

U.S. GOVERNMENT FUNDS SPRAYING OF DANGEROUS CHEMICALS

A Guatemalan government program of aerial spraying of pesticides and defoliants is taking a fatal toll in Indigenous communities. Among the pesticides used is one containing ethylene dibromide (EDB), banned in the U.S. since 1984 due to its properties as a potential cancer-causing agent. According to Survival International, 14 Indian campesinos, including two children, have died from drinking contaminated water.

The spraying program has generated controversy. The government says spraying is taking place to destroy plantations of marijuana and opium poppies (though some highland areas are too cold for either to grow) and to control the northward spread of the "medfly" which damages fruit crops. Opponents say the use of defoliants and pesticides is part of a Vietnam-style strategy to terrorize the Indian population, and is concentrated in areas where guerrilla activity is strongest.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Guatemala News and Information Bureau, P.O. Box 28594, Oakland, CA 94604.



INDIANS DEFY MILITARY, HOLD MEETING

From December 18th to 21st, the National Association of Salvadorean Indians (ANIS), held its World Indigenous Festival and Cultural and Spiritual Symposium in the war-torn country, despite harassment by the Salvadorean military.

According to ANIS, the indigenous peoples' organization had negotiated with both the army and the guerrillas prior to the meeting to ensure that Native representatives would not be impeded from travelling to the meeting site in Perquín, Morazán province. Though the guerrillas withdrew from the area, the army violated its agreement "to not have any armed presence in or near Perquín in order to avoid any civilian casualties," according to ANIS.

Instead, the Armed Forces set up road blocks at three-kilometer intervals and harassed those arriving for the conference. For this reason, the meeting was moved to Sonsanate, after delegates met with Indigenous people of Perquín to document "constant violations of individual human rights by the Salvadorean Armed Forces."

