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Nicaragua: Highlights Of Conference On Drug Addiction

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Summarized below are selected highlights from reports presented at Nicaragua's first national seminar, "Drugs and Juvenile Delinquency: A Challenge for Everyone," held in Managua, Aug. 20-21. Participants included representatives from non-governmental organizations and government agencies. * Nicaragua's rate of drug addiction is the lowest in Central America, with an estimated 250,000 addicts. * The nation is becoming an international transit point for drug shipments. * Eight cases of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) have been confirmed in Nicaragua. * The juvenile delinquency rate is 50%. * Addiction among youth is on the increase, aggravated by the end of the war. Some young persons were left with psychological problems and others remain unemployed as well as suffering from the so-called "war syndrome." In addition, during the last 18 months, thousands of young people who fled the country to avoid military service during the last decade have returned. Many are coming from Miami where they became addicted to some type of drug. In 1990, at least 12,000 cases of "hard" drug consumption (cocaine, crack, hashish) were recorded, compared to zero in 1986. * According to National Police statistics, until May 1991, there were 118 drug dealing operations functioning in Managua alone. * President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro's government was urged to provide support to the National Anti-Drug Commission, and the Children's Commission to prevent the transformation of Nicaragua into an international trafficking point and a stable consumer of illegal drugs. Comparative figures for two other Central American nations are summarized below. Costa Rica: 400,000 addicts, 199 confirmed cases of AIDS, 75% juvenile delinquency rate. El Salvador: 500,000 addicts, 252 AIDS cases, and 75% juvenile delinquency rate. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 08/27/91)

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