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El Salvador: Peace Talks & Related Events

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Category/Department: General
Published: Friday, December 20, 1991

Dec. 16: In New York, government and rebel negotiators met separately with UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar to establish a working agenda for the next round of talks, scheduled to begin Dec. 17. Presidency Minister Oscar Santamaria and Interior Minister Col. Juan Martinez Varela led the government delegation. The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) delegation was headed by Shafik Handal, Francisco Jovel, Salvador Sanchez Ceren, Eduardo Sancho and Joaquin Villalobos. Dec. 17: UN spokesperson Francois Giuliani told reporters that Perez de Cuellar had presented both delegations with a working document on army troop strength reduction, setting up the National Civilian Police (PNC) force, and reintegration of rebel combatants into civilian life. Giuliani said the talks were expected to continue through Christmas week. Rebel spokesperson Roberto Canas said that rebel field commanders were scheduled to arrive Tuesday afternoon to participate in a cease-fire round table discussion. UN specialist Marrack Goulding, he added, will coordinate the discussion. In a Radio Venceremos broadcast, the FMLN asserted that the rebels had earned the right to participate in the new police force, and their presence was necessary to ensure compliance with accords. The rebels rejected recent assertions by President Alfredo Cristiani that quotas for rebel participation in the police force were "not negotiable." According to the FMLN, if the rebels are not guaranteed participation in concrete terms, they will not disarm. Next, the FMLN reported that since the rebels' unilateral truce went into effect Nov. 16, the army had carried out 85 offensives in nine departments resulting in 88 government troop and rebel casualties. The statement said the FMLN had renewed "limited" military activity in response to army counterinsurgency operations. According to the report, rebels attacked the Urbina bridge in San Miguel department, where two Treasury Police officers were wounded. Next, guerrillas temporarily occupied towns and sections of roadways in several areas of the country, and three National Guard officers were taken prisoner. Dec. 18: Perez de Cuellar met with ambassadors from the four Support Group nations (Colombia, Spain, Mexico and Venezuela). National Salvadoran Workers Unity (UNTS) spokespersons demanded that President Cristiani and Defense Minister Gen. Emilio Ponce participate directly in the New York peace negotiations. (Basic data from Spanish news service EFE, 12/16-18/91; Agence France-Presse, 12/16-18/91; Notimex, Xinhua, 12/16/91; Associated Press, ACAN-EFE, 12/17/91)

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