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Salvadoran Military Accuses Tutela Legal of Smear Campaign Against Armed Forces & ARENA; Church Denies Allegation

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On April 16, at a mass in San Salvador's cathedral, auxiliary bishop Msgr. Gregorio Rosa Chavez read from a Church statement which said that the Roman Catholic Church rejected accusations by the armed forces that its human rights office, Tutela Legal, is smearing the military and the Republican Nationalist Alliance (ARENA). The Church statement asked the military "to permit us to know the evidence behind this reckless statement." Last week the armed forces press office issued a communique accusing Tutela Legal of sponsoring a smear campaign against the military and the rightist ARENA. Rosa Chavez told worshipers that Tutela Legal "operates only according to church criteria in its labor of promoting and defending human rights criteria that are invariable no matter what party is in the government." Rosa Chavez denounced attacks by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front and security forces last week in which he said 18 civilians were killed. He described attacks on businesses by the FMLN "as condemnable as they are traditional." According to rebel and government reports, in the past two weeks the FMLN attacked at least five factories, two shops, 12 bank offices and two coffee processing plants. (Basic data from AP, 04/16/89)

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