

## Dateline Mexico by an EIR Investigative Team

### Who's behind the Ojinaga Connection?

*Look for an entrenched network that includes the governor of Chihuahua state and the president of the Inter-American Development Bank.*

On Feb. 4, Mexico's Federal Judicial Police (PJF) arrested, in Ciudad Juárez and Ojinaga, in the state of Chihuahua, some 10 members of the "Ojinaga Connection" of the cocaine, heroin, and marijuana traffic. The "Ojinaga Connection" is the name of a well-organized gang of international drug traffickers, whose base of operations is in the town of Ojinaga, which borders on Presidio, New Mexico (U.S.A.)

According to Mexican and U.S. sources, Ojinaga is one of the main drug routes into the United States. Those arrested on Feb. 4 confessed to belong to the band of Amado and Cipriano Carillo, from Agua Prieta, Sonora, who are in turn employees of Pablo Acosta Villarreal, considered in the United States and Mexico as the head of the Ojinaga Connection. Acosta was first exposed publicly on Dec. 10, 1986 by the *El Paso Herald Post*, which singled him out as new head of the drug-trafficking families of the region, after having crushed his main rival, Fermín Arévalo, in 1984.

Alarm spread through the region. On Jan. 4, Luis Bojórquez wrote in the daily *El Imparcial*, of Hermosillo, Sonora, that there is an amazing boom in "inexplicable wealth," weapons, and cocaine dealing in the city, which "makes one suppose that the Colombians have shifted their shipping routes . . . and now have the Agua Prieta connection."

It is a confirmed fact that the Ojinaga gang was linked to the famous Colombian "Medellín Cartel." U.S.

Customs agents in Presidio recently found out that at least one Colombian drug mobster, coming from Miami, bought a ranch in the neighborhood of Ojinaga, for the purpose of using it as a landing strip for planes from Colombia.

Phil Jordan, head of the regional Drug Enforcement Administration office in Dallas, told the *Herald Post* on Dec. 9 that "many Colombians have made partnerships with the Mexican connection to transship large amounts of drugs destined for the United States." Mexican sources, outside the government, have confirmed and amplified this information.

Ojinaga was the exit point for the marijuana coming from the fields of El Búfalo, the world's largest drug plantation, "discovered" in late 1984. The bust of El Búfalo rocked the highest levels in Mexico, because of rumors that important public officials and ex-officials and businessmen were involved in running and protecting it. To carry out the multimillion-dollar operation, the drug gangsters who controlled El Búfalo bought the protection of most of the Federal Security Administration and an important number of officers in the Federal Judicial Police and other police bodies.

President Miguel de la Madrid ordered a clean-up of the security apparatus and the resignations of hundreds of agents, but he failed to jail the big mafia chieftains and their protectors. One of the most named individuals as protector of the El Búfalo drug plantation was the recently deceased Oscar

Flores Sánchez, the former Attorney General of Mexico (1976-82) and ex-governor of Chihuahua.

In Mexico City there is a lot of concern over the Ojinaga mafia. This is heightened by the fact that the current state governor, Fernando Baeza Meléndez, got his post due to the protection of Flores Sánchez, which makes many doubt that he'll fight the drug traffic. This concern is well founded.

One of the financial groups that bankrolled Baeza's election campaign was that of the Rohana brothers, of Lebanese origin, considered the "owners" of Ojinaga. One of them, Alfredo Rohana, today state chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI), was a running-mate of Baeza in his campaign for Mexico's Congress in 1985. In their electoral district, anonymous graffiti went up on the walls that read: "Baeza and Rohana, candidates for marijuana."

The strong suspicions about Baeza sparked great opposition in the PRI to his gubernatorial candidacy in the 1986 elections. The flak was so intense that the president of the Inter-American Development Bank, Antonio Ortiz Mena, felt forced to intervene to tip the balance in Baeza's favor. Ortiz Mena was also the fellow who made Flores Sánchez state governor, in 1968, and launched him into national politics. After 12 years as finance minister of Mexico, in 1968 Ortiz Mena tried (unsuccessfully) to obtain the presidential nomination of the PRI for the 1970-76 term. His campaign was run by then-Governor Flores Sánchez.

On Feb. 5, Ortiz Mena made a surprise appearance in Chihuahua, and got the red carpet treatment from his protégé Fernando Baeza and from Chihuahua strongman Eloy S. Vallina. The topic of their discussion was: the Mexican presidential succession.