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EL SALVADOR: Politics of Terrorism

*The recent surge in rightist terrorism, combined with continuing violence by the radical left, will prompt more moderates to withdraw from legitimate political activity and will further polarize the country.*

Two prominent leftist parties that pulled out of the government last month have been the targets of rightist terrorism. Such tactics will push these parties closer to the militant opposition.

//The most violent rightist organizations probably are working to precipitate a conservative military coup. The group that has been most active reportedly includes National Guard officers and may be linked to the former head of the Guard.//

The Christian Democratic Party--the only political organization represented on the military-civilian junta--fears violent reprisals from both the right and left, and has publicly demanded an investigation of the armed forces' involvement in repression. A Christian Democratic leader this week stated that the rightist threat could result in the party losing the support of its rank and file because of the government's failure to protect them. Such a development could split the party--which would be likely to shatter the fragile military-civilian coalition. The party is a target of the radical left because of its participation in the government. Party efforts to meet with extreme-left leaders have been rejected.

Leftist groups are still occupying the Ministry of Education, the Spanish Embassy, and Christian Democratic headquarters. Rightists killed one leftist party leader on Tuesday and have threatened to execute leaders of the Communist front party if the leftists do not withdraw. In this atmosphere, a government attempting to hold to the center and implement moderate reform is increasingly regarded as irrelevant by all sectors.

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