

## FARC Rebels See Upsurge in Colombian Violence as Talks Drag

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Colombia Marxist rebels said they'll step up attacks on security forces after suspending their cease-fire as peace talks to end Latin America's longest-running insurgency drag on.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, will target the army more than oil installations, a guerrilla commander known as Matias Aldecoa said in an interview in Havana. Pipelines used by companies including Ecopetrol SA and Occidental Petroleum Corp. have been damaged in FARC bombing attacks in the past few weeks.

"Soon people will see the war in this latest phase, and they're going to see the number of police and soldiers who die," Aldecoa said Saturday, in an interview in Havana. "For us, oil pipelines aren't the No. 1 target."

The FARC suspended a unilateral cease-fire in May after the armed forces killed at least 26 guerrillas in an attack in south west Colombia. The resumption of attacks has increased casualties on both sides, cut oil output and caused crude to leak into rivers and seas.

The attacks are intended to "hit the economy and investor confidence," Aldecoa said.

The government of President Juan Manuel Santos has been holding peace talks with the FARC since 2012, seeking a deal to end a conflict that began in the 1960s. One reason the talks are taking so long is that the government is insisting the rebels serve jail time, something they aren't going to accept, Aldecoa said.

Negotiators have been stuck on the current agenda item, about justice and reparations for victims, for more than a year.

Taking Time

Defense Minister Luis Carlos Villegas attacked Aldecoa's remarks, which he described as "mafia-like".

"We are going to react calmly, but with all our strength to this vile threat from this man in Cuba," Villegas said Wednesday, at a news conference in Bogota.

Aldecoa, a member of the FARC's "Estado Mayor" decision-making body, said its leaders won't accept any type of imprisonment, even house arrest in Cuba, since this would impede their ability to participate in politics and create a popular socialist movement.

"We can't found a political movement without leaders," Aldecoa said. "The government wants to keep the leadership of our movement outside the country for several years."

Given that, the FARC probably won't reach a deal with the government and convert itself into a political party in time for 2018 elections, Aldecoa said.

"To reach a final agreement is going to take time," he said. "Then our transition from a political-military organization to a political organization will also take time."

#### New Threats

The formation of a political party may bring a whole new set of problems for oil companies.

The companies enjoy contracts that are far too generous and should be renegotiated so that a greater share of profits remain in Colombia, Aldecoa said. Oil accounts for about half of Colombia's exports.

"It's not that we are proposing that the multinationals leave the country," Aldecoa said. "What we are considering is what happened in Ecuador or Bolivia -- a renegotiation over the percentage of profits that are left in Colombia."

Aldecoa said it is worrying that peace talks between the government and Colombia's second-largest guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army, or ELN, haven't even started yet. It will make it harder to implement any deal between the government and the FARC if the ELN are still fighting, he said.