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El Salvador: Implementation Of Peace Accords & Related Developments, March 10 - 24

by Deborah Tyroler

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March 10: Shafick Handal, spokesperson for the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), told reporters that the government's refusal to participate in a special meeting called by four of the eight member organizations of the National Peace Commission (COPAZ) demonstrated "bad faith and ill will" toward compliance with peace accord provisions. The meeting was set up to request that government officials explain their reasons for assigning new duties to the former National Guard and Treasury Police, rather than dismantling the two forces as stipulated in peace accords. March 11: Undersecretary general for UN peace operations Marrack Goulding arrived in El Salvador for a three-day visit. Goulding was scheduled to review compliance with the peace accords and prepare a report for UN Secretary General Butros Butros-Ghali. March 12: In a communique, the Association of Wounded and Disabled Salvadoran War Veterans (ASALDIG) accused the government of obstructing the repatriation of about 300 former rebel combatants from Cuba. The statement asserted that the exiles in Cuba should be allowed to return under provisions of the amnesty law approved as part of the peace accords. March 13: FMLN commander Juan Ramon Medrano accused the UN observer mission to El Salvador (ONUSAL) of "partiality," and of promoting "anarchy" vis-a-vis compliance with the peace agreement. According to Medrano, ONUSAL's behavior has "favored the government," indicating that mission leaders are apparently "unaware of the accords." Medrano said ONUSAL team members meet with government officials to decide on practical measures, and "then they come and negotiate with us." March 16: Rebel leader Leonel Gonzalez, the FMLN's representative on the cease-fire committee, described Goulding's visit as "opportune" because it facilitated direct talks between the government and rebels. He noted that since the agreement was finalized in January, the government had refused to meet with FMLN representatives in order to clarify several points of contention on interpretation. He said Goulding's visit "opened [lines of] communication, which constitutes the first positive step." March 17: Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) deputies objected to participation by Argentine Rodolfo Mattarollo, ONUSAL human rights division member, in a seminar for Salvadoran legislators sponsored by the US Agency for International Development (AID). Mattarollo was scheduled to deliver an address on human rights and democracy at the seminar in San Salvador. According to spokespersons for the independent Salvadoran Human Rights Commission (CDHES), ARENA deputy Gloria Salguero demanded that Mattarollo stay away from the seminar. Mattarollo was notified by the Foreign Ministry that he had 24 hours to leave the country. Mattarollo arrived in El Salvador since August 1991 as a member of the ONUSAL human rights division. Christian Democrat Party Deputy Gerardo Le Chevalier said, "As far as we know, the government finds Mattarollo questionable because of his leftist past." He added that Mattarollo prepared three ONUSAL reports about human rights violations in El Salvador, and advised the Jesuit order at the trial of military personnel charged with the November 1989 murder of six Jesuit priests. In response to the latter "accusation," Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas said, "So what? It was an open trial in the state's tribunals, wasn't it?" Nationalist Democratic Union (UDN) Deputy Mario Aguinada said a faction of ARENA deputies was behind the move to see Mattarollo expelled from El Salvador,

described as "twisted and myopic." Five human rights groups issued a joint statement asserting that the expulsion order against Mattarollo "constitutes an insult against the good will of the UN and highlights the government's unwillingness to eradicate the vicious crimes of the past." March 18: A group of Christian Democrat and Democratic Convergence coalition deputies indicated they would request that Foreign Minister Manuel Pacas appear before the Legislative Assembly to explain the decision to expel Mattarollo from El Salvador. March 20: In a communique, ONUSAL expressed full support for Mattarollo's "professional competence [and] extensive experience in the field of human rights." Several thousand Salvadoran National Workers Unity (UNTS) members marched through the streets of the capital to demand complete dissolution of the National Guard and Treasury Police. Anti-riot police were deployed to the area. Local media reports indicated that ONUSAL observers were also present. March 24: In testimony before a Legislative Assembly commission, Pacas denied that orders had been issued to expel Mattarollo. The Legislative Assembly issued a decree changing the name of Cerro Guazapa (located on the outskirts of San Salvador) to the Bosque de la Reconciliacion (Reconciliation Forest). About 75,000 trees will be planted in the area in honor of the thousands of rebels and soldiers killed during the war. (Basic data from Notimex, 03/11/92; Salpress, 03/11/92; Inter Press Service, 03/19/92; Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 03/11/92, 03/12/92, 03/19/92, 03/20/92; Agence France-Presse, 03/10-13/92, 03/16/92, 03/18/92, 03/20/92, 03/24/92)

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