

Colombian Army to Search for Remains of Murdered ELN Priest



Bogota, January 18 (teleSUR-RHC) -- Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos has requested that the country's army investigate the whereabouts of the remains of political dissident, Father Camilo Torres. The move is intended to be a trust-building measure between the government and the National Liberation Army (ELN) rebel group just before formal peace talks begin.

"I told the Defense Ministry, let's search for the remains, this will be a symbolic gesture so we could continue this peace process and reconcile all Colombians," said Santos from the municipality of San Vicente de Chucuri, in Santander, where Torres was killed.

A week before, the ELN had publicly asked the Colombian government for this investigation, as a "peace gesture" meant to prove the government's commitment to peace.

On February 12, 1966, the Colombian army killed Torres, a Marxist priest and pioneer of Liberation Theology, less than four months after he joined the guerrilla movement. Torres was reportedly buried in an

unidentified grave.

The ELN, which has about 1,500 fighters according to the official estimate, started exploratory talks with Santos' administration in January 2014 in Ecuador, in a bid to open a peace process similar to the one carried out with the FARC in Havana.

In his speech on Saturday, Santos confirmed that peace talks with the country's second largest guerrilla group will start soon, as announced by the group's leader at the end of December.

The president also announced that San Vicente de Chucuri was free of anti-personnel mines. The town was the first in the country where such mines had been buried.

However, Colombia still sadly ranks second in the world for the number of mines buried in its soil, he said, with almost 700 towns believed to still contain anti-personnel mines, according to the official estimate.

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