

Colombian president proposes rebel zone

by UPI

BOGOTA -- Colombian President Alvaro Uribe has offered to create a special zone for future peace talks with leftist rebels if they agree to free their hostages. Uribe did however turn down a proposal by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, for the Colombian military to leave a small portion of the country in the south, El Tiempo newspaper reported online Thursday. The president said he would not do so, as it would create a safe haven for the rebel group. Last week, another rebel group, the National Liberation Army, or ELN, broke off peace talks with the government without agreeing on a cease-fire. Those talks with the ELN were held in Cuba and will resume later this month, said Colombian officials. The ELN was reportedly displeased with the government's call for the group to account for all rebels and keep them in one area of Colombia during the negotiations. Colombian rebels have been battling government forces for more than 40 years.

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