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Foreign Aid Groups Report Salvadoran Government Prohibiting Landing Of Planes Carrying Relief For Earthquake Victims

by Deborah Tyroler
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On Oct. 16, spokespersons for a US relief group told UPI reporters that the Salvadoran government had not permitted the landing of some 15 planes carrying tons of medicines and foodstuffs destined for earthquake victims. The group is called "Ayuda para El Salvador" (Help for El Salvador), and is based in Los Angeles. Ayuda said they and 15 other groups had requested and been denied permission to land their planes. The Oct. 10 earthquake has left 200,000 people homeless, 10,000 injured, and caused 1,200 deaths. Ayuda called the government's action a "barbarity," as the planes were carrying foodstuffs and other perishable items. Until now, most of the foreign aid medical supplies and foodstuffs has been left with churches in the capital city to be distributed among earthquake victims, particularly those of poor neighborhoods. A US State Department spokesperson told UPI that the Salvadoran government is not permitting the entry of non-goverment aircraft, but is accepting aid from private groups. The spokesperson said the Salvadorans did not wish to acquire an oversupply of unnecessary medicines, and that the government of President Jose Napoleon Duarte wants to receive the medical supplies and supervise their use. Other volunteer workers confirmed that several planes are waiting in the United States for special permission from Salvadoran authorities to land in the country. Jake Gillespie, spokesperson for the US Embassy in San Salvador said the embassy had received some reports of planes denied permission to land at the Ilopango military air base. He said that any airplane carrying emergency aid could land at the Comalapa international airport south of the capital. The Ayuda group spokesperson affirmed that Ayuda and other groups did not obtain permission to land at any Salvadoran airport. According to the group of private businesspersons appointed by Duarte to channel aid to the earthquake victims, at least 79 planes carrying foreign contributions of medicine and foodstuffs had arrived. Meanwhile, residents in the barrios most affected San Jacinto and San Marcos said that although they had food, they not yet received anything to construct temporary shelters.

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