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Salvadoran Rebels Reject New Government's "dialogue Initiative"; Suspend Transport Ban

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In a June 3 communique broadcast on Salvadoran radio stations, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) rejected President Alfredo Cristiani's proposal for "dialogue" as a call to surrender. During his inauguration speech June 1, Cristiani suggested that the FMLN be demobilized under the auspices of the regional peace plan. His offer for talks was premised on a pledge not to negotiate changes in the political system, but rather to "integrate" the rebels into civilian life. In the communique, the rebels said they were ready to negotiate a political solution to the war, but that Cristiani’s suggestion did not provide an opportunity to do so. Prior to the inauguration, the FMLN issued its own proposal, inviting Salvadoran opposition political parties to sponsor a peace dialogue. The rebels said Cristiani is attempting to project "an image acceptable to the United States and the European community, but the content of his speech was predominantly confrontation, strictly faithful to the politics and economics of ARENA" (Nationalist Republican Alliance). Next, the rebel broadcast declared that Cristiani has appointed notorious members of death squads to his cabinet. The FMLN said Deputy Interior Minister Carlos Figueiroa Villalta had led rightist terror groups responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of union members, farmers, teachers, students, journalists and opposition politicians in the early 1980s. Vice President Francisco Merino, also named interior minister, was described as a participant in organizing death squads. Two other members of the cabinet, ARENA founders Ramon Gonzalez Suvillaga and Sigfrido Ochoa Perez, said the FMLN, control paramilitary structures that will lend legitimacy to death squads. On the same day, the FMLN lifted a transport ban initiated May 31. On Friday, guerrillas reportedly damaged or destroyed five vehicles and dynamited power transformers and electrical transmission towers. No injuries were reported. The country’s 245 gas stations were also forced to remain closed for fear of rebel reprisals. (Basic data from AP, Notimex, 06/03/89; New York Times, 06/02/89)

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