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**Special Analysis**

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**EL SALVADOR: The Insurgents' Offensive**

*The guerrillas' latest offensive is primarily aimed at enhancing their prospects in negotiations. The attacks, which generally have been against highly vulnerable military and economic targets, are intended to demonstrate a continuing ability to inflict losses on government forces and to disrupt the economy. The insurgents have not scored any major successes, however, and thus are not likely to force a dialogue on their terms.* [Redacted]

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The offensive appears to be nearing an end, although sabotage operations and small-scale harassing actions continue. [Redacted]

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The government still has not used [Redacted] battalions to retake lost territory. The Army reportedly anticipates another major insurgent attack and wants to hold its elite units in reserve. As a result, the insurgents apparently have been able to consolidate their gains and seize several additional towns in northern Chalatenango and Morazan Departments. [Redacted]

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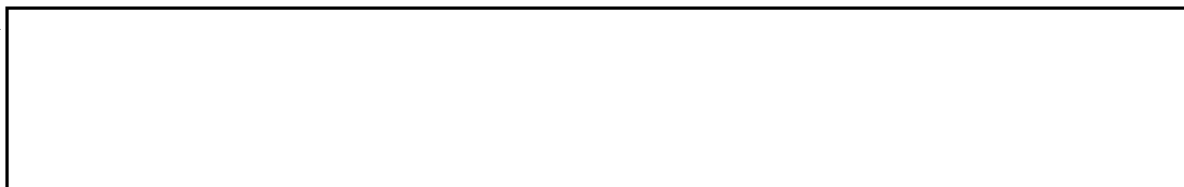
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Mixed Results

This strategy has been only partially successful. The insurgents have overrun several small towns in Chalatenango and Morazan and captured or killed over 100 government troops, but they have not seized large population centers or trapped key Army units. Although their sabotage campaign has disrupted the transportation, communication, and electrical power systems in various regions, it has not caused any serious damage to the infrastructure. [redacted]

The insurgents nevertheless have displayed close coordination among their several factions, which they have not been able to do in the past. They also have shown that, despite the successful elections in March and the several subsequent military campaigns against them, they can still carry out disruptive actions. In addition, their ability to launch another offensive indicates they continue to receive arms from Nicaragua. [redacted]

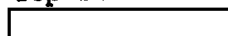
Outlook

It is as yet unclear what impact the offensive will have on existing political strains in the government and military. Defense Minister Garcia already is under attack from rightwing backers of Assembly President D'Aubuisson for his support of political and economic reforms and for his alleged poor handling of the war effort. Although the Army's failure to launch an immediate counteroffensive may have been good tactics, it probably will improve the position of those seeking to replace Garcia. [redacted]

The offensive also may have strengthened the hand of those who oppose negotiations. They can now argue that this is no time to talk. [redacted]

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President Magana's plan to form a peace commission to engage leftist political leaders in a dialogue probably will be delayed further. His objective is to split the leftist political leaders from insurgent militants and bring them into the electoral process before the scheduled elections in March 1984. [redacted]

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Although the offensive is likely to cause new problems for the government, it has not changed the basic military balance in the guerrillas' favor. Nonetheless, the continued military stalemate will not help the government's worsening political and economic problems.

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