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U.S. Episcopalian Bishops Travel To El Salvador

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Dec. 5, Episcopalian bishops William Frey of Colorado and David Reed of Kentucky arrived in San Salvador aboard a commercial flight from Miami. Immigration officials told them their visas were invalid, and put them on a flight back to Miami. On Wednesday, Frey and Reed and another bishop, William Swing of California, succeeded in flying into San Salvador and were permitted to remain. Frey said President Alfredo Cristiani sent a letter by telefax apologizing for the previous day's problems. Reed told reporters, "It's basically a pastoral visit, to come and be with our people, identify ourselves with whatever problems they happen to be going through, to strengthen them and encourage them in any way we can. We also are aware of the fact that some of our people are detained and we want to see what we can do to help them." Fifteen members of the Salvadoran Episcopal Church were arrested in November on suspicion of subversion. Six were released, and nine were sent to Mariona Prison on charges of complicity with an insurgent attack Oct. 30 on the Defense Ministry complex several blocks from the Episcopal church. Those imprisoned included Rev. Luis Serrano, the head of the church in El Salvador. In a prison interview this week, Serrano told AP that two trucks used by rebels in the attack were parked the night of Oct. 29 on Episcopal Church grounds. The rebels driving the trucks, he said, forced their way in at gunpoint and held the people there hostage overnight before carrying out the attack the next morning. (Basic data from AP, 12/07/89)

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