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Colombia: Attorney General To Investigate Possible Military Involvement In Recent Civilian Massacres

by John Neagle

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On Feb. 21, Colombian President Virgilio Barco ordered the attorney general's office to investigate possible military involvement in recent massacres of civilians. The office announced that an investigative commission would be headed by Manuel Salvador Betancur, a prosecutor appointed by the military. A letter dated Feb. 7 by the central committee of the Patriotic Union (UP) requested the investigation, referring specifically to the November 11 massacre of 44 peasants in Segovia, Antioquia department. The UP charged that the Segovia killings were carried out by a paramilitary group while police and soldiers simply looked on. The UP has also publicly charged that the military was linked to the murders of 12 members of a judicial commission last month in Santander department. Last week, the Supreme Court ruled that an Army colonel and a captain suspected of involvement in the Segovia massacre could stand trial in a civilian court. Other officers, said the Court, who are accused of having done nothing to prevent the massacre should face a military court. (Basic data from AFP, 02/21/89)

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