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John Neagle

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Colombia: Notes On Clashes Between Government Troops & Guerrillas

by John Neagle
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On Nov. 8, six guerrillas of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) were killed in a clash with government troops in Belen, La Plata municipality, located in a border area between Cauca and Huila departments. In Zaragoza, Antioquia department, government troops reportedly killed three members of the National Liberation Army (ELN). Nov. 13: Military sources reported that 18 rebels pertaining to the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) and one soldier were killed in a clash with government troops in the Puerto Libertador municipality, Cordoba department. The local news media said several of the dead rebels were young women. Notimex suggested that circumstances surrounding the battle in Cordoba department were rather suspicious. Standard operating procedure for the Colombian army is to pursue wounded rebels in an attempt to locate and then arrest them. No wounded rebels were arrested. The SOP includes rounding up all persons in the general locale of a battle considered to be rebels or rebel collaborators. Notimex points out that the Colombian armed forces have been accused by human rights organizations of executing residents of a locale where they believe rebels are active. Young agricultural workers are presumed guerrillas, and thus become shooting targets for soldiers. A military officer involved in the fighting in Puerto Libertador told a local radio journalist that 15 to 20 were killed, and that all were young people, ranging in age from 20 to 25. In addition to the EPL, drug traffickers are active in Cordoba department, where they own at least 300,000 ha. of land. The traffickers are responsible for massacres of supposed guerrilla collaborators and activists of the leftist Patriotic Union (UP) party. Judicial investigations have shown armed forces involvement especially by military intelligence officers in several massacres of Colombian peasants. Also on Nov. 13, rebels clashed with troops in Bolivar province. The army reported that two rebels were killed, one a member of EPL, and the other, of the National Liberation Army (ELN). (Basic data from Xinhua, 11/09/89, 11/14/89; Notimex, 11/14/89)

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