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El Salvador: On Recent Fighting, Sabotage

by Deborah Tyroler

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May 26: Government officials reported that three primary transmission towers were destroyed by rebels early Saturday morning in northern Usulután department. Spokespersons for the state-run Rio Lempa hydroelectric power company (CEL) said rebel actions in the village of Mercedes Humana caused the imposition of rationing in several locations in eastern El Salvador. Official sources said eight pylons were destroyed Thursday night by urban commandos in San Salvador. The dynamite explosions caused a temporary blackout in the Miramonte, Flor Blanca and San Luis neighborhoods. The armed forces press committee reported that two rebels were killed Friday in fighting in the village of San Gerardo, San Miguel department. In a broadcast on their clandestine Radio Venceremos, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) reported 29 troop casualties in several clashes occurring on May 25. June 2: In a report broadcast by Radio Venceremos, the FMLN claimed to have caused 362 troop casualties during the month of May. In addition, the rebels destroyed one helicopter and damaged six others; and, destroyed three military trucks, two civil defense installations, and 60 electricity grid components. Cmdr. Jorge Melendez (Jonas) said the June 1 resumption of guerrilla sabotage and attacks on military targets was motivated by an attempt to demand that the government and the military participate in good faith in negotiations for a political solution to the conflict. The FMLN accused the army of launching a nationwide offensive on May 16 at the same time government and rebel delegations had commenced peace talks in Venezuela. Melendez, member of the FMLN command in Morazan department, asserted that the government's first step in bringing democratization to El Salvador must be demilitarization. Clashes on Friday and Saturday, said the FMLN, resulted in about 50 troop casualties. Armed forces sources reported that eight soldiers had been killed, and five wounded. Rebels attacked guard posts at the Public Security Academy in Ciudad Merliot, 7 km. west of San Salvador. No casualties were reported. In Chalatenango department, rebels attacked Treasury Police units. No casualties were reported. June 4: Attorney Jose Armando Pena, was shot to death while driving his car on a San Salvador street. According to police, he had no known political or ideological affiliation. On Monday morning in downtown San Salvador, suspected rebel commandos fired automatic weapons at an army lieutenant in a car. The officer was seriously wounded. Late Monday afternoon, a communique by the Salvadoran joint chiefs of staff said that in the past 24 hours guerrilla sabotage of electricity grid equipment and clashes with troops had caused the deaths of at least four, and 22 wounded. Seven metal towers suspending primary transmission lines, said the communique, had been dynamited between on Sunday night and before dawn on Monday near Quezaaltepeque, 25 km. northwest of San Salvador. Also on Monday morning, guerrillas destroyed electricity pylons in San Salvador, San Vicente and Santa Ana, resulting in black-outs. The communique said that in fighting with troops near the village of Nueva Concepcion, Chalatenango department, two rebels died and six were wounded. In Apopa, 12 km. north of the capital, the military report said one soldier died and five were wounded in a rebel ambush. Next, one soldier died and seven were wounded in another guerrilla ambush on a highway in western El Salvador. Early Monday morning, four National Police agents were wounded in a rebel attack in the city of Suchitoto, 44 km. northeast of San Salvador. (Basic data from Notimex, 05/26/90, 06/02/90; AFP, 06/02/90, 06/04/90)

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