

# Haven Offered to 2 Militias in Colombia, if They Disarm

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BOGOTÁ, Colombia, Aug. 2 - President Álvaro Uribe is prepared to create a second safe haven for two rival paramilitary factions in southern Colombia on the condition that the groups declare an immediate cease-fire and begin disarming, his office announced on Monday.

The offer came five days after three commanders from the largest paramilitary group, which is involved in fragile talks with the government in a northern safe haven created in May, vowed in a highly unusual appearance before the Colombian Congress that they would never agree to a deal that would lead to their imprisonment. In the havens, paramilitaries are shielded from arrest.

Mr. Uribe, whose two-pronged strategy for pacifying the country calls for co-opting right-wing death squads and battling Marxist rebels, called on the two paramilitary factions to end their conflict over cocaine or be shut out of talks with his government.

As an incentive, the government is prepared to create a second safe haven and possibly a third, so the two groups will have a secure zone in which to disarm and hold talks, said Martha Martínez, a spokeswoman for Mr. Uribe's peace commissioner, Luis Carlos Restrepo.

The government's announcement was criticized by some political analysts, who say the peace talks are in trouble because the government has been ceding ground without pushing the paramilitaries to stop their violence or admit to their crimes.

"This process is in a crisis of credibility," said Daniel García-Peña, a former peace commissioner here. "The president has time to rescue the process if the conditions are well established and they make them comply. But the government has hard rhetoric one day, and they make concessions the next."

One of the paramilitary groups, the Centauros Bloc, led by Miguel Arroyave, is part of the country's largest paramilitary group, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, which is carrying on peace talks with the government in Santa Fe de Ralito in the north. Commanders of the group are offering to demobilize if the government guarantees they will not be punished for crimes including mass murders and drug trafficking.

The second group, the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Casanare, led by Martín Llanos, is conducting separate talks with the government.

"We're talking about two more zones, or that the Centauros group will concentrate in Santa Fe de Ralito," Ms. Martínez said. "It is a given there will be at least a zone for Llanos."

On Friday, Mr. Llanos met with Mr. Restrepo, the peace commissioner, and told him that a zone was needed for the talks. Last Wednesday, one of the three commanders who visited the

Congress, Salvatore Mancuso, also called for more safe havens, where paramilitary commanders and troops would be shielded from arrest and extradition to the United States on drug-trafficking charges while they negotiate.

Mr. Uribe is clearly open to creating the zones to further the talks, but under the condition that paramilitary groups cease hostilities. Though informal talks with various factions have been going on all year, the groups have continued killing labor leaders, human rights workers and peasants and trafficking in cocaine.

In the government's statement on Monday, Mr. Uribe directed his ire at Mr. Llanos and Mr. Arroyave, saying, "If these conditions are not met in the coming days, the national government will end the peace process with these two groups."

The paramilitary groups were formed more than 20 years ago by rogue military officers, landowners and drug traffickers to combat leftist rebels by killing their supporters and taking back territory. They quickly turned into major drug-running outfits, and several paramilitary commanders are now wanted in the United States on drug-trafficking charges.

*Mónica Trujillo contributed reporting for this article.*