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El Salvador: Update On Rebels' "limited Offensive"

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

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Nov. 27: According to a report by the armed forces press agency (COPREFA), at 11:30 p.m. rebels attacked army units stationed at the Mariona Penitentiary in San Salvador with mortar and rifle fire. An inmate and two soldiers were killed, and two soldiers seven inmates wounded. Mariona houses political prisoners. Nov. 28: Salvadoran Ambassador to the UN Mauricio Granillo said that thus far the offensive has caused 233 deaths, including 25 civilians, and 510 wounded. At dawn, rebel units attacked military positions in Suchitoto, Cuscatlan department, located 44 km. east of San Salvador. No casualties were reported. A car bomb exploded 200 m. from the Presidential Palace in San Salvador. The explosion, which police attributed to the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), caused no casualties. Rebels dynamited three electricity pylons in different locations in the capital. In a communique released in San Salvador, the FMLN warned that military actions would continue, and that "dark days" were ahead for the armed forces. The rebels also cautioned coffee, cotton and sugar growers that if they fail to comply with wage rates established by the FMLN their plantations will be targeted for attack. The FMLN reported that the army had suffered 600 casualties in the past week, and that rebels had destroyed or damaged 12 aircraft and nine tanks. The report also said the rebels had confiscated dozens of weapons. Military officials said the army has compiled a list of all of the residents living in the immediate vicinity of the 1st Infantry Brigade, located in the capital, in an effort to forestall rebel infiltration and attack. Similar measures have been adopted to protect military garrisons in other areas of the country. The government denied FMLN allegations of a plan to assassinate political opposition, and religious and popular movement leaders. The allegations came in the form of a communique distributed to the UN Secretary General, the US Congress, the US State Department, and Latin American and European governments. In a letter to UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, US Ambassador to the UN Thomas Pickering urged the secretary general to personally intercede for an end to the rebel offensive as requested Nov. 24 by the Central American Security Commission (see CAU 11/28/90). Nov. 29: COPREFA reported fighting at coffee plantations on the outskirts of Santa Elena, Usulután department. Three soldiers were killed, and eight wounded. According to COPREFA, 31 rebels have been killed and 52 were wounded in fighting in the area since Monday. COPREFA reported one soldier wounded in a rebel attack on a military post in San Ramon, located on the outskirts of San Salvador. The FMLN called on Salvadoran political parties and popular organizations to urge the president to remove military posts from densely populated areas or away from schools, workplaces, and recreation centers to avoid civilian casualties. The rebels said the military uses civilians as shields for their activities. The FMLN has repeatedly called on civilians to move from neighborhoods surrounding military installations. (Basic data from AFP, 11/28/90, 11/29/90; Notimex, 11/29/90)

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