

Colombia suspends extradition to U.S. of FARC's Jesus Santrich



Bogota, May 19 (RHC)-- The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), the organism in charge of judging the crimes committed during the Colombian armed conflict, has decided to suspend the extradition process of FARC's Jesus Santrich to the United States, after the DEA accused him of drug trafficking.

The president of the review section of the JEP, Jesus Bobadilla, said in a press conference that the tribunal "suspends the extradition process demanded by the U.S." against Santrich.

Santrich, the nom de guerre Zeuxis Hernandez Solarte, was arrested on prosecutor's orders on April 9, after the U.S. issued an Interpol red alert accusing him of planning to export 10 tons of cocaine into the North American country after the FARC and the Colombian government signed the peace agreement on November 24, 2016.

Now, the peace tribunal is suspending the process for 120 days, in which it will be determined if the former insurgent will be judged by Colombian justice, which would allow the extradition to continue, or if he should be sent to the United States. The JEP demanded that prosecutors hand over all information "related to the extradition process and privation of liberty" regarding Santrich's case within the next five days.

The organism also demanded the foreign ministry hand in the U.S. extradition petition "immediately" after

receiving “a formal request,” which hasn't been issued yet. The involved parties in the process will have a 10-day period to request “the evidence considered necessary,” said Bobadilla.

The judge said the suspension of the process “doesn't mean that a foreign government, in this case the U.S., has to abstain” of presenting “the formal request for extradition.” The decision, approved unanimously, is a consequence of Santrich's request to review his case.

Jesus Santrich, one of the FARC leaders that was part of the negotiating team that led to the peace agreement with the Colombian government, has been on hunger strike for 39 days as protest against what he considers a “staged” case against him.

According to the historic peace agreement, the former insurgents that adhere to the JEP can't be extradited for crimes committed during the armed conflict, but prosecutors claim that Santrich kept on drug trafficking agreements after the pact was signed.

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