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## **Cholera Update, Aug. 22 - Sept. 4**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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Aug. 22: Guatemalan Health Ministry spokespersons reported 80 confirmed cases of cholera and 100 cases under observation. Guatemalan police and local media sources reported five cholera-related deaths. Health Minister Miguel Angel Montepeque denied the reports. Salvadoran Education Minister Cecilia Gallardo stated that 20% of public schools lack sanitary facilities, potable water, and sewage systems. Aug. 25: Panamanian Health Ministry spokespersons reported that they are studying the possibility of utilizing biodegradable bacteria to combat the spread of cholera in contaminated ponds, rivers, and septic tanks. Aug. 26: Salvadoran Health Minister Lisandro Vasquez confirmed eight cases of cholera. All victims are residents of San Salvador slums. The Salvadoran Health and Education Ministries, along with various private organizations, launched a nationwide educational cholera prevention program. Nicaraguan Health Ministry officials denied Costa Rican reports of cholera cases in Nicaragua. The ministry's epidemiology division director Larry Balladares said cholera was not detected in any of 520 persons tested thus far. Aug. 27: Guatemalan health officials reported 13 new cholera cases, raising to total to 93. In addition, 116 persons are under observation. The new cholera victims reside in southern and western Guatemala, and along the Mexican border. Panamanian Health Minister Guillermo Rolla declared a general state of alert along the Colombian and Costa Rican borders. Rolla said cholera prevention programs throughout the country had been stepped up. Aug. 28: The Panama City mayor's office prohibited bathing, fishing, and swimming in Panama Bay. The bay contains sewage, and may be contaminated by the cholera bacteria. Salvadoran deputy health minister Gustavo Argueta reported 11 confirmed cases. He added that another 144 persons are under observation. Aug. 30: Salvadoran deputy health minister Argueta reported that a 44-year-old alcoholic died from cholera in Rosales Hospital in San Salvador, marking the first cholera death in El Salvador. Argueta indicated that thus far 25 cases of cholera had been confirmed, 23 in the capital area, and two in La Paz department. According to Argueta, health authorities have commenced the shut-down of food vendors in capital city streets. He said residents had been warned about using water from contaminated rivers. Sept. 3: Guatemala Health Ministry spokesperson Irena Hernandez confirmed the first cholera fatality, a nine-year-old child, in San Antonio, Suchitepequez department. Sept. 4: Human Rights Attorney General Ramiro de Leon Carpio told reporters that test results indicated human waste contamination of milk products. (Basic data from Cerigua Weekly Briefs, 08/11-17/91; Inter Press Service, 08/21/91; World Perspectives Magazine, 08/23/91; Notimex, 08/26/91; ACAN-EFE, 08/22/91, 08/26-28/91, 09/03/91, 09/04/91; AFP, 08/24/91, 08/26/91, 08/27/91, 09/03/91; EFE, 08/25/91, 08/28/91)

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