

Mexico Political Chatter

9 de julio 2026

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With the World Cup hangover still lingering, following the Mexican national team's elimination at the hands of a relentless England, the week was dominated by an escalation in the bilateral relationship centered on the capture of Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada. President Claudia Sheinbaum exchanged accusations with former Ambassador Ken Salazar over reports about Washington's involvement in the operation, after the FBI displayed the plane in which Zambada was transported as part of an operation of its own. The former ambassador responded to the president that, as has been reported since 2024, "it was not our plane, nor our pilot, nor our operation."

In parallel, Zambada agreed to plead guilty and serve a life sentence in the United States, while authorities there released the first photographs of his capture alongside Joaquín Guzmán López.

But it is not the latest twist in the Sinaloa case: although the investigation remains ongoing, the FGR argued that the United States has not provided evidence meeting the minimum evidentiary standard of Mexican law regarding the accusations against governor on leave Rubén Rocha Moya and nine other former officials for alleged ties to the Sinaloa Cartel. In the same vein, the SRE classified for five years its communications with Washington regarding the accusations against Rocha and Senator Enrique Inzunza, on the grounds of protecting bilateral trust and cooperation. As Raymundo Riva Palacio warns, the case is only beginning and could open a new phase of political pressure on ruling-party figures, with repercussions even on the commercial front.

On the trade front, Economy Secretary Marcelo Ebrard traveled to Washington ahead of the new round of talks with the United States on July 20, to define the path of the USMCA review, with 13 priority issues on the table, among them the automotive industry, steel, and aluminum. Faced with the concern generated by Toyota's announcement that it will move part of the Tacoma's production to the United States, Ebrard ruled out an exodus of investment and previewed the announcement of an automotive investment exceeding 500 million dollars. As Gerardo Esquivel notes, the integration of regional value chains is so powerful that it is highly unlikely the treaty will not continue, backed moreover by a largely positive perception of the agreement in all three countries.

The World Cup gave a temporary respite to security: during June, the three Mexican host states (Mexico City, Jalisco, and Nuevo León) recorded a 31% reduction in intentional homicides, though the effect faded after the Mexican national team's elimination, when daily murders once again exceeded 50 victims. On the electoral front, the definition of candidacies ahead of 2027 continues to

strain the ruling coalition: the PVEM is seeking to lead candidacies in at least 13 states, with San Luis Potosí as the main point of contention.

Finally, two cases kept public attention. Former Pemex director Víctor Rodríguez Padilla was arrested in Mexico City under a court order stemming from a domestic violence complaint filed by his wife, days after the release of a video showing the aggressions. And in Houston, a Mexican migrant identified as Lorenzo Salgado Araujo died after being shot by an ICE agent during a detention operation, a case that adds to the growing scrutiny of U.S. immigration policy.

The 'El Mayo' case escalates to a bilateral crisis: Sheinbaum questions the U.S. account

The case of Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada once again strained the relationship between Mexico and the United States. President Claudia Sheinbaum accused former Ambassador Ken Salazar of lying by claiming that Washington did not participate in the capture of the Sinaloa Cartel leader. Following the release of new elements about the alleged involvement of U.S. agents in the operation, the Mexican government demanded a formal explanation and warned that, if an action without Mexico's authorization were confirmed, national sovereignty would have been violated.

The episode has revived the debate over bilateral security cooperation and the scope of U.S. operations on Mexican territory. Analysts consider that the case revives the historical specter of Washington's interventionism and tests the relationship between the two governments, precisely as both countries maintain open key negotiations on trade, migration, and the fight against organized crime.

Salazar responded to the president's accusations, insisting that "it was not our plane, nor our pilot, nor our operation." The former ambassador's statements come amid the promotion of his new book, "Borderlands," whose preview sparked controversy over the claim by a businessman close to President López Obrador, who reportedly asserted that AMLO is worried about the information derived from "El Mayo's" detention.

In parallel, Zambada's judicial process advanced definitively. The drug trafficker agreed to plead guilty and serve a life sentence in the United States, acknowledging that he will never regain his freedom, though he asked the judge to take into account his advanced age and health condition in determining the conditions of his imprisonment. At the same time, U.S. authorities released the first photographs of Zambada and Joaquín Guzmán López following their capture in Texas, images that once again placed the case at the center of political and judicial discussion between the two countries.

The tension escalated further after the FGR accused the FBI of having provided "false, partial, and insufficient" information about Zambada's capture. It maintained that U.S. authorities have obstructed the investigation by denying access to key evidence and maintaining inconsistencies about the aircraft used, the pilot, and the development of the operation, insisting that the actions of U.S. agencies may have violated Mexican sovereignty and announcing that it maintains various open lines of investigation.

 [La Jornada: Sheinbaum: "Everything seems to indicate that Ken Salazar lied" about the capture of 'El Mayo'](#)

SRE shields Rocha and Inzunza file for five years, and FGR clears governor on leave

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) classified for five years the communications held with the U.S. government regarding the accusations of alleged drug-trafficking ties against Sinaloa governor on

leave Rubén Rocha Moya and Morena Senator Enrique Inzunza. The Foreign Ministry argued that making the information public would jeopardize trust between the two governments, affect bilateral cooperation mechanisms, and could compromise the conduct of diplomatic relations. The reservation includes official letters, diplomatic notes, emails, minutes, and international legal assistance requests related to both cases.

For its part, the Attorney General's Office cleared Rocha Moya and nine other former state officials of ties to the Sinaloa Cartel. David Boone, Specialized Prosecutor for Regional Control at the FGR, explained that the inquiry was initiated based on the request for provisional detention for extradition purposes, but that to date the United States has not provided evidence confirming the accusations or meeting the minimum evidentiary standard required by Mexican law; he added that the FGR summoned the 10 accused individuals without receiving further evidence from the neighboring country.

 [Reforma: SRE reserves communications on Rocha and Inzunza for 5 years](#)

 [Reforma: FGR clears Rocha and now accuses the U.S.](#)

MXUSCA Third round: Ebrard accelerates the dialogue ahead of the USMCA review

Economy Secretary Marcelo Ebrard reported that Mexico will begin a new round of talks with the United States on July 20 to define the issues and the path of the USMCA review, after Washington opted to keep the treaty in force under an annual-review scheme. The official asserted that the agreement will not disappear and that the Mexican government's goal is to reach agreements that restore certainty for trade and investment in North America. He also noted that work is already underway on 13 priority issues for the negotiation, among them the automotive industry, steel, and aluminum.

Faced with the concern generated by Toyota's announcement that it will gradually move part of the Tacoma pickup's production to the United States, Ebrard stated that there is no exodus of investment from Mexico and previewed that an automotive investment exceeding 500 million dollars will be announced in the coming days to demonstrate that the country retains its appeal as a manufacturing destination. The secretary maintained that Toyota's adjustment responds to specific production decisions and not to an abandonment of the Mexican market, so he asked to avoid interpretations that fuel uncertainty around the USMCA.

 [Proceso: Ebrard seeks to calm concerns over Toyota and USMCA with 500-million-dollar investment announcement](#)

World Cup gives security a respite: homicides fall in Mexican host cities

During June, the three host states of the 2026 World Cup — Mexico City, Jalisco, and Nuevo León — recorded a 31% reduction in intentional homicides compared to the same month in 2025, dropping from 195 to 135 victims. The decline was most pronounced in Nuevo León, where murders fell from 62 to 29 cases, while Jalisco went from 68 to 47 and Mexico City from 65 to 59. The decline coincided with the period in which Mexico hosted World Cup matches and with the deployment of special security operations.

Nevertheless, the effect was temporary. Although during some days of the tournament the lowest homicide figures in a decade were recorded, violence rebounded as the competition advanced and, following the Mexican national team's elimination, daily murders returned to levels above 50 victims.

Specialists warn that it is still premature to attribute the decline exclusively to the security strategy or the World Cup, so it will be necessary to observe whether the trend holds in the coming months.

 [El Universal: Crime gives a truce; homicides fall in Mexico's World Cup host cities](#)

PVEM pressures Morena over candidacies ahead of 2027

The definition of candidacies for the 2027 elections has already begun to generate tensions within the ruling coalition. Although Morena and the PVEM maintain their alliance, the Green Party is seeking to lead candidacies in at least 13 states where it considers it has sufficient political strength, with San Luis Potosí as the main point of contention. The negotiation also reaches states such as Zacatecas, Quintana Roo, Querétaro, and Guerrero, anticipating a complex negotiation that will test the unity of the governing bloc ahead of the renewal of 17 governorships.

 [Milenio: PVEM plays hardball with Morena in 13 states; in SLP the toucan's rebellion prevailed](#)

Former Pemex director faces justice for domestic violence

Víctor Rodríguez Padilla, former Pemex director, was arrested this Tuesday in Mexico City by Investigative Police officers, in compliance with a court order stemming from a complaint of alleged domestic violence filed by his wife, academic María Felicia Jiménez. The former official was located in the Narvarte neighborhood and taken before the authorities, while the National Registry of Detentions confirmed his capture, though it initially did not specify the offense. The arrest comes days after the release of a video in which he allegedly physically assaults his partner, a case that generated widespread public condemnation and will now proceed through the courts.

 [El Universal: Víctor Rodríguez, former Pemex director, arrested; he was recorded beating his wife](#)

ICE operation leaves a Mexican migrant dead

A Mexican migrant identified as Lorenzo Salgado Araujo died after being shot by an agent of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) during a detention operation in Houston, Texas. According to the official account, the Mexican national refused to be arrested and allegedly attempted to ram an agent with his vehicle, who responded with a shot, arguing that he acted in self-defense. The case is already being investigated by U.S. authorities and adds to a growing list of incidents that have placed ICE's actions and the hardening of U.S. immigration policy under scrutiny.

 [Milenio: ICE agent shoots Mexican migrant, causing his death during a detention operation](#)

Opinion express

- **The murder of Roxana, between sadism and collusion — Héctor de Mauleón**
Héctor de Mauleón addresses the murder of Veracruz journalist Roxana Berenice Guzmán Ramírez as a case that reveals the operation of organized crime with possible networks of institutional protection. The columnist describes the involvement of members of Grupo Sombra in the kidnapping and murder of the journalist, and notes that the gravity of the case lies not only in the violence inflicted on the victim, but in the alleged complicity of authorities tasked with providing security. In the author's view, the crime exposes the fragility of the State in the face of criminal groups that have managed to infiltrate local structures.

 [El Universal: The murder of Roxana, between sadism and collusion](#)

- **We need to talk about Salinas Pliego — Viri Ríos**
Viri Ríos argues that Morena's greatest error is not confronting Ricardo Salinas Pliego, but turning him into a political protagonist. The author warns that, despite his financial and legal problems, the businessman has found in the conflict with the government a platform to build a cultural, anti-establishment movement, with the capacity to influence beyond a candidacy of his own. Her thesis is that every response from Morena strengthens his narrative and amplifies his reach, when the most effective strategy would be to let his litigation and business difficulties reduce his political weight on their own.

 [El País: We need to talk about Salinas Pliego](#)

- **Rocha Moya: what comes next — Raymundo Riva Palacio**
Raymundo Riva Palacio analyzes the political consequences of the case of Sinaloa governor on leave Rubén Rocha Moya and the tensions generated by the Mexican government's stance on the accusations against him. The columnist argues that the decision not to hand him over to the United States would have generated discontent within the cabinet itself and suggests that the conflict could have repercussions on the bilateral relationship, including the USMCA commercial scenario. For Riva Palacio, the case is only beginning and could open a new phase of political pressure on figures linked to the ruling party.

 [El Financiero: Rocha Moya: what comes next](#)

- **USMCA: perception and prospects — Gerardo Esquivel**
Gerardo Esquivel argues that the U.S. stance of not yet extending the USMCA does not imply the end of the treaty, but rather a negotiating starting position, though he acknowledges that the uncertainty harms medium- and long-term projects. The columnist argues that the integration of regional value chains is so powerful that not even Trump is willing to disrupt it, which is why tariffs have largely respected products traded under the agreement, with the exception of steel and aluminum. He highlights that positive perception in the United States rose 24 points since 2017 — from 54% to 78% — and that only 8% of Americans believe their country should leave the agreement. His conclusion: it is highly unlikely the USMCA will not continue, unless Washington decides to go against the majority opinion of its population.

 [El País: USMCA: perception and prospects](#)

Agenda in brief

Economy Secretary Marcelo Ebrard will travel to Washington on July 8 to prepare for the new round of talks with U.S. authorities, to be held on July 20. Mexico will seek to advance the definition of the trade agreement's review agenda, with emphasis on issues such as investment, the automotive industry, rules of origin, and certainty for North America's production chains.