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El Salvador: Update On Rebels' "limited Offensive"

by Deborah Tyroler

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Nov. 29: The military press office (COPREFA) reported that two civilians were injured when rebels bombed an electricity pylon in the southwestern sector of San Salvador. Nov. 30: In a Radio Venceremos broadcast, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) reported that rebels had used small firearms to shoot down an air force helicopter in Cuscatlan department. Witnesses cited by the Agence France Presse said that in San Salvador near the University of El Salvador campus, rebels tossed a grenade at an army tank, resulting in the death of one soldier and serious injuries to two others. The FMLN reported that the grenade explosion caused six casualties. Following the attack, classes were suspended for the day. Emergency medical workers in San Salvador reported that a rebel attempt to blow up a vehicle transporting police officers failed, injuring four civilians. COPREFA reported the following casualties: one rebel was killed in Chalatenango department; one rebel died in fighting in San Miguel department; and, in Usulután department, two soldiers were wounded. Dec. 1: Rebels attacked the nation's two largest hydroelectric generators with mortar fire. The attack on the Cerrón Grande power station, the country's largest, caused minor damage. Nelson Quijada, spokesperson for the state-run electric utility (CEL), said that damage to the 5 de Noviembre dam and turbines was estimated at \$800,000. He added that damage to the plant, which normally generates about 13% of the country's electricity, cut output by half. Repairs will take several months. The armed forces press office (COPREFA) reported that troops guarding the dam had exchanged gunfire with the rebels. No casualties were reported in either attack. COPREFA reported sabotage of four electricity pylons and two transformers in the capital on the evening of Nov. 30. The military press office also reported that a 12-year-old girl was injured in fighting north of San Salvador. Five rebels were wounded in firefights occurring in the departments of Santa Ana, Morazan and San Miguel. Dec. 2: Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas called on the government and the FMLN to declare a Christmas season cease-fire. He said that Tutela Legal has counted 69 civilian and combatant dead over the last seven days of the rebels' "limited offensive." According to the prelate, it is illogical and incomprehensible that violence continues when a peace process achieved through dialogue and negotiation is available. Rivera y Damas also denounced human rights violations, making specific reference to the recent abduction of Edward Bazan, son of a union leader. Rebel commander Roberto Roca, Christian Democratic Party general secretary Fidel Chavez Mena, Democratic Convergence coalition leader Guillermo Ungo, and National Conciliation Party leader Hernán Contreras participated in a televised debate on the FMLN's current military actions, and prospects for a negotiated peace. Dec. 3: FMLN leader German Serrano asserted that the FMLN would continue sabotage of the economic infrastructure. Dec. 4: COPREFA reported that rebels shot down an AC-47 troop transport plane in La Laguna, Chalatenango department, with the use of a surface-to-air missile. Heavy fighting was reported in La Laguna. Reporters were denied access to the area. According to COPREFA, eight rebels and two soldiers were killed, and 15 rebels wounded. Rebels attacked with mortar fire the 6th Infantry Brigade in Usulután. The Agence France Press reported the partial destruction of five homes in the vicinity of the Brigade headquarters, and one civilian injured by mortar fire. According to AFP, the city of Usulután is heavily patrolled by the 6th Infantry Brigade and Atonal Battalion troops with reinforcements from San Miguel and La Unión departments. In Libertad

department, rebels punctured the tires on several vehicles cutting off traffic between San Salvador and the Pacific coast. COPREFA reported that two soldiers were wounded in a clash with rebels at a cotton cooperative in Jiquilisco, Usulután department. Trade union sources and businesspersons reported that the coffee, cotton, and sugarcane harvests have been seriously affected by the rebels' military activities. CEL reported electricity shortages affecting 44% of the country. Five rebels and one soldier were killed, and four soldiers wounded in fighting at the Santa Rosa plantation in San Miguel department. Fighting was also reported near the San Salvador Volcano, in Tonacatepeque, San Salvador department, and in San José Villanueva, La Libertad department. In Cuscatlán, rebels downed a helicopter. According to COPREFA, the helicopter pertained to CEL and its crew was supervising repairs to damaged electrical towers. No casualties were reported. (Basic data from AFP, 11/30-12/04/90; AP, 12/01/90; Notimex, 11/30/90, 12/04/90; DPA, 12/04/90)

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