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Venezuelan President Dismisses Rumors Of Military Coup As "absurd"

by John Neagle

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On Oct. 31, Venezuelan President Jaime Lusinchi dismissed rumors of an imminent military coup as "absurd," and declared that the armed forces were "wholly identified with the democratic system." The rumors reportedly developed as a result of a mobilization of armored tanks on Oct. 26. The tanks converged on the presidential palace and government ministry buildings in Caracas, as the result of a telephone call advising military officers of a near-future attempt on the life of a minister. Lusinchi said that the young officers who received the call mobilized the tanks and soldiers to protect the minister and the ministry. At the time of the incident, Lusinchi was in Punta del Este, Uruguay attending a summit meeting of the Group of 8. Interior Minister Simon Alberto Consalvi also dismissed the rumors. According to unofficial reports, the tanks moved toward the palace and the Interior Ministry and took positions about 300 meters from the buildings to protect Acting President Consalvi from a terrorist attack. Some politicians told reporters they believed it equally absurd to act on a telephone tip regarding a murder attempt or "terrorist attack" without first confirming it. (Basic data from AP, 10/31/88)

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