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**DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE**

**MAY 1986**

**CENTRAL AMERICAN MONTHLY REPORT #34 (U)**

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**This memorandum was prepared by the Central America North and South Branches, ALA. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. It contains information available as of 31 May 1986. Questions and comments are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Division, ALA, [Redacted]**

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**May 1986**  
**CENTRAL AMERICAN MONTHLY REPORT #34 (U)**  
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**EL SALVADOR**

The prospect of formal talks between the government and rebel leaders--last held in late 1984--was raised when Salvadoran Government officials and guerrilla political representatives met in Lima on 26 April to discuss renewing dialogue. The peace talks

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apparently took place at the initiative of rebel political leaders and were facilitated by Peruvian President Garcia.

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rebel spokesmen said their principal reason for meeting with Salvadoran officials was to discuss incorporating insurgent military leaders--who had not been informed of the meeting--into private talks. We believe the political representatives hope to use the talks to regain influence in the insurgency by appearing as a necessary mediator between the government and guerrilla hardliners.

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Meanwhile, the Salvadoran military maintained the offensive by launching two major sweeps in Morazan and Usulután Departments in addition to the ongoing Phoenix operation in central El Salvador. the two sweeps, like Phoenix, are designed to last for at least several weeks in an attempt to shut down long-occupied rebel base camps and logistics corridors. Recently captured guerrilla documents tell of continuing supply shortages and low morale caused by the constant government pressure and capture of materiel. The armed forces' most significant losses in May were three aircraft that crashed because of bad weather and mechanical problems. Casualties included eight experienced pilots and an entire class--29 men--of aircraft mechanics.

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Civilian authorities, probably bowing to military pressure and undermining recent improvements in the judicial process, turned over to the armed forces the investigation of military personnel involved in a kidnaping for profit ring uncovered in April. The military claimed jurisdiction by an unprecedented application of a special legal provision assigning it the responsibility for handling subversion and terrorism cases--to include criminal activity such as kidnaping. Civilian investigators had been making progress in the case, according to the US Embassy, although the accused leader of the ring--Lt. Col. Staben--was released for "lack of evidence." Three suspects died in suspicious circumstances--two while in police custody and another after being temporarily released from jail. Civilian and military personnel--fearful of exposure in these and other crimes--may have been responsible for the deaths, and their influence could further limit the scope of the investigation.

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Meanwhile, leftist efforts to exploit working class discontent with the government's austerity program received several setbacks in late April and May. According to the US Embassy, the insurgent-backed National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS) called a general strike on 24 April which affected only a few private businesses and public institutions and failed to gain private sector support. Despite a year of aggressive organizing, the annual May Day march produced only 10,000-12,000 UNTS supporters--roughly the same number that took part last May. disputes between UNTS hardliners and moderates were partly responsible for the poor showings. the UNTS will be unable to initiate any significant actions in the near-term because of ideological differences, lack of cohesive leadership, and insufficient funds. UNTS leaders reportedly were in Mexico and Europe in mid-May trying to raise money.

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