

International Conference on
Police Accountability and the Quality of Oversight:
Global Trends in National Context
October 19-21, 2005, The Hague, Netherlands

APPROACHES TO THE MEXICO CITY POLICE FORCE AND ITS MAKEUP (MEXICO)

Extracts

* In Mexico City, pursuant to the Public Safety Law of the Federal District of Mexico City (*Ley de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal*) issued in 1993, the Mexico City police force is composed of the Preventive Police Force (*Policía Preventiva*) and the Complementary Police Force (*Policía Complementaria*). The Mexico City Preventive Police Force is integrated by: the sectorial police (divided into 68 territorial subdivisions); *Grupo Tigre*; the Metropolitan Police Force (comprised of the traffic patrol, the female patrol, the horseback patrol, the tourism patrol, the specialized ERUM Rescue and Emergency unit, and the grenadier unit); special forces (composed of the Special Unit, Helicopters, the Task Force and the Alfa Group); Road Safety and Internal Affairs (*Unidad Marte*). The Complementary Police Force is composed of the Auxiliary Police force and the Banking and Industrial Police Force.

According to a well-respected expert on public safety issues in Mexico, the Ministry of Public Safety of the Federal District (*Secretaría de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal*) has 81,108 personnel members (data from the first semester of 2004), which includes officers from the sectorial police forces, crowd control, roads, auxiliary and banking and industrial units, as well as administrative personnel. In addition, it legally controls at least 107,391 officers belonging to private forces. To this, the office of Attorney General of the Federal District (*Procuraduría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal*: PGJDF) should be added, comprised of 6,500 judicial police officers, experts and agents of the public prosecutor. In summary, the country's capital has 107,299 "competent officers in local matters." [Extracts from the section by Ernesto López Portillo Vargas]

* Officially, the (preventive) police force of Mexico City is divided as follows:

Sectorial Police	15,021
Crowd Control	6,473
Traffic	2,026

Auxiliary Police	29,314
Banking and Industrial Police	16,388
GRAND TOTAL	69,222

[Extract from the segment by Gabriel Regino García]

* The complaints received by the Human Rights Commission of the Federal District (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal: CDHDF*) from October, 2001 to July, 2005, totaled 25,257, from which 46.7% correspond to the office of the Attorney General of the Federal District (*Procuraduría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal: PGJDF*) and to the Ministry of Public Safety of the Federal District (*Secretaría de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal*), the government agencies that have police forces.

The complaints that were advanced by complainants were related to the improper exercise of public service, arbitrary arrests, injuries, forceful disappearance, torture and summary executions.

During the same period, the CDHDF issued 9 recommendations to the PGJDF, 7 to the Ministry of Public Safety and 4 to both agencies and, to date, these agencies have complied with said recommendations in a partial manner. [Extracts from the section by Emilio Álvarez Icaza Longoria]

* No one in the media questions whether or not the people arrested by police are responsible for the crimes they are accused of. It is not often that an assessment on behalf of journalists is made of the systematic actions of the police forces. The useful presentation of public safety issues does not abound in the content of the media that profit in exchange for social fear, thus *administering* reality. Each time that an infringement on human rights takes place, the media seconds it and legitimizes it, transferring offensive practices against citizens from the law enforcement sphere to that of the media. The multimediatization produced by globalization concentrates a growing amount of radio and television stations, printed publications, online portals and cultural industries, in the hands of a few conglomerates. The reach of the power of the media has grown in such a way that *media judgments* have a greater capacity to determine the destiny of an individual, than the decision of a judge. [Extracts from the section by Marco Lara Klahr]

Note

This document is composed of four sections, the common axis of which is the conceptual approximation to the police forces of the nations' capital, although they represent the point of view of each one of the Mexican participants to the Conference:

- * **Emilio Álvarez Icaza Longoria** (Human Rights Commission of the Federal District: *Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal: CDHDF*)
- * **Marco Lara Klahr** (journalist, *otromexico/media content*)
- * **Ernesto López Portillo Vargas** (Institute for Safety and Democracy, Civil Association: *Instituto para la Seguridad y la Democracia, AC*)
- * **Gabriel Regino García** (Ministry of Public Safety of the Federal District: *Secretaría de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal*)

The objective was not to reach a consensus, but rather to generate an account that reflects a bit of the diversity and wealth of approaches and debates, via which the complexity of law enforcement bodies of the city with the highest ratio of officers to inhabitants, may be understood. The haste with which this document was prepared (requested two weeks in advance) did not allow for the inclusion of thorough documentation.

FOUR APPROACHES

I. EMILIO ÁLVAREZ ICAZA LONGORIA

President of the Human Rights Commission of the Federal District (Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal)

Public Safety Issues and the Police in Mexico City

The bodies in charge of public safety in Mexico do not fully guarantee the individual and legal safety of citizens, nor a harmonious coexistence among the members of society.

Unfortunately, there is a collective feeling of lack of safety and impunity in the country. The increase in organized crime and drug trafficking, as well as the lack of coordination between the higher ranks of law enforcement and the bodies in charge of safety, have generated corruption and inefficiency problems which have undermined the police forces' response capacity.

Mexico City's law enforcement model has a partial view of delinquency and organized crime, given the fact that causal factors are not considered, nor are the measures needed to develop a preventive paradigm, applied.

The public safety model that operates in Mexico City is a punitive one, via which strong sanctions are applied to non-serious infringements, searches of premises are performed without the appropriate judicial warrant, aleatory arrests are made on the streets, and sanctions that deprive people of their freedom are imposed in place of alternative penal sanctions. In many cases, these measures promote an application of the law out outside of the area of competence of the law itself.

Other problems inherent to the police forces are related to the poor training and precarious economic conditions of officers, as well as to the extortion suffered by officers at the hands of their superiors, deficient equipment and the negative image of officers held by the general public.

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The complaints that were advanced by complainants were related to the improper exercise of public service, arbitrary arrests, injuries, forceful disappearance, torture and summary executions.

During the same period, the CDHDF issued 9 recommendations to the PGJDF, 7 to the Ministry of Public Safety and 4 to both agencies and, to date, these agencies have complied with said recommendations in a partial manner.

Challenges

* Given the fact that public safety and human rights are complementary and interdependent issues, there is a crucial need to progress toward a democratic law

enforcement model that would allow for public safety policies to be designed with broad citizen participation and respect for the human rights of all people.

- * The development of a preventive and specialized law enforcement model that views delinquency as a social category with a multifactor etiology.

- * The improvement of police force professionalizing processes, so as to perfect and grant transparency to selection, admission, promotion and training procedures.

- * The improvement of police force labor conditions, beginning with fair remuneration, a greater amount of job benefits, adequate equipment, and respect for the human rights of the officers themselves.

- * The creation of a database containing detailed information on each member of bodies in charge of public safety, so as to benefit from better control and evaluation mechanisms.

- * The CDHDF believes that it is fair to recognize the good members of the police forces.

II. MARCO LARA KLAHR

Journalist, "otromexico"/media content

Historically, the social communication policy strategies of public safety bodies throughout the country and, in particular, those of Mexico City, have given priority to transferring that which they consider to be their institutional efficiency, to the media, administering said information via *press releases*.

These dispatches take place throughout the workday; they deal succinctly with cases of police intervention that different internal offices consider worthy of being communicated; at times, they are disclosed during press conferences that aim to further highlight each case, and are happily picked up by journalists who, in turn, make a selection of the "most important" details, seasoning them with their own set of prejudices, to then shape the hurried and superficial content via which they allegedly inform the public.

This cycle is determined by the discretion of at least one high-level public official and a social communicator, as well as that of an editor and the specific editorial routines of each mass communications medium. Rhetorically, both parts believe themselves to be

the depositaries of public interests; grabbing hold of information bequeathed via oral transmission, they propose to know the interests and concerns of society at large.

It is possible to identify traits of authoritarianism and verticality in the exercise of power that has characterized Mexican history, in this pernicious *law enforcement agency-media industry* chain. During Mexico's three colonial centuries, one of the predominant punitive models was inquisitorial. Throughout the country's history as an independent nation, since 1821, policies on crime have not achieved a detachment from those dark habits whereupon the functions of the police/prosecutor/defense counsel/judge/*executioner*, intertwine.

Specifically, given the fact that The Voice of the institutional powers is considered The Truth, the media submissively accept the information offered and reproduce it in a literal fashion, also due to the fact that, since the inception of the industry and throughout the XIX century, to date, the media have had a role as instrument of the powers that be (whereupon editorial policies are subject to interest groups that compete for political and financial power) and editorial decision-making in terms of content is likewise vertical.

In this tenor, these *press releases* would equal to that which, in criminalistics, is termed *important sensitive material*; they are physical and crude evidence of the way in which information is decanted from the infallible institutional Truth to the unquestionable media Truth.

In a parallel fashion, there are informal arrangements where discretionality is once again a determining factor. One example are the so-called *Onces* ("Elevens"): a small army of reporters that, dating back to at least three decades, are assigned by the media to perform night duty in order to wait for incidents related to public safety or civil prevention.

As a group or on their own; aboard an ambulance or aboard corporate or private vehicles, reporters, photographers and camera people, engaged in a hawk-type mission, run around the city in search of an accident or homicide; from a collision to a fight; from an explosion to a marital quarrel. And the main weapon used to arrive to the scene at the same time as the police officers, the paramedics or the firefighters, are the police scanners which they *purchase* from officers with money from the corporations that employ them. This mechanism promoted by the media itself reinforces institutional

communication policies, but it then leaves these policies up to the discretionality of street police officers of diverse ranks.

Focusing this perspective on the Ministry of Public Safety (*Secretaría de Seguridad Pública*) and on the Attorney General of the Federal District (*Procuraduría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal*), if the *system* itself depends on discretionary factors due to the fact that there are no protocols, procedure manuals or deontological instruments, nor external or internal bodies (in line with the notion of accountability) that guarantee transparency and the citizen's right to information, then, police efficiency is measured, from the point of view of institutions and the media (not necessarily from that of the public at large) according to the quantity and *relevance* of the cases that police officers respond to, and according to their impact on news content.

This leads to another informal arrangement: *leaks*. Among the pool of reporters assigned to a police source, a few of these –TV reporters, some radio reporters and those from a handful of newspapers—have direct access to the middle and high ranks, and to *exclusive* or anticipated information (including interviews with the actors involved in each case). These reporters must correspond accordingly to this advantage –an advantage, once again, which results from discretionality—with content that accommodates the expectations of their sources.

The watchdog role

Among the postulates of civic journalism, is the oversight of public service. This approach involves the notion that journalism and its informative means assume a role as depositaries of the citizens' attribute to access all types of information regarding the actions of those who govern. Honoring this social mandate turns journalism into a determinant power in terms of the right to information.

In order to achieve this, the role of the watchdog has been defined as the system of the journalist and his or her communication medium meant to keep an eye on the exercise of government. The issue lies in how to carry out this *oversight* on behalf of society, when the communication policies of institutions –which are oftentimes *de facto*—are delegitimized as a result of their being opaque and discretionary, in addition to the fact that they distort reality for one fundamental reason: if institutional efficacy is measured by media impact, the *press releases* can magnify the cases and depict the accused in the worst light possible, so as to attract the attention of reporters and editors.

Human rights, the media and the police

Since the mid nineteenth century, the Mexican media have been an instrument of the powers that be and, specifically, of the mechanisms designed to procure and administrate justice, for the purpose of what was termed, in the inquisitorial model, *vindicta pública* (the constructive purpose of the punishment), thus relegating issues regarding the reliability of information and institutional efficacy.

Such is one of the ways in which the media have remained linked to political power (or because they are subjugated to it, or because they identify with it). No one in the media questions whether or not the people arrested by police are responsible for the crimes they are accused of. It is not often that an assessment on behalf of journalists is made of the systematic actions of the police forces. The useful presentation of public safety issues does not abound in the content of the media that profit in exchange for social fear, thus *administering* reality. Each time that an infringement on human rights takes place, the media seconds it and legitimizes it, transferring offensive practices against citizens from the law enforcement sphere to that of the media.

The multimediatization produced by globalization concentrates a growing amount of radio and television stations, printed publications, online portals and cultural industries, in the hands of a few conglomerates. The reach of the power of the media has grown in such a way that *media judgments* have a greater capacity to determine the destiny of an individual, than the decision of a judge.

Challenges

1. One of the most important areas of confluence among legitimate social interests, institutions and the media, would have to be built via accountability, for at least three reasons: a) the media can become a part of external and citizen oversight instruments of police forces; b) the quality of the information produced by this system, as well as a thinking of transparency, would favor the role of the watchdog.
2. Federal and local legislation regarding access to public information –which doesn't have a history of more than five years in Mexico—must also be reflected in social communication policies that grant transparency to the exercise of public service, rather than functioning as a means of personal political advancement.
3. Non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and citizen bodies must support and generate the deontological means to professionalize the production of media content in the chain that moves through the institutions to the media.

4. Via an *ad hoc* legal framework in the sphere of the right to information, the citizenry must assume an activist role in order to procure better laws so as to create a media environment that may serve as the basis for a democratic system.

5. The respect for human rights must be a referent that steers social communication policies as well as the media content consumed by the public at large.

III. ERNESTO LÓPEZ PORTILLO VARGAS

President of the Institute for Safety and Democracy, Civil Association (Instituto para la Seguridad y la Democracia, AC)s

Statement of the problem

Mexican law enforcement agencies were originally designed as instruments of political control, authorized to make use of force outside of formal controls. In exchange for carrying out this task of control, police forces were granted a broad margin of impunity that allowed for the consolidation of informal systems of relative self-government within the forces. Political manipulation and impunity situated law enforcement bodies at the margin of the modernization of the State when said State was conformed as a hegemonic party system, while Mexico's arrival on the democratic scene evidenced the caducity and extreme vulnerability of that institution. In the case of Mexico, democratic reform intended to regularize professional police performance subject to internal and external democratic controls, is yet to be built. Given the inexistence of documented cases to the contrary, this hypothesis applies in general terms to the approximate amount of two thousand Mexican police forces that, in total, include between 350,000 and 400,000 police officers, a quarter of whom work in Mexico City.

The Organization of Police Forces

In Mexico, law enforcement agencies are divided into three jurisdictions and two areas of responsibility. The jurisdictions are federal, state and municipal, while the generic areas of responsibility are crime prevention (preventive police forces), carried out in all three jurisdictions, and direct investigative assistance to the public prosecutor (judicial or ministerial police forces), carried out only in federal and state jurisdictions. There is one investigating officer for every 11 uniformed police officers. In general terms, state preventive police forces are governed by general statutes included in the public safety laws of the states and their corresponding regulations, while municipal police forces are governed by local administrative statutes. Judicial

police forces are governed by the organic laws of the state offices of the Attorney General and their statutes, as well as by procedural penal legislation.

In Mexico City, pursuant to the Law on Public Safety of the Federal District of Mexico City (*Ley de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal*) issued in 1993, the Mexico City police force is composed of the Preventive Police Force (*Policía Preventiva*) and the Complementary Police Force (*Policía Complementaria*). The Mexico City Preventive Police Force is integrated by: the sectorial police (divided into 68 territorial subdivisions); *Grupo Tigre*; the Metropolitan Police Force (comprised of the traffic patrol, the female patrol, the horseback patrol, the tourism patrol, the specialized ERUM Rescue and Emergency unit, and the grenadier unit); special forces (composed of the Special Unit, Helicopters, the Task Force and the Alfa Group); Road Safety and Internal Affairs (*Unidad Marte*). The Complementary Police Force is composed of the Auxiliary Police force and the Banking and Industrial Police Force.

Its mission is to maintain public order; protect the physical integrity of people and their property; prevent crime and infringements to the government and police regulations; and assist the population in the case of catastrophes or disasters.

According to a well-respected expert on public safety issues in Mexico¹, the Ministry of Public Safety of Mexico City Según (*Secretaría de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal*) has 81,108 personnel members (data from the first semester of 2004), which includes officers from the sectorial police forces, crowd control, roads, auxiliary and baking and industrial units, as well as administrative personnel. In addition, it legally controls at least 107,391 officers belonging to private forces. To this, the office of Attorney General of the Federal District (*Procuraduría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal*: PGJDF) should be added, comprised of 6,500 judicial police officers, experts and agents of the public prosecutor. In summary, the country's capital has 107,299 "competent officers in local matters."

According to said specialist, it is perhaps "considered that 107,000 police officers for a city of 8.6 million inhabitants and 163,634 reported crimes, as was the case of Mexico City last year, is not excessive. After all, there was one police officer for every 80 inhabitants and 656 police officers for every thousand crimes." However, the "ratio... is disproportionate", given the fact that "in the national context, it is surprising that Mexico

¹ Rafael Ruiz Harrell, in his column *La Ciudad y el Crimen (Crime and the City)*, titled "Elefantiasis policial" (*Police Elephantiasis*), *Reforma* newspaper, Mexico City, January 31st, 2005.

City, housing only 8.1 percent of the country's population, has 22 percent of the country's police officers."

This immediately suggests another reading of the issue: "Subtracting those of Mexico City, in the rest of the country, there were 378,397 police officers in June, 2004. That year, 1,275,043 crimes were reported and the average annual population reached 97,589,000 inhabitants. Which is to say: there was one police officer for every 258 inhabitants and 297 police officers for every thousand reported crimes.

"From this, surfaces a fact that is as absurd as it is unforgivable. In 2004, Mexico City had 1,901 crimes for every 100,000 inhabitants. In the rest of the country, the ratio was that of 1,307. Now then: if we have 2.2 more police officers per inhabitant and 3.2 more police officers per crime, why do we have 45.5 percent more crimes than the rest of the country?"

And he goes on to situate this within a global dimension, starting with New York, the city "closest to ours in terms of its population: 8.1 million in 2004. That year, 139,610 serious crimes were made known to New York authorities. The number of police officers in the forces, including operative and administrative personnel, was that of 39,110. The Big Apple had, as a result, 208 inhabitants for each police officer and 280 officers for every thousand crimes. With regard to inhabitants, Mexico City had 2.6 more police officers. In terms of crimes, there were 2.3 more."

In addition, "if it is considered that, in any city in the world with a million inhabitants or more, the number of police officers is less than ours, not only per inhabitant, but also with regard to crimes. Here, we have, as has been mentioned, 80 inhabitants per police officer. In Paris, there are 104; in London, 164; in Chicago, 178; and in Madrid, 204. Here, we have 656 police officers for every thousand crimes: in Paris, there are 74; in London, 105; in Chicago, 68; and in Madrid, 106.

"If we look at the 20 most densely populated cities in the world that offer information on the issue, there is not a single one that comes close to the volume of police officers that we have. In order to reach an average, we would have to reduce the number of police officers from every 230, to 100" and "instead of 107,299, we should only have a total of 46,651..."

Police Accountability and the Tláhuac Case

On November 23rd, 2004, three members of the Federal Preventive Police Force (*Policía Federal Preventiva*: PFP) were lynched by the community of the San Juan Ixtayopan neighborhood, belonging to the Tláhuac political district (*delegación*) of Mexico City. Two of these police officers died on the scene and the third sustained incapacitating injuries. The incident lasted almost four hours and was televised in real time. Some days later, the Vice Minister of Public Safety of the Federal District and the Commissioner of the PFP appeared on a televised news program in order to explain the incident. A report of the facts surrounding the case was not made public on that occasion, nor on any other.

It is perhaps the most serious incident of tumultuous violence against police officers to take place in the contemporary history of the country's capital. Immediately, many voices demanded penal punishments for those responsible for the lynching and homicides, as well as for the heads of law enforcement institutions. Strong political pressure forced the removal and substitution of the Commissioner as well as of the Minister of Public Safety of the Federal District, both ordered by the president of the Union.

However, no pressure was placed on police forces to explain what the officers had done, what they didn't do, or why. The incident demonstrated that police accountability, understood to be an internal and external control system of the evaluation of results and of learning, is not among the priorities of the most relevant political actors and civil society, nor is it, of course, among that of the police forces themselves. This case evidenced the generalized confusion that leads society to deposit the correcting of wrongful behavior of police officers and of law enforcement institutions, in penal punishment –in fact, this confusion has been openly expressed in training programs by police officers who, in actual fact, cannot imagine what it even means for a technical report of an incident to be issued by the police.

The inexistence of a police report regarding the events that took place in Tláhuac, shows that critical episodes of violence involving the police, even when these are broadcast via the television stations with the highest number of viewers, do not lead to the building of common diagnostic platforms. The police closed the chapter on Tláhuac, evaluating themselves via general statements that never included any explanation whatsoever regarding the workings of control, intelligence, infiltration, risk prevention, advance alert, discipline, flow of information, communication, results evaluation, nor

internal supervisory mechanisms. Actually, society never knew what the Mexico City police had done (the same happened in the case of the PFP).

The Tláhuac case seems to evidence that, even in the face of extreme political and media pressure, the police manage to avoid not only the flow of information toward the outside, but also to block the access of external actors that would evaluate the actual quality of job performance. And given the fact that we do not have technical evaluations of job performance (validated by the police and by specialized external actors), we cannot measure the dimensions of internal problems, nor the level of conflict between the police and citizens. Ultimately, with weak and insufficient information within and outside of police forces, said information ends up being evaluated on parallel planes: the police forces view themselves in a certain light, while they are viewed in another by society at large.

Mistrust and Lack of Information

In line with the aforementioned, the information available to interpret what kind of police officers we have in Mexico City and what their relationship is with citizens, is insufficient. We have a growing collection of data, but there aren't yet consolidated tendencies in the building of information, beyond the opinion polls applied on a regular basis over the last ten years. Hence, each interpretation forces the collecting of data from a broad range of sources so as to try to provide a basis for some hypotheses. That is precisely what I will do.

According to the 2004 version of *Latinobarómetro* ("Latinobarometer"), Mexico is the country with the highest expectation among citizens of being able to corrupt the police, in all of Latin America. Sixty-five percent of those interviewed believe that they can bribe a police officer in order to avoid arrest. The statistic is in line with the polls mentioned above, applied specifically in Mexico City. To date, there is no poll that has found a majority statistic in terms of trust toward the police.

Some of the research begins to indicate that the police do not trust the inhabitants, either. Furthermore, applied anthropology in Mexico City and in other parts of the country, has discovered that our police officers live unprotected by the institutions and in social abandonment; it has also found that being a police officer is equal to a deeply frustrating experience.

Victimization polls applied this year in the country's capital and which are still in the process of being interpreted, show that the reporting of crimes to authorities is minimal in proportion to the universal total. In the words of the researcher that authored the study: "basically, no one reports anything." This is also in line with what was found in a broad range of empirical studies that were carried out over the course of a decade, according to which the greater part of inhabitants do not believe that reporting an incident is of any benefit whatsoever. I do not know of any consolidated information regarding the consequences derived from citizen-police officer contact, although the hypothesis is that said contact positively or negatively modifies perception measured in general terms.

The apparent reality is that, with the exception of exceptional circumstances related to extreme cases in which police intervention implies an evident act of protection, the citizen-police officer relationship is of mutual mistrust and, according to some of the information available, there is even fear on behalf of citizens toward police officers.

IV. GABRIEL REGINO GARCÍA

Subsecretario de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal (Vice Minister of the Ministry of Public Safety of the Federal District)

The Mexico City Police and the Accountability System

On June 1st, 2002, for the first time in the history of the capital's police force, the General Office of Internal Affairs (*Dirección General de Asuntos Internos*), that replaced the crippled General Office of Inspection (*Dirección General de Inspección*), was created. The merit was the significant progress in the fight against corruption.

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The workings of the internal affairs section is as follows: as a result of a citizen compliant or an official order, a police investigation procedure is initiated of the acts

that could be in violation of the Principles of Police Performance (*Principios de Actuación Policial*) or of those that constitute criminal acts.

Once the procedure involving reports, statements and testimonies of those involved is completed, the General Office determines whether or not the case merits being turned over to the Honor and Justice Council (*Consejo de Honor y Justicia*) so that said Council may decide what proceeds: whether the case is to be sent to the Comptroller, or whether the Public Prosecutor should be made aware of the case so that it may intervene accordingly.

The Honor and Justice Council is the largest internal law enforcement body and its resolutions can go from warnings to temporary suspension, and even to the removal of the police officer.

During 2005, the number of complaints received, compared to those received during 2004, reflected a 22% decrease, notwithstanding the fact that the telephone numbers of the control area were more greatly broadcast.

Another of the programs that have been reinforced during 2005, with the purpose of generating mechanisms that allow for police performance supervision and evaluation, is the *Policía de Barrio* (Neighborhood Police).

Through this program, citizens become familiar with the officers in charge of providing safety services in their neighborhood and they evaluate the officers' performance on a monthly basis. Said evaluations are made known to the higher ranks and they serve as a basis for personnel incentives and for promotion purposes.

However, the control of citizen contact with the police has not yet received enough attention, nor have reliable record systems aiming to procure a greater amount of resources needed for a general evaluation, been generated.

In other words: even though police officers have managed to decrease the number of complaints for abuse of authority reported over the last few years, and reports of corruption have maintained a minimum decrease, it is also true that in a non-quantifiable universe, there is still a dark side, whereupon the thousands of citizen contacts that are generated in Mexico City, are not registered. In addition, the *Policía de Barrio* program has only been applied in certain regions of the country's capital.

It is still important to note the quantifiable police performance that has taken place over the course of 2005:

* 13,396 people have been arrested for the most predominant crimes (theft, generally. Number estimated up to September 24th)

* 5,222 people have been arrested for drug possession

Qualitatively speaking, this represents an increase in police efficiency of up to 20.6%, highlighting the fact that, in car theft cases, 96% of those arrested have been subject to judicial proceedings.

During 2005, the Human Rights Commission of the Federal District (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal*) has not issued a single recommendation regarding police actions.

Now then, the proposal for the creation of authentic accountability mechanisms within law enforcement systems, lies in a combination of:

1. A transparent and de-bureaucratized internal affairs system
2. A generalized *Policía de Barrio* program
3. Permanent citizen audits

The legal reforms needed to establish these mechanisms in a definitive manner, are important, although it is more important to understand their benefits, not only in terms of what is implied for the protection of citizens, but also in terms of the capacity of these mechanisms to improve the internal control systems of the police corporations and elevate their efficiency levels without detriment to the respect for legality.