

FARC condemns smaller rebel group

MIAMI HERALD
JUN. 13, 2006

BOGOTA - (AP) -- Guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, have declared war on a smaller insurgent group engaged in exploratory peace talks with the government.

In a statement on the rebels' website Monday, the 10th Front of the FARC said it had suffered attacks from the National Liberation Army, or ELN, that it "expected only from the enemy" -- referring to the Colombian government.

Both groups have been battling the government and right-wing paramilitary fighters for more than four decades in a conflict that claims more than 3,000 lives a year.

"We've repeatedly tried to resolve our revolutionary differences, but we haven't received a response that allows us to maintain brotherly relations," the statement said. ``For that reason we manifest our decision to punish those responsible."

The FARC also made an implicit call for revolutionaries to desert the ELN and join forces with the much stronger FARC.

The conflict between the two groups appeared confined to the isolated state of Arauca, on the eastern border with Venezuela, long an ELN stronghold.

Weakened by decades of armed conflict and an unprecedented government offensive under President Alvaro Uribe, the ELN has held three rounds of exploratory peace talks with the government in Havana, Cuba.

The larger FARC, with an estimated 12,000 fighters, has so far rejected the government's peace entreaties.