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Salvadoran Military Endorses New Procedures To Prevent Violent Incidents Against Journalists

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On April 11, the Salvadoran Armed Forces announced implementation of procedures aimed at preventing journalist victims of security measures. The procedures resulted from discussions between members of the high command and Salvadoran and foreign journalists. Under the new guidelines, soldiers must not shoot at journalists' vehicles when for any reason they do not respond to shouted orders. Next, journalists without authorization in conflict zones are not to be detained, and their equipment and materials are not to be confiscated. Henceforth, journalists' vehicles must be clearly identified, including roofs of cars and trucks. Under no circumstances are Salvadoran troops to use aircraft to fire on or otherwise harass press vehicles and their occupants. Finally, the new procedures dictate that in the event a journalist is injured, troops will provide all possible assistance to ensure that the injured receive medical attention as soon as possible. The Defense Ministry is to distribute the new instructions to all military commanders throughout the country. On the eve of the March 19 elections and on election day, three journalists were killed, and one injured by Salvadoran soldiers. Two Salvadoran journalists, Roberto Navas, photographer for Reuters, and a local television reporter, Mauricio Pineda, were shot to death in separate incidents by soldiers. The troops asserted that the drivers of the vehicles they were riding in failed to respond to shouted orders. Another Salvadoran photographer employed by Reuters, Luis Galdamez, was injured in the same incident involving Navas. He waited for two hours before receiving medical attention. Dutch TV journalist Cornelio Lagrow was shot while filming a battle between rebels and government troops in the eastern El Salvador. The immediate evacuation of the journalist to a hospital was delayed by soldiers in military aircraft who followed and harassed his colleagues' two vehicles. Lagrow died en route. (Basic data from AP, 04/11/89)

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