

# *Six Rebels Dead, Three Soldiers Wounded in Colombian Fighting*

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Bogotá, February 23 (RHC-EFE) – At least six guerrillas with the ELN and EPL died and three Colombian army soldiers were wounded during intense combat at the weekend in Colombia's Norte de Santander province, military sources said on Sunday.

The clashes occurred in a rural portion of San Calixto municipality among Colombian army troops and members of the National Liberation Army, ELN, and the Popular Liberation Army, EPL, the commander of the 30th Army Brigade, Col. Marcos Pinto, told reporters.

The fighting began on Saturday afternoon between the towns of Palmarito and La Cantina, through which passes the road connecting San Calixto with Ocaña, the most important city in the region.

The EPL demobilized in 1991, but a portion of the group refused to lay down its arms and continues to operate in some regions of the country, Colombian authorities say, sometimes together with the ELN.

A year ago, the ELN initiated “exploratory” contacts with the Colombian government to open a peace process similar to that under way in Cuba between Bogotá and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, but the contacts have not yet resulted in an ongoing dialogue.

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