1. (SBU) Summary. Michoacan will elect a new governor, 40 state legislators, and 113 mayors on November 13, in what will be the final vote in Mexico's 2011 election cycle. The campaign season, which does not officially kick off until August 31, is already polarized due to the insecurity that plagues Michoacan and because President Felipe Calderon's sister, Luisa Maria "Cocoa" Calderon, is running as the National Action Party (PAN) candidate. The race will be contested by three political parties that enjoy almost equal strength in the state-the PAN, Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), and Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), although two clear frontrunners are likely to emerge as election day approaches. This last election of 2011 will have implications for each of the three parties for the 2012
2. (C) The PRD has its roots in Michoacan. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas—the founder and symbolic leader of the PRD—served as Senator from Michoacan and Governor of the state before launching his 1988 presidential campaign in Michoacan. The PRD has governed Michoacan since 2002, and it is one of only four states (Chiapas, the Federal District, Guerrero, and Michoacan) that the party still controls (excluding those governed by PAN-PRD alliance candidates).

Julio Cesar Godoy Toscano, was kicked out of the Chamber of Deputies and stripped of his legislative immunity in December 2010 for his alleged ties to then-La Familia Michoacana organized crime kingpin "La Tuta."

3. (C) The PRD, Worker's Party (PT), and Convergencia alliance candidate—former Senator Silvano Aureoles Conejo—is viewed as a strong candidate. The 46-year old from Caracuaro, Michoacan was selected as the PRD candidate on June 30 following a vote of 300,000 party activists. He has a bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering and a master's in regional rural development. Aureoles served as the vice-coordinator of the PRD bloc in the Senate (2006-2011), Federal Deputy (2000-2003), Secretary of Agricultural Development for Michoacan under Governor Lazaro Cardenas Batel, and mayor of Zitacuaro, Michoacan.

[Note: In May 2009, the GOM launched an ambitious anti-corruption effort in Michoacan, "the Michoacanazo," that included the arrest of 35 mayors and senior state officials accused of protecting La Familia Michoacana. As of April 2011, all 35 individuals had been...]

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The PRI Marches Triumphanty Toward Michoacan:

4. (C) Following its landslide victory in the July 3 gubernatorial elections in Mexico State, Nayarit, and Coahuila (Ref A), the PRI is extremely confident heading into election season in Michoacan. The PRI’s gubernatorial candidate, Fausto Vallejo Figueroa, the 62-year old Morelia native has a bachelor’s degree in law from a Michoacan university and a doctorate in political science from Sorbonne University in Paris. He has served as mayor of Morelia three times (1994-1995, 2002-2004, and 2007-2011), was personal secretary to former Governor Genovevo Figueroa (1990-1992), and served as a local deputy. PRI President Humberto Moreira publicly says that Vallejo is leading his PAN and PRD rivals by at least 12 percentage points. The contact, however, says that while Vallejo is extremely popular, the PRI party machinery in Michoacan is not as strong as that of the PRD.

Could "Cocoa" Calderon Win Michoacan for the PAN?

5. (C) President Felipe Calderon’s older sister, Luisa Maria "Cocoa" Calderon was selected as the PAN gubernatorial candidate on July 31 after winning 60 percent of the votes in a party primary. The 54-year old was raised in Morelia, and has a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a master’s degree in anthropology and inter-cultural relations. She served as a Michoacan state legislator (1983-1986), a federal deputy (1988-1991), senator (2000-2006), and Secretary of Elections for the Michoacan state PAN (2007-2010). The New Alliance Party (PANAL)—which backed the PRI in Mexico State, Coahuila, and Nayarit—surprisingly agreed to forge an alliance with the PAN in Michoacan, which says will make it a very competitive race.
While Coca is a stronghold of both La Familia Michoacana and its spinoff The Templar Knights. Parametria Director Francisco Abundis told the Los Angeles Times that his pollsters were part of a 25-member team hired by the PRD to prepare a companion survey to the one being done by Mitofsky to gauge the relative popularity of mayoral candidates. They do not think that the pollsters were specifically targeted, but admitted that there are areas of the country where it is not safe to conduct polls.

Phone polls represent another option in insecure urban areas. While the victims may not have been targeted for their professional affiliations, admitted that the crime will impact the elections because, whether this was the criminals' intention or not, Mexico's major polling firms have decided not to conduct surveys in Michoacan. One hypothesis is that organized criminal groups kidnapped the pollsters to send a message that they are aware of the comings and goings of everyone in Michoacan and that
7. (C) In addition to the issue of physical security during the campaign season—the PRI says its candidate will use armored vehicles, and the President’s sister’s campaign certainly poses an additional security risk—Mexican media outlets and our contacts have expressed concern over the possibility of organized criminal groups influencing some of the races. Mexican daily Reforma on August 11 said that organized criminal groups in Michoacan are busy “designating” their representatives in certain municipalities. It said that in municipalities like Apatzingan, the narcos are offering to pay candidates’ campaign debts if the elected mayors agree to cede control of the offices of the treasury, public works, and municipal police.

Comment:

8. (C) This last election of 2011 will have implications for each of the three parties for the 2012 presidential election.

End comment.

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