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Material Damage After Salvadoran Earthquake Estimated In Excess Of One Billion Dollars

by Deborah Tyroler
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As reported by Cuban news agency PRENSA LATINA (10/15/86), current estimates of the material damage caused by the Oct. 10 earthquake in San Salvador have surpassed one billion dollars. President Jose Napoleon Duarte said official reports include only estimates of "irreparable" damage, while the addition of other property damage will increase the total still further. Irreparable damages are calculated at over five billion colones, or $1.122 billion. The cost of repairing damaged industrial and commercial establishments as well as public services has yet to be estimated. Duarte told reporters, "What we lost in six years of war and economic crisis, we have lost again in six seconds of earthquake." The president issued a call for more international assistance, pointing out that there is "no way to attend to the needs of the 200,000 left homeless by the earthquake." He said medicines, food and construction materials are urgently needed, while the financial aid necessary for reconstruction is "incalculable." According to PRENSA LATINA, the government has already been accused of diverting foreign aid for earthquake victims to other purposes, and the army has reportedly appropriated surgical equipment donations for its own hospital. Catholic relief organizations have insisted in maintaining autonomy from government control over distribution of foreign aid to survivors. San Salvador's Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas has stated that the Church is devoted to serving the needy only, and distinctions as to whether individuals are "communist, Christian, or Mason" are not important.

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