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El Salvador: Update On Rebel Offensive; FMLN Announces Transport Strike On Inauguration Day

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On May 25, rebel spokespersons called several local radio stations to say the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) had launched coordinated attacks on four military and police posts in the capital city area. The actions, said the callers, were part of an offensive called "All Against ARENA. We're Going to Win." At dusk on May 25, rebels attacked the 1st Army Brigade headquarters. According to Brigade commander Col. Orlando Zepeda, four men aboard a jeep fired US-made M-69 grenades and Soviet-made RPG-18 rocket-propelled grenades into the brigade headquarters. Six of seven projectiles landed inside the base perimeter, he said, causing property damage but no casualties. The commander said rebels attacking the base with rifle fire engaged in combat with soldiers, resulting in the deaths of six rebels. He said five militarized National Police, one army soldier and three civilians were wounded. The fighting was reportedly the heaviest in the capital in at least a year. Col. Zepeda said combat in the neighborhoods of Zacamil, Mejicanos and around the Transit Police headquarters erupted after police and soldiers clashed with retreating guerrillas. According to the colonel, about 30 rebels participated in the attack. Rebel sources have said a military offensive launched this week was aimed at pressing the new government for a negotiated political solution to the civil war. President-elect Alfredo Cristiani of the rightist Republican Nationalist Alliance (ARENA) is to take office June 1. Earlier Thursday, a communique by the FMLN high command announced a nationwide transport ban for the inauguration. "We call on all our units to enforce the ban and the people to observe it in repudiation of this government from the moment of its inception," said the communique. The transport ban is scheduled to begin at 12:01 a.m. May 31. Previous bans have lasted three days on average. Rebel units were ordered to carry out reprisals against vehicles defying the order. The army high command reported Thursday that government troops had killed at least 21 rebels in separate combat on May 24. On May 24, the FMLN continued sabotage attacks on the country's electricity grid. Three sub-stations near the eastern city of Usulutan were bombed. Blackouts plagued San Salvador for the third consecutive day. (Basic data from AP, AFP, Reuters, 05/25/89; Notimex, 05/24/89)

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