

## **US Lawmakers Urge Probe of CAFTA Protester Deaths**

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**Reuters News**

*WASHINGTON* - Eleven U.S. lawmakers urged the Guatemalan government on Friday to fully investigate fatal violence by security forces this week against protesters opposing a free-trade pact with the United States.

"Given the long history of the Guatemalan state's violent responses to protest, we regard official claims that police were fired upon and that the heavy-handed response was necessary ... with a healthy degree of skepticism," the 10 Democrats and one independent said in a letter to Guatemala's ambassador to the United States.

In their letter, the members of the U.S. House of Representatives said "two protesters were shot and killed by police (on Tuesday) when they fired live rounds to disperse a march of teachers and farmers near Huehuetenango.

Organizers say a male victim was shot at close range, and local hospital staff said four others were receiving emergency care for bullet wounds from police rounds, one of them in critical condition."

Reuters reported at least one person was killed in a clash on Tuesday between police and opponents of the U.S.-Central American Free Trade Agreement.

Guatemala's legislature approved the agreement last week by a vote of 126-12, with 20 lawmakers absent. John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO, the United States' largest labor organization, also called for an investigation in a separate letter to Guatemalan President Oscar Berger.

The union group strongly opposes CAFTA, which is expected to come before the U.S. Congress in the next few months. The 11 lawmakers who called for an investigation have a history of opposing trade agreements.