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El Salvador: Notes On Recent Fighting

by Deborah Tyroler

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Dec. 8: According to official sources, government troops backed by air support launched a counteroffensive to retake positions that had been seized by rebels in the Ciudad Delgado and Soyapango neighborhoods of the capital. Rebels dynamited eight main power lines, cutting off half San Salvador's normal supply, and electricity was being rationed to industrial users Friday, the national power company said. The Rio Lempa Hydroelectric Company said rebel sabotage had caused severe service disruptions in San Salvador and elsewhere. Military sources reported that in Tecoluca, San Vicente department, rebels took over a section of El Litoral highway where they pulled over five trucks belonging to a ranch and burned them. The rebels also forced over other vehicles in an attempt to enforce a travel ban and opened fire on one passenger bus that did not stop, wounding five civilians. Next, the army press office said rebels attacked government forces early Friday in Chalatenango department. It said 17 guerrillas and one soldier were killed. The press office said that rebels set fire to the city hall, telephone office and a gasoline station in El Transito, 75 miles southeast of the capital, but no casualties were reported. Jorge Villacorta, a leader of the leftist Social Christian People's Movement, said police held him for more than 12 hours Wednesday night and Thursday morning and accused him of belonging to the FMLN. He told reporters, "They didn't interrogate me to obtain information; they accused me of belonging to the FMLN and humiliated me and beat me." "I left there yesterday at noon and went to the International Red Cross after they made me sign a blank piece of paper and put my fingerprints on it. I don't know what fabrication will appear as testimony I never gave." The Salvadoran government extended for another 30 days a state of siege approved after the Nov. 11 rebel offensive began. Dec. 10: An army press office report said that in La Paz department, rebels clashed with soldiers of the Jiboa Batallion, resulting in 10 casualties. Fighting was also reported in Chalatenango, San Miguel and Morazan departments. On Sunday night, rebels attacked a local police post and telephone company offices in Tonacatepeque, northeast of San Salvador. Fighting was reported on the outskirts of Soyapango, and on a plantation in Antiguo Cuscatlan, on the northern edge of the capital. Dec. 11: Official sources reported clashes between troops and rebels on the outskirts of the capital and elsewhere throughout the country. In La Paz department, fighting continued. (Basic data from AP, AFP, 12/08/89; Notimex, 12/11/89)

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