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Colombian Troops Kill Rebel Commander

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Identified by the nom de guerre Tuerto Lucho, the guerrilla led an ELN front and planned an ambush last October that took the lives of 11 soldiers and a police officer in the central province of Boyaca, the army said.

That attack, in which the guerrillas captured two soldiers, who have since been released, was the spark that motivated President Juan Manuel Santos to order a redoubling of military operations against the ELN, with which he has been seeking to launch a peace process since January 2014.

The army called the operation in which Tuerto Lucho died, and two other guerrillas were captured, a “strategic blow” to the rebel group.

The 42-year-old ELN commander is also said to have planned attacks against Colombian authorities and to have laid landmines, as well as attacking the Caño Limon Coveñas oil pipeline.

The ELN and the Colombian government since January 2014 have been engaged in an “exploratory dialogue” with an eye toward beginning peace talks similar to those Bogota has been conducting with the much larger Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, since November 2012 in Havana.