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El Salvador: Update On Fighting & Rebel Sabotage, November 6 - 21

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Nov. 6: The armed forces press office (COPREFA) reported two Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) rebels killed, and nine rebels and two soldiers wounded at Rosario, Cuscatlan department. Next, one national police officer was killed and four wounded at Apopa, San Salvador department. Five rebels were wounded at Tejuteque, Cabanas department. In addition, one rebel and one soldier were killed, and three soldiers wounded at Santiago de Maria, Usulutan department. Rebels attacked a power substation in Nuevo Cuscatlan, La Libertad department, causing severe material damage and wounding two soldiers. One soldier was wounded at Villa Victoria, Cabanas. In addition, one civilian was injured at Osicala, Morazan. Radio Farabundo Marti reported 20 troop casualties at Santiago de Maria, Usulutan department.

Nov. 7: According to COPREFA, one soldier was killed and six wounded during clashes in Cuscatlan, San Vicente, and La Union departments. Radio Venceremos reported that two national police officers were wounded when rebels occupied the town of Estanzuelas, Usulutan. Nov. 8: Military sources reported one civilian killed at San Jose Guayabal, Cuscatlan. Three rebels were wounded in Cuscatlan and Cabanas departments. Nov. 9: Local emergency workers reported one soldier killed and three others wounded at Moncagua, San Miguel department. According to COPREFA, rebels set a factory ablaze in Jalacatal, San Miguel. Troops seized weapons from rebels at San Jose Guayabal, Cuscatlan. Next, four rebels were killed during clashes in Cabanas and Morazan departments.

Nov. 10: COPREFA reported three soldiers wounded during a rebel grenade attack on a barracks at El Paraiso, Chalatenango department. An FMLN spokesperson reported that rebels occupied the towns of Potonico, Dulce Nombre de Maria, and Concepcion Quezaltepeque, Chalatenango.

Nov. 11: Rebel spokespersons reported 15 troop casualties and one insurgent killed at Jucuapa, Usulutan. Rebels destroyed a bank, a private club, and dynamited a national telecommunications company office. COPREFA reported three National Police officers, one civilian, and one rebel killed at Jucuapa. Red Cross spokespersons reported one civilian killed and three others injured at Jucuapa. Next, COPREFA reported that rebels occupied the town of San Jorge, San Miguel. Two soldiers were killed and three rebels wounded at Jiquilisco, Usulutan. Three rebels were wounded at Ilobasco, Cabanas. Radio Venceremos reported 119 troop casualties during the Nov. 1-9 period. In addition, rebels destroyed two tanks, one military truck, and damaged three helicopters; downed 30 electricity pylons and destroyed 12 transformers; and partially destroyed three coffee plantations and a factory.

Nov. 12: According to COPREFA, four soldiers and two rebels were killed, and two soldiers and several rebels wounded at Jocoro, Morazan department. Local radio broadcasters reported that rebels occupied the towns of San Rafael Oriente and San Jorge, San Miguel department. Police sources reported that rebels dynamited three electricity pylons in Escalon, San Salvador. Nov. 13: Military sources reported that troops seized 10 rifles, ammunition, and explosives from an FMLN weapons cache in Perquin, Morazan. Nov. 14: Local press sources reported that FMLN rebels captured four trucks carrying foodstuffs in the Mejicanos neighborhood in San Salvador. The products were subsequently distributed to neighborhood residents.

Nov. 16: FMLN spokespersons announced the beginning of a unilateral cease-fire.

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reported that gunfire was exchanged in Las Vueltas and Tejutla, Chalatenango department, and in Osicala, Morazan department. The report indicated that government troops also exchanged fire with rebels at several locations in Chalatenango, Morazan and La Paz departments. Next, in San Miguel Tepezontes, La Paz department, fighting left four soldiers and two rebels dead. In addition, COPREFA reported that four soldiers and two rebels were killed and one soldier was wounded in fighting near Suchitoto, Cuscatlan. Venceremos and Farabundo Marti radio broadcasts indicated that the soldiers killed in Suchitoto died as a result of "friendly fire" between two government infantry units while one was attempting to evacuate wounded. The report made no mention of rebel casualties. Radio Venceremos reported that rebel troops were maintaining a state of maximum alert because of continued offensive operations by government troops. The FMLN denounced army troop deployment to rebel-controlled territories in Chalatenango, Morazan, San Vicente and Cuscatlan departments. The rebels said counterinsurgency operations near Guazapa Volcano in San Salvador department and in Usulutan, San Vicente and Morazan departments continued despite the FMLN truce. The FMLN reported 230 army casualties during the first two weeks of November. COPREFA released a statement asserting that the FMLN announcement of an "alleged truce does not mean the army's troops will be recalled to their barracks." COPREFA said the rebels had violated their own truce and asserted that the unilateral cease-fire was "nothing more than a political propaganda strategy." Nov. 19: Defense Minister Rene Emilio Ponce said the rebel truce was "important," but rejected the possibility that the army would make a similar move. Ponce said that since the truce had been declared, the FMLN had carried out a series of military actions at several locations. If rebel military actions cease, he added, the army would not carry out any "aggressions." Nov. 21: In San Miguel, President Alfredo Cristiani announced that the armed forces will suspend air and artillery attacks against rebel strongholds as a goodwill gesture. He said the move was not a response to the unilateral rebel cease-fire, but rather constituted a step in deescalating the war. (Basic data from Associated Press, 11/11/91, 11/18/91; Notimex, 11/18/91; ACAN-EFE, 11/06/91, 11/09/91, 11/10/91, 11/12/91, 11/18/91, 11/21/91; Agence France-Presse, 11/06-14/91, 11/16-19/91, 11/21/91)