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ACTION SCT-03

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-13 ADS-00 AID-01 ARA-01 A-01 CA-02
CCO-00 CG-00 CIAE-00 SJK-01 COME-00 CTME-00 C-01
DODE-00 DOEE-00 DS-00 EB-01 EUR-01 FAAE-00 FBIE-00
IMMC-01 INRE-00 INR-01 INSE-00 IO-19 JUSE-00 L-03
M-01 NRCE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OIC-02 OIS-01 PA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2009
INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO
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AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Oscar Olson, Senior
Reviewer

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TAGS: PTER, PINS, PGOV, ES
SUBJECT: FMLN UPS VIOLENCE WITH AN EYE TO NEGOTIATIONS

1. (U) SUMMARY: FMLN REBELS BEGAN A WAVE OF ATTACKS
NOVEMBER 4 ON THE EVE OF THE NEXT ROUND OF PEACE
TALKS, ATTACKING THE POWER GRID, BLOCKING TRAFFIC IN
SAN SALVADOR AND TAKING ON ESAF TROOPS IN APOPA TO THE
NORTH AND IN THE PORT TOWN OF LA LIBERTAD, SOUTH OF
SAN SALVADOR, ALL THE WHILE DEMANDING THE ESAF LEAVE
FMLN REAR GUARD "ZONES OF CONTROL." THE DOWNING OF
SEVEN HIGH TENSION TOWERS INCREASED NATIONWIDE
RATIONING TO SEVEN HOURS DAILY, PROMPTING AN INCENSED
LEMPA RIVER HYDROELECTRIC COMMISSION (CEL) PRESIDENT
TO CALL THE FMLN "ANIMALS." END SUMMARY.

2. (U) IN A BOLD EARLY EVENING NOVEMBER 4 INCURSION
INTO SAN SALVADOR, URBAN COMMANDOS BLOCKED AN

INTERSECTION IN THE ESCALON NEIGHBORHOOD, SNARLING TRAFFIC FOR OVER AN HOUR. THE FMLN FORCED A BUS AND A TRUCK ACROSS BUSY SAN ANTONIO ABAD BLVD., AT THE 75TH AVENUE NORTH INTERSECTION, AND SHOT OUT THE VEHICLES' TIRES. AFTER NATIONAL POLICE AND FIRST BRIGADE TROOPS ENGAGED THE SMALL REBEL FORCE, THE INSURGENTS COMMANDEERED A TAXI AND TURNED TAIL.

3. (U) IN A NOVEMBER 4 RESUMPTION OF POWER GRID ATTACKS, THE FMLN DOWNED FIVE PRIMARY AND TWO SECONDARY ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES, LEADING TO AN INCREASE IN ELECTRIC RATIONING FROM FOUR TO SEVEN HOURS DAILY. LEMPA RIVER HYDROELECTRIC COMMISSION (CEL) PRESIDENT SIGIFREDO OCHOA PEREZ, LIVID DURING A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOVEMBER 5 NEWS CONFERENCE, CALLED THE FMLN "ANIMALS" FOR THEIR ATTACKS ON THE CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE. OCHOA ALSO LAMBASTED THE CHURCH AND NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GROUPS "WITH OR WITHOUT CASSOCKS" WHO CRITICIZE THE GOVERNMENT AND CEL, BUT FAIL TO CONDEMN THE "BARBARITIES" OF THE FMLN.

4. (U) DURING THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 5, IN THE AREA BETWEEN NEJAPA AND APOPA--SOME 11 KILOMETERS NORTH OF SAN SALVADOR--THE FMLN CLASHED WITH FIRST BRIGADE TROOPS FOR SEVEN HOURS, TAKING CONTROL OF THE APOPA-QUEZALTEPEQUE ROAD, THE POPOTLAN DISTRICT OF APOPA AND THE MECAFE COFFEE FARM. DURING THE ENSUING FIRE-FIGHT, AT LEAST FIVE ESAF SOLDIERS WERE WOUNDED, AS WELL AS TWO FIRST AID WORKERS ATTEMPTING TO CARRY CIVILIANS TO SAFETY. FMLN CAPTAIN CAMILO RIVERA CHARACTERIZED THE COMBAT AS A "RESPONSE TO ESAF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN AREAS UNDER FMLN CONTROL."

5. MEANWHILE, IN SANTIAGO DE MARIA IN THE DEPARTMENT OF USULUTAN, GUERRILLAS FOUGHT ESAF FORCES IN HEAVY COMBAT RESULTING IN THE WOUNDING OF THREE CIVILIANS AND THE KILLING OF SIX ESAF SOLDIERS. NEWSPAPER REPORTS STATE LOCAL RESIDENTS TIPPED OFF ESAF TROOPS TO THE PRESENCE OF THE REBELS. SOUTH OF SAN SALVADOR, IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LA LIBERTAD, REBELS ATTACKED AN ELECTRIC SUBSTATION AND SET UP ROAD BLOCKS IN THE PORT TOWN OF LA LIBERTAD. IN THE MIDST OF THE LA LIBERTAD OPERATION, GUERRILLA COMANDANTE ADRIAN CITED THE POSSIBILITY OF A UNILATERAL FMLN CEASE-FIRE FOR CHRISTMAS (AS THEY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST) IF NO FORMAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED.

6. (U) ON NOVEMBER 6, URBAN COMMANDOS, DRESSED AS TELEPHONE WORKERS, PLACED A BOMB ON THE SOUTH WALL OF THE ESAF MILITARY CIVIC ACTION OFFICE IN SAN SALVADOR WOUNDING FIVE CIVILIANS. THE BOMB DAMAGED THE CIVIC ACTION OFFICE, THE NEIGHBORING TERRITORIAL SERVICES BUILDING (THE PROBABLE TARGET OF THE ATTEMPT AS IT SUPERVISES CIVIL GUARD (GC) ACTIVITIES) AND AS MANY AS 40 HOMES IN THE MARGINAL NEIGHBORHOOD OF "SU CASA." IN HEAVY COMBAT IN THE AREA OF THE GUAZAPA VOLCANO, FMLN FORCES UNSUCCESSFULLY FIRED A SURFACE TO AIR MISSILE AT ESAF AIRCRAFT IN SUPPORT OF FIRST BRIGADE TROOPS.

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COMMENT:

7. (LOU) THE FMLN'S ATTACKS LACKED MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE BUT WERE EFFECTIVE ATTENTION GRABBERS THAT IMPACTED ON MANY SALVADORANS' EVERYDAY LIVES. FMLN COMANDANTES STRESSED OVER AND OVER, IN IMPROMPTU NEWS CONFERENCES, THIER TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AND THEIR OBJECTION TO ESAF OPERATIONS IN FMLN "REAR GUARD" AREAS. APOPA SEEMS TO HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN THE FMLN'S HEART. ITS PROXIMITY TO SAN SALVADOR (AND TO THE FMLN GUAZAPA BASE AREA) AFFORDS EASY ACCESS TO JOURNALISTS, MAKING FOR GUARANTEED PRESS COVERAGE OF REBEL OPERATIONS WHILE ALSO PROVIDING EASY ESCAPE ROUTES WHEN THE ACTION BECOMES TOO INTENSE FOR FMLN SENSIBILITIES. FMLN ATTACKS ON THE POWER GRID, WHILE HAVING AN IMMEDIATE PROPAGANDA VALUE, MAY BE TURNING COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE AS THEY WORSEN EL SALVADOR'S ELECTRIC CRISIS.
WALKER

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