

3-23-1990

Guatemala: Notes On Recent Debate Surrounding Civil Defense Patrols

Deborah Tyroler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Guatemala: Notes On Recent Debate Surrounding Civil Defense Patrols." (1990).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/3847>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Guatemala: Notes On Recent Debate Surrounding Civil Defense Patrols

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Friday, March 23, 1990

On March 18, representatives of opposition organizations, members of the diplomatic corps, the National Reconciliation Commission, government agencies, the national congress and the army to discuss recent complaints regarding procedures and performance of the so-called self-defense civil patrols. Edmund Mulklet, head of the congressional defense committee, said the patrols have been a key factor in the army's counterinsurgency strategy, and in many cases, substitute for the army and other security forces. However, the patrols do not have adequate material support (weapons), and many times serve as cannon fodder, he said. Defense Minister Hector Gramajo said the patrols expand to 900,000 persons at times of greatest conflict. He reported that early this month, the army delivered weapons to new patrols in Santa Maria de Jesus, Sacatepequez department, a site of recent rebel activity. Civilian patrols are currently being organized for the first time in Guatemala City. Attorney General for Human Rights Ramiro de Leon Carpio said that under the constitution, membership in patrols must be voluntary, since they are defined as civilian organizations, but assisted and coordinated by the Defense Ministry. He said his office has received many complaints from citizens asserting that they are forced to participate in the patrols. He added that the intimidation includes death threats. Leon Carpio said his office has not been able to collect sufficient evidence on such complaints because indigenous persons and peasant farmers are afraid to make public statements in court. Gramajo asserted that given the large number of patrol members, it is possible that excesses and lack of discipline occasionally occur. He insisted that the army employs measures to avoid such incidents, and rejected claims of human rights abuses. (Basic data from Notimex, 03/18/90)

-- End --