

# *Eight Ex-Military Officers Behind Operation Condor Sentenced to Life*

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Rome, January 18 (RHC)-- A court in Rome has handed down life sentences to eight former military officers from Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Uruguay who were found guilty of the forces disappearance and death of about 20 Italian nationals as part of the bloody "Operation Condor" in South America in the 1970s and 1980s.

Only eight of the 27 military officers charged from the four countries received jail time in the high-anticipated sentencing hearing after a lengthy 9-year investigation. "We are disappointed by the decision," said Uruguay's Vice President Raul Sendic, who was present at the hearing. The prosecutor had asked for life sentences for the 27 officers.

The former military men sentenced were Chile's Hernan Jeronimo Ramirez and Rafael Ahumada Valderrama; Uruguay's Juan Carlos Blanco; Bolivia's Luis Garcia Meza and Luis Arce Gomez; and Peru's Francisco Morales Bermudez, Pedro Richter Prada and German Ruiz Figueroa.

The investigation, opened by Italian attorney Giancarlo Capaldo, initially included 140 people accused of human rights abuses, but the list was eventually whittled down to the 27 who were charged, as many of

the accused had died or were found too old to be tried.

When the trial launched in February 2015, the case involved 34 former heads of state, military officials, police and secret services agents and other operatives of military regimes in South America in the 1970s and 1980s.

The deadly multi-state Operation Condor intelligence operation was designed to destroy opposition to U.S.-backed right-wing regimes in Latin America. Operation Condor operations are thought to have led to the death or disappearance of 50,000 people throughout Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s.

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