

## **Mexico Says U.S. Abuses Its Illegals**

The Washington Post

April 09, 1996, Tuesday, Final Edition

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**Section:** A SECTION; Pg. A16

**Length:** 538 words

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**Dateline:** **MEXICO** CITY, April 8

### **Body**

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"Stop the Brutality!" screamed the front-page editorial in one of **Mexico** City's leading dailies.

In one of their most vociferous outbursts of **U.S.**-bashing in recent months, Mexicans are expressing outrage at back-to-back incidents across the border in California. In the first, sheriff's deputies beat Mexican immigrants -- and were caught on videotape. And in a second episode Saturday, seven illegal immigrants died in an automobile crash during a chase by **U.S.** Border Patrol agents.

"The violation of justice and of human rights is rooted in xenophobia and racism," the newspaper La Jornada charged in an editorial this weekend.

For many Mexicans, **U.S.**-bashing is much the same sport that **Mexico**-bashing is for presidential candidate Pat Buchanan. But in an election year when some of the Republican political rhetoric has been aimed at the **United States**' southern neighbor, Mexicans have become even more sensitive and outspoken about perceived slights from across the border.

"This aggression is a natural consequence of the direction that political opinion has taken in the **United States** against foreigners, and Mexicans in particular," charged Jose Angel Conchello, chairman of the Mexican Senate's foreign relations committee.

Nothing in recent years has stirred more bitterness on the part of Mexicans than the repeated videotape playbacks of Riverside, Calif., sheriff's deputies beating three illegal Mexican immigrants after a chase last Monday. Mexicans had much the same reaction to the film, taken from a helicopter by a television crew, as African Americans had to the tape showing Los Angeles police officers beating Rodney King in 1991.

When a pickup truck carrying 25 Mexican immigrants crashed Saturday in the same California county while trying to evade **U.S.** Border Patrol officers, killing seven and injuring 18, Mexicans became even angrier at what they claimed is a trend of increasing brutality against Mexicans in the **United States**.

The Foreign Ministry issued a statement demanding a "review of the methods and procedures for applying migration laws in the **United States**."

Ironically, **Mexico** has long been accused by human rights organizations of brutality by its own police against illegal immigrants from Central and South America who are caught trying to enter **Mexico** from the south or cross the country en route to the **United States**.

Human rights groups have documented cases of beatings, pistol whippings and other physical **abuses** by Mexican border agents and federal police against immigrants.

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Although U.S. authorities -- including White House press secretary Michael McCurry -- have denounced the beatings by the Riverside deputies, the U.S. Border Patrol has defended its agents, saying they were merely following the pickup truck carrying the illegal immigrants, not chasing them at high speed. The pickup reportedly rolled over when its driver pulled off a highway and tried to cross a gully to escape the Border Patrol agents.

Mexican authorities, always sensitive to migration issues, have been particularly critical of the United States this year for President Clinton's program to tighten security at the border to stem the flow of illegal immigrants.

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (91%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (90%); RACISM & XENOPHOBIA (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL BORDERS (89%); BORDER CONTROL (89%); HUMAN RIGHTS (89%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (89%); HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (89%); SHERIFFS (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (78%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (77%); AFRICAN AMERICANS (77%); RACE & ETHNICITY (76%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (76%); IMMIGRATION LAW (76%); TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS (75%); HEADS OF GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS (73%); US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (73%); FOREIGN POLICY (72%); INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (70%); STATE DEPARTMENTS & FOREIGN SERVICES (70%); POLITICAL CANDIDATES (68%); ASSOCIATIONS & ORGANIZATIONS (66%); FOREIGN RELATIONS (65%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (50%)

**Company:** US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (57%); US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (57%)

**Organization:** US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (57%); US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (57%); US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (57%); US CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION (57%)

**Industry:** TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS (75%); MOTOR VEHICLES (75%)

**Geographic:** RIVERSIDE, CA, USA (92%); MEXICO CITY, MEXICO (79%); LOS ANGELES, CA, USA (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (94%); MEXICO (98%); UNITED STATES (95%); NORTH AMERICA (93%); SOUTH AMERICA (79%)

**Load-Date:** April 9, 1996