

Captured bishop saved

BOGOTA, Colombia (CNS) — Bishop Jorge Jimenez Carvajal, whose kidnapping by Colombian guerrillas sparked widespread international criticism, was rescued by the army Nov. 15 after a firefight with his captors.

Bishop Jimenez, president of the Latin American bishops' council, and a priest were kidnapped Nov. 11 in the bishop's Diocese of Zipaquirá while both were traveling to attend a religious service 35 miles north of the capital of Bogotá.

The priest, Father Desiderio Orjuela, was also rescued.

A brief announcement issued by the bishops' council, known by its Spanish acronym CELAM, confirmed the rescue of the two churchmen.

Troops brought them to a military

base in Bogotá before releasing them to church authorities.

"God granted me life once again so I can put it at the service of my homeland," Bishop Jimenez told reporters at an impromptu press conference upon arriving at the base.

News reports said about 350 soldiers participated in the rescue operation and at least one guerrilla was killed.

At the time of the kidnapping, the Latin American bishops' council said the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, was responsible.

Pope John Paul II, other high-ranking Vatican officials, and bishops from the United States, Latin America, Europe and Canada were among church leaders calling for the immediate release of the bishop and priest.



AFP/CNS

Colombian Bishop Jorge Jimenez Carvajal smiles after being rescued from the hold of rebels Nov. 15.

After nearly four decades of civil war, Colombia has the highest kidnapping rate in the world, with more than 3,000 people abducted last year. Rebel groups use kidnappings to raise money and push their political agenda.

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...use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace"

1-Peter 4:9-11

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