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Panama: On Efforts To Reduce Chinese Immigration

by Deborah Tyroler

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At a Sept. 5 press conference, President Guillermo Endara asserted that large-scale Chinese immigration would not be permitted, "because we must protect Panamanians." According to Endara, the policy does not reflect Panamanian xenophobia. He pointed out that his wife and grandson are 75% and 50% Chinese, respectively. Endara said another wave of Asian immigration such as occurred over the past decade would not be permitted, because Panamanians would be displaced from retail trade. He added that it was "a pity" this area of commerce is dominated by Chinese immigrants, many of whom do not speak Spanish. An estimated 100,000 Asian immigrants reside in Panama City. Most emigrated from Taiwan. Immigration officials estimate that 5,000 undocumented Asians are living in Panama. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 09/05/91)

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