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Notes On Guatemalan Refugees In Southern Mexico

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Aug. 27, coordinator of the Mexican Refugee Aid Commission (COMAR), Luis Fernando Ramirez, told the Mexican government's international news service that by 1992 Guatemalan refugees residing in Quintana Roo state will achieve food self-sufficiency. In 1989, COMAR introduced a self-sufficiency program for the refugees. At present the Guatemalans are able to produce 60% of food consumption needs, totaling 1,200 ha. of corn, and 1,600 ha. of beans in the 1990 harvest. Ramirez told Notimex that the refugees will also need to work outside the camp to meet all subsistence needs. In statements to Notimex on Aug. 31, Ramirez denied reports appearing Aug. 27 that because the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has instructed COMAR to repatriate refugees, 183 Guatemalans were preparing to return home the following week. He asserted that COMAR had not received any recent requests from Guatemalans for assistance to repatriate. "COMAR does not force anyone to return. Guatemalans who decide to repatriate do so voluntarily, and aid organizations work with them in the move," said Ramirez. He added that 46 persons have been repatriated in 1990. (Basic data from Notimex, 08/27/90, 08/31/90)

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