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El Salvador: Summary Of Peace Talk Developments

by Deborah Tyroler

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Nov. 4: In Mexico City, government and rebel negotiators convened another round of peace talks. The government delegation was comprised of Presidency Minister Oscar Alfredo Santamaria and David Escobar Galindo. Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) representatives included commanders Roberto Canas, Schafik Handal, Ana Guadalupe Martinez, Martha Vallardes and Salvador Samayoa. Alvaro de Soto, UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar's envoy to the talks, serves as mediator. De Soto told reporters that the length of the talks and the agenda are open-ended. Handal said the two sides would begin with discussion on points of disagreement on restructuring and reform of the armed forces, the new civilian police, army troop strength reduction, and a variety of social welfare topics. Nov. 5: Eight FMLN commanders arrived in Mexico City to join military officer counterparts in round table discussions on a cease-fire. Rebel commander Ramon Suarez reiterated the FMLN proposal for an informal truce while a definitive peace agreement is negotiated. Commander Jorge Melendez ("Jonas") said, "The FMLN is forced to fight because of the army's military offensives...Regardless of government preferences, negotiations are going to have to move toward concrete demonstrations of political will, such as a cease-fire." Costa Rican Foreign Minister Bernd Niehaus met with FMLN commander Eduardo Sancho ("Cienfuegos") in San Jose (Costa Rica) to discuss the peace talks. In statements to reporters, Sancho said the first phase of a program to reintegrate rebels into civilian life and transform the FMLN into a legal political party would cost US\$600 million. He said the European Community and the US and Canadian governments are prepared to support the program. Nov. 6: Government delegation member Escobar said that thus far the two sides had focused on the contents of the New York accords in general terms. He indicated that questions of a cease-fire and a timetable had not entered into the discussion. Despite announcements to the contrary, the cease-fire roundtable discussions did not convene. (Basic data from Associated Press, 11/04/91; Agence France-Presse, EFE, 11/04- 06/91; ACAN-EFE, 11/06/91)

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