

Mexico questions USAID contributions to anti-graft group

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Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has asked for confirmation of US funding to anti-graft group ahead of meeting with US Vice President Kamala Harris [File: Henry Romero/Reuters]

Mexico City, May 8 (RHC)-- Mexico has sent a diplomatic note asking the United States to explain funding for an anti-corruption group critical of the government, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said shortly before a scheduled call with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris.

Lopez Obrador said the formal protest was sent because of funding for Mexicans Against Corruption and Impunity, a group that investigates political corruption. He said the group is seeking to undermine his government.

“It’s promoting a form of coup,” said Lopez Obrador, describing funding that includes money from the US Agency for International Development, commonly known as USAID, as an affront to Mexico’s sovereignty. “That’s why we’re asking that (the US government) clarifies this for us. A foreign government can’t provide money to political groups,” he said.

The organization has issued reports critical of some of Lopez Obrador’s major initiatives, including the cancellation of a partially built Mexico City airport and the construction of a tourist train around the Yucatan Peninsula.

In the diplomatic note shown by Lopez Obrador on Friday, Mexico said that it respects the role of civil society organisations and shares an interest in eliminating corruption, but said that people connected to the group “have been explicit in their political militancy against the government of Mexico”.

The note, dated Thursday, asked the US embassy to confirm financial support from the US Agency for International Development and if so, suspend it.

On Thursday, Mexicans Against Corruption and Impunity posted on Twitter that its work was completely legal. “We reiterate the absolute legality of our work,” it said, rejecting any suggestion of interventionism, while asking for what it said had become constant attacks from the government to stop.

Lopez Obrador’s complaint came hours before he was set to meet virtually on Friday with Harris to discuss migration and other bilateral issues.

Lopez Obrador, however, said he would not raise the issue during the meeting with Harris, who has been the Biden administration’s point person in responding to a surge of undocumented migrants at the US-Mexico shared border.

During the virtual meeting, Harris and Lopez Obrador agreed to address what they called the root causes of migration from Central America -- violence and corruption.

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