

Dateline Mexico by Josefina Menendez

Washington behind the drought?

The worst drought in 20 years has struck Mexico's Northern states, and Mexican government officials are saying that U.S. weather modification is responsible.

The Director of Meteorology at Mexico's Ministry of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (SARH) told the local press this week that Mexico had officially asked the United States to suspend its weather modification experiments over Mexican territorial waters. The official, Silvino Aguilar, added that these experiments had altered the routes of hurricanes forming both in the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, such that *not one* of these storms had actually entered inland to drop rain on Mexico's arid north.

Aguilar's unprecedented accusations came as Mexico is suffering its worst drought in almost 20 years, which threatens to cut national agriculture by 30 percent this year and may mean the death of 4.5 million head of cattle. In the state of Sinaloa in Northern Mexico rain has not been seen in 24 months. Most Northern states have been dry for the better part of the last year.

A top SARH official contacted by *EIR* explained the thinking behind Mexico's concern. "The U.S. conducts highly sophisticated reconnaissance flights into the eye of a hurricane. They get useful information this way, but it can also have, shall we say, non-beneficial effects. We asked the U.S. to stop these flights, not because we sus-

pect some foul play, but because we don't want to suspect anything."

The SARH is not alone in Mexico in expressing alarm at the gravity of the current crisis. The Federal Electrical Commission warned that, due to the lack of rain and the heat wave now sweeping the country (temperatures are reaching 120° Fahrenheit), the country's hydroelectric dams are functioning at levels as low as 10 percent of capacity. Hydroelectric plants provide 30 percent of Mexico's energy needs. Already government officials have asked private water users to reduce consumption by 8 percent, and industries to cut electricity use by 20 percent for the duration of the crisis. There are two aspects to the current crisis which have high level Mexican officials particularly worried. First, they foresee serious political unrest in the Mexican countryside if food shortages become severe. This would play right into the hands of those foreign and national interests that are already trying to destabilize the López Portillo government by triggering peasant violence—such as the recent incident in Chiapas (see this week's Special Report). In fact, Monterrey-linked business interests that are factionally opposed to the current government have already begun to take

advantage of the situation by issuing alarmist statements to the press designed to worsen the already volatile situation. The directors of the business association CONCAMIN told the press this week that, "due to the drought, the country is experiencing a national emergency affecting both agriculture and industry, and which could lead to a labor crisis."

The second aspect involves energy policy. President López Portillo has often reiterated that Mexico will not "eat its oil"—that is, oil revenues will not be channeled into food imports but rather into heavy industrial development. But the unexpected agricultural crisis means Mexico will now face a trade-off between using a significant part of its oil revenues to purchase food abroad, or suffering a serious food deficit which will create social problems throughout the country. There are already reports that Mexico will have to purchase 2 million tons of grain more than the 7.5 million already scheduled for 1980, and that this may cost close to \$2 billion.

The U.S., Mexico's biggest supplier of food, is the likely source of the increased imports. In fact, the American ambassador in Mexico City, Julian Nava, was quick to tell the press that Washington stands prepared to increase food shipments to Mexico. But one high level Mexican official told *EIR* that he shuddered when he read Nava's remark. "The U.S. is happy to now have us over a barrel on the food question. Next they will try to act on the Kissinger doctrine of using food as a weapon, and propose bartering their food for increased shipments of our oil."