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Salvadoran Rebel Offensive & Related Developments: Summary Of Events & Statements, Nov. 16-17

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[See CAU 11/15/89 and 11/17/89 for details on earlier events mentioned below.] Nov. 16: AFP reported that Salvadoran government sources had told its correspondents that the Guatemalan army had sent 126 counterinsurgency specialists to assist them in quashing the FMLN offensive. Nov. 17: According to UN spokesperson Francois Giuliani, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar called for an immediate stop to the fighting, and expressed shock at the murders of the six Jesuit priests. In Brussels, the European Community announced approval of \$330,000 in emergency aid for El Salvador to be channeled through the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the French private agency Doctors Without Borders. The aid includes medical equipment and supplies. In Havana, Deputy Foreign Minister Ricardo Alarcon expressed solidarity with the FMLN, and said that despite US aid, the Salvadoran government is condemned to failure. Questioned about Cuban arms shipments to the FMLN, Alarcon said that the FMLN does not depend on foreign arms shipments. He described statements appearing in the international press on recent Cuban weapons shipments to the FMLN as a "fiction." At a press conference in San Salvador, Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas announced that the Church had offered its good offices to serve as mediator in a truce. Representatives of the FMLN consulted by the Church hierarchy said they would publicize their acceptance of Church mediation. The government of President Alfredo Cristiani at first said it would respond to the Church offer "within a few hours." However, no official response occurred. The Church also denounced the capture of 17 foreigners pertaining to a Lutheran mission, and aerial bombings of densely populated residential areas. [According to AP, most of 12 Lutheran missionaries captured by security forces on Nov. 16 were released Friday.] Next, the Church condemned accusations aired by the military-controlled media against clergypersons. In statements aired over the government-controlled national radio during the previous weekend, the six Jesuit priests killed on Thursday, as well as the archbishop and auxiliary archbishop Msgr. Gregorio Rosa Chavez, were labeled as communists. On Thursday, 1st Infantry Brigade soldiers used megaphones to shout in the streets similar statements regarding communist and subversive tendencies of certain members of the clergy. North of the Archbishopric, the soldiers were heard yelling, "Ignacio Ellacuria and Martin-Baro have already fallen. We continue killing communists." Archbishop Rivera y Damas said the message was clearly heard. US Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Bernard Aronson told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he believed right-wing forces were responsible for the killings of the Jesuit priests. The hearing was repeatedly interrupted by protesters shouting criticism of US policy toward El Salvador. (Basic data from Xinhua, Notimex, AP, AFP, 11/17/89)

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