

Gunmen Attack Colombia Military Killing 10, Injuring 17



Bogota, April 15 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Colombian authorities reported on Wednesday that a military convoy was attacked by unidentified gunmen the government is saying are FARC rebels with whom they've been in negotiation peace since 2012.

However, the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC) have on various occasions declared a unilateral cease-fire and have insisted on a bilateral truce as a necessary measure to continue with the peace process in the 50-year conflict that has left over 220,000 people dead.

In contrast, the government has consistently rejected any cease-fire. The FARC has not claimed the attack, which military officials say took place in *Timba*, in the state of *Cauca* (some 460 miles south of Bogota) and also left 17 wounded. If it is confirmed that the FARC carried out the attack, it could mean they have decided to suspend the unilateral cease-fire they declared late last year.

But on Tuesday, the FARC released a statement saying the "actions by the guerrilla have been defensive without any exception. Those voices that attempt to discredit our gesture of peace through a unilateral cease-fire should instead join those voices demanding a bilateral cease-fire."

On Wednesday, the FARC released a statement on its website pazfarc-ep.org. Rebel leader Felix Antonio Muñoz Lascarro, also known as "Pastor Alape," regretted the attack against the military and the death of

the soldiers. He also said that the death of the 10 soldiers is due to the governmental “incoherent ordering of military operations against a rebel group which has declared a truce.” He did not say the FARC carried out the attack, however. Muños added, “Be it an ambush, a counter-ambush, an attack ... what is relevant is the death of Colombians, which is something that needs to stop. There is no plausible explanation that in the middle of an ongoing peace process these attacks take place. We must remember the death of Gilberto Becerro, a FARC-EP rebel, among many others who have died in the middle of the unilateral cease fire. This must be stopped.”

Gen. Mario Augusto Valencia, army commander, confirmed his people were ambushed by armed men, which he says are members of the Miller Perdomo rebel convoy of the FARC. However, no evidence has been presented to support their allegations. Valencia explained that military forces engaged in fierce combat Tuesday evening with alleged rebels. He said the fighting continued on through Wednesday morning.

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos condemned the attack and regretted the death of soldiers. Santos also said he was working closely with the military's high command in order to clarify the incident.

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