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U.N. Observer Mission, Salvadoran Army & Rebels Deny Honduran Reports Of Military Conflict

by Deborah Tyroler

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On March 5, spokespersons for the Salvadoran army, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the UN observer mission to El Salvador (ONUSAL) denied Honduran reports of military conflict between Salvadoran government troops and rebels on March 1 or at any other time since Feb. 1, or implementation of the cease-fire. Honduran media reports on March 6 indicated that Salvadoran rebels and army troops clashed March 4 in San Luis de la Reina, Morazan department. Gen. Mauricio Vargas, Salvadoran armed forces assistant chief of staff, said reports of armed conflict were "completely false." FMLN commander Jorge Melendez said, "There is no official information concerning troop movements" in the Honduran border area. In a statement broadcast by the Honduran Radio America, Salvadoran Deputy Mario Aguinada said reports concerning military clashes as well as alleged land distribution to Salvadorans in a disputed border area "were clearly manipulations on the part of Honduran politicians trying to divert attention from their own problems...such as conflicts within the Honduran military high command, [Honduran] President Rafael Callejas' decision to reduce army troop strength and increase police officer numbers," and upheaval surrounding the government's agricultural modernization policy. (Basic data from Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias- Spanish news service EFE, 03/05/92; Agence France-Presse, Notimex, 03/06/92)

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