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El Salvador: Notes On Recent Violence, Military Activities

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April 10: According to an army spokesperson, rebels wounded six civil defense guards at a coffee processing plant in a grenade attack. The attack took place outside the Beneficio El Rosario coffee processing plant in Comasagua, 17 miles southwest of San Salvador. Military spokespersons reported that two students reported missing April 5 by university and human rights groups have been arrested for taking part in urban guerrilla attacks. The April 10 report was the first official word on Mauricio Pineda and Salvador Israel Marroquin, economics students at the University of El Salvador. April 18: Military sources reported at least 12 casualties in fighting in Chalatenango and San Vicente departments. Six soldiers died and three injured in a rebel attacks in La Laguna and Concepcion Quezaltepeque, Chalatenango. The military report said two civilians were injured in these attacks. On the same day, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) reported via Radio Venceremos that government troop casualties in the above clashes were "numerous," and that guerrillas had damaged a military helicopter. Air Force spokespersons said their troops caused three rebel casualties April 17 in San Vicente department. Military sources reported that rebel sabotage caused electricity blackouts April 18 in San Salvador, and the eastern region of the country.

April 22: Defense Minister Gen. Eugenio Vides Casanova announced stepped up security measures in San Salvador to combat increasing violence by FMLN urban commandos. The minister said security forces will implement a series of special operations to locate sites where urban guerrillas plan their military and political activities. According to the general, in the last few days the armed forces were obligated to carry out search and seizure operations at the headquarters of selected trade union and civic organizations "due to denunciations by civilians who reported the presence of subversive elements in these offices." (See CAU 04/21/89 for report on arrests and confiscation of materials at three San Salvador offices.) April 27: The bodies of an Argentine physician and a French nurse, killed by the Salvadoran military on April 15 near San Ildefonso, San Vicente department, were turned over to delegations comprised of diplomats from both countries, the International Red Cross, and family members. According to the Salvadoran military, Argentine doctor Gustavo Ignacio Islas Caceres and French nurse Madelaine Languedec were "armed mercenaries" working with the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). The military press office claimed to have launched a successful attack on a rebel unit, causing the deaths of eight rebels, including the two foreigners. The FMLN reported that the Air Force bombed a field hospital, and that the reported death toll included not only the two foreign medical workers, but wounded rebels. The rebels also reported an unspecified number of civilian deaths in the attack on the field hospital. (See CAU 04/21/89.) On the same day, journalists and representatives of Tutela Legal (human rights legal aid office run by the San Salvador Catholic Archdiocese) said Salvadoran troops would not permit them access to the site of the killings at any time following the incident, including on April 27 to observe the procedure involving the foreign delegations. Tutela Legal filed a legal complaint, protesting that its investigators were barred from carrying out examination of the bodies and the site of the attack. The human rights office said they needed evidence to determine whether the military had attacked a "rebel military unit," or a field hospital. [The Geneva Convention and other international human rights agreements (to which El Salvador is a signatory) prohibit military attack against hospitals.
and medical personnel.] (Basic data from Miami Herald, 04/11/89; Notimex, 04/18/89, 04/22/89; AP, 04/27/89)

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