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Update On Cholera, November 19 - December 10

by Deborah Tyroler

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Nov. 19: Panamanian Health Ministry officials reported 20 deaths and 716 confirmed cases of cholera. New outbreaks of the disease have been reported on Chiman island, 30 km. southeast of Panama City, and Kuna Yula archipelago, 400 km. northeast of the capital. Nov. 21: Panamanian Health Minister Guillermo Rolla reported 21 deaths and 720 confirmed cholera cases. Rolla said the most recent fatality was recorded at Ailigandi, San Blas archipelago, 300 km. northeast of Panama City. The Minister said hundreds of indigenous Kuna are migrating to Panama and Colon departments "trying to flee from the disease." Nov. 22: Health officials in the Nicaraguan port of Bluefields, 300 km. east of Managua, declared a state of emergency because of a suspected case of cholera. The case has yet to be confirmed by the Health Ministry. Bluefields mayor Alvin Guthrie prohibited the sale of food by street vendors and requested aid from President Violeta Chamorro for cholera prevention. Nicaraguan Health Minister Ernesto Salmeron announced that the suspected cholera case in Bluefields tested negative. Nov. 25: In Guatemala City, health services director Rudy Cabrera reported at least 45 deaths and 1,063 confirmed cases of cholera. Cabrera said the epidemic is "under control." He added that the most affected areas are the capital and Escuintla department. Dec. 8: Panamanian Health Services director Jose Paredes announced that the European Economic Community (EEC) planned to finance an anti-cholera project along the Panama-Costa Rica border. Paredes said the EEC will contribute US\$3 million for the construction of latrines and potable water supplies in the area. Dec. 10: In Managua, Alvaro Ramirez, head of the Cholera Information Office, denied reports of two cholera deaths over the previous week. Guatemalan Health Minister Miguel Angel Montepeque confirmed 43 deaths, 1,293 confirmed cases, and 1,650 suspected cases of cholera since July. Citing data from a recent report by the ministry's Epidemiological Monitoring and Information Center, Montepeque also said the disease has been detected in 21 of the nation's 22 departments. No cases have been reported in El Peten department. According to Montepeque, the most affected departments are Guatemala (9 deaths and 521 confirmed cases); Escuintla (15 deaths and 258 confirmed cases); and, Retalhuleu (5 deaths and 84 confirmed cases). (Basic data from Cerigua Weekly Briefs, 11/10-16/91; ACAN-EFE, 11/18/91, 11/20/91, 11/25/91; Agence France-Presse, 11/18/91, 11/19/91, 11/21/91, 11/22/91, 12/05/91, 12/08/91, 12/10/91; Spanish news service EFE, 12/10/91; Notimex, 12/11/91)

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