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## **El Salvador: Government & Rebel Representatives Convene For "informal Talks"**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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On Aug. 22-23 government and rebel representatives held informal talks at the Peace and Reconciliation Center in San Jose, Costa Rica. Participants included Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) leader and mayor of San Salvador, Armando Calderon Sol; Defense Minister Gen. Emilio Ponce; Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) commander Shafik Handal; UN mediator Alvaro de Soto; Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas; and, former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias. The closed-door meeting was sponsored by Vesper International and Georgetown University's Center for Central American Studies (Washington, DC). Arias, director of the Peace and Reconciliation Center, told reporters that the meeting would not produce a statement or written agreements. Rather, he said, it was aimed at "giving the participants confidence to express themselves without fear and to establish a frank dialogue." According to Arias, discussion on Aug. 22 focused on democratization and the "post-war future of El Salvador," and economic problems. Friday, he said, was devoted to demilitarization. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, AFP, 08/22/91)

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