

12-12-1990

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Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "El Salvador: Notes On Recent Fighting." (1990). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/4811>

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El Salvador: Notes On Recent Fighting

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, December 12, 1990

Dec. 5: In a statement, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) denounced the army for aerial bombardment of densely populated areas of Chalatenango department. Dec. 6: Salvadoran Ambassador to the US Miguel Salaverria said that since Nov. 20, 24 civilians, 105 soldiers and 230 guerrillas have been killed, and 209 civilians, 337 soldiers and 185 rebels were wounded. The most recent rebel offensive, he added, has caused between \$20 million and \$30 million in material damages. Salpress cited an unidentified witness who said that two civilians died and three were wounded by air force bombing in Usulután department. Armed forces spokespersons declined to comment on the incident. Dec. 7: Air Force commander Gen. Rafael Villamariona said that prior to the FMLN's use of surface-to-air missiles, the air force lost only two to three aircraft per year. Dec. 9: Military sources reported that a pilot died in Concepción Batres, 118 km. east of the capital, in efforts to evacuate injured soldiers. Rebel gunfire damaged the aircraft. Dec. 10: Rebels attacked a military base on the outskirts of the city of Chalatenango, located 80 km. north of San Salvador. There were no casualties reported. Air Force commander Villamariona said he was certain that the army will militarily defeat the rebels, by the end of 1991 at the latest. COPREFA reported that rebels downed a helicopter in Usulután department. The FMLN confirmed the incident, adding that the aircraft's two pilots were wounded, and its gunner killed. Two soldiers were killed and seven wounded in fighting in Usulután department. In the city of San Miguel, one rebel was killed in clashes with the 3rd Infantry Brigade. The FMLN reported rebel sabotage of 125 electricity grid structures between Nov. 20 and Dec. 8. Dec. 11: COPREFA reported that 11 soldiers and 30 rebels died in heavy fighting on the outskirts of San Jorge, located southeast of San Salvador. In a later report, COPREFA said that in Las Vueltas, Chalatenango department, two air force pilots were wounded and a gunner killed when rebels attacked a UH-1H helicopter. The military said that because of damage caused by rebel fire, the aircraft was forced to land. The FMLN released a communique saying that the aircraft was a UH-1M rocket-launcher model, and that it crashed. According to COPREFA, during the past 24 hours, fighting in Chalatenango, Usulután and San Miguel departments caused the deaths of 33 rebels and six soldiers, and left 50 soldiers and 15 rebels wounded. Fighting in eastern El Salvador, said COPREFA, also resulted in civilian casualties, including six deaths, and one wounded. The FMLN reported 152 government troop casualties in the past 36 hours in northern and eastern El Salvador. Another 11 soldiers were taken prisoner after they surrendered. (Basic data from Salpress, 12/07/90; ACAN-EFE, El Rescate Weekly Report 12/10/90; AFP, 12/10/90, 12/11/90)

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