



PR#386

PRESS RELEASE

Statement on the Recent BDF Operations Near Rio Blanco

Belmopan. July 28, 2021. 4:00 p.m.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration has received reports from the Belize Defence Force (BDF) dated July 27, 2021, of incidents that occurred July 23 and 24, 2021, in the area of Rio Blanco in southern Belize during planned operations.

On July 23 and 24, 2021, both Guatemalan soldiers and armed Guatemalan civilians entered Belizean territory near the area where the BDF was conducting their operations along with personnel of the Forest Department and Friends for Conservation and Development. The routine operations involved the destruction of fences and plantations of beans and pumpkin seeds that were verified, by the Organization of American States (OAS), to be in Belizean territory. It is reported that on July 23, 2021, there was some crossfire. A Guatemalan helicopter was also seen flying overhead.

On both days, members of the Guatemalan Army (GA) entered Belizean territory to inquire from the BDF about their operations. Following those cordial verbal exchanges, the GA personnel returned to the Guatemalan side of the border.

This multiagency operation, led by the BDF, was a routine exercise that follows an OAS verification of any activity or incident in the Adjacency Zone. The operation was carried out in full accordance with the Confidence Building Measures between Belize and Guatemala.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration is strongly protesting the incidents to Guatemalan authorities.

Ends