

35 kids removed from Guatemala orphanage

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GUATEMALA CITY --

Authorities removed 35 babies from an adoption home catering to Americans that was raided two weeks ago and took them to several private orphanages, the government said.

A judge ordered they be taken from the Casa Quivira home on Thursday, said Suly de Ucles, an official with the President's Office of Social Welfare who is responsible for their care.

Ucles said the judge did not tell her where the babies would be taken or why they were moved after being allowed to remain at the home for nearly two weeks.

Authorities raided Casa Quivira on Aug. 11 as part of a national crackdown to bring adoption agencies in line with international standards.

Nine of the 46 children found there were hospitalized with respiratory problems, and two were turned over to their adoptive parents.

Officials allege the home, run by an American man and his Guatemalan wife, lacked the proper paperwork for the children, and are investigating whether any of them were abducted or coerced from their parents.

Casa Quivira owner Clifford Phillips of Florida and wife Sandra Gonzalez, an attorney, say all of Casa Quivira's babies have been properly turned over to it for adoption since it opened in 1996.

The U.S. has pushed for a crackdown on adoptions in Guatemala, a largely unregulated, multimillion-dollar (-euro) industry in which some brokers steal babies. More than 25,000 Guatemalan children have been placed in U.S. homes since 1990 - so many that every 100th baby born in the Central American country grows up as an adopted American.