

Pinochet-Era Commander Released on Bail After Only Five Days in Jail



Santiago de Chile, July 20 (RHC)-- Former Army Commander Juan Emilio Cheyre, along with six former military officials, were released on bail five days after they were arrested over their alleged involvement in the death of 15 people as part of an operation known as the Death Caravan, launched one month after the Augusto Pinochet military coup in October 1973.

Cheyre's lawyer welcomed the judge's decision to release the retired general, setting bail at one million pesos, about \$1,500 USD, saying Cheyre was not a danger to society and had some health issues that he did not detail.

The Human Rights Program affiliated with the Interior Ministry, which had initially filed the complaint against the general, condemned his release.

Cheyre was named commander-in-chief of Chile's Army in 2002, one year before he was publicly accused of participating in the murder of a couple and stealing their 2-year-old child in La Serena in 1973. Chile's justice eventually found Cheyre not responsible for the act.

Serving in the top-ranking military role until 2006, Cheyre was appointed as president of Chile's electoral body in 2013 by the neoliberal President Sebastian Piñera.

The Death Caravan was the name of a military operation that killed and disappeared almost 100 political prisoners in Chile, following General Augusto Pinochet's coup and with the support of the United States. The military dictatorship ruled the country with an iron fist for 17 years, until 1990.

Cheyre jailed an estimated 80,000 people, tortured 30,000 and murdered around 3,200. Only 75 of more than one thousand of his former agents are serving prison sentences for human rights violations.

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