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EL SALVADOR: Suspected Kidnapers Released

President-elect Cristiani, the armed forces, and the US Embassy are trying to reverse a ruling by an allegedly corrupt judge that released three suspects in a major kidnaping case. The suspects—associates of Roberto D'Aubuisson, honorary president of Cristiani's ARENA party—are accused of kidnaping for ransom five prominent Salvadorans between 1982 and 1986. [REDACTED] one suspect remains in prison because the Justice Minister countermanded the judge's ruling before he was freed, a second is under police surveillance pending the issuance of a new arrest warrant, and the third is being sought by the military. Three other suspects in the case are fugitives in the US and Mexico [REDACTED]

Comment: Although there is as yet no evidence that D'Aubuisson or other ARENA officials bribed the judge, controversy surrounding the ruling comes at a difficult time for Cristiani as he prepares to visit Washington this week. Critics will point to the release of the suspects as an indication that Cristiani's government will be cavalier about human rights. Reforming El Salvador's corrupt and ineffective judicial system will be a necessary—and difficult—step if Cristiani hopes to control political violence. [REDACTED]

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