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Venezuela: Security Measures Expanded At Government & Military Installations

by Erika Harding

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On May 18, Defense Ministry spokesperson Rear Adm. Jose Rafael Huizi Clavier told reporters that the armed forces have reinforced security at the Miraflores presidential palace and other major government and military installations. The precautions are the result of persistent rumors since May 15 of attacks by "unidentified assailants." Huizi Clavier said that the measures will remain in place "as long as deemed convenient." Huizi Clavier said the Military Intelligence Directorate (DIM) had recently submitted a report on potential attacks, based on a clandestine video recording by the "Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement" delivered to a TV station for nationwide broadcast. In the video, the Movement announced attacks against the "corrupt" beginning May 15, and called on Venezuelans to participate in a general strike against the government scheduled for May 20. Huizi Clavier added that the situation within the government and military was "completely normal." According to several media sources, the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement, which led the Feb. 4 coup attempt, issued an ultimatum to the government via the video tape. In brief, unless the government implemented profound political and economic reforms by May 15, the Movement would begin executing people linked to corruption. On May 19, Jose Curiel, deputy secretary general of COPEI, said the party will not propose nor support measures to reduce President Carlos Andres Perez's term because such action "would provoke a military coup." He added, "There are forces in the country who are waiting for a conflict of this type to launch a coup against the government." Curiel cited a document submitted by Jose Rodriguez, chair of the Chamber of Deputies national defense committee, which warns of a possible coup should Perez resign or be removed from office before the end of his constitutional term. [Sources: Notimex, 05/18/92; Prensa Latina (Cuba), 05/19/92; Agence France-Presse, Spanish news service EFE, 05/18/92, 05/19/92]