

# *Venezuelan president announces military exercises on Simon Bolivar's birth anniversary*

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Caracas, July 24 (RHC)-- To mark the birthday of Simon Bolivar, President Nicolas Maduro announced the start of new military exercises so as to strengthen the country's efforts to defend their sovereignty, amid increasing U.S. aggression.

"I give the order for the start of the Simon Bolívar Liberation Campaign Military Exercises 2019, operations for the defense of our seas, our rivers, our airspace and the entire territory of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela... Venezuela has the means to defend itself in its Bolivarian National Armed Forces. We must be proud of the military forces of Venezuela!" said President Maduro as the country celebrated Bolivar's birthday and 'Armed Forces Day'.

Preparations for territorial defense come during the recent controversy involving a U.S. spy plane entering Venezuela's airspace, with Communications Minister Jorge Rodriguez announcing that "This year, Venezuelan airspace and its flight information area has been violated 78 times. They are not humanitarian planes, they are U.S. spy and warplanes."

The exercises will take place from Wednesday through Sunday, mobilizing all parts of the military, involving over one million soldiers over all 23 states of the country.

These exercises are the first phase of the campaign. President Maduro also explained that the second phase of the military exercises will take place between July 28 and August 7, in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the battle of the Boyaca, a key victory in the country's independence struggle.

Then the third stage of the campaign, set to be the most extensive, will take place from August 7 to 30, and will be aimed at strengthening the military's response to cross-border crime.

When self-proclaimed lawmaker Juan Guaidó launched the coup attempt in January, he appealed to the country's armed forces to move against Venezuela's government, however, only a handful of troops accepted his offer and defected to Colombia, leaving many of them without work or support.

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