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In Brief

News

Guatemalans vote peacefully after violent campaign

Sun News Services

110 words

10 September 2007

Vancouver Sun

Final

A8

English

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GUATEMALA CITY

GUATEMALA CITY -- Voting in Guatemala's presidential, legislative and municipal elections concluded Sunday evening without any reports of significant incidents. "I am very happy with the whole process," said Wolfgang Kreissl-Doerfler, who headed a European Union electoral monitoring mission. There were no reports of significant incidents during the voting, in contrast with the violent electoral campaign in which 50 candidates, campaigners and relatives were killed. Voter intention polls ahead of the voting indicated the presidential election would go to a November run-off between social democrat Alvaro Colom and conservative retired general Otto Perez Molina.

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Businessman, ex-general face Guatemala vote runoff

BUR

550 words

10 September 2007

18:55

Agence France Presse

English

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GUATEMALA CITY, Sept 10, 2007 (AFP) -

A businessman who vows to tackle poverty and an ex-general who wants to get tough on thugs are set for a runoff in Guatemala's presidential election, official returns showed Monday.

With 95 percent of the votes counted, Alvaro Colom led the pack of candidates with 28 percent, followed by retired general Otto Perez Molina with 24 percent.

Since neither obtained more than 50 percent, they go to a runoff vote, scheduled for November 4.

The results showed a crushing defeat for Rigoberta Menchu, who won the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize for her indigenous rights activism and who trailed far behind with just three percent of the vote. Like the majority of Guatemala's 13 million population, Menchu is a Mayan Indian.

Rightwing ruling party candidate Alejandro Giammattei came away with 17 percent of the vote.

In contrast with the political violence that left about 50 dead in the run-up to the vote, electoral observers hailed what they said was generally calm balloting and authorities said there were some isolated problems.

Officials reported one incident in eastern Guatemala, where security forces fired tear gas at protesters who burned ballots to protest what they claimed was electoral fraud.

The head of the EU observers' mission, Wolfgang Kreissl-Dorfler, said he was "pleasantly surprised" by the way the vote unfolded, while secretary general of the Organization of American States Jose Insulza

applauded the "peaceful and tolerant atmosphere" that prevailed.

Still, violence was a key issue in the election in this Central American country where 6,000 murders were reported last year.

Perez Molina pledged to take a tough line against street gangs, drug dealers and other common criminals. The retired general wants to deploy the army, double the size of the police force and bring back the death penalty to combat street violence.

Colom has said he would clean up the notoriously corrupt police force and the justice system, which many consider slow and ineffective.

But critics claim the uncharismatic Colom lacks the strong hand needed to battle the ills that plague Guatemala, including poverty which he has vowed to tackle head on.

Official figures say 50 percent of population lives in poverty, but aid groups believe the figure is closer to 80 percent. Poverty mainly affects Guatemala's indigenous majority.

The 1960-1996 civil war, which claimed as many as 200,000 lives, was also on the minds of many Guatemalans.

"Let us not return to an era of blood and terror," Colom said in his final campaign rally, in a jab at his rival, whose credentials include stints in the 1990s at the head of military intelligence and a now-disbanded elite army corps blamed for executions of political opponents.

Perez Molina, 56, who signed the 1996 peace accords, retired from the army in 2000 and later won a congressional seat.

Colom, also 56, is an industrial engineer and businessman-turned-politician, who made two previous bids for the presidency.

Almost six million people were eligible to participate in Sunday's elections.

Among the candidates for the 158-seat unicameral congress was former dictator and Efraim Rios Montt, who has been accused of human rights violations during his 1992-1983 rule. /bur/ksh/mac

Document AFPR000020070910e39a003vr



Voting concludes in Guatemala

BUT

147 words

10 September 2007

03:51

Agence France Presse

English

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GUATEMALA CITY, Sept 9, 2006 (AFP) -

Voting in Guatemala's presidential, legislative and municipal elections concluded Sunday evening without any of the bloodshed that marked the electoral campaign.

Authorities did say there were some isolated incidents, including in a community in eastern Guatemala, where security forces fired tear gas at protesters who burned ballots, alleging electoral fraud.

But on the whole, observers said the election appeared to have gone smoothly.

"I am very happy with the whole process," said Wolfgang Kreissl-Doerfler, who headed a European Union electoral monitoring mission.

The run-up to the election was marked by violence that left about 50 candidates, campaigners and relatives dead.

Voter intention polls ahead of the voting indicated the presidential election would go to a November run-off between social-democrat Alvaro Colom and conservative retired general Otto Perez Molina.

but-pfm/kd

Document AFPR000020070910e39a0012x



Guatemalans vote in violence-free elections

BUR

562 words

10 September 2007

02:52

Agence France Presse

English

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GUATEMALA CITY, Sept 9, 2007 (AFP) -

Guatemala voted on Sunday without any of the bloodshed that marked the run-up to the elections, in which a former general who wants to deploy the army against criminals and a social-democrat pledging to battle poverty vied for the presidency.

About 50 candidates, campaigners and relatives were killed during the run-up to the presidential, legislative and municipal elections. The deaths have been partly blamed on criminal gangs seeking to gain political influence.

But earlier fears of renewed violence on election day itself appeared unfounded, with no significant incidents reported as the polls closed on Sunday evening.

"I am very happy with the whole process," said Wolfgang Kreissl-Doerfler, who headed a European Union electoral monitoring mission.

The presidential election was seen as a race between retired general Otto Perez Molina and social-democrat Alvaro Colom, but neither was expected to get the 50 percent needed to win outright on Sunday and avert going to a November 4 second round of voting.

Also among the 14 hopefuls, but trailing far behind with single-digit support, was Rigoberta Menchu, whose activism for indigenous people won her the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize. Most of Guatemala's population is ethnic indigenous Maya.

Casting his ballot, Perez Molina, called for a clean campaign for the second round. "We want it to be a quality campaign between the two candidates so Guatemalans can chose the best," he said.

The last voter intention poll ahead of the voting gave Colom 34 percent and an eight-point lead over his right-wing rival, but just days earlier the two were seen to be running neck-and-neck.

Perez Molina's pledge to take a tough line against street gangs, drug dealers and other common criminals has struck a deep chord in a country where 6,000 murders were reported last year.

The retired general wants to deply the army, double the size of the police force and bring back the death penalty to combat street violence.

The 1960-1996 civil war, which claimed as many as 200,000 lives, was also on the minds of many in this Central American country,

"Let us not return to an era of blood and terror," Colom said in his final campaign rally, in a jab at his rival, whose credentials include stints in the 1990s at the head of military intelligence and a now-disbanded elite army corps blamed for executions of political opponents.

Perez Molina, 56, who signed the 1996 peace accords, retired from the army in 2000 and later won a congressional seat.

Colom, also 56, is an industrial engineer and businessman-turned-politician, who made two previous bids for the presidency.

His critics claim the uncharismatic Colom lacks the strong hand needed to battle the ills that plague Guatemala, including poverty which he has vowed to tackle head on. Official figures say 50 percent of the 13 million population live in poverty, but aid groups believe the figure is closer to 80 percent. Poverty mainly affects Guatemala's indigenous majority.

Almost six million people were eligible to participate in Sunday's elections.

Among the candidates for the 158-seat unicameral congress was former dictator and Efraim Rios Montt, who has been accused of human rights violations during his 1992-1983 rule. bur-pfm/mdl

Document AFPR000020070910e39a000gq



Closing concludes in Guatemala

AF

108 words

10 September 2007

02:31

Agence France Presse

English

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GUATEMALA CITY, Sept 9, 2006 (AFP) -

Voting in Guatemala's presidential, legislative and municipal elections concluded Sunday evening without any reports of significant incidents.

"I am very happy with the whole process," said Wolfgang Kreissl-Doerfler, who headed a European Union electoral monitoring mission.

There were no reports of significant incidents during the voting, in contrast with the violent electoral campaign in which 50 candidates, campaigners and relatives were killed.

Voter intention polls ahead of the voting indicated the presidential election would go to a November runoff between social-democrat Alvaro Colom and conservative retired general Otto Perez Molina.

af/pfm/mdl

Document AFPR000020070910e39a0005o

EU beats funding record in Guatemala elections.

199 words

5 September 2007

Latinnews Daily

English

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Development: The head of the European Union's monitoring team, Wolfgang Kreissl-Dorfler, announced on 4 September that the EU had spent around US\$4m on the Guatemalan election, the most that the bloc has ever spent on a mission of this kind.

Significance: The unprecedented scale of the EU's monitoring mission (it also possesses the largest-ever staff) underscores the international community's desire to ensure the elections are free, fair and peaceful. However, the fact that campaigning for the 9 September presidential vote (which will almost certainly go to a second round) has been the bloodiest since the return to democracy in 1985 demonstrates the limits of this commitment.

On 3 September José Antonio de Gabriel, joint chief of the monitoring mission, lamented the level of violence and claimed that "the infiltration of drug-trafficking in the political parties is a reality". De Gabriel said that this infiltration occurred at a local rather than a national level and he warned that the parties themselves admit that they "do not control local units", to the point that they do not even know whose names appear on the list of candidates.

Document LARD000020070905e39500007

(EU) EU/GUATEMALA: EU to provide election observers in Guatemala

237 words

31 July 2007

Agence Europe

English

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Brussels, 30/07/2007 (Agence Europe) - Upon invitation from the Guatemalan government, the European Commission decided on Monday 30 July to send an election observer mission to Guatemala for the country's presidential, general and municipal elections on 9 September 2007. The mission will be headed by German MEP Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler (PES). The head of the mission and an initial group of seven experts will arrive in the country very shortly to make contact with the national electoral authorities (the 'Tribunal Supremo Electoral'), the foreign ministry and key players in the electoral process. Some 48 long-term observers will arrive shortly afterwards with the task of following the campaign and election preparations throughout the country and observing how the elections are organised and the post-electoral period.

Some 54 additional short-term observers and members of the European Parliament and diplomats from EU member states' embassies in Guatemala will also join the mission to observe the voting, counting and publication of the results. If there should be second round in the presidential election, the EU observers will remain in the company until the second round has been completed. An EU observer mission was sent to Guatemala for the November 2003 elections. The EU has earmarked EUR 3.5 million to fund the mission from the budget of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights. (hb)

Document AGEU000020070731e37v00003

EU to send observers to Guatemala elections

108 words

31 July 2007

Xinhua News Agency

English

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MEXICO CITY, July 30 (Xinhua) -- The European Union will send a mission to observe Guatemala's general elections scheduled for September 9, according to reports reaching here Monday.

The observers, to be headed by German legislator Wolfgang Kreissl-Dorfler, will arrive in Guatemala this week and stay until the end of the electoral process.

Guatemala political analysts believe a second round will be needed in the presidential elections, because leading candidates Alvaro Colom and Otto Perez Molina are not receiving the minimum 50 percent of voting intentions to win in the first round. The

second round is scheduled for November 4.

Document XNEWS00020070731e37v000dx

Midday Express of 2007-07-30

1,053 words

30 July 2007

The Commission of the European Communities - Press Releases

English

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EXME07 / 30.7

MIDDAY EXPRESS

News from the Communication Directorate General's midday briefing

Nouvelles du rendez-vous de midi de la Direction Générale Communication

30 / 07 / 07

* EU to send Election Observation Mission to Guatemala

Following invitations from the Guatemalan state and electoral authorities, the European Commission has decided to deploy a European Union Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Guatemala to observe the Presidential, Legislative and Municipal elections, scheduled to take place on 9 September 2007. The EU EOM will be led by Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler, Member of the European Parliament.

MEX/07/0730

Document EUCOM00020070730e37u00007

EU to send Election Observation Mission to Guatemala

444 words

30 July 2007

The Commission of the European Communities - Press Releases

English

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IP/07/1194

Brussels, 30 July 2007

EU to send Election Observation Mission to Guatemala

Following invitations from the Guatemalan state and electoral authorities, the European Commission has decided to deploy a European Union Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Guatemala to observe the Presidential, Legislative and Municipal elections, scheduled to take place on 9 September 2007. The EU EOM will be led by Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler, Member of the European Parliament.

Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, said: “ These elections should mark a further step towards the consolidation of democracy in Guatemala. I am convinced that with its presence through out the country, this election observation mission will play an important role in enhancing transparency and public confidence . At the same time, this initiative is a renewed sign of our commitment towards stability and development in Central America, as recently shown by the start of the negotiation process for a bi-regional Association Agreement”.

The EOM Core team will consist of the Chief Observer and seven experts who will arrive in the country at the end of July. The Chief Observer will immediately take up contact with the country’s national electoral authority (the Tribunal Supremo Electoral), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all key players in the election process. They will be joined shortly thereafter by 48 long-term observers (LTOs), who will be deployed throughout the country to follow the campaign period and pre-election preparations, as well as election day and the post-election period.

An additional 50 short-term observers (STOs), together with Members of European Parliament and diplomats from EU Member State embassies in Guatemala, will join the mission over the election day period to observe voting, counting and the tabulation of results. If a second round of the Presidential

election is required, the EU EOM will remain in country until this has been completed.

An EU EOM was also deployed to Guatemala to observe the previous general elections in November 2003.

The EU is making available €3.5 million, from the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), to meet the costs of deploying this mission.

For additional information, see also: EU Election Assistance & Observation:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/human_rights/eu_election_ass_observ/index.htm European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/index_en.htm The EU's relations with Guatemala:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/guatemala/intro/index.htm The EU's relations with Central America:

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/ca/index.htm

IP/07/1194

Document EUCOM00020070730e37u00003



EU team to observe Guatemalan polls

237 words

30 July 2007

16:39 Reuters News

English (c) 2007 Reuters Limited

BRUSSELS, July 30 (Reuters) - A team of more than 100 European Union observers will monitor Guatemala's Sept. 9 elections for a president, congress and mayors across the country, the European Commission said on Monday.

The mission will be led by Wolfgang Kreissl-Doerfler, a German Social Democrat member of the European Parliament.

The chief observer and seven experts will arrive at the end of July and be joined a short time later by 48 long-term observers who will be deployed throughout the country during the campaign period, the EU executive said in a statement.

An additional 50 short-term observers, as well as members of European Parliament and diplomats from EU member state embassies in Guatemala, will join the mission on election day, it said.

The EU mission, for which 3.5 million euros (\$4.79 million) has been allocated, will remain for a second round of the presidential election if this was required, the statement said.

EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said the elections "should mark a further step towards the consolidation of democracy in Guatemala".

Officials and analysts say drug traffickers are supporting candidates ranging from national lawmakers to first timers in politics. Some 50 people have been killed in the runup to the polls.

EUGUATEMALA/ELECTIONS|LANGEN|AFA|CSA|LBY|RWSA|RWS|REULB|GNS|G|RBN|RNA|RNP|PGE|SXNA

Document LBA0000020070730e37u00214

EU observers to monitor Guatemalan general elections

265 words

30 July 2007

Xinhua News Agency English

(c) Copyright 2007 Xinhua News Agency

BRUSSELS, July 30 (Xinhua) -- The European Union (EU) will send 106observers to Guatemala to monitor the Sept. 9 presidential and parliamentary elections, the European Commission announced Monday.

The mission will be led by European Parliament member Wolfgang Kreissl-Dorfler and will consist of an 8-member core team, 48 long-term observers and 50 short-term observers.

The core team will arrive in Guatemala at the end of this month. They will be joined shortly after by the long-term observers, who will be deployed throughout the country to follow the campaign period and pre-election preparations.

The short-term observers and European Parliament members and diplomats from EU member state embassies in Guatemala will join the mission over the election day period to observe voting, counting and the tabulation of results.

If a second round of the presidential election is required, the EU election observation body will remain in country until this has been completed, the European Commission said.

"I am convinced that with its presence throughout the country, this election observation mission will play an important role in enhancing transparency and public confidence," said EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

"At the same time, this initiative is a renewed sign of our commitment towards stability and development in Central America," she added.

The EU has allocated 3.5 million euros (some 4.76 million U.S. dollars) to cover the costs of deploying the observers.

The EU also sent observers to Guatemala for the previous general elections in November 2003.

Document XNEWS00020070730e37u005mu