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22 May 2003

HND41593.E

Honduras: Whether former Nicaraguan contras have attacked or threatened local land owners in Zico, La Mosquitia or anywhere else near the Nicaraguan border; response by the state to protect those affected by contra violence (2000-May 2003)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

In a 20 May 2003 telephone interview, the Director of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Honduras (Comite para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras, CODEH), stated that he was not aware of any reports that former Nicaraguan contras have attacked or threatened local land owners in Zico, La Mosquitia or anywhere else near the Nicaraguan border. Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within time constraints.

A 23 April 2003 article in *La Tribuna* reported that the proliferation of AK-47 assault rifles, used in criminal activities in Honduras, could be traced back to when the Nicaraguan contras demobilized and sold all their weapons and ammunition to local citizens. Consequently, the National Congress has drafted a law that would prohibit the possession and use of the AK-47 rifle (*La Tribuna* 23 Apr. 2003).

With regard to state protection, *Country Reports 2002* stated:

The police forces are underfunded, undertrained, and understaffed, and corruption is a serious problem. There is widespread public frustration at the inability of the security forces to prevent and control crime. During the year, under the new administration, police and military jointly patrolled the streets and petty crime fell significantly. While gang violence and intimidation on the streets declined, gangs continued to intimidate, threaten, and rob passengers on public transportation. Kidnapings of the wealthy and well-known continued at the same rate as in 2001, but more perpetrators were identified and prosecuted compared with the previous year. While investigation into crimes improved during the year, the public continued to believe that corrupt security personnel were complicit in the high crime rate ... (31 Mar. 2003).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Comite para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras (CODEH). 20 May 2003. Telephone interview with the Director.

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002. 31 March 2003. "Honduras." U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18336pf.htm>> [Accessed 20 May 2003]

La Tribuna [Tegucigalpa]. 23 April 2003. "Bancadas acuerdan prohibir tenencia y uso de los AK-47." <<http://tribuna.icomstec.com/news/index.php?id=9421&mode=2>> [Accessed 20 May 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

IRB databases

Unsuccessful attempts in contacting the Committee of Relatives of Detained and Disappeared in Honduras (Comite

de Familiares de Detenidos - Desaparecidos en Honduras, COFADEH).

Unsuccessful attempts in contacting the National Commissioner of Human Rights in Honduras (Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras, CONADEH).

World News Connection (WNC)

Internet sites:

Amnesty International

Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras (CONADEH)

Comite para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos en Honduras (CODEH)

Human Rights Internet

Human Rights Watch

La Nacion [San Jose]

El Nuevo Diario [Managua]

La Prensa [San Pedro Sula]

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