PAN, the PRI, or the PRD, I think there is a widespread acknowledgement that what organized crime aims for is to take control at the municipal level to keep their ‘black businesses’ that will never bring about anything good,” he said.

According to Pascual, politicians in Mexico who propose to negotiate with drug traffickers are a minority, but he warned that negotiating would only lead to more infiltration of authorities by criminals.

“Obviously we have heard from time to time people suggesting that the best thing to do is to strike a deal with [drug traffickers] and compromise. But those are exceptions,” Pascual pointed out during the meeting that was conducted in Spanish.

In June 2009, the press scooped an audio file where the then candidate and current mayor of San Pedro Garza Garcia Mauricio Fernandez allegedly said he was willing to negotiate with the Beltran Leyva cartel.

“If we compromise we will see more infiltration and that is not a path we can follow,” said Pascual about the possibility of negotiating.

The U.S. envoy, born in Cuba in 1961, recognized that in Mexico, one of the paradoxes most difficult to explain is saying the antidrug policy is successful when violence is still raging.

“One of the hardest things is explaining in Mexico how the [antidrug] policy is going forward and being successful when violence is increasing.” Pascual admitted, “And it is a superficial contradiction that is hard for everyone to understand.”

However, the American diplomat noted that even if the Mexican government stopped targeting drug trafficking organizations, violence would continue because cartels would still fight among them, and therefore there is no other option but to push forward.

With the initiative for the FY2011 budget around the corner, Pascual avoided commenting on the amount the U.S. will offer Mexico for antidrug support in the

second phase of the Merida Plan [sic] after the \$1,351 million in the past three years.