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### Colombia Discusses Final Stages of Peace Process

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Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos will discuss the final stages of the peace process this week, only three months before the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC guerrillas are expected to sign a final peace deal.

Santos traveled to the coastal city of Cartagena, Thursday for an annual two day summit, where he will analyze and discuss the plans for the final peace deal with the FARC.

The two sides have been undergoing peace negotiations in Havana, Cuba, since 2012, in order to bring the over 50 years of civil war in the country to an end. After over three years of talks, and reaching several landmark agreements, they have set a deadline of March 23 to sign a final peace deal.

Santos and a team of international observers, the peace commissioner, and other government negotiators who have been taking part in the current talks will discuss details of the plan this week. This will include outstanding signatures on agreements, likely timeline for signing a deal, and disarmament of the rebels.

It is unclear whether the talks this week will be open to the public or held behind closed doors with President Santos delivering a speech at the end of the conference. A similar meeting last year took place behind closed doors.

The discussions will be held without any representation from the FARC, but the details will be brought to the talks in Havana.

The FARC has reiterated that a final peace deal could not be reached unless the government acknowledges the continued existence of paramilitary groups — otherwise known as death squads — and agrees to take measures to demobilize such groups. Other contentious issues for the guerrillas include their participation in national politics and the release of their members from prison, particularly those who have already been pardoned by the government.

The government and the FARC rebel group are both preparing to sign a final peace deal by March 23, to bring an end to over 50 years of fighting.

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