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Erika Harding

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Venezuela: Former Military Intelligence Chief Denounces Plan To Kidnap President Perez

by Erika Harding

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On Nov. 14, former Military Intelligence Directorate (Direccion de Inteligencia Militar, DIM) chief Ret. Gen. Herminio Fuenmayor, considered a close advisor of President Carlos Andres Perez, told reporters from daily newspaper El Universal he had discovered a plan to kidnap the President during a Christmas tour of the country's military installations. Fuenmayor attributed the plan to the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario, MBR), which led the failed coup attempt in February. According to Fuenmayor, following the failed coup, the imprisoned MBR leaders circulated orders throughout the military that any official who had the opportunity should take Perez captive during the annual Christmas tour. Negotiations would then be held for the release of imprisoned MBR leaders, including Lt. Cols. Hugo Chavez and Francisco Arias. The action was also intended to force Perez to resign, according to Fuenmayor. Fuenmayor said he had reported the plan to director of the Judicial Technical Police (Policia Tecnica Judicial, PTJ), Orlando Jordan Petit. He then repeated his recommendation that Perez pardon the MBR leaders in order to "reduce tension among the armed forces." Fuenmayor served as DIM director during Perez's administration until June 1991 when he retired following charges of involvement in drug trafficking. On Nov. 15, Ret. Col. Luis Alberto Pena, chief defense lawyer for the MBR leaders, said Fuenmayor "is suffering from information delirium," adding that the MBR leaders "would not dirty their hands with such a thing...The MBR [members] do not need to negotiate their freedom. The people themselves will give it to them. Nor do they need to demand the resignation of the President, as the people are doing that," said Pena. (Sources: Spanish news service EFE, 11/14/92; Agence France-Presse, 11/14/92, 11/15/92)

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