

Statement from Casa Quivira
August 14, 2007

We are shocked at the illegal police raid on Casa Quivira, and are working to make sure that the 45 children in our care continue to receive the high quality, professional care that we work so hard to provide.

Guatemalan authorities have accused Casa Quivira of operating an “illegal” orphanage (*casa cuna clandestina*), but we have worked under a cabinet-level approval since 1994 to legally and transparently process adoptions and to provide care for children while the adoptions are in progress. The children stay in a modern, clean facility where they are attended by experienced nannies and receive regular visits from pediatricians and a staff nurse is always on duty. Care ratio of nanny to baby is very low and each child is properly stimulated and monitored for growth as well as psycho-motor development. The children at Casa Quivira receive better care than the children in the surrounding communities, so we have also been working to build an out patient pediatric clinic that would provide basic medical care and vaccinations to children in need. We have built a strong reputation in our local community and enjoy the support of many of the families around the world that we have helped, which makes these accusations all the more painful for everyone involved with Casa Quivira.

I recognize that the US government has concerns about the way adoptions are processed by Guatemalan authorities. The reason so many parents come to us is because of our high standards for ensuring that every child’s adoption is handled in way that is fair and legal for the birthmother as well as the adoptive parents. From the time that birthmothers place their children in our care until the case is approved by the Guatemalan government birth mothers have several opportunities to change their minds. The birth mothers and the infants are required to twice undergo DNA testing at a facility approved by the US embassy. The actual sample testing is performed at a laboratory in the United States. All of this is to ensure that an infant is actually the birthmother’s child. The birthmother also undergoes a rigorous interview through the Family Court of Guatemala and the entire case is reviewed by the Solicitor General's Office (*Procuraduria General de la Nacion*) of Guatemala for final approval.

We maintain extensive files on each of the children in our care. All of the children’s documents, official certificates from the Guatemalan government regarding their adoptions, as well as the documents certifying Casa Quivira’s operations have been confiscated by the authorities. They have also taken the children’s medical records, which our doctors and nurses need to provide care to the children.

I do not know why the Guatemalan police decided to raid Casa Quivira and to malign our work and our staff. I do not understand why they fail to recognize or even mention that the statutes of Casa Quivira are duly recognized and approved

by the Ministry of Government (Ministerio de Gobernacion) of Guatemala. All of us are deeply hurt by the accusations that we would in any way mistreat or neglect any of these children. We work hard to provide the very best care possible. We believe that our adoptions are conducted in a way that positively supports the people of Guatemala. We will continue to do our best to make sure that the children are well cared for and that their adoptions can be completed with as little delay as possible.

Attached you will find a copy of the Acuerdo Ministerial dated 27 December 1994 which was later published in the *Diario Oficial*, (the official Government Record of Guatemala) This Acuerdo approves the statutes of the institution of which Casa Quivira is a project to process adoptions and provide care for children while in adoption. This is a Government Ministry (Ministerio de Gobernacion) level approval and together with the statutes is furthermore registered with the Attorney General's Office, the National Police and the Municipality of Antigua.

Clifford Phillips
Casa Quivira