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Nicaragua: Vice President-elect Accused Of Fraud

by Deborah Tyroler

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On March 19, vice president-elect Virgilio Godoy was formally charged in court by four men accusing him of fraud. Judge Ramon Rojas Mendez of the 4th District Criminal Court rejected the charge on a technicality, although the charge could be filed again. According to the judge, the plaintiffs failed to inform police, as required before formal charges can be presented in court. Two of the plaintiffs, Joaquin Mejia and Juan Manuel Gutierrez, belong to the Liberal Independent Party which Godoy heads. The four allege Godoy failed to account for funds donated to a research center by the West German Friedrich-Naumann Foundation. On March 20, Godoy asserted that the Sandinista National Liberation Front was behind a campaign to discredit him, and hinted that certain "private sector" interests within the National Opposition Union (UNO) were also involved in what he described as a "campaign of calumny" to weaken his position when UNO takes office April 25. If Godoy is eventually arrested and faces trial, he could not take office until the case is settled. If convicted and imprisoned, he could not take office. In November 1989, Godoy was stripped of his legislative immunity as a deputy of the National Assembly, result of the same accusations. The Assembly decision opened the way for legal charges to be filed. (Basic data from AP, Xinhua, 03/20/90)

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