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Director of Central Intelligence

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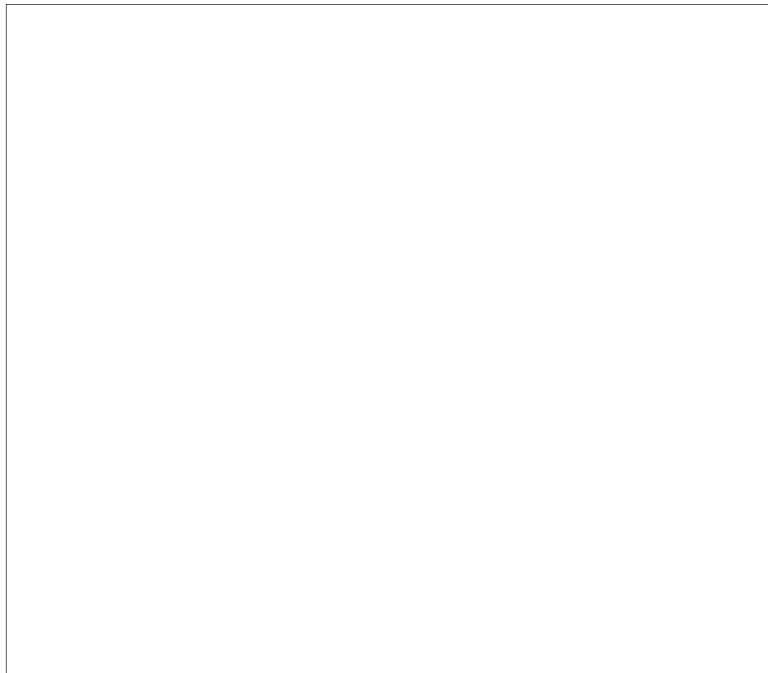
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EL SALVADOR: Officers Arrested in Jesuit Case

Three junior Salvadoran officers have been arrested in connection with the murder of six Jesuit priests and two women in November, [redacted] but the investigation appears far from complete. Armed Forces Chief of Staff Ponce says ballistic and handwriting evidence implicates the three officers. [redacted] adds that the colonel who had operational control over the site of the killings has been confined to quarters after privately accepting responsibility for the deaths. President Cristiani has convened a special military tribunal to assist in the investigation, ordering it to ensure a complete and impartial investigation no matter who appears to be guilty. [redacted]

Comment: Ponce and other senior military officials appear committed to resolving the case but may face resistance from some officers determined to protect the military's standing. The presence of senior officers on the tribunal should assist in the interrogation of other officers. Cristiani's decision to keep the membership of the tribunal secret is, nevertheless, indicative of the potential for violence against those who implicate the military. Even if evidence in the case appears conclusive, weaknesses in the Salvadoran judicial system will impede prosecution. [redacted]

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**El Salvador: Cristiani's Leadership Undermined
by FMLN Offensive**

President Cristiani has shown signs of stress since the offensive [redacted]

At his press conference last Thursday, he reportedly knocked over his chair at the sound of an Air Force rocket being used against insurgents. [redacted]

Cristiani is more moderate than many of his ARENA party colleagues, and [redacted] he was the major decisionmaker during the offensive; he has, nevertheless, largely failed to project either control or moderation during the past two weeks. He needs to raise his public profile quickly and take the offensive against both the FMLN and hardliners in ARENA and in the security services. Cristiani probably will have difficulty taking such an assertive stance because of pressures from opposing interest groups. The left and much of the international community will expect him to pursue peace talks with the guerrillas and rein in the security services. The far right is almost certain to resist strongly any move it believes will curtail its freedom of action and help the FMLN. Cristiani, known as a consensus seeker, probably will try to strike a balance between the two camps.
