

Former Director of Venezuelan Intelligence Agency Shot Dead in Caracas

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The former director of Venezuela's primary intelligence agency has been found shot dead. Venezuelan officials said Eliézer Otaiza was shot dead sometime in the early hours of Saturday morning in Baruta, a suburb in the outskirts of capital Caracas. His bullet-ridden vehicle was later found abandoned in another part of the same *barrio*.

Venezuela's Minister of the Interior, Miguel Rodriguez Torres, [told](#) reporters on Tuesday that Otaiza's body was discovered on Saturday, but that it took nearly two days for him to be identified due to the absence of identification documents on the body. At the time of his assassination, Otaiza headed the Libertador Bolivarian Municipality in Caracas which numbers over two million residents.

Earlier in his career, however, Otaiza led an elite unit of the personal guard corps of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. The latter also appointed him director of the National Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services (DISIP), later renamed Bolivarian Intelligence Service, which is today Venezuela's foremost intelligence organization. Otaiza was known as a stalwart supporter of Venezuela's late president, even in the early 1990s, when Chavez was still in opposition.

In February of 1992, when Chavez led a failed military coup aimed at ousting President Carlos Andres Perez, Otaiza had been unable to participate on account of his absence from Venezuela. But he played a leading role in another pro-Chavez military mutiny in November of that year, when he led a small military force attempting to storm the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas. He was shot several times in the chest but survived thanks to a bulletproof vest he was wearing.

Venezuelan government media said Otaiza played "an important part in the events leading to the Bolivarian revolution", and remained a strong supporter of Chavez throughout the president's life. Otaiza was last seen leaving a friend's house in Caracas late on Friday night. Minister Torres, who also leads the Bolivarian Intelligence Service, said on Tuesday that Otaiza's body was found bearing at least four bullet wounds.

Police said no clear motive for his assassination has been established at this time. But they added that the circumstances around the killing had been deemed "suspicious" and announced that an official investigation into the case had been ordered by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

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