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Update On Cholera, December 10 - January 7
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Dec. 10: According to a report by the Guatemalan Health Ministry's epidemiological monitoring and information center, the cholera virus has been found in three waterways: Motagua river, located in central Guatemala; Suchiate river, along the Mexican border; and, Lake Amatitlan, 20 km. south of Guatemala City. Dec. 13: The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that a total of 2,536 cases of cholera had been confirmed in Guatemala. Dec. 16: Honduran Health Minister Cesar Castellanos reported one new confirmed case on the Boca del Rio Viejo island, located in the Gulf of Fonseca. Dec. 18: Honduran Health Minister Castellanos confirmed three new cases of cholera in Choluteca department, near the Gulf of Fonseca and the Salvadoran border. The minister said the disease has been spread by Salvadoran fisherfolk working in the area. Dec. 27: According to a report by the Guatemalan Health Ministry, 50 persons have died and 2,000 have been infected with cholera in Guatemala since July 1991. Health Minister Miguel Angel Montepeque reported that most cholera fatalities have occurred in the nation's southern and northwestern regions. Dec. 28: Cirilo Lawson, spokesperson for the Panamanian Cholera Control and Prevention Commission, reported two cholera deaths in Alto Bayano, 70 km. east of Panama City, and one death in Darien department, on the Colombian border. According to Lawson, 1,146 confirmed cases have been reported in Panama, 272 of which have required hospitalization. Lawson asserted that although the cholera situation is "under control," a 50,000 liter/day potable water deficit in Panama City has prompted the adoption of more serious preventive measures. Jan. 4: A Guatemalan Health Ministry communique reported 50 deaths and 1,506 confirmed cases of cholera in 1991. The disease has been reported in 187 of the nation's 365 municipalities. Salvadoran Health Minister Lisandro Vasquez reported three deaths and 352 new cases of cholera during the Dec. 28- Jan. 3 period. The new cases reside in San Salvador, La Libertad, San Vicente, and La Paz departments. Vasquez attributed the outbreak to Salvadorans' disregard of recommended sanitation measures during the New Year holiday. According to Salvadoran Health Ministry statistics, 36 deaths and 1,258 confirmed cases of cholera were recorded between Aug. 19 and Jan. 4. Jan. 7: Costa Rican health officials reported the first confirmed case of cholera in Alajuela department. The victim apparently contracted the disease while visiting Ecuador. Health Minister Carlos Castro said there is little danger of a widespread cholera epidemic since the first confirmed case was "imported," and the nation's resources and facilities are adequate to combat the disease. According to Salvadoran health officials, three deaths and 488 new cases of cholera were reported during the Dec. 21- Jan. 6 period. The Salvadoran army press office (COPREFA) reported that military units are cooperating with other government institutions to educate citizens about cholera. In addition, the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front's (FMLN) Radio Venceremos reported that rebel units have commenced an anti-cholera campaign in rebel-controlled territory. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 12/10/91; Notimex, 12/11/91, 01/04/92; Associated Press, 01/05/92; Agence France-Presse, 12/16/91, 12/18/91, 12/23/91, 12/28/91, 01/04/92, 01/07/92; ACAN-EFE, 12/23/91, 12/27/91, 12/30/91, 01/06/92, 01/07/92; Spanish news service EFE, 01/07/92)