

WORLD NEWS | Fri Aug 21, 2015 | 5:37pm EDT

Mexico president, finance minister cleared in ethics probe



Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto speaks during a news conference at the Los Pinos official residence in Mexico City, Mexico August 13, 2015. REUTERS/Henry Romero

TRENDING STORIES

- 1 North Korea stages large-scale artillery drill as U.S. submarine docks in South
- 2 Entire U.S. Senate to go to White House for North Korea briefing
- 3 Ready for take-off? China's answer to Boeing now just needs to sell
- 4 Not an inside job: How two analysts became SEC whistleblowers
- 5 Trump's push to fund wall may be delayed as government shutdown looms

By **Alexandra Alper** | MEXICO CITY

A Mexican government auditor on Friday exonerated President Enrique Peña Nieto and his finance minister from any wrongdoing over purchases of homes from public contractors, but opposition lawmakers poured scorn over the bid to lay the scandal to rest.

Virgilio Andrade, head of the Public Administration Ministry, said the investigation showed that neither Peña Nieto nor Finance Minister Luis Videgaray had gained benefits or tried to influence officials responsible for awarding contracts to companies that sold homes to them and the president's wife.

Appointed by Peña Nieto to run the public administration ministry after an outcry over the homes, Andrade said investigators had questioned 111 officials involved in awarding 33 contracts to the companies linked to the homes.

In a news conference to announce the probe's findings, Andrade explained how Peña Nieto and Videgaray had not broken any laws and argued that the two politicians had not held public office at relevant moments in the chronology of the purchases.

"It was determined there is no conflict of interest," Andrade said before facing repeated questions from reporters about how his ministry had reached its conclusions.

Speaking later on Friday, Peña Nieto said the investigation showed that he, his wife and Videgaray had not broken any laws.

"Nonetheless," he said, "I'm aware and I recognize that these events created interpretations that hurt and outraged many Mexicans. To all those people, I offer a sincere apology."

Videgaray bought his home in October 2012 when he was head of the transition team formed after Peña Nieto won the July 2012 presidential election, and had been expected to hold a top cabinet post once they took office that December.

Also, by the time first lady Angelica Rivera agreed to buy her multi-million dollar house in January 2012, Peña Nieto was the clear favorite to win the presidency.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-corruption-idUSKCN0QQ1T620150821>

PICTURES



Mexico president, finance minister cleared in ethics probe

The controversy erupted last November when it emerged Rivera was acquiring her home from a company that was part of a Chinese-led consortium to build a \$3.75 billion rail link.

The company was headed by contractor Juan Armando Hinojosa, and the government canceled the rail contract just before a major media investigation on the home purchase was published.

Andrade's arguments were in line with the position taken by the Mexican presidency, whose chief spokesman in January said there would be no mea culpa over the purchases.

"It was a pantomime, and we all expected this result," said Fernando Belaunzaran, a leftist opposition congressman. "The investigation itself was a conflict of interest."

Ricardo Anaya, head of the opposition center-right National Action Party (PAN), dismissed the investigation as a "joke."

ALSO IN WORLD NEWS

North Korea stages large-scale artillery drill as U.S. submarine docks in South

Hollande urges French to reject Le Pen in presidential run-off vote

Andrade told reporters Rivera had returned the house to Hinojosa's company and rejected the idea the entrepreneur's ties with Peña Nieto posed any moral dilemma.

"Conflict of interest does not materialize with friendship," he said, adding that the investigation had followed both the letter and "the spirit" of the law.

The housing revelations were deeply embarrassing to Peña Nieto because the lucrative rail contract was canceled just as he was about to set off to China for a

state visit.

It subsequently emerged that Videgaray had purchased a home from Hinojosa and that Peña Nieto enjoyed rent-free use of another Hinojosa property during the 2012 election campaign.

Further media investigations showed Peña Nieto had bought a property a decade ago from a different company that subsequently went on to acquire substantial government business.

(Additional reporting by Dave Graham, Joanna Zuckerman Bernstein, Michael O'Boyle, Christine Murray; editing by Paul Simao and Alan Crosby)

Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles](#)

NEXT IN WORLD NEWS

Iraqi forces using siege and stealth to evict Islamic State from Mosul



MOSUL, Iraq, Iraqi forces are using siege and stealth tactics to drive Islamic State militants out of Mosul's Old City, an Iraqi general said, as his forces sought to minimize casualties among hundreds of thousands of people trapped in the cramped, historic neighborhood.

MORE FROM REUTERS

SPONSORED CONTENT

SPONSORED TOPICS

TRENDING STORIES

- 1 North Korea stages large-scale artillery drill as U.S. submarine docks in South
- 2 Entire U.S. Senate to go to White House for North Korea briefing
- 3 Ready for take-off? China's answer to Boeing now just needs to sell
- 4 Not an inside job: How two analysts became SEC whistleblowers
- 5 Trump's push to fund wall may be delayed as government shutdown looms

Mexico president, finance minister cleared in ethics probe

- sending weapons to Taliban
- Top U.S. general says 'not refuting' reports Russia supplying Taliban
- Britain's Labour to guarantee EU citizens rights if wins election
- Elton John recovering from 'potentially deadly' bacterial infection
- Continental AG steps up investments in electric car drives

FROM AROUND THE WEB

Promoted by Revcontent

Follow Reuters:

Subscribe: [Feeds](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Podcasts](#) | [Apps](#)

[Reuters News Agency](#) | [Brand Attribution Guidelines](#) | [Careers](#)

Reuters is the news and media division of [Thomson Reuters](#). Thomson Reuters is the world's largest international multimedia news agency, providing investing news, world news, business news, technology news, headline news, small business news, news alerts, personal finance, stock market, and mutual funds information available on Reuters.com, video, mobile, and interactive television platforms. Learn more about Thomson Reuters products:

EIKON Information, analytics and exclusive news on financial markets - delivered in an intuitive desktop and mobile interface	ELEKTRON Everything you need to empower your workflow and enhance your enterprise data management	WORLD-CHECK Screen for heightened risk individual and entities globally to help uncover hidden risks in business relationships and human networks	WESTLAW Build the strongest argument relying on authoritative content, attorney-editor expertise, and industry defining technology	ONESOURCE The most comprehensive solution to manage all your complex and ever-expanding tax and compliance needs	CHECKPOINT The industry leader for online information for tax, accounting and finance professionals
---	---	---	--	--	---

All quotes delayed a minimum of 15 minutes. [See here for a complete list](#) of exchanges and delays.

[© 2017 Reuters. All Rights Reserved.](#) | [Site Feedback](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Advertising Guidelines](#) | [Cookies](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)