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Guatemala: President Orders Removal Of Military Barracks From Santiago Atitlan

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On Dec. 6, in a letter to Delfino Rodas, mayor of Santiago Atitlan, President Vinicio Cerezo said he had "instructed" the removal of the local military detachment from the town. Cerezo also promised to prosecute soldiers responsible for the deaths of at least 16 civilians in an incident on Dec. 2. (See CAU 12/05/90 for coverage of massacre.) In an official report released Dec. 7, Human Rights Prosecutor Ramiro de Leon Carpio blamed the Guatemalan army for the "genocide" perpetrated in Santiago Atitlan. The report said soldiers "began to shoot indiscriminately" against participants in a peaceful demonstration who were carrying white flags on the road to the military barracks, located two kilometers from the town. Eleven persons were killed, and 19 injured. Five persons died shortly thereafter as a result of severe injuries. The prosecutor said the incident was not "simply another massacre," but rather the continuation of "many acts of intimidation, abuse of authority, repression, control of the population, extra-judicial executions and involuntary forced disappearances." De Leon Carpio concluded his report with a "public censure of the army as institution," and demanded that army officers "modify this type of attitude." In a communique, the army high command said the responsible parties for the killings in Santiago Atitlan were reserve lieutenant Jose Antonio Ortiz, and master sergeant Efrain Garcia Gonzalez. (Basic data from AFP, 12/06/90, 12/07/90)

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