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Former Nicaraguan Contras Return To Honduras

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Nov. 7, the Agence France Presse quoted unidentified Honduran military and former Nicaraguan contras sources as saying that hundreds of the ex-contras and their families have returned to Honduras in the previous week. In Tegucigalpa and elsewhere, Honduran authorities discovered about 50 former contras, who had previously been repatriated. They were immediately deported. The same sources said the deported persons and others awaiting deportation have been informed that if they return to Honduras yet again they will be incarcerated. Honduran police and soldiers acknowledge difficulties in identifying former contras, particularly in Danli, El Paraiso department. According to Indalecio Rodriguez, coordinator of a human rights committee serving Nicaraguans in exile, the former contras are returning to Honduras because they are being targeted by "constant aggression" at the hands of the Nicaraguan army. He asserted that since the demobilization in April, contras have been "hunted like animals"; 67 were assassinated within a month in Jinotega department. An unidentified spokesperson for the UN High Commission for Refugees told AFP that the UNHCR has not observed the return of contra repatriates to UN refugee camps in Honduras. The source said the UNHCR has compiled a register of all former contras and their families who remained in Honduras after the demobilization, and of those who returned to Nicaragua. The repatriation process continues at present under the supervision of the International Verification and Support Commission (CIAV), a joint operation of the UN and the Organization of American States. Repatriation began July 5 when, according to Honduran government records, about 20,000 men, women and children were in the UN camps.

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