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Guatemala: Government Purchases 20,000 M16 Rifles, Seeks Acquisition Of U.S.-made Copters

by Deborah Tyroler

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In early October, the Guatemalan government purchased 20,000 M16 rifles (from Colt Industries, Hartford, Conn.) for approximately \$13.8 million. The government is also seeking to acquire eight US-made helicopters from Saudi Arabia or Jordan. The expected total is nearly \$30 million, and derives from Guatemala's military budget that is not already committed. The M16s will replace Israeli Galils as the standard weapon of the country's armed forces. Since the rifles purchase did not surpass \$14 million, the State Department issued the export license without notifying Congress. Some members of Congress called it a "back door approach" to rearming the Guatemalan military. The helicopter purchase must also be approved by the State Department under the Arms Export Act. Despite the absence of evidence that human rights violations have declined, Congress recently approved \$9 million in non-lethal military aid for FY1989. The amount surpassed the Reagan administration's initial request of \$5.4 million. (Basic data from 11/09/88, Washington Report on the Hemisphere)

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