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Powell Tackles Immigration Issue

Mexico wants amnesty plan

(AP) — The chances that the U.S. Congress will overhaul immigration rules have increased with the end of the political season and the improvement of security along the U.S.-Mexican border, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday in Mexico.

But Powell cautioned that approval of the first major immigration changes in 18 years would depend on the new Congress that will take office in January.

"We don't want to overpromise," Powell told a news conference during discussions in Mexico City on a broad range of cross-border issues. Joining Powell for his 20-hour stay in Mexico were five fellow Cabinet secretaries.

Powell met with Mexican President Vicente Fox, who has made migration reform in the United States a top foreign policy priority. Fox says the millions of Mexicans who work in the United States should have legal status there so they can live without fear of arrest and deportation.

During his discussions, Powell said he reaffirmed President Bush's "plan to work with our new Con-



A sign and mangled wire fence is all that separates Arizona from Mexico near Papago Farms, Ariz. (AP photo)



Secretary of State Colin Powell

gress to develop a temporary worker program to match willing foreign workers with willing U.S. employers."

The comments suggested the Bush administration was giving priority to the provision in Bush's proposal that would give workers who still live in their home countries permission to work in the United States if they have a job offer.

A more controversial provision - which Powell did not mention - would allow undocumented aliens already in the United States to achieve legal status if they can prove they have employment. Ben-

eficiaries could to stay in the United States for three years, then be permitted to remain longer if certain conditions are met.

Many in Congress view Mexicans and others who entered the United States without official permission as lawbreakers, and are wary of doing them any favors. Mexicans constitute by far the largest illegal immigrant community, estimated to total about 10 million.

Bush and Fox agreed in 2001 to press for immigration reform, but the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks soured Congress on the idea. Since the attacks, enhanced border security has been the dominant U.S. goal in

relations with Mexico.

Powell indicated he is pleased with Mexican cooperation on that issue.

"We are coming out of the 9/11 period and doing a better job of securing our border," he said. He also suggested Congress may be freer to act next year, mindful that no member faces an election until 2006.

Fox said the time is ripe for an immigration accord. "We have done all the analysis, diagnostics and problem solving possible," Fox said in a radio interview Monday. "There's no reason to lose much time."

Mexican Artist Featured

The Pacific University Kathrin Cawein Art Gallery in Forest Grove hosts works by Jesse Vasquez in a November exhibit titled "Fragments."

Born and raised in Mexico, Vasquez moved to the U.S. in 1995 at the age of 36 with the desire to learn English and to extend his art skills.

Vasquez took courses at Portland Community College and Mt. Hood Community College, where he studied painting, ceramics and printmaking.

He paints with acrylics, oils and finger paints on plates and signs.

"My paintings mostly are fragments of my whole idea," he said.

Americas Road Considered

(AP)—The presidents of Panama and Colombia have discussed building a road linking North and South America.

Panama's Martin Torrijos and Alvaro Uribe of Colombia also addressed electricity sharing and the possible construction of a natural gas pipeline that would send gas to Panama.

Uribe said he formally asked the Panamanian government to study

the feasibility of building the road. Currently, highways span the continents from Alaska to Argentina, except for an 85-mile stretch in the jungles of the Darien Gap straddling the Colombian-Panamanian border.

Uribe said he considers this highway to be of "huge importance." While Torrijos said Panama "has taken note" of Uribe's request, he said his country is studying "better environmental alternatives."

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