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COUNTRY: EL SALVADOR

SUBJECT: FMLN EVALUATION OF 11 NOVEMBER OFFENSIVE; REVISED  
FMLN MILITARY PLANS

DOI: 11 NOVEMBER - MID-DECEMBER 1989

TEXT: 1. IN MID-DECEMBER 1989,

STATED THAT THE FMLN GENERAL COMMAND INITIATED A THREE PHASE "EMERGENCY" PLAN AFTER THE FMLN'S FAILURE TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES IN THE FIRST HOURS OF THE 11 NOVEMBER OFFENSIVE.

2. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE OFFENSIVE WAS TO SEIZE PRINCIPAL MILITARY GARRISONS IN THE CITIES OF SAN SALVADOR, SAN MIGUEL, USULUTAN, SANTA ANA, AND ZACATECOLUCA. HE SAID FMLN INSURGENTS FAILED TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES IN THE INITIAL PHASE OF THE 11 NOVEMBER OFFENSIVE BECAUSE OF STRATEGIC ERRORS COMMITTED AT ALL LEVELS OF THE FMLN COMMAND.

3. THE EMERGENCY PLAN CALLED FOR RESERVE FORCES TO REMAIN IN PLACE OUTSIDE TARGET CITIES, RATHER THAN SUPPORTING INSURGENTS ENGAGED IN COMBAT.

4. ERRORS BY THE FMLN GENERAL COMMAND RESULTED IN THE NEED FOR THE EMERGENCY PLAN. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GENERAL COMMAND HAD MADE NO PROVISION FOR THE FAILURE OF FMLN COMBAT UNITS TO ACHIEVE THEIR PRIMARY GOALS. IN ADDITION, FMLN UNITS FAILED TO COORDINATE THEIR ACTIONS. THE FMLN ALSO FAILED TO TAKE OVER RADIO STATIONS, WHICH THEY HAD PLANNED TO USE TO ANNOUNCE THEIR "VICTORY" OVER THE SALVADORAN ARMED FORCES (ESAF) AND TO RALLY SUPPORT AMONG THE POPULACE. ALSO, MOST FMLN COMMANDERS WERE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE AREAS THEIR UNITS WERE FIGHTING IN, WHICH RESULTED IN A SLOWER ADVANCE BY THESE UNITS THAN HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED.

5. IN SAN MIGUEL, THE FMLN SUFFERED A MAJOR SETBACK WITH THE DEATH OF COMMANDER ALIAS "GUATUZO" AND THE WOUNDING OF ALIAS "AMADEO." THE FMLN GENERAL COMMAND BELIEVED THE LOSS OF THESE TWO COMMANDERS CAUSED CONFUSION AMONG COMBATANTS, PREVENTING THEM FROM ATTAINING THEIR OBJECTIVES. IDENTIFIED GUATUZO AS A NICARAGUAN. NO OTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON WHY THOUGHT GUATUZO WAS A NICARAGUAN.)

6. IN VIEW OF THE FACTORS CITED ABOVE, THE FMLN INSTITUTED ITS EMERGENCY PLAN. PHASE ONE CALLED FOR FMLN COMBATANTS TO MAINTAIN THEIR POSITIONS AND NOT ATTACK MILITARY CUARTELS. IT ALSO INSTRUCTED FMLN UNITS TO FORCE THE ESAF TO USE ARTILLERY AND AIR ATTACKS IN POPULATED AREAS, THUS FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATION OF THE SALVADORAN GOVERNMENT. FMLN UNITS WERE ALSO INSTRUCTED TO FAMILIARIZE THEMSELVES WITH THE TERRAIN, INTERCEPT ESAF RADIO COMMUNICATIONS TO ANTICIPATE COUNTERATTACKS, AND INFILTRATE CIVILIANS INTO ESAF AREAS TO CARRY OUT SURVEILLANCE IN PREPARATION FOR FURTHER FMLN MILITARY ACTION.

7. THE MURDER OF SIX JESUIT PRIESTS ON 16

Approved for Release

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NOVEMBER AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE OF ESAF AIR AND ARTILLERY ATTACKS AGAINST POPULATED AREAS CONVINCED THE FMLN GENERAL COMMAND TO DELAY THE WITHDRAWAL OF COMBATANTS FROM THE CITIES, AS PHASE ONE ALSO CALLED FOR. THE GENERAL COMMAND BELIEVED INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE WOULD MAKE THE FMLN RETREAT FROM THE CITIES EASIER, AND ALLOW IT TO CARRY OUT SUBSEQUENT OFFENSIVE ACTIONS WITH LITTLE OR NO NEGATIVE PRESS COVERAGE.

8. PHASE TWO OF THE PLAN BEGAN ON 4 DECEMBER, AND CALLED FOR "MASS DESTRUCTION" OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE. IT ALSO CALLED FOR AMBUSHES AGAINST ESAF UNITS PROVIDING SECURITY FOR THE COFFEE GROWING REGIONS, AND FOR THE TAKEOVER OF MILITARY UNITS IN SMALL CITIES. THE GENERAL COMMAND HOPED THIS STRATEGY WOULD DRAW ESAF UNITS FROM MAJOR CITIES-

9. PHASE THREE, FOR WHICH A DATE WAS NOT SET, CALLED FOR THE USE OF HEAVY SUPPORT WEAPONS

SUCH AS RECOILLESS RIFLES AND MORTARS FOR AN EIGHT HOUR PERIOD AGAINST MILITARY CUARTELS. THE FMLN ERRED IN NOT EMPLOYING HEAVY WEAPONS DURING THE 11 NOVEMBER OFFENSIVE. HOWEVER, THE FMLN GENERAL COMMAND BELIEVED THAT IT WOULD BE SEEN AS JUSTIFIED IN USING THESE WEAPONS, BECAUSE OF HEAVY INTERNATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE OF ESAF ARTILLERY AND AIR ATTACKS AGAINST POPULATED AREAS, AND THE DEATHS OF THE JESUIT PRIESTS. UNIDENTIFIED "PRO-SOVIET" COUNTRIES AS SUPPORTING THE FMLN'S PLANS TO USE HEAVY SUPPORT WEAPONS.

10. PHASE THREE WAS INTENDED TO FORCE ESAF UNITS OUT OF THEIR GARRISONS, BY STAGING FMLN ATTACKS IN UPPER CLASS NEIGHBORHOODS. THE FMLN GENERAL COMMAND BELIEVED THAT ESAF UNITS COULD THEN BE MORE EASILY AMBUSHED. PHASE THREE WAS TO MAKE EXTENSIVE USE OF FMLN COMBATANTS FORCIBLY RECRUITED SINCE 11 NOVEMBER, BUT ONLY AFTER THEY HAD RECEIVED THREE MONTHS OF MILITARY TRAINING. COMBATANTS WOUNDED IN PHASE ONE WOULD ALSO TAKE PART IN PHASE THREE ONCE THEY HAD RECOVERED FROM THEIR WOUNDS. (SOURCE COMMENT: THE THREE MONTH TRAINING PERIOD FOR THE FORCIBLY RECRUITED COMBATANTS--MOST OF WHOM WERE RECRUITED IN DECEMBER INDICATES THAT PHASE THREE OF THE EMERGENCY PLAN WOULD PROBABLY COMMENCE IN MARCH OF 1990.)

11. (SOURCE COMMENT: GIVEN THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN EL SALVADOR SINCE NOVEMBER 1989, IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE THIRD PHASE OF THE EMERGENCY PLAN OUTLINED IN THIS REPORT WOULD STILL BE A CONSIDERATION IN THE FMLN'S PLANNING IN 1990.)