

## Colombian lawyer denies Jaque negotiations



The Colombian lawyer that according to El Nuevo Herald had negotiated between FARC guerrillas and Colombian authorities about the release of Ingrid Betancourt, three U.S. contract workers and eleven policemen, denies having been part of any negotiations.

According to Carlos Toro, he only established contact between Colombian authorities and two men who had approached him saying they represented the guards of the hostages two months before the rescue operation.

The lawyer said contacts between him and the mediators "broke off" for unknown reasons.

"I don't know if the negotiations continued after that," the lawyer told Caracol Radio.

U.S. attorney Jeffrey Manciagli, who was contacted to aide the negotiations, confirmed to Colombia Reports attempts for a voluntary release were made and said he has his doubts about the version of the government, but does not think the guerrillas were cheated.

"In order for the government to have violated an agreement, there had to be an agreement to violate. To my knowledge, no agreement was ever reached between the government and the guerrillas," he said.

The Colombian army Monday denied nor confirmed any negotiations had taken place. According to Freddy Padilla, commander of Colombia's armed forces, the article that was published by El Nuevo Herald and was taken over by several Colombian media only works in favor of the FARC, Colombia's largest rebel group.

According to the army, 'Operation Jaque' was a success because of the security forces' infiltration of the highest layers of the FARC.