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Salvadoran Peace Talks: Summary Of Developments

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On Oct. 12, rebel and government negotiators commenced a round of peace talks in Mexico City mediated by Alvaro de Soto, representative of UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Joaquin Villalobos, Schafik Handal, Francisco Jovel, and Leonel Gonzalez represented the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). The government delegation was headed by Presidency Minister Oscar Santamaria, and included armed forces assistant chief of staff Col. Mauricio Vargas, and Interior Minister Juan Antonio Varela. Recent developments are summarized below. [For previous coverage on the talks, see CAU 10/18/91.] Oct. 16: Rebel spokesperson Roberto Canas said the two delegations had made progress in issues related to the armed forces, i.e., purge of officers guilty of human rights abuses, an end to military impunity, and reforms of military education and intelligence gathering practices. According to Canas, the FMLN is not demanding complete dismantlement of the National Intelligence Administration (DIN), but rather "an end to the impunity with which this organization presently acts, and implementation of mechanisms to ensure that it conforms to Salvadoran law." Canas said the FMLN has not withdrawn its proposal for immediate implementation of an informal truce. He asserted that applying a cease-fire prior to final accords "is a question of political will and good faith." Oct. 17: FMLN commander Rebeca Palacios said the two sides disagree on membership on a commission charged with carrying out a purge of human rights abusers from military ranks. The Agence France-Presse cited a source requesting anonymity who said the rebels insist that commission members should be foreigners, while the government delegation prefers nationals. Oct. 18: FMLN delegates submitted a proposal calling for an informal cease-fire. The truce would be supervised by a commission comprised of UN, rebel and government representatives. De Soto told reporters that UN participation on such a commission would be difficult, in part because territorial disputes are likely to complicate monitoring activities. According to the mediator, the most contentious issue at present is "how to organize the civilian National Police." Oct. 20: Minister Santamaria said participants in the talks achieved "cumulative advances but not definitive accords." Oct. 21: An unidentified source cited by the Agence France-Presse said negotiators were close to agreement on 11 of 14 points regarding the future of the armed forces. The remaining three focus on the purge, subordinating the military to civilian control, and integration of former rebel combatants in the National Police force. Oct. 22: At the close of talks, de Soto said the next round was scheduled for Nov. 3. FMLN commander Handal said the two sides had reached agreement on bringing the army under civilian control. Details on troop strength reduction, and organization of the civilian police force are topics for the next round. (Basic data from AP, 10/18/91; ACAN-EFE, 10/20/91; EFE, 10/16/91, 10/18/91, 10/21/91, 10/22/91; AFP, 10/16-18/91, 10/20-22/91)

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