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SUBJECT El Salvador Claims Victory

DIANE SAWYER: El Salvador's rebels are claiming one of their biggest victories so far this year. The rebel radio says the insurgents ambushed two companies of the Bajoso (?) battalion, which was trained at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The rebels say they killed 84 soldiers, took over the town of San Ysidro, 66 miles northeast of the capital.

The Salvadoran Government has not commented on that victory claim, but it has released two American journalists who were being held on suspicion of having contacted the rebels. One of them, T.J. Western, is a free-lance reporter for the Associated Press Radio Service, and he's joining us by phone now from San Salvador.

Mr. Western, is Diane in New York. Can you hear me?

T.J. WESTERN: Yes. Good morning.

SAWYER: You spent four days in a Salvadoran jail. How were you treated?

WESTERN: I was treated well. I was interrogated only at reasonable hours and fed well.

SAWYER: We are told that they arrested you because they suspected that you were operating with the guerrillas, or at least with the guerrillas at that time. Was it the case?

WESTERN: Well, the charges that they have been investigating, and still are investigating, are charges of transporting weapons to the leftist guerrillas here in El Salvador. That was based on a phone conversation I had with a

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radio producer on Thursday.

SAWYER: So -- I'm not sure what you're saying. Is it correct or not correct?

WESTERN: No. No, it's not correct. I had a radio conversation about a report on the Salvadoran economy, and from that I was arrested and investigated for these weapons charges.

I am still under investigation, though I am free to move about the country and do my work as a journalist. I cannot leave the country until the investigation is complete.

SAWYER: Thank you very much, Mr. Western, for joining us from San Salvador this morning.