

Venezuela Arrests Three Generals Linked to Coup Plot



Caracas, March 26 (RHC) -- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Tuesday his government has detained 3 Air Force generals linked to a coup plot by hardline right-wing opposition groups.

The generals were arrested after lower ranking officers notified security forces, Maduro said during a meeting of foreign ministers from the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) seeking to help mediate an end to violent anti-government protests that have rocked Venezuela since early February.

The generals were detained late Monday and placed in the custody of the military courts, Maduro said, without identifying them.

"We captured three generals that we were investigating thanks to the strong morale of our revolutionary armed forces -- three generals that planned to get the Air Force to rise up against the constitutional government. All of them have been placed in the hands of the military courts," he said.

The death toll from the violent protests has now reached 35, said Maduro, blaming small right-wing opposition gangs known as "guarimbas."

"Each fatality is the direct responsibility of the guarimbas," he said, countering allegations by the opposition that the security forces are to blame for the deaths.

Maduro also asked UNASUR to support a Truth Commission created by the National Assembly to investigate the violent deaths.

The UNASUR delegation -- representing Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela -- was to meet on Wednesday with the political committee of the country's ongoing National Peace Conference and with Venezuelan religious leaders.

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