

Colombian President Says Operations to Release Five FARC Captives Underway



Bogotá, November 21 (RHC) — President Juan Manuel Santos said Thursday that humanitarian operations to release a general and four others who were recently captured are “underway.”

The Colombia Reports website says the humanitarian operations will be carried out by the International Red Cross and are expected to come to an end within days after the army ends military operations in the areas where the FARC says to be releasing their captives.

The international humanitarian organization will have to carry out two separate operations in almost opposite sides of the country and the five were taken prisoner in two separate rebel actions.

A spokesman for the Red Cross confirmed to local media on Thursday that the humanitarian organization had been authorized by both the government and the FARC to carry out the operations.

In the western Choco state, guerrillas will hand over General Ruben Dario Alzate, an army captain and an attorney near the village of Las Mercedes. The three were captured on Sunday when the military men entered FARC territory unarmed and without the necessary security measures.

The capture of the general prompted Santos to suspend ongoing peace talks with the FARC and demanded his release before talks could be resumed.

Also in the hands of the FARC are two soldiers who were captured in combat in the northeastern state of Arauca almost two weeks ago. The Red Cross will carry out a separate operation to receive these two men.

Both Arauca and Choco are remote areas with substandard road infrastructure, which could slow down a possible release operation.

The release operations were brokered by the representatives of Norway and Cuba who are guarantor countries of the peace process.

The government and FARC have been negotiating peace since November 2012, but have so far failed to agree to a ceasefire in spite of repeated calls by the rebels to implement a truce. If successful, the talks will end 50 years of violence between the rebels and the state.

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