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Paraguay: Soldiers & Police Attack Striking Workers At Itaipu Dam Project

by John Neagle

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On Dec. 12, soldiers fired on striking workers from the giant Itaipu Dam hydroelectric project, killing two and wounding 10 or 12 others. According to a reporter from private station Radio Nanduti on the scene, the incident occurred when strikers attempted to prevent workers from entering the complex. Local news reports said hundreds of soldiers and anti-riot police from nearby Ciudad del Este tried to disperse the strikers, who responded by throwing stones. Union spokespersons said troops then began using automatic weapons. The strike by some 2,500 workers, began 15 days ago. According to AP, the workers' demands were related to pay and benefits. AFP reported the strikers' demands were not related to wages. The Labor Ministry declared the strike illegal, and officials said employees who refused to work would be fired. The project, jointly owned with Brazil and located on the Parana River, has cost \$18 billion since construction began in 1974 and the first energy was delivered two years ago. At the peak of construction, the project employed 20,000 people. Currently, 5,000 workers from both countries are employed by the project. (Basic data from AP, AFP, 12/12/89)

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