

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Intensifies Offensive Against FARC



Bogota, June 15 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Colombia's president announced on Sunday that a prominent leader of the ELN (National Liberation Army) had been killed, just a day after the government ordered the armed forces to intensify their attacks against guerrilla groups.

President Juan Manuel Santos said that an army commando had just killed ELN leader José Amín Hernández Manrique, aka "Marquitos," in the northern department of Antioquia. In a press conference from Rome, Italy, on Saturday he announced the country's armed forces will intensify their attacks against the guerrilla groups, despite the peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), started in 2012 in Havana, Cuba.

A Cifras survey revealed that Santos is losing public support among Colombians, with support for his administration dropping by 5 percent since December, leaving him with just a 38 percent approval rate in total. His approval rate contrasts sharply with hard-liner and fierce opponent of Santos' policy of peace talks with the rebels ex-President Alvaro Uribe, who gained one point, reaching 47 percent approval this month.

The FARC resumed their military attacks in Dec 2014 after seven months of unilateral cease-fire that the government never accepted. However the recent death of 11 army soldiers in the region of Cauca triggered a period of tension that threatened the peace negotiations. The government claimed it was the result of a deliberate action, while the FARC-EP pointed to the government's rejection of their offer of bilateral cease-fire and accused the government of maintaining military offensive during the peace talks.

Numerous human rights activists and political leaders in the country have urged in vain that the government commit to a bilateral ceasefire for the sake of the peace talks, about to end a conflict that lasted over half a century and caused about 230,000 victims.

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