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El Salvador: Comments On Rebel Strategy, Next Round Of Peace Talks

by Deborah Tyroler

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Oct. 8: President Alfredo Cristiani told reporters that changes in the nation's constitution are not subject to negotiations with the rebels. The constitution, he said, belongs to "the people," not the government. The president stated that legislative mechanisms for amending the constitution exist. His party, the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) holds an absolute majority in the national legislature. Oct. 9: In statements to reporters, Justice Minister Oscar Santamaria said the government is willing to discuss military topics with the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) at the next round of peace talks, scheduled to take place next month in Mexico. He said, "We have been very clear. We are willing to discuss qualitative and quantitative restructuring [of the army], but not its existence." Radio Farabundo Marti broadcast statements by German Serrano, rebel commander in Chalatenango department, said the FMLN was capable of launching a new military offensive to apply pressure on the government to offer serious proposals at peace talks. Vice President Francisco Merino and several military officers asserted recently that the rebels are weak, since they lack popular support and have been isolated internationally. Oct. 10: ACAN-EFE reported that in a recent statement, FMLN commander Emilio Mena Sandoval said rebel leaders have "few expectations" for the next round of talks. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 10/09/90, 10/10/90; EFE, 10/09/90)

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