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**Headline:** Ponce Admits Soldiers Held on Jesuit Killings

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**FULL TEXT OF ARTICLE:**

1. [Text] San Salvador, 8 Jan (ACAN-EFE)--Colonel Rene Emilio Ponce, chief of the Salvadoan Armed Forces' General Staff, has admitted that 2 officers and 45 soldiers of an elite battalion are "being held in various garrisons of San Salvador" while investigations into the killing of the six Jesuits continue.

2. According to Ponce, these officers and soldiers of the Atlacatl Battalion were placed at the disposition of the Crimes Investigative Commission, which is studying the case of the Jesuits who were shot to death on 16 November.

3. Spanish, British, French, and Canadian police agents have participated in these investigations.

4. These Salvadoran soldiers had searched the Jesuits' residence 2 days before the killing, Ponce told the media today without giving much detail.

5. However, diplomatic sources stated that the soldiers will be "confined" to their respective garrisons and added that they include "five officers."

6. Francisco Estrada, a Salvadoran priest who was appointed new rector of the Central American University (UCA), said that "the president's announcement that members of the Armed Forces committed this crime, is an important step very seldom taken in this country." However, this "matter is not over yet."

7. "What would really be new is for him to say who did it, instead of just saying that it was the Armed Forces," the priest told ACAN-EFE and added that he trusts in the "goodwill and ethics" of President Alfredo Cristiani.

8. Every source consulted with by ACAN-EFE, whether diplomatic or religious, agreed to say that now it is important for Cristiani to take one step further and mention the names of the people involved in this murder carried out at UCA.

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9. Two domestic servants (a mother and a daughter) were killed together with the clergymen, five Spaniards, including UCA Rector Ignacio Ellacuria, and a Salvadoran.

10. The U.S. Embassy in El Salvador also congratulated Cristiani today for his efforts to clarify the assassination, as U.S. congressmen and officials of the George Bush administration had asked.

11. In fact, diplomatic sources commented to ACAN-EFE that beginning on 22 January, the U.S. Congress is to discuss a new \$90 million package of economic and military aid to El Salvador that might hinge on the status of the investigations.

12. The United States has given over \$3 billion in military and economic aid to El Salvador over the past decade, and at present it is giving about \$1.4 million daily, according to Salvadoran political sources.

13. UCA rector Francisco Estrada said that Cristiani could take this step because "he is confident that he can control any internal resentment within his government and the Armed Forces."

14. A similar opinion was expressed by a European diplomat, who told ACAN-EFE that Cristiani is taking a great risk by accusing members of the Armed Forces of this crime. He added: "If he has done this, it is because he feels very confident."

15. Observers compare the investigation being carried out by the present rightist government to one carried out by the government of Jose Napoleon Duarte, a Christian Democrat, into the 1980 murder of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero.

16. Duarte, who turned over power to Cristiani on 1 June 1989, on several occasions attributed the murder of Archbishop Romero to Roberto D'Aubuisson, a present deputy and leader of the ruling Nationalist Republican Alliance, but the investigations never led to any concrete results.

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