

ACTION WHA-00

INFO LOG-00 EEB-00 AF-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 GHFS-00 RPPR-00  
INL-00 DOEE-00 DOTE-00 DS-00 DHSE-00 AVC-00 FAAE-00  
UTED-00 SIPD-00 DIAS-00 H-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00  
LAB-01 L-00 MOFM-00 MOF-00 NSAE-00 ISN-00 OIC-00  
NIMA-00 EPAU-00 PA-00 GIWI-00 PRS-00 P-00 ISNE-00  
DOHS-00 SP-00 IRM-00 SSO-00 SS-00 STR-00 TRSE-00  
FMP-00 R-00 EPAE-00 DSCC-00 PRM-00 DRL-00 G-00  
NFAT-00 SAS-00 FA-00 PESU-00 /001W

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INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE

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DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC

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SENSITIVE

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E.O. 13526: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, PREL, MX

SUBJECT: Violent Protest in Guerrero Leaves Two Dead, Authorities  
Point Fingers

1. (SBU) Summary: A chaotic student protest turned violent on December 12 in the state of Guerrero. Students from a local teachers' college, who have staged seven major protests over the past eight months, blocked traffic on an important federal highway near the state capital and demanded an immediate meeting with the governor to discuss conditions at the school. After state and federal police moved to dislodge the protestors and reopen the highway, both police and protestors resorted to violent tactics, and two protestors were killed. NGOs and the local human rights commission have strongly condemned the killings. Investigations are ongoing, but state and federal authorities have blamed one another for the deaths. Though it will likely be some time before all the facts are clear, the governor of Guerrero fired a number of high ranking state officials in an effort to control the political damage. End summary.

Student Protest Descends into Chaos, Facts Still Unclear

2. (SBU) In the late morning of December 12, about 500 students

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Don Holm, Senior Reviewer

from the Teachers' College of Ayotzinapa, along with their allies from local civil society organizations, blocked a toll booth on a major federal highway that links Mexico City with Chilpancingo (the state capital) and the resort town of Acapulco. State and federal police responded and, though reports differ and the exact timeline is uncertain, some of the students, armed with Molotov cocktails, stones, and firecrackers, started a fire close to a nearby gas station, badly burning one gas station employee. The police reportedly used tear gas against the protestors and fired warning shots into the air. Local press has shown security camera footage, released by state officials, that shows federal police beating fallen protestors. In the ensuing twenty minutes of confusion, the police continued to fire their guns and the students responded with more homemade bombs and stones before fleeing. In the end, two protestors were killed at the scene, seven were wounded, and 24 were arrested. Of the 24 arrested, 23 were released the next day. Four policemen were injured as well.

#### State and Federal Authorities Respond by Pointing Fingers

3. (SBU) Hours after the incident, state authorities told the press that since the protest occurred on a federal highway, the federal police had jurisdiction to confront the protestors and state forces simply provided back-up. During a press conference, then-State Attorney General Alberto Lopez Rosas said the state police had not opened fire, though the protestors had been "excessively violent." He indicated that other civil society groups unassociated with the school had been involved in the violence and one protestor (who was not an Ayotzinapa student) had been found with an AK-47. The following day, December 13, the Governor's office confirmed that Rosas, as well as the state secretary of public security and an undersecretary of public security, had stepped down in order to "facilitate a transparent investigation."

4. (SBU) The Governor's office later released a video, captured by security cameras, which, according to a state spokesman, show that the first to respond to the protest were federal police who kicked and beat the protestors after they started the fire at the gas station. The video did not clearly show who fired on the protestors. A spokesman for the federal police denied its officials had shot the protestors and released a satellite photo that the spokesman said proved that state police had killed the two protestors. The federal police insist an agent from the ministerial police, part of the state attorney general's office, shot the protestors.

#### Civil Society Decries Incident

5. (SBU) Seventy-five local and national NGOs signed a letter decrying the violence and calling for a transparent investigation. The Tlachinollan Mountain Human Rights Center and the State Human Rights Commission said they were monitoring the progress of investigations closely. Representatives from the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico interviewed victims and

said they would conduct their own investigations as well. Around the country, supporters staged sympathy protests in various cities.

6. (SBU) The protestors were calling for a meeting with Governor Angel Aguirre Rivero to discuss their demands to admit more students to the Ayotzinapa school, appoint a new director, repair aging facilities, increase the daily allotment for school meals, and provide more opportunities to graduating teachers. Since Aguirre took office in April, the students of Ayotzinapa have held more than seven large protests in which they have blocked major highways, taken over radio stations, and gone on strike. The protestors say Aguirre broke his promises to them and cancelled previously scheduled meetings. Many Guerrero residents have expressed frustration with the students and their disruptive tactics.

Comment

7. (SBU) State authorities initially reacted defensively and insensitively by blaming the victims and denying any responsibility. To try to limit the political damage, Aguirre fired three of his highest ranking security officials and has attempted to strike a more compassionate tone in subsequent press statements and interviews. The case is being investigated by state and federal authorities and Aguirre and his collaborators will be under immense pressure to conduct a thorough investigation, though results are not expected anytime soon. Regardless of who is responsible for the deaths, the evidence of heavy-handed police tactics is strong and disconcerting. End comment.

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