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El Salvador: Rebels Launch Attacks In Several Departments

by Deborah Tyroler

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At about 2 a.m. on the morning of Sept. 26, Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) units attacked the 4th Army Detachment barracks in San Francisco Gotera, capital of Morazan department, and the 1st Army Detachment barracks in Chalatenango, capital of the department of the same name. According to rebel station Radio Venceremos, FMLN units also attacked a military barracks in the capital of Cabanas department, and military posts in San Salvador and in several towns in Morazan, San Miguel, La Union, Usulutan, La Paz, San Vicente, Chalatenango, and Cuscatlan departments. According to a report by AFP, at least 14 rebels and soldiers were killed. A broadcast by Radio Venceremos early in the day said rebels captured six soldiers and killed several others in the fighting. A military spokesperson confirmed the rebel attacks and reported that four soldiers were wounded in the attack in San Francisco Gotera. He said the rebels destroyed part of an airstrip at the edge of the city. According to the spokesperson, troops killed 14 rebels in fighting near the town of Tejutla, in Chalatenango. Ciro Lopez Roque, commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade in Chalatenango, said the FMLN's intent was "to give the impression that it is capable of simultaneous attacks in several locations, but in reality these attacks are little more than harassment." Later in the day, Radio Venceremos said the operation was in response to "acts of provocation by the government and the army" since the mid-September preliminary talks in Mexico City. The provocative acts include the recent bombings of Torola, Guazapa and Perquin; the arrest of 140 labor union members; military surveillance of union headquarters; maintenance of a military cordon surrounding the country's major university; and stepped up military operations throughout the country during the FMLN's unilateral Sept. 13-23 ceasefire. Radio Venceremos reported that in San Sebastian, La Union department, rebels attacked the 3rd Brigade, where they captured three soldiers. At the Tres Rios cooperative in La Paz department, the FMLN destroyed three military aircraft. The cooperative is kept under heavy military surveillance. On Tuesday evening, Radio Venceremos broadcast a report by the FMLN claiming that the rebels had caused a total of 223 casualties, and captured nine prisoners. The FMLN, said the report, sustained 11 casualties. FMLN commander Joaquin Villalobos was quoted as saying that El Salvador's civil war cannot be ended on the basis of statements proclaiming democracy by persons who have created and maintained dictatorships. The armed struggle, he said, will cease only when solutions proposed by the FMLN are implemented. According to Villalobos, the potential for establishing a fascist dictatorship in El Salvador is increasing. The FMLN, he said, is doing its part to stop fascism and create a real democracy. The FMLN commander asserted that peace will come to El Salvador after democracy is established, and not before. (Basic data from AFP, Notimex, 09/26/89)

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