Salvadoran Rebels Launch Major Offensive

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On May 10, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) launched an offensive with attacks against military positions in 16 towns, located in seven of the country's 14 departments. According to the FMLN, the early morning push was aimed at demonstrating the rebels' military capabilities to the Republican Nationalist Alliance (ARENA). Rebel station Radio Venceremos said the drive was called "Everyone Against ARENA in the Fight for Peace." ARENA president-elect Alfredo Cristiani is to take office June 1. The FMLN has claimed that an ARENA government will result in more extreme polarization and an increase in repression of political opponents. The rebels say the military and ARENA have already targeted members of progressive organizations in a campaign of assassinations, arrests and searches. At a news conference in Managua, FMLN commander Nidia Diaz said guerrillas killed or wounded 67 Salvadoran army officers and enlisted men. She said guerrillas also blew up power lines and carried out other acts of sabotage. Unidentified sources cited by AP said attacks damaged at least two telecommunications offices, two coffee processing plants, a gasoline station, six homes and several electricity poles and towers. According to Notimex, the gasoline station and mayoralty offices were destroyed in El Congo, Santa Ana department. The sabotage of the coffee processing plants took place in Santiago de Marta. Next, in an attack on the 3rd Infantry Brigade headquarters in San Miguel, the rebels hit a gasoline storage dump with mortar fire. According to an armed forces communique, about 2,800 gallons of fuel burned. Military sources reported 16 rebel casualties, eight soldiers dead and five wounded in the heaviest fighting, a four-hour clash in Tejutepeque, 37 miles northeast of San Salvador. These sources said five homes were damaged when rebels directed mortar fire against a civilian defense post in Aguilares, 20 miles north of San Salvador. The same reports said the guerrillas suffered another 23 casualties in San Pedro Monoalco, against one soldier killed and two wounded. A rebel report said 13 soldiers were killed or wounded in Anamoros, 118 miles northeast of San Salvador. Late Wednesday, Radio Venceremos reported that the military had suffered nearly 100 casualties throughout the day. Major battles took place in Cabanas, Usulutan, San Miguel and La Paz departments. (Basic data from Notimex, AP, 05/10/89)

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