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Deborah Tyroler

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El Salvador: Peace Accord Implementation & Related Events, March 2 - 9

by Deborah Tyroler

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March 2: In statements to reporters on March 2, President Alfredo Cristiani said former members of the National Guard would become military police officers, and Treasury Police personnel are to serve in the nation's border patrol. The two corps will continue operating out of respective barracks. Cristiani added that the military police force will have to recruit more officers since National Guard numbers are insufficient for new responsibilities, and to meet the challenge of the nation's escalating crime rate. March 5: In statements to reporters, Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) commanders Shafick Handal and Salvador Sanchez Ceren accused the government of making a "mockery" of the peace accords by failing to carry out a de facto dismantlement of the National Guard and Treasury Police. Handal said the government's reassignments of Guard and Treasury officers would "intimidate" citizens, and tantamount to "incubating a new conflict." According to Handal, the fact that the two military organizations continue operating out of the same barracks during the transition period is "deplorable." Under the peace accords, said Handal, the 7,000 members of the National Guard and the Treasury Police are to be incorporated into the army and gradually retired. Instead, he added, "The only thing [the government has] done is...change the names" of the two forces. Handal and Sanchez said they were suspicious of recent reports of a burgeoning crime wave, since the military regimes in 1944 and 1960 used "common crime" as justification for stepped-up patrols and repression. Next, the rebel leaders expressed concern over the absence of concrete plans for reintegration into civilian society for 1,300 to 1,600 FMLN combatants scheduled for same in May. They also criticized delays in establishing the civilian police force (PNC), i.e., operations budget, installations, and appointing a director for the new police academy. Sanchez Ceren said all FMLN combatants will be concentrated in 15 designated areas by March 15. He said the army has failed to comply with the accords by maintaining troop positions in Morazan and La Union departments, and National Guard posts in Jucuapa and Sesori, in Usulután and San Miguel departments, respectively. Sanchez and Handal stated that land tenure conflicts are being manipulated by political groups opposed to the pacification process. Handal said the government and private businesses were engaged in a campaign to frighten property owners by claiming the FMLN was attempting to steal their land. In fact, they added, most of the landowners have sought to negotiate with the Front. March 9: FMLN leader Joaquin Villalobos asserted that changing the mandate of the Treasury Police and the National Guard constituted a "flagrant violation of the peace accords." He said the move has created a climate of fear and distrust because the Guard and Treasury Police are considered to be the military units most intimately linked to human rights abuses. Villalobos said the government and the military hierarchy are preparing a "policy of terror which could ruin everything that has been achieved thus far...If they continue killing, and throwing people out into the street, no one is going to disarm...and the FMLN will not demobilize." Over 100 labor union leaders assembled in front of the Legislative Assembly building to demand immediate installation of the socio-economic forum outlined in the peace accords. The forum is to serve as a mechanism through which the government, private sector leaders and trade unions joint seek solutions to economic and social welfare problems caused by over 10 years of civil

war. Labor leader Humberto Centeno said that under the accords, the National Peace Commission (COPAZ) was scheduled to convene the forum in mid-February. The National Private Enterprise Association (ANEP) conditioned participation in the forum on an end to land occupations in rural areas. (Basic data from Agence France- Presse, 03/05/92, 03/06/92, 03/09/92, 03/10/92; Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 03/05/92, 03/06/92, 03/10/92; Spanish news service EFE, 03/10/92)

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