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On Venezuelan President's Visit To El Salvador

by Deborah Tyroler

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During a two-day visit to El Salvador which ended Jan. 13, Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez and counterpart Alfredo Cristiani signed accords lifting tariffs from 57 Salvadoran export products, and inviting Venezuelan participation in a trade fair to take place in El Salvador next year in November. Perez said that Venezuela will continue supplying oil at current levels to Central American nations throughout the "Gulf crisis." The Venezuelan leader also met with political party representatives, union leaders, private businesspersons, the Official Dialogue Commission, the Interparty Commission, Defense Minister Emilio Ponce, Archbishop of San Salvador Arturo Rivera Damas, and Central American University Jesuit provincial Jose Maria Tojeira. At a press conference, Perez said, "I found [El Salvador] to be an integrated society, capable of confronting the adverse circumstances which it has experienced in order to achieve understanding, reconciliation and progress." He said that he hoped to meet with Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) representatives to share his impressions, and "to remind them of their responsibility to cooperate in the establishment of democracy in El Salvador." According to Perez, lack of understanding and distrust on both sides have been the main obstacles to ending the civil war. However, he said, foundations for peace have already been established. Perez said the Salvadoran military high command has acknowledged certain mistakes in the past, and has "expressed its willingness (to accept) a restructuring of the armed forces. I have witnessed a genuine understanding on the part of the armed forces, the government and the FMLN, which all are convinced that no one wins in a war..." Defense Minister Ponce said that he had obtained a promise from the Venezuelan government and armed forces to lend complete support to the Salvadoran military. (Basic data from AFP, ACAN- EFE, 01/13/91; Notimex, 01/12/91, 01/13/91)

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