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Residents Strike In Guatemala City Hospitals

by Deborah Tyroler

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Dec. 11: Hospitals were practically shut down in Guatemala City, result of a strike by residents. The residents called for a US\$1,200 bonus payment, and a US\$156 monthly salary hike. Dec. 15: Interior Ministry officials reported that five patients had died since the strike began. They said judicial procedures had been initiated for voluntary manslaughter against doctors at the Roosevelt Hospital. Health Minister Miguel Montepeque said the strike represented a violation of patients' human rights. Dec. 16: Vice President Gustavo Espina warned 300 physicians participating in strike that security forces would be called in if they attempt to prevent entry into hospitals. He said the strikers refused a government offer of a one-time payment of 1,000 quetzals (US\$200). Montepeque said he would request that the government declare the strike illegal. Dec. 19: Montepeque told reporters that the strike had been settled, and medical services resumed at the Roosevelt and San Juan de Dios hospitals in Guatemala City, and at the Cuilapa and Quetzaltenango Hospitals in Santa Rosa and Quetzaltenango departments, respectively. Montepeque said the government and the striking physicians agreed that a commission of physicians and Labor and Health Ministry representatives will be convened to examine the residents' complaints. He said that no salary hikes nor over-time payments are forthcoming. Instead, the commission is to study the feasibility of some type of compensation for the residents. The physicians in residence are students at the state-funded University of San Carlos (USAC). (Basic data from Xinhua, 12/16/91; ACAN-EFE, 12/15/91, 12/16/91, 12/19/91)

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