

# *Colombian Government Rebuffs Rebel Call for Bilateral Truce*

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Havana, June 24 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Ivan Marquez, a commander with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the member of the rebels' peace delegation, insisted that the time has come to "stop the war to prevent damages against the peace process and further useless victimization."

Making an appeal directly to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and Minister of Defense Luis Carlos Villegas on Tuesday, Marquez said: "This peace process has progressed like no other in Colombia, and today we are discussing crucial, complex issues, linked to specific aspects of the end of the conflict. Therefore, the background of it shouldn't be the armed confrontation."

However, Villegas responded by once again ruling out a bilateral cease-fire and announced that government forces would maintain its offensive against the guerrilla forces. "The bilateral cease-fire will be agreed to when it is final, when we've reached the end of the negotiations, when we have the full ability to verify it," Villegas said at a press conference, reiterating similar comments made by President Santos.

The intransigence of Santos government has lately led to an escalation in the armed conflict. The FARC suspended its unilateral cease-fire after a government massacre in the Cauca region left 27 dead guerrillas, including Commander Jairo Martinez, who was at the camp to inform the rebels about the progress of the peace process.

FARC rebels killed four soldiers in the province of North Santander Monday when a remote explosive was detonated as government soldiers disembarked a helicopter.

The FARC and Colombian government are in the midst of the 38th round of peace talks taking place in Havana.

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