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In a communique released June 15, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) denied any responsibility in the June 9 assassination of presidency minister Jose Antonio Rodriguez Porth. Salvadoran government officials and members of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) have told the press that FMLN rebels trained in Nicaragua attacked Rodriguez. In their communique, the rebels said the government had "no circumstantial evidence, or any other proof, that links us" to the assassination. According to the FMLN statement, the government's accusations constituted only another "justification" for the "false commotion within ARENA ranks, when we all know of ARENA's responsibility for innumerable crimes such as the murder of Msgr. Oscar Arnulfo Romero, and members of the executive committee of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR)...." The communique continued as follows: "We have noted the silence of [former] major Roberto D'Aubuisson in relation to the killing of Rodriguez Porth." The FMLN pointed out that the murder occurred in the midst of a "struggle for control of the party between the business sector and d'Aubuisson followers." According to the rebel statement, the power struggle within ARENA led to a dispute about President Alfredo Cristiani's appointment of defense minister. Rodriguez Porth, said the FMLN, intervened in this dispute against the general (Bustillo) favored by the d'Aubuisson faction for the cabinet position. Next, the FMLN communique stated that the minister's death has been used as the reason for a series of cries for broadening the war. Examples cited were former colonel Sigfrido Ochoa's request that the government "fight fire with fire"; Vice President Francisco Merino's death threats leveled at opposition leaders; and, actions by some ARENA politicians to implement additional repressive legislation. The communiqué stated: "Responsibility for the upsurge in violence and deepening of the war...is the government's, and not ours." Finally, the FMLN reiterated that "reprisals against the opposition movement" will be met by "firm and decisive action." This week, rebel commandos have reportedly bombed several banks and private businesses in San Salvador. (Basic data from Notimex, 06/15/89)

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