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Summary Of Developments: Implementation Of Salvadoran Peace Accords & Related Events

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Feb. 18: UN observer mission to El Salvador (ONUSAL) spokesperson Mario Zamorano told reporters that 147 members of the ONUSAL police division began working in conjunction with members of the National Police. Zamorano noted that the ONUSAL police division, whose members have been deployed to all major Salvadoran cities, are not armed. Feb. 19: Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) leader Eduardo Sancho ("Ferman Cienfuegos") submitted an inventory of lands "affected by the civil war" to the National Peace Commission (COPAZ) land issues subcommittee. Sancho told reporters that nearly 6,000 sq. km. of the nation's 21,000 sq. km. are under FMLN control. Feb. 20: In an interview with reporters from a local television station, deputy defense minister Gen. Orlando Zepeda charged that the inventory of troop strength and weapons presented by the FMLN to ONUSAL was not accurate. According to that account, the FMLN possesses 4,000 weapons and is comprised of 6,000 combatants. Zepeda said the claim of having more combatants than weapons was illogical and "incongruent" with military intelligence reports indicating that the rebels have the capacity to arm 20,000 combatants with modern weapons supplied by Libya, Czechoslovakia, North Korea, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Germany, Cuba and Nicaragua. Feb. 24: San Salvador Mayor and Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) leader Armando Calderon Sol called on property owners victimized by illegal land occupations to file complaints in court so that security forces could proceed to dislodge squatters. Feb. 25: FMLN leader Antonio Alvarez charged that the government is attempting to "resolve the land problem outside the framework established by the peace accords by denying the existence of zones of conflict." Alvarez said that peace cannot be achieved without an adequate resolution of land tenure issues in zones of conflict. He reiterated that FMLN is not promoting illegal land occupations. About 90 families returned to the Amulunga Hacienda in Ahuachapan department, a property from which they were evicted in June 1991. The squatters told reporters that Amulunga is included in a list of properties protected by a July 3, 1991 government-peasant agreement and that therefore their action does not constitute an "illegal occupation." Feb. 26: In separate statements, the National Private Enterprise Association (ANEP) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry indicated that they would boycott the national dialogue on socio-economic issues called for in the peace accords unless illegal land takeovers were immediately suspended. Calderon Sol called on the business groups to reconsider their decision. "All Salvadorans must make an effort on behalf of peace," he said. UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali submitted a report to the UN Security Council on progress in implementation of the Salvadoran peace accords. The report stated that the first phase of implementation separation and concentration of rebel and government combatants had proceeded without any major setbacks. Feb. 27: The Legislative Assembly elected Mauricio Molina Fonseca to the post of Human Rights Attorney General. Democratic Convergence deputies abstained from the vote, objecting to the selection of Molina Fonseca due to his performance in the post of deputy labor minister in the early 1980s. Next, the legislature elected Luis Arturo Zaldivar Romero to serve as president of the Supreme Electoral Council. Feb. 28: President Alfredo Cristiani warned that the government would act to dislodge persons illegally occupying private
land. The Agriculture Ministry requested that ONUSAL members act as witnesses to evictions of persons illegally occupying private property. In comments to reporters, Presidency Minister Oscar Santamaria said that "illegal land occupations constitute a human rights violation." FMLN leader Herson Martinez said that by attempting to resolve the issue of disputed lands through forced evictions, the government was in effect "dousing the fire with gasoline. In the end, we will all get burned." Next, Martinez and Oscar Grimaldi, an engineer who served a jail sentence for hiding an FMLN weapons arsenal at his place of business, requested that the army submit an inventory of all weapons seized from the rebels during the course of the war. Martinez said the FMLN suspects that some of the confiscated weapons may have been sold to rightwing death squads, common criminals and drug traffickers. Grimaldi said that weapons seized from his property by Treasury Police in August 1991 including surface-to-air missiles, AK-47 rifles, rocket launchers, and ammunition were worth US$10 million. Grimaldi said that the judge presiding in his case had visited Treasury Police headquarters on three occasions in an effort to verify the evidence against him, but none of the weapons were ever shown to him. Feb. 29: FMLN commander Juan Ramon Medrano told journalists that sectors of the army and rightwing businesspersons were organizing death squads with the objective of killing rebel leaders. Medrano said that the FMLN was prepared to defend its members against such attacks and asserted that "they are not going to play with us like they did with the Colombian rebels." March 1: In compliance with the peace accords calendar, the Treasury Police and National Guard were formally dissolved. Deputy defense minister Gen. Orlando Zepeda said that the 7,000 former members of the Treasury Police and National Guard would be transferred to the army. March 2: Margarita Aleman, leader of a group of relatives of political prisoners, told reporters that only 29 of the nation's 72 political prisoners had been released in conjunction with the amnesty declared as part of the peace accords. President Cristiani charged that the rebels had failed to complete concentration of FMLN combatants into 15 designated areas in accordance with the calendar established in the peace accords. Next, according to the calendar set out in the accords, President Cristiani was to have named a director for the National Civil Police (PNC) by March 2. He explained that his failure to do so was due to the fact that COPAZ had still not submitted a list of candidates for the post. Acknowledging the difficulty of the tasks assigned COPAZ, Cristiani referred to the calendar for compliance with the peace accords as a series of "goals, not deadlines." Defense Minister Gen. Rene Emilio Ponce said the FMLN's failure to comply with the dates established in the calendar was "worrisome," adding that it was an indication of a "lack of will and good faith." ONUSAL spokespersons Mario Zamorano confirmed that the army had completed concentration of its troops to military barracks and other designated areas. At a ceremony celebrating dissolution of the Treasury Police and National Guard, former deputy public security minister Col. Orlando Montano said that 4,000 of the former police and guardsmen would be incorporated into the army and 3,000 would be dismissed. March 3: ONUSAL director Iqbal Riza said that the FMLN had begun concentration of its forces into the 15 designated disarmament areas. He attributed the delay to logistical problems regarding provision of shelter, water, and food in the disarmament areas. March 4: The US State Department issued a statement charging that the FMLN's delay in initiating the second phase of its troop concentration constituted the "first serious violation of the accords." (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 02/26/92; Salpress, 02/27/92; Agence France-Presse, 02/18-20/92, 02/27-29/92, 03/01-04/92; Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 02/19/92, 02/25-27/92, 02/29/92, 03/02-04/92)