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EL SALVADOR: Officers Arrested in Jesuit Case

Three junior Salvadoran officers have been arrested in connection with the murder of six Jesuit priests and two women in November. [REDACTED] but the investigation appears far from complete. Armed Forces Chief of Staff Ponce says ballistic and handwriting evidence implicates the three officers. President Cristiani has convened a special military tribunal to assist in the investigation, ordering it to ensure a complete and impartial investigation no matter who appears to be guilty. [REDACTED]

Comment: Ponce and other senior military officials appear committed to resolving the case but may face resistance from some officers determined to protect the military's standing. The presence of senior officers on the tribunal should assist in the interrogation of other officers. Cristiani's decision to keep the membership of the tribunal secret is, nevertheless, indicative of the potential for violence against those who implicate the military. Even if evidence in the case appears conclusive, weaknesses in the Salvadoran judicial system will impede prosecution. [REDACTED]

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