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Deborah Tyroler

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## **Guatemala: Summary Of Peace Negotiations, August 2 - August 6**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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Aug. 2: Government negotiations commission chief Manuel Conde confirmed to reporters that a key objective of the round of talks with the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca-URNG) scheduled for Aug. 3-7 in Mexico City is the signing of a human rights agreement. He said other agenda items included participation in the negotiation process by representatives of non-governmental groups, mechanisms for advancing towards a cease fire, and demobilization of the rebels. Conde insisted that the government delegation seeks "a negotiated, political settlement, not the surrender of the guerrillas." He reiterated that the government has been "flexible regarding all negotiating points which have a constitutional base and which respond to the real situation faced by the country." The government delegation was comprised of Conde, Gens. Mario Enriquez, Marco Antonio Gonzalez, Julio Balconi, Carlos Pineda and Rafael Rosito, and civilian advisers Amilcar Burgos, Jose Luis Asencio and Manolo Bendfelt. The rebel delegation included leaders from the URNG-affiliated groups, led by Rodrigo Asturias (Gaspar Ilom). Also participating in the talks were Jean Arnault, observer and personal representative of UN Secretary General Butros Butros Ghali, and mediator Msgr. Rodolfo Quezada Toruno. Aug. 4: A delegation representing 77 Guatemalan non-governmental groups including indigenous, human rights, union, religious and popular organizations arrived in Mexico City in order to demand inclusion in the negotiations. The delegation presented participants in the talks with a proposal calling for their "direct participation" in the process. The proposal is based on previous accords reached between government and rebel negotiators including the Oslo Declaration and the Queretaro Accord which stressed the importance of participation by representatives from civil society in the talks. To date, however, no mechanisms have been adopted for such participation. Aug. 5: Sources close to the talks indicated that a major obstacle to advancing on the discussions regarding human rights was the issue of Civil Defense Patrols (Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil-PAC). According to Gen. Carlos Pineda, "the PACs were created by the subversives themselves. But [PAC members] eventually ceased believing in the [rebels'] strange ideas. The only thing the army did was go in and provide them with weapons so they could defend their communities." According to the sources, the URNG was demanding that the army suspend forced recruitment of civilians into the PACs as an indispensable element of the human rights pact. Estimates regarding the number of PAC members run as high as 500,000. Responding to reporters' questions regarding the military conflict in Guatemala, Gen. Pineda responded, "in reality the members of subversive groups are no more than about 800 individuals. They don't have any capacity whatsoever to destabilize the [Guatemalan] state. All they do is hurt the civilian population through their acts of sabotage, which don't affect the army in the least." Gen. Pineda rejected the notion that peace accords similar to the ones reached in El Salvador might be achieved in Guatemala. He said "the Guatemalan case is totally different. In El Salvador, the United Nations was able to impose its solution...the Salvadoran army was economically and militarily dependent on the US. But no government is in a position to exercise pressure on Guatemala in these negotiations." Aug. 6: According to URNG leader Pablo Monsanto, the two sides have drawn up the main points for an agreement regarding the PACs, one

of the items which had been stalling progress on a human rights accord. In declarations to reporters, Monsanto indicated that the URNG conceded that the PACs may continue to exist until a definitive end to the armed conflict is achieved. In exchange, once the human rights accord is signed, forced recruitment by the army for the PACs would immediately cease. The PACs will become volunteer-based groups under the control of local civilian, not military, authorities. Monsanto also indicated that the PACs will no longer participate in offensive military actions, but will be limited to minor local security functions. He added that one of the keys to overcoming the impasse regarding the PACs was the dropping of a demand by the military that PACs be eliminated simultaneous with the demobilization of the URNG combatants. (Sources: Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 08/02/92; United Press International, 08/03/92; Agence France- Presse, 08/01/92, 08/02/92, 08/04-06/92)

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