

~~Top Secret~~
[redacted]**... and Losses**

Domestic reaction to the offensive was mostly negative. Even the FMLN's political allies, including leftist leaders Guillermo Ungo and Ruben Zamora, denounced it and urged the rebels to resume negotiations. Zamora believes the offensive has exposed the FMLN's weaknesses and undercut the left's political gains; he is considering a formal break with the FMLN, [redacted]
[redacted]

The FMLN probably cannot easily convert the offensive into tangible long-term gains. It will have difficulty winning popular confidence after subjecting so many civilians to combat. By arming members of its political front groups, the rebels also have undercut the ability of their mass organizations to operate legally and have subjected them to prosecution for participating in armed rebellion. [redacted]

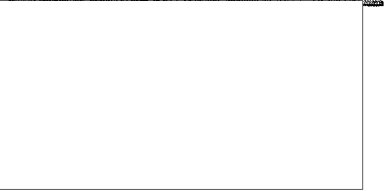
Outlook

The FMLN offensive failed to weaken the political or military resolve of the government. San Salvador has moved quickly to restore basic services in the capital and mobilize relief efforts. The government probably will launch a diplomatic campaign to counter the rebels' international gains, citing the FMLN's unilateral suspension of talks before the offensive as proof they do not want a political settlement. Cristiani will use the recent shipment of SA-7s from Nicaragua to the FMLN to deflect international calls for a cease-fire and renewed dialogue. He almost certainly will expect the OAS and the UN to condemn Nicaragua for violating the Tela accord. [redacted]

Cristiani's most difficult challenge now probably will be retaining military and party support for his moderate policies. Some political hardliners probably believe his leniency allowed the FMLN to establish itself in the capital and plan the offensive, and extremist elements probably are eager to retaliate against the rebels. The FMLN will continue trying to provoke them into vigilante violence and human rights abuses. [redacted]

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Director of Central Intelligence

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Special Analysis

EL SALVADOR: Rebels Retreat With Limited Gains

Although the Salvadoran Government defeated the rebels' offensive militarily, the FMLN may have manufactured a political victory. The rebels managed to portray the offensive as challenging the government's control of San Salvador, when in reality they retreated quickly to isolated enclaves and failed to spark a popular insurrection or capture a strategic target. The FMLN also benefited from the killings of the Jesuits and the Army's aerial attacks against slums where the rebels were holed up. The government, however, still appears confident it retains the military advantage. [redacted]

Despite the Army's success against the FMLN, the government has been put on the political defensive. The murders of the Jesuits, probably by rogue extremists in the security forces, let the FMLN and other regime opponents renew charges of government repression. Although President Cristiani immediately denounced the killings and launched an investigation, the incident hurt his credibility as a moderate and renewed doubts that he can control the extremists.

[redacted]

Cristiani's standing also has been eroded by his imposition of a state of siege, which restricts some civil liberties, and by recent harassment by security forces of some church workers suspected of assisting the rebels. New laws that increase sentences for "seditious" crimes and expand powers of arrest already have sparked charges of government abuses. The government also is considering the enforcement of new restrictions on the activities of foreigners, although such moves will invite new charges of repression.

[redacted]

Other Rebel Gains . . .

The rebels made major propaganda gains by grabbing international headlines and giving an appearance of military viability. International calls for a cease-fire also helped them; they still hope to force the government to negotiate on their terms. Most important for the rebels, the offensive reinvigorated the debate in the US about continued support to San Salvador, which the FMLN has long sought to stop

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