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El Salvador: Notes On Recent Fighting, Rebels' "limited Offensive"

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Nov. 13: Rebels attacked power lines causing blackouts throughout the country. The state-run electricity company reported that the nation-wide power deficit averaged 23% during daylight hours, and 27% at night. Rebels bombed two telephone booths in San Salvador. The armed forces press office (COPREFA) reported that one soldier died and two more were injured when an army patrol clashed with guerrillas in San Salvador. Four civilians were wounded and a home destroyed. COPREFA reported that two guerrillas died in fighting in Chinameca, and another rebel was killed in San Vicente department. Nov 14: Rebels launched an attack on army units in Usulután department. The rebels called the attack "The November Heroes," in memory of those who died in the rebel offensive last year. In a report broadcast by Radio Venceremos, the FMLN claimed that 14 soldiers died and 34 were injured. The rebels also reported confiscation of 15 M-16 rifles, two M-60 machineguns, three grenade launchers, among other weapons. The COPREFA reported that seven soldiers were killed, and another 15 wounded. Nov. 18: In a Radio Venceremos broadcast, the FMLN reported that during the Nov. 10-17 period, the army suffered 96 casualties. In addition, the rebels reported destruction of 68 electricity grid components. The state-run electricity company reported that in the past week, rebels destroyed nine major electricity lines causing major blackouts in the capital and the eastern region of the country. Nov. 20: Shortly after midnight, the FMLN launched coordinated attacks in seven of the country's 14 departments. A rebel communique released in Mexico City and elsewhere described the offensive as one of "limited objectives," and was intended to pressure the government into negotiating an end to the war. Fighting in San Francisco Gotera, capital of Morazan department, continued until mid-day. In the capital city of Chalatenango clashes throughout the day resulted in 28 civilian and military casualties, including eight dead and 20 wounded. Power blackouts affected the area, and all business activities were shut down. Rebel units attacked the Ilopango airforce base on the outskirts of the capital, causing damage to one plane and a paratrooper dormitory. Air Force Gen. Rafael Villamariona said four soldiers were wounded during the mortar attack. Damages were also reported at 15 military posts within a 15-mile radius of San Salvador, including the towns of San Jose Guayabal, Suchitoto, Nejapa, Apopa and Quetzaltepeque. Water and electricity were cut off in Apopa and the surrounding area. Rebels burned a coffee plantation in Nejapa. In Quezaltepeque, 25 km. northeast of San Salvador, rebels destroyed two bank offices. According to the state-run electricity company, rebels sabotaged electrical installations and power lines affecting about two-thirds of the nation. In La Paz department, the FMLN attacked a cotton cooperative, and destroyed three crop dusting planes. Three soldiers were wounded. Rebels set up a road block on the Troncal del Norte highway linking San Salvador and Chalatenango. The army reported that attempts to dislodge the rebels resulted in five soldiers wounded, and the death of one civil defense member. Military sources said rebels had sought refuge Tuesday evening in tenement houses located in the Zacamil neighborhood, northern San Salvador, after attacking a National Police barracks with mortars and gunfire. On Tuesday morning, COPREFA reported 50 rebel and soldier casualties in the first seven hours of fighting. Later in the day, the toll had increased to 26 dead and over 115 wounded, based on reports

by military and civilian sources. Still later, "preliminary reports" indicated 30 deaths and over 175 wounded during Tuesday's fighting. Rebel sources reported over 200 military casualties. On Tuesday evening, Defense Minister Col. Rene Emilio Ponce reported that 12 soldiers had been killed and 66 wounded. He added that 10 rebels had died, and an indeterminate number had been wounded. The minister said the rebels were responsible for setting fire to International Red Cross ambulances during fighting in Chalatenango. Rebel radio broadcasts said the ambulances burst into flame as a result of "indiscriminate" launching of projectiles by the soldiers. Nov. 21: At dawn Wednesday, rebels attacked the National Guard post in the village of Sesorí, 153 km. east of San Salvador, San Miguel department. No casualties were reported. In Zaragoza, La Libertad department, 30 km. southwest of the capital, the rebels attacked the local military command post. Two civil defense members were wounded. The Agence France Presse reported over 200 casualties resulting from the new offensive, including 30 deaths. (Basic data from AFP, 11/13/90, 11/16/90, 11/20/90, 11/21/90; Notimex, 11/18/90, 11/20/90; AP, 11/20/90)

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