

Oaxaca state government apologizes

The Miami Herald
Jun. 15, 2007

MEXICO CITY --

The government of the southern state of Oaxaca apologized for the first time Friday for a police raid on protesters last year that led to the country's worst political unrest in years.

Oaxaca Interior Secretary Manuel Garcia Corpus said he lamented the results of the June 14, 2006 raid aimed at clearing striking teachers from a protest camp they had set up weeks earlier in Oaxaca City's main square.

He said he was speaking on behalf of Gov. Ulises Ruiz, whose refusal to negotiate with protesters sparked a five-month takeover of the capital city by teachers and leftist activists angered by what they claimed was police brutality and corruption.

"The government of Ulises Ruiz gives the people of Oaxaca a public apology for the events that arose after the 14th (of June)," Garcia Corpus told the government news agency Notimex. Garcia Corpus' office confirmed the remarks.

What began as a nearly annual teachers' strike in May grew into a bloody conflict after strikers were injured during the raid. The teachers later drew on leftist allies, took over the city, erected barricades and chased out police.

Tourists - the city's lifeblood - were scared away and vehicles were burned by protesters demanding Ruiz's resignation.

A dozen people were killed in the conflict, mostly protesters shot by gunmen, including Bradley Roland Will, a 36-year-old journalist-activist from New York who was killed while filming a clash between demonstrators and gunmen.

Soon after Will's Oct. 27 death, then-President Vicente Fox sent federal troops to evict protesters from the city center.