

August 8, 2007 - U.S. Lawyers Grill Top Mexican Cardinal In Abuse Case
By REUTERS, The New York Times

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexico's leading Roman Catholic cleric, Cardinal Norberto Rivera, was questioned on Wednesday by U.S. lawyers who accuse him of protecting a priest wanted for child sex abuse.

The lawyers met with Rivera at the capital's archdiocese building to try to establish that he can be sued by a Mexican former altar boy in a California court, along with co-accused Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony.

"Cardinal Rivera has voluntarily received the lawyers," said a Catholic church official who asked not to be named.

Rivera, whose Mexico City diocese is one of the world's largest, is accused of sending a priest named Nicolas Aguilar to Los Angeles knowing that he had raped former altar boy Joaquin Aguilar Mendez in Mexico's Puebla state in 1994.

Mahony, whose Los Angeles diocese recently paid out \$660 million in compensation to abuse victims, also is named in the civil suit.

He is accused of conspiring with the Mexican cardinal to allow Aguilar to flee Mexico to California. Aguilar is believed on the run in Mexico and is wanted in the United States on multiple charges of sexually abusing boys.

Rivera, who was once seen as a possible candidate to succeed Pope John Paul II, says the Los Angeles court does not have jurisdiction over him since the incidents in the altar boy's allegations all took place in Mexico.