

# Mexico president dismisses accusations

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MEXICO CITY --

President Felipe Calderon on Monday dismissed as "pure fiction" the allegations by a Chinese-Mexican businessman that Mexico's ruling party forced him to hide tens of millions of dollars in campaign cash at his home.

In his first public statements about the accusations by Zhenli Ye Gon, Calderon said they "are not only false, they are ridiculous."

Ye Gon claimed this month that he was threatened with death by the ruling party unless he stored at least \$150 million in his Mexico City mansion. It was the first major accusation that Calderon's administration has links to Mexico's drug underworld.

But key details in Ye Gon's version of events seem contradictory, unclear or unverifiable, and a senior U.S. anti-drug official said he knew of no evidence that the Calderon administration - which has sent troops into the streets to fight drug cartels - has any links to organized crime.

Ye Gon is charged in Mexico with drug trafficking, money laundering and weapons possession for allegedly importing 19 tons of a pseudoephedrine compound used to make methamphetamine - charges he denies. He is thought to be in the United States; Mexico considers him a fugitive.

In all, police found more than \$207 million hidden inside the mansion's walls, suitcases and closets. Calderon said the March 15 cash seizure was a blow to the "backbone of methamphetamine trafficking in our country and probably in the continent."

Calderon's administration and former campaign officials have denied any links to the seized money, and have accused him of trying to blackmail the Mexican government into dropping or reducing the charges against him.

"It's just a clumsy, foolish strategy, which will not have success but that attempts to evade Mexican police action," Calderon said at a joint news conference with visiting Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero.

Ye Gon claimed in a letter from his lawyers to the Mexican government that "a substantial part of these cash deposits" consisted of National Action Party campaign funds delivered to his home by Calderon campaign officials.

Mexican laws limited total campaign spending in last year's presidential election to \$60 million per party.

On Monday, El Universal newspaper quoted Ye Gon as saying he has been the victim of a "sinister political conspiracy."

Mexico's electoral watchdog has said it will investigate Ye Gon's allegations.