

AMLO Update: How His National Guard Plan Will Test His Strength in Congress

BY [Benjamin Russell](#)

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Highlight of the Week

Despite opposition deputies [staging a walk out](#) and civil society groups [protesting in Congress](#), Morena legislators on Thursday passed a constitutional reform required to create a new [national guard](#) through committee hearings in the Lower House. That sets up a key test of AMLO's support in Congress, with a full vote expected [as early as this weekend](#). Morena and its allies on their own don't have the [two-thirds majority](#) required for the change, and leading opposition figures have already said they'll vote against the measure.

Morena has pledged to move quickly through [remaining hurdles](#) standing in front of AMLO's controversial proposal, including Senate approval and secondary laws regulating the creation of the new force. On Thursday legislators [made changes](#) in order to draw more opposition support, including a five-year limit on military authority over the body.

But broad opposition remains, with [international organizations](#), advocacy groups and even some AMLO supporters voicing concern that institutionalizing the [military's role in public security](#) could lead to abuses and fail to reduce violence.

Alfonso Durazo, who heads a newly revived public security ministry, said that if the national guard isn't approved the military would be [fully returned to barracks](#), prompting [criticism](#) that the administration was [using scare tactics](#) to get its way.

What they're saying: Javier Risco on how [Tatiana Clouthier](#) emerged as an effective voice of moderation on security from among AMLO's supporters; Alejandro Madrazo [speaks in Congress](#) on civil society objections to the national guard proposal; congresswoman Martha Tagle [explains her opposition](#).

Migration Confusion

Foreign ministry officials on Thursday said that ["on humanitarian grounds"](#) Mexico would accept a U.S. plan to send non-Mexican asylum seekers south of the border while they [await processing](#) from the U.S. The announcement came days after the [U.S. and Mexico agreed on a plan](#) to fund development in Central America.

Mexican officials, including [newly confirmed](#) U.S. Ambassador [Martha Bárcena](#), emphasized that the measure did not constitute a so-called [safe third country agreement](#). But [questions remain](#) over how the proposal will be carried out. The head of Mexico's immigration authority muddied the waters Thursday afternoon,

saying that in the short term Mexico [did not have the capacity](#) to accept the migrants in question. AMLO's team is expected to announce details of how the plan will be implemented on Monday.

What they're saying: WOLA's Adam Isacson and Elyssa Pachico on the [unanswered questions](#) of the asylum proposal, and Isacson on why there's [less than meets the eye](#) on the Central American funding deal; the [potential court challenge](#) facing the U.S.' asylum measure.

Briefs

Officials said that [70 percent](#) of bondholders on the canceled Mexico City airport project had accepted a [revised compensation offer](#). AMLO said that the deal [paves the way](#) for his alternative plan, which includes converting a military airstrip for commercial use.

Markets [reacted favorably](#) to AMLO's 2019 budget, though not everyone was happy with the proposal: Jalisco's Governor Enrique Alfaro and Chihuahua's Governor Javier Corral [decried a lack of funding](#) for priority projects in their states, while actors, musicians and others called for an [increase in cultural funding](#). Pemex was a big winner, receiving an [18 percent budget increase](#).

AMLO announced [an increase in the minimum wage](#), up from 88.36 pesos per day (\$4.40) to 102.68 pesos in most of the country, and to 176.72 pesos along Mexico's northern border with the U.S.

Senators eventually endorsed one of AMLO's nominees, [Juan Luis González Alcántara](#), to fill a vacant Supreme Court position despite a first round of voting in which none of the president's three choices received sufficient backing.

Quote of the Week

"Now that we're talking about the Maya Train, some people pop up in protest saying that it will affect the environment. No. We're not going to cut down a single tree."

AMLO [marked the beginning of construction](#) of his tourist train project in southeast Mexico with an [indigenous ceremony](#) dedicated to Mother Earth, promising economic benefits for local communities. The project's planned route through protected areas and a lack of official environmental impact studies has [sparked concern](#) from environmental groups.

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