

Former Colombian Commander Investigated for Extrajudicial Killings



Bogota, June 24 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The former commander of Colombia's National Army, General Mario Montoya, was called in for questioning on Tuesday over his alleged role in thousands of extrajudicial killings carried out by the country's security forces to be presented as guerrilla fighters killed during clashes.

The scandal, dubbed False Positives, began in 2008 and is still being investigated by the Colombian authorities. But already more than 400 army commanders, 800 unit commanders and almost 3,000 soldiers have been formally indicted.

According to the Prosecutor's Office, Montoya would be questioned given that the killings occurred under his authority, and could be charged for failing to effectively overview the actions that led to the killings. Another three retired commanders were also called for questioning by the Prosecutor's Office.

Montoya has still pending charges, regarding his links to the now defunct paramilitary group Colombian Self-Defense Force (AUC), a group that killed tens of thousands of civilians throughout its existence.

The false positives became such a common practice during the administration of former President Alvaro Uribe that by 2007, more than 40 percent of registered combat kills were in fact murdered civilians dressed in fatigue. In exchange for the killings, generals were awarded vacations and cash prices.

Uribe vowed to destroy the FARC rebels using military strength, instead of trying to negotiate with the group through peace talks as other presidents had done in the past. It is estimated that some 3,000 civilians were extra-judicially murdered by the Colombian army.

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