

Venezuelan Government Foils Plot to Destabilize the Country: Arrest of Foreign Mercenaries

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Venezuelan security forces have foiled a plot to violently destabilize the country, Vice-president Jorge Arreaza announced this afternoon.

“The Bolivarian National Armed Forces and state security agencies have dismantled a plan that would affect the election or post-election,” Arreaza told Venezuelan media.

He further stated that the plot involved Salvadorian mercenaries who “wanted, but could not, intervene to disrupt the peace of the republic at the last minute”.

The government first announced the presence of two groups of Salvadorian mercenaries operating in Venezuela on April 6.

Internal Affairs and Justice Minister Nestor Reverol warned that the groups were funded by drug trafficking, and have links to far right terrorists including Luis Posada Carriles. Currently living in Miami, Carriles has been convicted in Panama of a number of terrorist attacks, including the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airline that claimed 73 lives.

Arreaza also stated that a group of students have been arrested after attempting to “storm” the Generalissimo Francisco de Miranda Airbase in Caracas. The same group previously tried to enter the National Guard headquarters in Paradise, near the capital, according to Arreaza.

Yesterday, security forces also arrested Colombian paramilitaries operating in Venezuela, interim President Nicolas Maduro announced last night.

In a series of early morning raids, authorities reported that the paramilitaries possessed Venezuelan military uniforms, and were stockpiling C4 explosives and other material.

Among the confiscated materiel, the Bolivarian Guard seized 50 high capacity magazines, Defence Minister Diego Molero Bellavia said today.

Maduro has stated the paramilitaries “came to kill”, and urged Venezuelans to be vigilant, “without falling into provocations” of violence.

Within hours of Maduro’s announcement last night, an employee of the state run oil company Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA) died in a Caracas hospital from gunshot wounds.

According to VTV, the employee was gunned down outside PDVSA's La Campina offices, where a number of workers were engaging in a pro-Maduro celebration. VTV reported that witnesses believe the attack was politically motivated.

Mining and Oil Minister Rafael Ramirez warned earlier this week that the oil sector is a potential target for destabilising forces.

"We are aware of destabilisation and chaos attempts, and we are committed to maintaining peace and stability," AVN reported Ramirez as stating on Tuesday.

Today, however, Arreaza praised the work of security forces, stating that a peaceful vote on Sunday is "guaranteed".

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