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Deborah Tyroler

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El Salvador: Rebels Deliver On Promise To Escalate War After Government Rejection Of Peace Offer

by Deborah Tyroler

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The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) warned the Salvadoran government that if its peace offer was rejected, it would escalate the war. (See CAU, 01/ for accounts of the rebel proposal.) On Jan. 25, President Jose Napoleon Duarte dismissed the FMLN's offer. Jan. 27: On Friday evening, a bomb was thrown into the home of Defense Minister Gen. Eugenio Vides Casanova's mother, causing damage but no injuries. In a statement over Radio Venceremos, the FMLN said the attack was the opening salvo in response to the government rejection. Next, a car bomb exploded in a club near the presidential house in the same area where the vice president resides. Two gunmen killed Usulután department governor, Ernesto Antonio Flores Serpas. According to a UPI report, he was killed outside his home in Canton el Llano, 70 miles east of San Salvador. An AP report stated that the incident occurred in Jucuapa. The governor's secretary, Maria del Pilar Barrios, told UPI in a telephone interview that although his family "could not identify the two men who shot him, we presume they are from the FMLN because they left behind leaflets that contained their emblem." She said the leaflets indicated that Flores was killed "for not complying with our demands (to quit his post) and for collaborating with the Yankees." Flores, a Christian Democrat, was appointed to the governorship last year by President Duarte. From 1985 to 1988 when he assumed the post, Flores was mayor of a town in Usulután department. A UPI report said the town was Jucuapa, and AP, Villa El Triunfo. Officials said he was the first governor killed in the civil war. Guerrillas destroyed a truck used for transporting eggs in retribution for the government's alleged detention of union leaders Alfredo Lemus and Margarita Navarro on Jan. 26. The government would not confirm that it had arrested the union leaders. Sixty union members occupied San Salvador's Metropolitan Cathedral on Thursday night through Friday morning in protest of the arrests which reportedly occurred on Thursday afternoon in Soyapango, located outside San Salvador. Various union activists who accompanied the two said they were detained while distributing union leaflets. Jan. 30: According to rebel and military sources cited by UPI, before dawn FMLN guerrillas simultaneously attacked troops stationed in the towns of San Ignacio, El Refugio, La Palma, San Miguel de Mercedes, Concepcion Quezaltepeque, La Laguna, Dulce Nombre de Maria and Nueva Concepcion. Col. Ciro Lopez, head of the Fourth Army Brigade in Chalatenango department (about 40 miles north of San Salvador), said the attacks began around midnight and continued until 4 a.m., more than two hours before dawn. The attacks resulted in at least 21 casualties. Lopez said the rebels also attacked and captured an undetermined number of soldiers who guarded the El Poy post on the Honduran border, Chalatenango department. Hours after the attacks, the rebels called International Red Cross members in San Salvador to tell them to prepare for the return of hostages, but they did not specify when or where it would take place. The FMLN reported it killed or wounded 167 soldiers last week and destroyed 34 electrical structures throughout the country. (Basic data from UPI, 01/27/89, 01/30/89; AP, 01/27/89; Washington Post, 01/30/89; Xinhua, 01/31/89)

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