

Mexican Finance Minister Mum on House Purchase Scandal



Mexico City, March 20 (teleSUR-RHC) Mexico's Finance Minister Luis Videgaray remained silent as a report revealed that the contractor at the center of a conflict-of-interest scandal sold him a house without making a profit.

"I have nothing to add to the comments I already gave to the newspaper before publication ... I will not make any more comments," Videgaray told reporters at Mexico's annual banking conference at Acapulco beach resort.

Videgaray has been caught up in the scandal involving a government contractor with ties to Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto. Journalists uncovered that the president and his wife purchased a luxurious house from Grupo Higa, which had been granted several multi-million contracts while Peña Nieto was governor of the state of Mexico.

It was subsequently revealed that Videgaray purchased house at an exclusive golf resort in the central state of Mexico from the same contractor. The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday that property records showed Juan Armando Hinojosa, owner of Grupo Higa, sold Videgaray the house in 2012 for the same price Hinojosa paid for it 10 months earlier.

Videgaray previously told the U.S. newspaper that the house purchase was conducted at market value "both in terms of the amount paid and the rate of interest" and added that he believed no conflict-of-interest existed.

For that to be true, the value of the house would have had to remained exactly the same throughout those 10 months. However, the Wall Street Journal stated that real estate prices in the state of Mexico rose 3.5 percent during that period.

Revelations that Videgaray, Peña Nieto and first lady Angelica Rivera all bought or used homes belonging to Grupo Higa have spurred accusations of corruption that have reverberated throughout Mexico.

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