

# **“Creating Chaos” and Sabotage in Lead up to Venezuelan Elections: Government Denounces the Presence of Foreign “Mercenaries”**

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Venezuelan government officials released a recorded conversation on Saturday that allegedly reveals the use of “mercenaries” by the Venezuelan opposition to create chaos in the lead up to elections next Sunday.

Interim President Nicolas Maduro made the announcement at a campaign event on Saturday, assuring that the group of “mercenaries” were already in Venezuela, and are seeking to carry out three objectives before next week’s elections: sabotage the electrical grid, increase the number of murders in the country, and assassinate Maduro.

“From Central America we have gotten information that a group of mercenaries has entered the country, with coordination from the Central American right-wing and some sectors linked to the opposition candidate,” he said.

Maduro said that US officials Roger Noriega and Otto Reich were behind the plan, together with right-wing sectors from El Salvador and Venezuela, and had paid the “mercenaries” to kill him.

“They want to kill me because they know they cannot win the elections on April 14<sup>th</sup>,” he said.

Shortly after Maduro made the accusation, Foreign Minister Elias Jaua appeared on news channel Telesur to give more details.

“Through our intelligence agencies, we have recorded conversations among right-wing groups where they discuss using Central American mercenaries to carry out destabilization plans in the country,” he said.

Jaua explained that the groups involved are led by a retired colonel of the Salvadoran armed forces, David Koch Arana, who is allegedly linked to Cuban terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, and the operation is coordinated by Salvadoran right-wing politician Roberto d’Aubuisson.

In a recorded conversation between d’Aubuisson and Koch Arana, vague plans are discussed to engage in activities inside Venezuela, and the conversation would also seem to implicate the Capriles campaign in the plans.

Jaua read a portion of the dialogue that allegedly took place between the two individuals,

which went as follows:

Roberto d'Aubuisson: "How are things going down south? You haven't given me the reports.... Are the reports we are sending you useful?"

David Koch Arana: "I have the reports, but I haven't sent them to you yet... Supposedly they have informed the Venezuelan government that there are foreigners interfering in the political situation. Capriles has managed to find safe places so that our people can chill. The team already arrived and they are working together. One group is already working in the streets to disorient the vote."

Roberto d'Aubuisson: "Did you tell them that it should be like we worked in the campaign here? Just be careful. Remember that they have offered their support if they win, and that would be good for us. I don't know how the other groups that we sent from here are working, but I hope they don't clash with each other or have conflicts, because they don't know each other. I will talk to them to see how we should organize the operations there."

Jaua said that the full audio of the conversation would be made publicly available in the coming days.

He also assured that they were taking immediate action to find and neutralize the alleged "mercenaries", and that intelligence forces had been deployed around the country.

"We want to tell the Venezuelan people that they can remain calm. State security forces are after these groups and we hope to identify and neutralize them in the coming days so we can prevent them from generating any turmoil," he said.

According to Jaua, the plan is part of a larger strategy by the Venezuelan opposition to destabilize the electoral process as a way to delay next week's elections.

"Remember that just a few days ago some opposition spokespersons suggested to the National Electoral Council (CNE) that the elections should be postponed, because they know that they can't win on April 14<sup>th</sup>, so they are trying to buy time," he said.

Nicolas Maduro also claimed to have evidence of a meeting between a US official and a member of opposition political party Primero Justicia in which they discussed causing blackouts in the eastern state of Bolivar, however further details were not provided.

The Capriles campaign has not commented or responded to any of the allegations.

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