

FARC Liberates Army Officer Before Unilateral Cease-Fire Begins



Bogota, July 20 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Colombian guerrilla group FARC freed an army sub-lieutenant on Saturday, with mediation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The liberation occurred two days before the unilateral ceasefire launched by the guerrilla group came into effect on Monday, accompanied by the government's commitment to de-escalate its military operations against the FARC.

Sub-lieutenant Cristian Moscoso was captured by the rebels earlier this month, after clashes in the province of Putumayo. President Juan Manuel Santos announced his release through his Twitter account on early Sunday, and later assured that the official was in a good state.

Members of the Colombian military leadership – including Defense Minister Luis Carlos Villegas – visited Moscoso in a hospital in Bogota on Sunday, where he is under observation.

Representatives of the Norwegian and Cuban governments also participated in the release of the official. Both governments have led efforts to bring together the guerrilla group and the Colombian government.

The new and sixth unilateral ceasefire and de-escalation of the conflict, which began Monday morning, will be effective until November, when both parties will evaluate its results and will decide if they can work towards agreeing a bilateral ceasefire.

The FARC released a statement, ahead of the unilateral ceasefire, emphasizing the group will respond to any attack launched by the Colombian army.

The group announced their position through their Twitter account. "None of the FARC units will themselves be struck by the (Colombian) Armed Forces and have all the right to defend themselves from enemy fire," reads the tweet.

Representatives from the United Nations and UNASUR are expected to monitor the ceasefire and de-escalation of violence.

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