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Americas: Mexico Prepares for Recount in Disputed Presidential Election

Tuesday, July 4, 2006 8:33 PM



AP Photo
Cesar Augusto Morones Servin, president of the Marketing and Opinion Institute holds up a print out of the Federal Electoral...



AP Photo
Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute, known as the IFE, is ready to begin a detailed verification of its preliminary vote count from Sunday's presidential election. Leftist candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador claims there was vote manipulation and has promised to fight "vote for vote" to prove that he won. But, conservative candidate Felipe Calderon is gaining momentum in his effort to present himself as the winner.

Cesar Augusto Morones Servin, president of the Marketing and Opinion

On Tuesday, newspaper headlines across Mexico reported the final preliminary vote count from Sunday's election that put Felipe Calderon of the ruling National Action Party more than one percent ahead of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the Party of the Democratic Revolution.

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Institute holds up a print out of the Federal Electoral Institute's website, July 4, 2006

Calderon appeared relaxed and confident as he spoke to reporters in televised interviews and discussed his plans to reach out to other parties to build a government of unity.



Felipe Calderon waves to supporters

Boosting his position further, two of the four other candidates who ran for president conceded defeat. Most important was the concession of Roberto Madrazo, candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, the party that had dominated Mexico for 71 years until the election of Vicente Fox in 2000.

He said he accepted the results from what he called a fair and transparent electoral process and stressed that his party would not haggle over the votes, but would accept the will of the Mexican people.

Madrazo finished in a distant third place according to the preliminary vote count and failed to win in any area of the country. Political analysts say this could be a fatal blow to the once almighty PRI, although the party has done well in some local elections, capturing governor's seat in a few recent state contests.

Also conceding defeat was the candidate of the New Alliance Party, Roberto Campa, who said the vote count clearly showed that Felipe Calderon had won the election.



Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador greets a supporter as he leaves his headquarters office Tuesday, July 04 2006, in Mexico City

million votes that were set aside will be examined when the IFE does its complete recount and verification, starting at eight in the morning Mexico City time Wednesday.

Officials cannot say how long this process will take, indicating it could be completed as early as Wednesday evening or continue on into the weekend. But even that will likely not be the end of the electoral dispute.

But the PRD's Lopez Obrador continues to challenge the results, citing irregularities and anomalies in the process.

He notes that the official number of voters registered and the number of voters who were recorded as voting, when compared to the total vote count, shows three million missing votes.

But IFE spokeswoman Lourdes Lopez says that is easily explained.

She says voting certificates that contained errors or were not complete or in any other way appeared questionable were set aside for closer examination. She says no votes were lost and that those close to three

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PRD leaders told reporters Tuesday they will challenge the vote count if it does not show Lopez Obrador as the winner. That could involve many weeks of legal wrangling. Adding to the anxiety felt by many Mexicans, PRD leaders say they have not ruled out massive marches and street protests to put pressure on officials.

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