

Venezuelan Opposition Mayor, Alias “The Vampire,” Arrested for Role in Blue Coup Plot

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Image: Opposition politician, Antonio Ledezma, was arrested by SEBIN on Thursday afternoon (Telesur).

Caracas, February 19th 2015 ([venezuelanalysis.com](#)) Venezuelan opposition Mayor and longtime rightwing politician, Antonio Ledezma, has been arrested by the country's intelligence services, SEBIN, for his alleged role in plotting to stage a coup against the democratically elected government of Nicolas Maduro.

The planned coup was uncovered last week by security forces, just hours before several US backed Air Force officials had planned to partake in a bombing spree of strategic targets in the capital. They had hoped this would lead to the assassination of the country's president and bring about regime change in the South American country.

“Antonio Ledezma who, today, by order of the Public Prosecutor's Office, was captured and is going to be prosecuted by the Venezuelan justice system, to make him answer to all of the crimes committed against the peace and security of the country and the Constitution... We've had enough of conspiracies, we want to work in peace!”

announced Venezuelan President, Nicolas Maduro, amidst a chorus of cheers from onlookers.

Last week, Ledezma, who is current Mayor of the Metropolitan Capital District of Caracas, signed a statement calling for a “National Transition Agreement” alongside opposition politicians, Maria Corina Machado and currently detained leader of the Popular Will party, Leopoldo Lopez.

The document calls on Venezuelans to unite behind a plan to remove elected President Nicolas Maduro and sets out an action programme for the would be provisional government. This includes facilitating the return of “exiled” Venezuelans, prosecuting current members of government and reaching out to international financial lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund.

Circulated on February 11th, the statement was disclosed just a day before the attempted coup was set to unfold and was reportedly the signal to set the plan in motion.

“It has no base in any juridic text, it is a putschist act of conspiracy that is unfortunately to the liking of thousands of opposition militants who have been indoctrinated to attack

democracy,” Constitutional Lawyer, Jesus Silva, told Venezuelanalysis.

Ledezma’s detention comes in the wake of several other arrests, including those of a number of airforce officials implicated in the plan.

According to revelations made by the President of the National Assembly, Diosadado Cabello, on Wednesday night, Ledezma has since been named by one of the arrested officials under questioning.

The confession links Ledezma to a plan to “eliminate” opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez last year in order to create “chaos” and destabilise the government. Fellow opposition politician and National Assembly legislator, Julio Borges, is also implicated in the assassination plan, which forced an intervention by the government in early 2014. At the time, Lopez’s wife, Lilian Tintori, stated that the government had acted to protect her husband’s safety.

Unlike, Ledezma, Borges cannot be prosecuted as National Assembly legislators are protected by political immunity.

The “Blue” Coup

Although details surrounding Ledezma’s exact role in the recently discovered “Blue” coup plot are still unclear, it appears that the opposition politician is implicated beyond his call for a transitional government.

Following the announcement of the coup plot last Thursday, the Maduro administration suggested that further arrests were to be made once there was sufficient evidence to prosecute the political ringleaders of the plan.

“In these intelligence investigations, we have discovered a codified message, in another language, by an important leader of a party. On translating it, we found that it gave the details, the elements of the coup. We are about to capture the person who brought the script that they were going to read, the script they were going to read out was already written, and circulated by a person who I will name at the correct moment”

said Maduro, referencing a preplanned statement which was to be read out to the public following the aerial bombardment, announcing a “rebellion” of the armed forces against the government.

Arrest and possible prosecution

Although international press has widely reported that the Mayor was manhandled when SEBIN officers entered his office, a video of the detention has emerged appearing to show a reticent but unharmed Ledezma being escorted from his office by several armed guards. Photos published of glass on the floor in Ledezma’s office by news agency, Ultimas Noticias, appear to show that SEBIN forcibly entered the building.

He has since been transferred to the SEBIN’s head office in Plaza Venezuela, Caracas, where a few hundred of his supporters gathered outside in protest in the early evening. They were joined by former presidential candidate and current Governor of Miranda State, Henrique Capriles Radonski. Streets were clear by around 10pm.

It is expected that the opposition politician will now await a hearing before a judge to decide whether there is sufficient evidence to proceed with the case against him.

“Ledezma is Mayor and for that reason he does not bear the Constitutional right to impunity as legislators, governors and the heads of national public powers do. Legally speaking, he should be presented before a judge, along with a public prosecutor and his defence lawyer within the next 48 hours,”

Silva informed us.

It is not the first time that Ledezma has been implicated in a plan to violently overthrow the government. In 2002, he participated in an attempted coup which saw socialist president of the time, Hugo Chavez, ousted for a period of 47 hours. Last year, he was also named several times as a “principal ally” by currently detained terror plotter, Lorent Saleh. Saleh was one of the main underground activists fuelling the armed barricades known as guarimbas which last year claimed the lives of at least 43 Venezuelans. He had planned to go on a killing spree with the help of Colombian paramilitaries but was arrested before the plan could take place.

Political trajectory

Popularly known as “the vampire”, Ledezma began his political career in 1973 as a member of the “Democratic Action” Party. In 1989, he infamously became Governor of the Federal District of Caracas, when he oversaw one of the most violent periods in the history of the Caracas Metropolitan Police.

The police body, which was since disbanded in 2010 due to its human rights violations, regularly opened fire on unarmed student protests, systematically repressed street vendors, pensioners and the unemployed, as well as regularly disappeared political activists.

During this period he also oversaw the “Caracazo,” when up to 3000 people were killed and disappeared by security forces in the wake of violent protests against a government imposed austerity programme.

This particular period of Ledezma’s career earned him the reputation of “student killer” amongst working class Venezuelans. He is founder and current leader of the rightwing party known as the “Brave People’s Alliance”.

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