

11-22-1989

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Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Salvadoran Rebel Offensive & Related Developments: Summary Of Events & Statements, Monday, Nov. 20." (1989). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/3553>

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Salvadoran Rebel Offensive & Related Developments: Summary Of Events & Statements, Monday, Nov. 20

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Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, November 22, 1989

AP reported that troops from the elite Beloso battalion fought guerrillas in the eastern San Salvador suburb of Soyapango. Sporadic fighting was reported in the Merliot suburb west of the capital. Rebels had departed from most areas of the city, and were reportedly returning to mountain strongholds. There was heavy fighting in Apopa, north of San Salvador, and about halfway along the retreat route for rebels returning to strongholds on Guazapa mountain. AFP reported that fighting in the Soyapango and Ciudad Delgado neighborhoods was sporadic, with the heaviest combat recorded in the suburb of Merliot. According to the French news service, although the army had tried to surround the rebels in Soyapango, the guerrillas appeared to have disappeared into crowds of refugees fleeing to emergency relief centers. Throughout the metropolitan area, public employees worked to remove barricades set up during the fighting and to restore electrical service. The Associated Press noted that in San Salvador, stores, shops and other businesses were open and service stations were selling gasoline for the first time since last week. Late Monday, reporters in the city of San Miguel were cited by AP (11/21/89) as saying that rebels had pulled out of all previously held positions. AFP cited US Embassy figures: more than 70,000 people have died in the civil war, including 1,287 in the past week of fighting. Organization of American States Secretary General Joao Baena Soares arrived in San Salvador, heading a delegation charged with attempting to mediate a truce in the fighting, and assist the rebels and the government to resume political negotiations. In Mexico City at a press conference, Berto Canas, member of the FMLN's political-diplomatic commission, said the rebels are ready to meet with Baena Soares. Canas dismissed the notion that the rebels had been pushed back by the Salvadoran military in the capital, saying that they had only changed their strategy. Next, Canas stated that the Salvadoran officials' request to the Vatican to withdraw priests from the country "is a death threat against clergymen whom the government accuses of being guerrilla ideologues." The spokesperson said that US pilots and advisers are in El Salvador and are supporting the Salvadoran military. Canas concluded by pointing out that the exacerbation of the war which has cost over 80,000 lives in the last nine years has made the country ungovernable. Just after dawn, National Guard troops raided the Episcopal church in San Salvador and arrested several foreigners. The church has sheltered about 200 refugees. All persons detained worked in the church's social services program, said an unidentified church worker cited by AP. According to the church worker, nine Salvadorans and seven foreigners were taken to Treasury Police headquarters. In a later report, AP cited a church worker as saying that director of the Episcopal church's relief program, Juan Antonio Luis Quinonez, his wife, Ana Rivera de Quinonez, and a lay worker, Francisco de Paz, were arrested Sunday in their homes. The foreigners arrested Monday included one US citizen, a Canadian citizen, a Colombian citizen, a Guatemalan citizen, and three Spanish citizens. The church worker said they probably would be deported. AP noted that other foreign workers, including a dozen Lutheran missionaries, have been arrested and expelled from the country recently. The news agency reported that security forces raided at least seven churches or church schools Sunday and Monday. According to church officials, workers and witnesses, church workers and war refugees they sheltered were questioned and the buildings

were searched for arms, ammunition and medicine. In an early report, AFP said National Guard troops had raided an Episcopal church and arrested six foreigners and two Salvadorans. President Bush said restricting aid to El Salvador would mean "abandoning a fragile democracy." The House of Representatives voted 215-194 to keep a restriction on US aid to El Salvador from being added to a foreign aid bill. In Chicago during a Republican fund-raising luncheon, President Bush was challenged by hecklers who insisted that he explain US aid to the Salvadoran government. Police escorted four hecklers from the room. Three of the protesters were identified as Roman Catholic nuns by a colleague. On Monday evening, three members of the National Police conducted a 20-minute search of the room of Joseph Gannon, a US reporter who works for Canada's MacLean magazine, at the Camino Real Hotel. The police said they found nothing incriminating among his possessions. AP reported that Gannon was picked up Sunday as he was leaving the Soyapango area of San Salvador and spent the day under arrest at the National Police. He was released on orders of Treasury Police commander Col. Heriberto Hernandez. Opposition members of the Canadian parliament requested that the government act to pressure Washington and the Organization of American States to resolve the Salvadoran conflict through political negotiations. Late Monday, Col. Rene Emilio Ponce, head of the joint chiefs of staff, toured a neighborhood in the eastern district of Soyapango. He claimed a number of foreigners, including US citizens, were among guerrillas killed during the fighting but gave no details. AP (11/21/89) cited other unidentified sources who said at least several dozen Latin Americans, Europeans and US citizens were fighting with the guerrillas. In a news analysis piece, AP correspondent in El Salvador, Douglas Grant Mine, wrote that the rebel offensive "left no doubt about the Salvadoran guerrillas' military capacity and drove home their point that serious negotiations and government concessions are necessary to end the 10-year-old civil war." Mine noted that last week, retired US Army Gen. Fred Woerner told the AP: "I hold the FMLN in high regard professionally." The war, he said, "cannot be resolved militarily," and that the rebels cannot be overcome until the roots of the conflict extreme wealth inequity and pervasive social injustice are addressed. Woerner drew up a strategic plan for the war in El Salvador in 1981 and was head of the US Southern Command in Panama until the end of September. (Basic data from several reports by AP, 11/20/89, 11/21/89; AFP, 11/20/89; Notimex, 11/20/89, Xinhua, 11/21/89)

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