

ACTION WHA-00

INFO LOG-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 CA-00 CIAE-00 CPR-00 INL-00
 DNI-00 DS-00 EUR-00 OIGO-00 FBIE-00 UTED-00 H-00
 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00 LAB-01 MOFM-00 MOF-00 NSAE-00
 ISN-00 OIC-00 OIG-00 NIMA-00 PA-00 GIWI-00 ISNE-00
 CFPP-00 SP-00 IRM-00 VO-00 FMP-00 SCRS-00 DSCC-00
 PRM-00 DRL-00 G-00 NFAT-00 SAS-00 FA-00 SWCI-00
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R 251544Z AUG 07
 FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8583
 INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE

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UNCLAS MEXICO 004553

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
 TAGS: PREF, PHUM, SMIG, KWMN, KCRM, MX, KFRD, ELAB
 SUBJECT: RR SHUTDOWN SLOWS BUT DOESN'T STOP CENTRAL
 AMERICANS HEADED NORTH

Summary: In a conversation with Poloff on August 22, officials from the National Migration Institute (INM) reported that most of the thousands of undocumented Central American migrants left stranded when two rail freight routes from southern Mexico to central Mexico closed down late July have dispersed in the past two weeks. Migrants had grouped along the Mexico-Guatemala border in Chiapas for nearly three weeks when what had been a popular and inexpensive route north toward the U.S. closed unexpectedly. The INM has deported over a thousand, and said hundreds more either returned to Guatemala voluntarily, or moved further north.
 End summary

 SOURCE OF THE PROBLEMS

1. On July 29, Connecticut-based Genesee & Wyoming Inc. pulled out of its 30-year operating concession with the GOM, citing the high cost of repairing and maintaining tracks that were heavily damaged by hurricane Stan in 2005. One of C&W's freight route ran from the southern border town of Tapachula to Salina Cruz in the state of Oaxaca; the other arced from Merida in the Yucatan through the small Chiapas community of Tenosique to Pajaritos in Tabasco state. For years, thousands

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of undocumented migrants, seeking to enter the U.S. illegally, have hopped trains along both routes. Further north, migrants then switched to freights on Mexico's main north-south rail line, or found other clandestine means to make it to staging areas in northern border states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon from which they made their final push across the border. When Genese and Wyoming closed both branch routes last month, INM estimates that between 2500 and 3,000 migrants were left temporarily stranded in near the small community of Tepisoque in Chiapas. (Media, however, reported close to 7000 stranded migrants at one point. An accurate count will probably not be forthcoming.)

2. The majority of undocumented migrants come from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. According to INM, the number of illegal migrants transiting southern Mexico had been increasing during the course of this year. (Comment: INM told poloff that it had deported 182,705 Central American migrants 2006, 46.3% were from Guatemala, 31.7% from Honduras, 14.9% El Salvador, and 2.0% from Nicaragua. It did not provide statistics supporting its claim that the numbers were increasing.)

 Situation Stabilizes, According to INM, CNDH

3. (SBU) On August 22, Poloff met with [redacted]

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[redacted] at

INM, to discuss Central American migration issues. [redacted]

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[redacted] said that 1,361 of the stranded migrants had been deported, and estimated that an unknown but significant number of Central Americans returned to their countries voluntarily. (Note: Mexican immigration officials do not document migrants who voluntarily return to their countries.)

[redacted] acknowledged, however, many migrants had left the area on foot headed north. [redacted] told Poloff that [redacted] believed remaining concentrations of Central American migrants numbered in the 100's at this point.

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4. While Mexican media reported that elements of the Mexican Army had been deployed to clear camps near Tenosique in early August (and cited allegations that troops beat and robbed migrants), INM denied that federal forces had been used to disperse the migrants. It did say that a Beta Group had been deployed to inform migrants that the freight service had been suspended and that no more trains would be coming. INM also worked through Mexican consulates in Guatemala to inform travelers of the change. Media also reported that many migrants had been beaten and robbed during their stay along

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the border. The semi-independent National Human Rights Commission's (CNDH) Tabasco director told media on August 16 he was investigating such allegations. Poloff spoke with CNDH representatives in Mexico City who confirmed the organization had received reports of abuses, but said they felt the situation in the region had stabilized. INM representatives acknowledged that they too had received reports of abuses and said that in general migrants are vulnerable targets of random violence while looking for routes north.

5. Comment: Closure of the Chiapas-Mayab train route in southern Mexico may have denied migrants a convenient route to travel north, however evidence to date suggests this closure has not produced a significant drop in migrant numbers; instead migrants are mostly seeking out alternate routes. CBP figures indicate that few have been deterred by

the more arduous trek. The number of August apprehensions of "Other than Mexicans" (mainly Centrals) along the Southwest border has increased 17% this year. End comment.

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