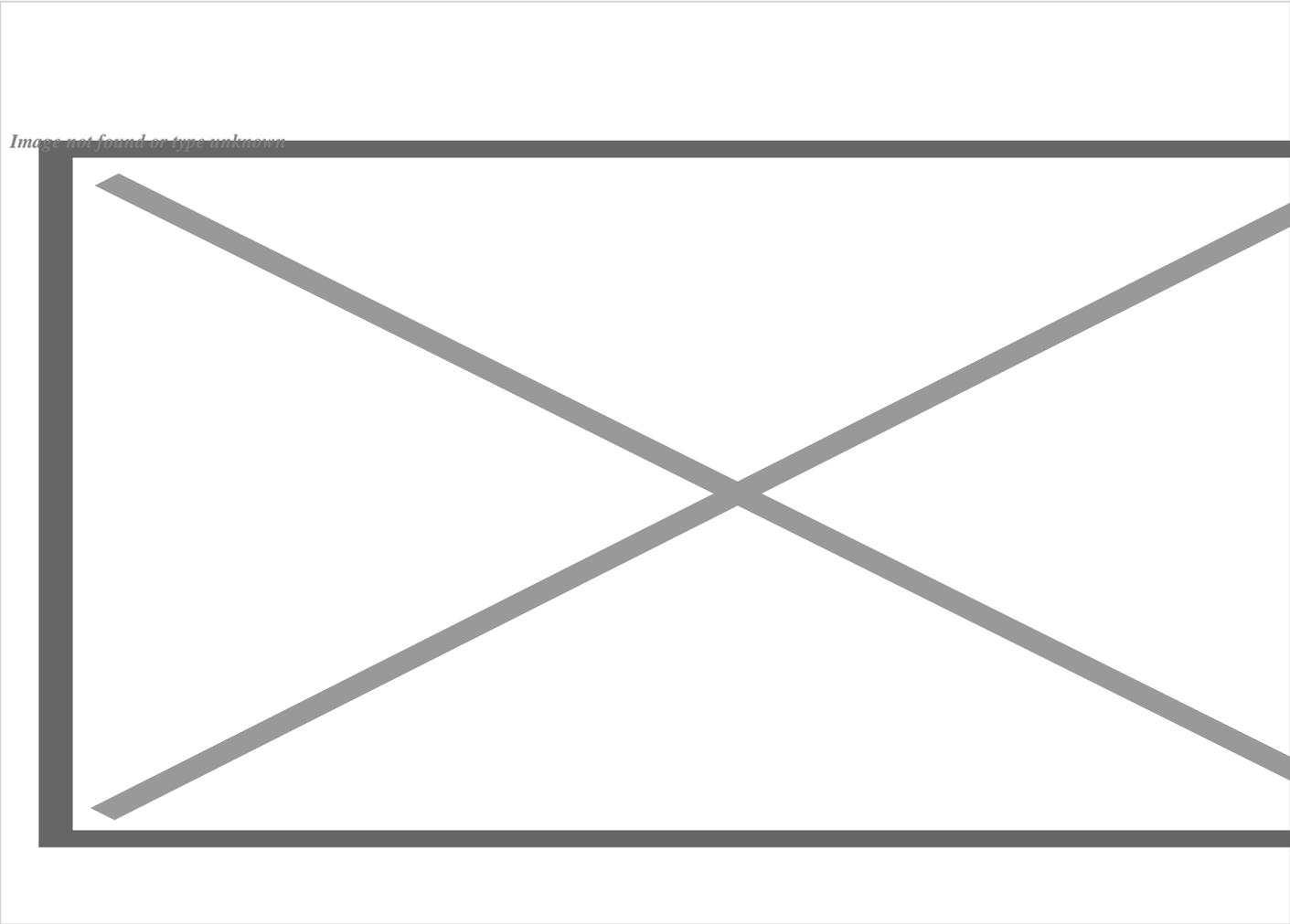


Rotten apples

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In his book "La Salida," written before winning the 2018 presidential elections in Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador describes corruption as the most serious obstacle to get that country out of the economic and social crisis it is suffering.

"Corruption is no longer a set of isolated and unconnected practices, but a systematic and systemic exercise," wrote the current leader of that nation -- and the reality unfortunately seems to agree with him.

These days, Emilio Lozoya, one of the close collaborators of former president Enrique Peña Nieto, who put him in charge of Petroleos Mexicanos corporation and whose eventual confessions make many lose sleep, is being prosecuted for participating in a bribery scheme.

However, what shakes the country's public opinion due to its serious implications is the detention of General Salvador Cienfuegos last Friday in the United States. He is the former Secretary of Defense during Peña Nieto's administration, and has been accused of having links with an organization dedicated to drug trafficking.

This is a far-reaching scandal, because if the head of national security worked for drug trafficking, in whom can we have confidence?

There are many aspects of this case to be concerned about, because he was the person in charge of coordinating actions with his counterparts all over the region, including the United States, particularly in terms of strategies to fight drug production and trafficking. In short, he had privileged access to sensitive information, which he then passed on to those who paid him.

This is a significant fact, but not the only one that shows how organized crime has penetrated the structures of the Mexican State. Let's remember that another general, Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, the director of the National Institute for the Fight against Drugs during Ernesto Zedillo's government, was captured in 1997 and condemned to 40 years in prison for collaborating with the Juarez Cartel, of the drug lord Amado Carrillo.

A more recent case was that of Genaro Luna, Secretary of National Security of former president Felipe Calderón, the one who initiated the war against drug trafficking imposed by Washington. While thousands of Mexicans died during that confrontation, Luna was receiving bribes from trafficker Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán.

As López Obrador said after learning of the arrest of Salvador Cienfuegos: "This is an unmistakable sign of the decomposition of the regime. We are cleaning up, purifying public life, but the disease was very advanced already."

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