

# East Peru Mission

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East Peru Mission (Misión del Oriente Peruana or MOP) is an administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) located in the territory of the South Peru Union Mission (Unión Perúana del Sur or UPS). Its headquarters is located at Av. Centenario at Km. 4,700 in Zip Code 25000 in the Yarinacocha District in the city of Pucallpa of the Province of Coronel Portillo in the Department of Ucayali in the Republic of Peru.<sup>1</sup>

This administrative unit is responsible to lead the advancement of the Adventist preaching of the Gospel in the departments of Loreto (excluding the Alto Amazonas Province) and Ucayali as well as some parts of the Huánuco and San Martín departments. In the MOP's entire territory, there are 164 organized churches and 148 groups with a membership of 25,791 in a population of 1,964,869 inhabitants. The average is of one Adventist per 76 people.<sup>2</sup>

In the educational area, the East Peru Mission through the Adventist Education Organization of East Peru (Asociación Educativa Adventista del Oriente Peruano or AEOP-MOP) administers seven educational institutions that seek to better prepare the church youth as well as to give society the opportunity to enjoy an education with moral values and Christian principles. These schools are: Third Millennium Adventist Academy (Institución Educativa Adventista Tercer Milenio,<sup>3</sup> located at Jr. Sinchi Roca 260, 09 de Octubre, Pucallpa, Ucayali; Maranatha Adventist Academy (Institución Educativa Adventista Maranatha),<sup>4</sup> located at Av. Lloque Yupanqui s/n, Coronel Portillo, Pucallpa; Atalaya Adventist Academy (Institución Educativa Adventista Atalaya)<sup>5</sup> located at Calle Teniente Mejía Mz. A, Lote 6, Atalaya, Ucayali; Ucayali Adventist Academy (Institución Educativa Adventista Ucayali),<sup>6</sup> located at Jr. Raymondi 340, Callería, Pucallpa, Ucayali; Jose de San Martin Adventist Academy (Institución Educativa Adventista Generalísimo José de San Martín,<sup>7</sup> located at Av. José Carlos Mariátegui 560, Castillo Grande, Tingo María, Huánuco; Amazonas Adventist Academy (Institución Educativa Adventista Amazonas,<sup>8</sup> established at Jr. Napo 589, Iquitos, Maynas, Loreto; and Fernando Stahl Adventist Academy (Tocache) [Institución Educativa Adventista Fernando Stahl - Tocache]<sup>9</sup> located at Jr. Tocache, 811, Tocache, in the Department of San Martín.

In the evangelism area through radio, in the MOP mission field, the New Time Radio Productions is broadcast in two cities. In Pucallpa, the message of the soon return of Jesus reaches out through frequencies 1120 AM and

95.7 FM, and in Iquitos “La Voz de la Esperanza” [“The Voice of Hope”] is heard on 97.3 FM!<sup>10</sup> Focused on taking the Gospel to every tribe, language, and part of their territory, the MOP staff team has a total of 258 active employees, of whom 42 are pastors (17 are credentialed ministers and 25 are licensed), two are credentialed workers, one works with a missionary license, and 213 are working full-time in other functions in the Church institutions.<sup>11</sup>

## The Origin of the Adventist Work in the Territory of the Mission

The establishment of Adventism in Peru began in the 19th century and was based on the commitment and dedication of many missionaries. Among them was Pastor Franklin Leland Perry, who was sent by the General Conference to help organize the Adventist Church in the country.<sup>12</sup> Shortly after, Fernando and Ana Stahl arrived in 1911 in Puno,<sup>13</sup> and the work progressed in the South of Peru. Another important person in the spreading of the message was educator Manuel Zúñiga Camacho, who established the first indigenous Adventist school. This school operated in his own house in the village of Utawilaya (in Platería, Puno), where he received the Stahls “in the early years of their educational, health, and evangelizing work in the Peruvian mountains.”<sup>14</sup> Ana and Camacho were the first teachers, and they taught from young children to adults. This work resulted in the establishment of the Lake Titicaca Mission.

With these favorable results in the Platería indigenous mission area, around June 1920, Oliver Montgomery, vice president of the South American Division (SAD) for the General Conference, and W. H. Williams, secretary-treasurer of the SAD, “made a missionary recognition and projection trip to the Peruvian Amazon region, crossing the Chanchamayo area through the Vía Central or the Pichis.” These leaders’ intentions were to establish the Adventist work in these regions of the Peruvian jungle that were being colonized.<sup>15</sup> In those days, the central government wanted to integrate the Peruvian coast and jungle into the regional economy.

It was during this trip that the Adventist missionaries made the first contact with the Amazonian indigenous population. In addition, Montgomery had obtained a presentation letter from the president of Peru, Ausguto B. Leguía (1908-1912; 1919-1930) and a safe conduct through the North American ambassador. With these, he was able to receive a friendly reception from all the local political authorities through which they passed, from Tarma to Iquitos. And then they confirmed the possibility of opening missions in those regions, such as in Iquitos!<sup>16</sup>

About that time, Fernando Stahl, who had done an excellent work among the Aymara and Quechua Indians of the Peruvian Andes for about nine years, for health reasons had moved to the capital to recover and to work in other parts of Peru.<sup>17</sup> Later, in July 1921, after Montgomery presented the results of his exploratory trip, Fernando Stahl, a member of the Inca Union Mission board of directors (Unión Inca or UI, currently the South Peru Union Mission), “was commissioned to investigate the possibility of starting the work in the central region of Peru;”<sup>18</sup> that is, “in the Amazon area where the contact with civilization was more continuous (and with less risk)” Back then, communications with the city of Iquitos would take in average of three weeks. For this reason,

Stahl was sent specifically to the Chanchamayo-Perené zone.<sup>19</sup>

Fernando and his wife, this time as missionaries with extensive experience, left to work among the natives of the Central Jungle (Selva Central). "After a few months of getting to know the field the work began with the relationship between the Adventist movement and Colonia del Perené [Perené Colony].<sup>20</sup> The Perené Colony (Colonia del Perené) was within the lands that the Peruvian State granted to the British company Peruvian Corporation of London as part of the external debt payment.<sup>21</sup> Thus, in November 1921, Fernando Stahl, thanks to the great acceptance on the part of the "campas" (Asháninkas) Indians,<sup>22</sup> due to the medical work and the contextualized evangelization that he was developing, asked the SAD for financial resources and a worker to establish the facilities of the Metraro Mission of the Perené Colony (Misión Metraro en la Colonia del Perené [Chanchamayo]). To assist in the work of the mission, Rufino Pacho, a young Aymara Indian from the Lake Titicaca Mission, was appointed.<sup>23</sup>

Once the conditions in the Coloy (Colonia) were favorable and Stahl's work also contributed to the purposes of the Peruvian Corporation, this company granted, at Stahl's request, 300 hectares of land to establish the mission station buildings (the temple, the missionary house, and the school).<sup>24</sup> Thus, without much inconvenience, in 1922, Fernando Stahl established the Metraro Mission Station (Estación de la Misión Metraro).<sup>25</sup>

During those first years, the location of the Metraro Station (today located in the Gran Pajonal) was strategic since it especially helped to reach the native Asháninkas and Amueshas (Yanesha).<sup>26</sup> These natives, in turn, were the first indigenous Adventists who, over time, became teachers and missionaries, taking the Gospel to other indigenous people into the countryside of Perené and the Ucayali affluents. By 1925, the Metraro Station already had a membership of around 50 people.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the Metraro station "served as a training center and prepared missionaries, teachers, and canvassers" to be sent to work in different parts of the jungle in Peru.<sup>28</sup>

During this period, one of the greatest difficulties that early Adventist missionaries faced was the absence of air transportation. Because of this, the communication of the missionaries with the capital took days and, therefore, the evangelization was delayed. For all that, "the leaders of the Adventist church of that time, based in Lima, began to look at the Peruvian Amazon as a new challenge for the establishment of new churches. A year later [1926] these plans were consolidated, and they agreed to organize a working commission to start the work in the Upper Amazon."<sup>29</sup> This commission was established on February 22 and consisted of H. U. Stevens, P. E. Brodersen, W. H. William, and Fernando Stahl.<sup>30</sup> For this reason, "Stahl embarks in a more ambitious mission, to expand the missionary work in the lower Perené area, the Ucayali and its affluents. Thus, Irwin Maxwell was appointed as director of the Metraro Mission Station."<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, Stahl, before heading to Iquitos to open a new mission, organized a canvassing team and sent Bernabé Chávez and Henry Westphal to prepare the field. These two missionaries "taught the Bible and its faith to hundreds of people." During the day, they dedicated themselves to selling religious literature, and at night, they preached the Word in homes that received them. Thus, in a few months, the first group of Adventists

reached a total of 65 believers.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, in Lima, on November 18, 1926, the work commission organized a few months earlier, "in view of the work carried out by Stahl in the east of Peru and the Upper Amazon region, recommended to the UI the creation of the 'Upper Amazon Mission.'"<sup>33</sup>

With the arrival of the Stahl family (1926) in Iquitos, the educational work gained strength with the support of local authorities, who encouraged the creation of a local school. Also, with the help of Pastor Frank Henry Westphal, the central church started a school with up to 106 students.<sup>34</sup> Still, in the medical area, Fernando and Ana Stahl, to better serve the population of the Peruvian jungle, built a floating house on the banks of the Itaya River. One of the rooms was used as a medical and dental clinic. These were the beginnings of Ana Stahl Adventist Clinic of Iquitos.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the first evangelistic incursions into the Peruvian East were consolidated, and the project of mission launches was emerging.<sup>36</sup>

## The Mission Organizational History

The organization of the Upper Amazon Mission (currently East Peru Mission) happened on May 1, 1927, during a meeting of the Inca Union Mission Board of Directors led by Pastor F. L. Perry.<sup>37</sup> In this meeting, the UI leaders took the following vote: First, that the Mission would be responsible for the work in the province of Loreto, part of the Huánuco Province and the east of the Huallaga River, and a portion of the Junín Province east of the Perené River not including La Merced; Second, that Fernando A. Stahl was the superintendent; Third, that the headquarters be located in Iquitos; and finally, they authorized the "construction of two separate environments. One for the Mission offices and one for the president's house."<sup>38</sup> In the following year, the UI Board decided to change the name of "Upper Amazon Mission" to "Amazon Mission of Peru" (Misión Amazónica del Perú or MAP).<sup>39</sup>

In its first year as an administrative unit, the Mission had 99 members,<sup>40</sup> and in the following year, it had two organized churches and 178 members.<sup>41</sup> However, in 1929, "considering the extensive territory to attend, the Amazon Mission of Peru through the Inca Union Mission requested the SAD to separate the department of Junín to be under the Peruvian Mission and focus its work in the surrounding cities."<sup>42</sup>

Adventism in Peru from its origin saw education as a missionary tool. Wherever F. Stahl went, he sought to establish a school, a medical center, and a church. Then, with that same intention, in 1931, a small school started to operate in Loreto. This educational institution operated in the same building where the Ana Stahl Adventist Clinic is located today, at Av. La Marina 285 in Iquitos. Originally, it offered only elementary level education both for church children and for society in general.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, in the face of enormous geographic difficulties, "the Church took a new step in evangelism work towards the native communities of Iquitos when they decided to buy a launch."<sup>44</sup> Thanks to this ministry, many lives were saved in those distant regions of the jungle.

The years after F. Stahl left were marked by a rapid succession of presidents. In 1937, the Inca Union Mission Board of Directors named Joseph D. Replogle,<sup>45</sup> but there were two more successions before 1940.<sup>46</sup> That year, the UI appointed Pastor Richard A. Hayden as the new president,<sup>47</sup> and the Mission also proposed to the UI the name of “Upper Amazon Mission of Peru” (Misión Amazónica Adventista or MAA) and reorganized its territory with the departments of Loreto, San Martín, and Amazonas.<sup>48</sup> In 1942, Hayden made arrangements to get a launch donation to carry the message to those challenging terrains. This missionary launch was named “Auxiliadora” (“Helper”).<sup>49</sup> In addition, until the end of that year, the Adventist Church already had organized churches in the main cities of the Peruvian jungle, such as: Iquitos, Pucallpa, Lamas, Contamana, and Yurimaguas.<sup>50</sup>

It should be noted that the work in the city of Pucallpa began around 1944 during an evangelistic campaign led by Prospero Ramos. The place had capacity for 80 people, and about 120 were present. As a result of the evangelistic series, a Sabbath school with 40 members was established.<sup>51</sup> Around 1948, the Inca Union Mission Board named Pastor Stephen C. Pritchard as president of the Upper Amazon Mission of Peru.<sup>52</sup> He had under his administration the Mission Stations of Alto Huallaga in Tarapoto, Alto Ucayali in Iquitos, Huallaga in Yurimaguas, the Iquitos Mission, the Moyobamba Mission, and the Pucallpa Mission.<sup>53</sup>

During this time, the Mission not only sought to have quantitative growth, but also qualitative and representative growth in the cities being worked. For this reason, in Pucallpa, around 1953, due to the great interest of the population in the message of salvation, a church was built in that city.<sup>54</sup> Also, the small medical center that the Stahls used in Iquitos went through a renovation in order to provide a better service for the population.<sup>55</sup> When the year of 1955 arrived, the Mission had 13 churches and 1,454 members.<sup>56</sup>

In the mid-1960s, in view of the great demand for education, the Pucallpa Day Academy was created with the objective of serving the children and youth of the Pucallpa region, since at that time, public schools had classes on Saturdays.<sup>57</sup> In fact, the educational work went hand in hand with the preaching of the Gospel. Thus, wherever a church was organized, establishing an Adventist school was also sought.

In just over 30 years since its organization in 1927, the Mission now numbered 2,483 church members and 13 organized churches. Throughout its territory, in 1960, there were approximately 770,000 inhabitants, and the average was of one Adventist per 313 inhabitants.<sup>58</sup> In other words, in its three decades of existence, the missionary advance of the Mission as a local field of the UI was consistent and increasing--thus, the organization of a new Mission was necessary.

Hence, to better assist the churches in the North and Northeast provinces of Peru, in 1961, the UI Board of Directors decided to reorganize the Upper Amazon Mission of Peru and establish the North Peru Mission. This would be responsible for the departments of Amazonas, Cajamarca, Lambayeque, La Libertad, Piura, and Tumbes, while the Upper Amazon Mission of Peru was responsible for the departments of Loreto and San Martín. In this new phase, the Mission was responsible for guiding the work in these two departments with 15

churches and 2,814 Adventists. Pastor Charles C. Case was appointed to serve as president.<sup>59</sup>

In 1964, the Mission implemented the work of the missionary plane "Fernando Stahl," and its base would be in Yarinacocha in the Province of Colonel Portillo in the region of Ucayali. The plane greatly shortened the time it took to travel the distances that existed with the far-away native communities of Peru.<sup>60</sup> The work continued to grow, and as a result, in 1964, 494 new disciples were baptized.<sup>61</sup> By 1965, the Mission had 21 churches and 4,025 members.<sup>62</sup>

So, as the number of members grew, the educational work also grew exponentially in the Peruvian East. An example of this was the Pucallpa Day Academy, which became the second largest school in the Adventist network with 251 students. For this reason, in 1966 with the support of the UI, the South American Division was asked to open a secondary school in the city.<sup>63</sup> The SAD approval came in 1969, after the survey made by the group Investigación Global de Miembros de Iglesias [Church Members Global Research]. Thus, due to the accelerated growth of the population, authorization was given for the opening of Ucayali Adventist Academy (Colegio Secundario Ucayali).<sup>64</sup>

By then, almost 30 years had passed since the Mission established by Fernando Stahl had changed its name in 1940. Until 1968, the Mission not only served the Amazon, but the entire Peruvian East. That is why, on July 7, 1969, at the request of the Upper Amazon Mission of Peru Board,<sup>65</sup> the Inca Union Mission Board of Directors approved to change the name of the "Upper Amazon Mission of Peru" to "East Peru Mission" considering that this new name would better describe the territory.<sup>66</sup> In this new stage, the first leaders of the MOP were pastors Itamar Sabino de Paiva and Moisés Aguilar, president and secretary-treasurer, respectively.<sup>67</sup>

In 1971, as the Gospel preaching progressed, the membership in the entire field reached 7,483.<sup>68</sup> The MOP continued to grow, and in order to better serve the pastors and churches of the field, the transfer of the headquarters of the East Peru Mission to Tarapoto or Pucallpa was requested.<sup>69</sup> Then, in May 1972, the SAD commission, through the Inca Union Mission, recommended that the new headquarters of the Mission be established in the city of Pucallpa.<sup>70</sup> Thus, once the city of the new headquarters was decided, the next step taken by the MOP was to assemble an economic plan to acquire the land and build the facilities and houses of the field administrators and workers.<sup>71</sup> Since then, the transfer from the Iquitos headquarters to Pucallpa took place gradually and, in 1975, the MOP offices were temporarily located at 101 Jirón Tarapacá.<sup>72</sup> Finally, from 1977, the institution headquarters has been at the current address: Carretera Federico Basadre (Av. Centenario) km 4,700 in the Campoverde district in Pucallpa.<sup>73</sup>

In the following decades, preaching and education has continued to work together. In 1990, the Seventh-day Adventist Church established a private school called the Ellen G. White Private Adventist Academy (Escuela Privada Adventista Elena G. White) in the "C-October 9" mission district in Pucallpa near the MOP headquarters. Thirteen years later, this school became part of the Adventist Educational Network as the Third Millennium Adventist Academy (Institución Educacional Adventista Tercer Milenio).<sup>74</sup> Another school, Centro Educativo

Privado Adventista (CEPA) “La Bella Durmiente” [Adventist Private Educational Center (CEPA) “Sleeping Beauty”], was established in the city of Tingo María in the department of Huánuco, also seeking to advance the message of salvation through education. Initially, it only offered elementary level, but in 1992, it began to offer education on the secondary level as well. Both in Pucallpa and in Tingo María, the objective of these brethren and of the Mission was to educate for this life and for eternity.<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, although education in the field of the MOP has always been an excellent way of reaching families, around 1996, many families were financially afflicted due to the country's political and economic situation caused by the former governments and other external factors. As a result, the Adventist schools were also affected. For this reason, in the midst of great financial difficulties to maintain its educational commitments, the MOP, in order to better organize the educational system, created in March 1997 the Adventist Education Organization of East Peru (Asociación Educativa Adventista Oriental del Perú or AEAOP)<sup>76</sup> to administer all Adventist schools in its territory.<sup>77</sup>

A new millennium had begun, and it brought new challenges that would have to be faced. In 2001, the MOP had 33 pastors, 422 congregations (202 organized churches and 220 prayer groups) and was responsible to preach the Adventist message in the departments of Huánuco, Loreto, San Martín, and Ucayali.<sup>78</sup> In the course of that year, 7,800 people had been baptized,<sup>79</sup> and as a result, the number of members across the field reached 102,477 Adventists. So, in this context, the Peru Union Mission (currently South Peru Union Mission) decided to divide the ecclesiastical field of the MOP and organized, in 2002, the Northeast Peru Mission (Misión del Noreste de Perú or MNO) with its headquarters established in the city of Tarapoto.<sup>80</sup> For this reason, the territory of the East Peru Mission, since 2003, was responsible for the department of Loreto (excluding the province of the upper Amazon), Ucayali, and a portion of the department of Huánuco and San Martín.<sup>81</sup>

This latest reorganization helped the mission of the MOP. The field continued to grow, and the institutions, churches, and brothers were better served. Thus, the work developed better in the following years. However, until 2008, the MOP had presented the increase in its membership without first making an exhaustive update of the church books so, in that year, an update was made which showed a membership of 19,227 people. All in all, in 2009, it experienced great growth, reaching 20,954 members, 128 churches and 110 congregations. In other words, in just one year, this mission field had a net growth of 1,727 members.<sup>82</sup> In this region, the great development of the Adventist work was accomplished through the efforts and dedication of many administrators and workers fully committed to the Lord's work.

Among the missionary actions encouraged by the MOP is the “Mission Caleb” [“Caleb Mission”] project which, in 2016, had 10,000 volunteers from all the mission fields of Peru working in favor of others. The goal of the MOP “Youth Ministries” with this project has been to request Adventist youth to dedicate ten days of their vacation to social and missionary work.<sup>83</sup> Another way of preaching the gospel which has been used is known as the “Impacto Esperanza” [“Hope Impact”] Project, a project carried out by the SDA Church in South America that



encourages reading and provides the distribution of Adventist books annually. This missionary work seeks to strengthen the Church's relationship with the community and to bring many people to accept Christ. For this reason, children, youth, and adults have gone to the streets, malls, markets, and every home to take the message of God's word.<sup>84</sup>

In its missionary expansion and development program among children, teenagers, and youth, the MOP has 115 Pathfinder Clubs and 43 Adventurer Clubs. The MOP's goal is for the 3,544 young members of these clubs to be a blessing to their families and to society.<sup>85</sup> This youth program is open to youth of all denominations and seeks to lead them to a greater interaction with God, the family, church, society, and nature.

The MOP continues to fulfill the mission of proclaiming the everlasting Gospel through the message of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12. This message invites people to become disciples of Jesus Christ and prepare for His soon return. The members of the MOP carry out their mission through a Christlike life: preaching, discipling, teaching, healing, and serving others, all in harmony with the great prophecies of the Scriptures and God's plan to restore all things according to His perfect will and justice. One of the challenges of the MOP is to make each new believer a disciple who wins others for the kingdom of God. One of the lessons that can be learned from the MOP is that God blesses the missionary efforts of his people. God is who gives the crop, the good harvest, and the fruits that will last. If you work hand in hand with the Lord, there will be nothing to fear for the future.

## Chronology of Administrative Leaders<sup>86</sup>

Presidents: F. A. Stahl. (1927-1937); Joseph D. Replogle (1938); J. H. Meier (1939); Richard A. Hayden (1940-1947); Stephen C. Pritchard (1948-1955); Francisco Piro (1956-1958); J. W. Elick (1959); N. M. Merkel (1960); Charles C. Case (1961-1965); M. L. Fehrenbach (1966-1967); Itamar S. Paiva (1970-1971); Abel Paucar (1972-1974); Nicolás de Brum (1975-1979); Víctor Brañez (1980-1984); Rodrigo Gutiérrez (1985-1989); Lucio Calle (1990); Idelfonso Tasilla (1991-1992); David Alarcón (1993-1994); Samuel Sandoval (1995-2000); Salomón Arana (2001-2002); Gerardo Medina (2003-2006); Rufo Jaimes Zubieta (2007-2008); Gilberto Urcia (2009-2010); José Chávez (2011-2012); Orlando Chilón (2013-2015); Alberto Carranza (2016-2017); Michael Ccoa (2017-present).

Secretaries: W. E. Phillips (1927-1928); H. M. Colburn (1929-1937); M. León (1938-1940); A. Alberro (1941); A. Manrique (1942-1948); José A. Diaz (1949-1953); Víctor Achata (1954); Jorge Montalvo (1955-1957); Arturo Gnass (1960-1965); Isaac Contreras (1966); Moisés Aguilar (1967-1968); Federico Chuquimia (1970-1973); Rafael Ramírez (1974-1979); Melvi Atoche (1980-1985); Humberto Cuentas (1986-1988); Gerardo Puente (1989-1991); Denis Tello (1992-1993); Sergio Mercado (1994-1996); Williams Ferreyra (1997); José Meza (1998-1999); Yordan Santa Cruz (2000-2004); Virgilio Miranda (2005-2006); Abraham Huamani (2007); Erik Jiménez (2008); José Chávez (2009-2010); Daniel Villar (2011); Wilbert Maluquish (2012-2014); Iván Valladares (2015-present).

Treasurers: W. E. Phillips (1927-1928); H. M. Colburn (1929-1937); M. León (1938-1940); A. Alberro (1941); A. Manrique (1942-1948); José A. Diaz (1949-1953); Víctor Achata (1954); Jorge Montalvo (1955-1957); Arturo Gnass



(1960-1965); Isaac Contreras (1966); Moisés Aguilar (1967-1968); Federico Chuquimia (1970-1973); Rafael Ramírez (1974-1979); Melvi Atoche (1980-1985); Humberto Cuentas (1986-1988); Gerardo Puente (1989-1991); Denis Tello (1992-1993); Sergio Mercado (1994-1996); Williams Ferreyra (1997); José Meza (1998-1999); Yordan Santa Cruz (2000-2004); Virgilio Miranda (2005-2006); Abraham Huamani (2007); Juan Carranza (2008); Nelson Ponce (2009-2011); Marcial Carrasco (2012-2013); Freddy Robles (2014-2018); Juan Carranza (2019-present):<sup>87</sup>

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