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Deborah Tyroler

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F.m.l.n. Rebels Down Honduran Helicopter Over Salvadoran Airspace

by Deborah Tyroler
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In a Dec. 19 Radio Venceremos broadcast, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) reported that rebels downed a Honduran Air Force helicopter flying over Salvadoran territory. All crew members were killed. According to the report, the aircraft appeared during a clash between rebel and Salvadoran troops. The FMLN said the helicopter went down near Cacaopera, Morazan department, 14 km. from the Honduran border. The armed forces press office (COPREFA) confirmed the deaths of Honduran crew members in the crash, but denied that army troops were engaged in combat with rebels. The Honduran Air Force released a communique indicating that a helicopter with 11 crew members aboard crashed in Honduran territory due to mechanical difficulties. According to the statement, the aircraft was making a routine flight in the area of La Estancia, La Paz department. The statement adds that the aircraft experienced technical difficulties due to meteorological conditions and flew into Salvadoran airspace for a short period. A mechanical failure then caused the aircraft to crash in Honduran territory. The statement provided no information on the status of crew members. On Dec. 20, Honduran President Rafael Callejas confirmed that the helicopter had indeed been downed by Salvadoran rebel gunfire. He said nine crew members died in the crash. (Basic data from Agence France-Presse, 12/19/91, 12/20/91)

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