

International Intelligence

Mexico's Calderón Sworn In As Back-Door President

In a harbinger of his near-certain inability to govern, Felipe Calderón held a spurious “swearing in” ceremony at one minute after midnight Dec. 1, at the Presidential residence, because he and his staff were unsure whether he would be able to enter the Congress the next day for the constitutionally required ceremony. No such midnight “swearing in” ceremony had ever occurred in Mexican history.

Calderón ultimately succeeded in meeting the formalities required by the Constitution, in name only. With military troops occupying the galleries, Calderón, surrounded by bodyguards, sneaked in through a back entrance. In a ceremony which lasted all of four minutes; he whipped on the Presidential sash, and then fled, with cries of “traitor” and “get out” ringing in his ears.

Meanwhile, Andrés Manuel López Obrador was leading more than 200,000 supporters in a rally in the Zócalo Plaza and march through downtown Mexico City. López Obrador warned that Calderón’s swearing-in amounted to a “coup d’état” by a “neofascist oligarchy.” We are “not rebels without a cause,” as the media likes to portray us, he warned. Somehow, he said, they forget that the Presidential election was *stolen!* “They have to understand once and for all, we are going to defend the democracy of this country.”

Ukraine Parliament Fires Pro-NATO ‘Orange’ Ministers

Presaging a showdown with President Victor Yushchenko, the Ukrainian Parliament fired three Cabinet ministers, on request from Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich: Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk, Interior Minister Yuri Lutsenko, and Defense Minister Anatoly Hrytsenko. Tarasyuk was a key holdover from Yushchenko’s period as “Orange Revolution” victor (2004-05), and a chief advocate of Ukraine’s joining NATO. Yushchenko had managed to keep him in the government,

even as opposition parties dominated this year’s parliamentary election, ending in Victor Yanukovich becoming Prime Minister. Lutsenko was also an Orange Revolution organizer.

Tarasyuk’s undermining of Yanukovich came to a head at a Nov. 30 Cabinet meeting. Yanukovich read aloud a letter from Tarasyuk’s Foreign Ministry, informing him that it had cancelled the Prime Minister’s trip to Washington; the letter accused Yanukovich of failing to get Yushchenko’s approval of guidelines for the talks. Evidently Yanukovich was going to tell people in Washington, that Ukrainians overwhelmingly reject joining NATO. Telling Tarasyuk it was regrettable they had “failed to find an understanding how to work together over these three months,” Yanukovich announced he was formally sending a negative evaluation of Tarasyuk to the Supreme Rada (parliament), and asking for appropriate action.

Pakistani Foreign Minister ‘Stuns’ NATO Commanders

Pakistan’s Foreign Minister advised NATO to include the Taliban in the government, not confront it, according to the *Daily Telegraph* of London on Nov. 29. While NATO commanders at Riga pledged to stay the course to restore peace and stability in Afghanistan, more sage advice came from Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Khursheed Ahmed Kasuri. Kasuri, in a private briefing to foreign ministers of some NATO member-states, told them that the Taliban are winning the war in Afghanistan and NATO is bound to fail. These remarks were made on the eve of NATO’s summit in Riga.

According to Ahmed Rashid, a veteran Pakistani journalist, Kasuri’s briefing “stunned” the Western ministers. One Western official told him: “Kasuri is basically asking NATO to surrender and to negotiate with the Taliban.”

But Kasuri repeated what Lt. Gen. Mohammad Jan Orakzai, Governor of Pakistan’s volatile Northwest Frontier Province, had stated publicly. He said on one occasion that the United States, Britain, and NATO

have already failed in Afghanistan. “Either it is a lack of understanding, or it is a lack of courage to admit their failure,” the general said. Orakzai had masterminded the “peace deal” between the Pakistani army and the heavily Talibanized Pushtun tribes. The “peace deal” was, however, a sham carried out to withdraw the Pakistani Army and leave the tribal areas in the hands of the armed Talibanized Pushtuns.

German Victim of Torture Sues U.S.A.

Khalid El-Masri, the German victim of torture under the Bush-Cheney rendition policy, gave a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 29, to discuss his lawsuit, and the five months of torture he underwent. El-Masri, who was accompanied by a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union and his German lawyer, was kidnapped in Macedonia in 2003, and held and tortured for five months in a secret prison in Afghanistan; he was finally given a visa by the State Department and allowed to enter the United States to attend a hearing on his case at the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, on Nov. 28. He had been denied entry to the United States last December. El-Masri also gave a press conference in Richmond, Virginia, where the case was heard.

El-Masri’s civil suit was dismissed by the Federal Court in Alexandria in May, after the government asserted that the case could not be tried without disclosing “state secrets.” His lawyers point out that, since that time, President Bush himself has publicly acknowledged the existence of the secret prison network and the rendition program. El-Masri said that what he wants, above all, is an explanation of his rendition and an apology from the U.S. government.

El-Masri debunked any notion that his kidnapping was a case of mistaken identity—which was previously thought to be the case. Even after former CIA Director George Tenet and then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice had been informed that El-Masri was innocent, he was still imprisoned for another several months.