

Rights suspended during drug crackdown

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GUATEMALA CITY - (AP) -- The Guatemalan government announced Tuesday that it has partially suspended constitutional rights in five cities along Mexico's border as it cracks down on drug growers and traffickers in the remote region.

Under the 15-day order, authorities have suspended the rights to carry firearms and hold meetings without authorization, and will be allowed to randomly search motor vehicles.

"We are trying to fight drug trafficking and organized crime," Interior Minister Carlos Vielman told reporters.

The order also warns the news media ``to not incite rebellion, because on previous occasions radio stations have urged people to resist the destruction of drug crops."

The operation will involve searches for poppy crops, heroin and weapons possession, and other drug crimes in the border cities of Ixchiguan, Concepcion Tutuapa, San Miguel Ixtahuacan, Tajumulco and Tejutla.

Authorities already had detained two people carrying firearms, Police Director Erwin Sperissen said.

Police officers, 21 prosecutors, two judges and 1,000 military troops will participate in an operation to combat the production of poppies, government spokeswoman Rosa Maria de Frade said.

She said Guatemalan officials also were collaborating with their Mexican counterparts to stop poppy trafficking to Mexico.

The poppies usually are cultivated in Guatemala and then transformed into heroin in laboratories on the Mexican side of the border.