



Message And A Bomb

The Spain Herald

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The message ETA released this past weekend and its bombing attack yesterday have confirmed GEES' most recent analyses, revealing how unfounded the Prime Minister's talk of a coming ETA ceasefire really is.

ETA's message proved the group has no intention of abandoning its criminal activities. It also served as a warning to the government that negotiations, in the terrorists' eyes, are not going well. ETA is demanding Zapatero pay a political price up front, as a pre-requisite for the group to give up terrorism. The bomb placed in Bilbao emphasized its message and raised pressure on local businessmen to submit to ETA's increasingly widespread extortion.

The administration has opted to act like the message got lost in the mail because it contradicts everything Zapatero has been saying. The Prime Minister hopes for an end to terrorism remain intact - although he does mention the process might be a long one. The Prime Minister's strategy is to act like ETA doesn't exist, despite the terrorists' presence growing by the day.

On the other hand, the welcome Supreme Court decision to keep ETA's bloodiest murderers in jail, against the wishes of the Attorney General's office, constitutes the latest conflict between an administration determined to promote goodwill with the terrorists and a judicial system determined to apply the rule of law. This contradiction is inadmissible from ETA's point of view.

The next step in the process Zapatero has embarked on will be the 2007 municipal elections. ETA assumes it will be able to run, either under its registered political trademark, Batasuna, or a substitute. It is vital to ETA to again take control of local government, not only politically, but also economically. The terrorists can renounce new killings until that date and still continue its many other criminal activities: extortion, bombings, recruiting. On the contrary, if the administration contemplates apply the Law of Parties to prohibit ETA from running in the elections, the terrorists might retaliate with blood, a retaliation limited only by the group's lingering weakness.

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