

Chile Expels Detained Bolivian Officials, Imposes Fine



Santiago de Chile, June 22 (RHC-teleSUR)-- Nine Bolivian officials who have been detained in Chile since March are being accused of smuggling and illegal possession of weapons, and face expulsion within the next 30 days.

Bolivia has rejected the claims, stating that Chilean police crossed into its territory and detained the officers while they were performing a regular operation against smuggling.

Isabel Peña, the ruling judge of the Supervisory Court of Pozo Almonte announced the decision, according to Bolivian Information Agency. They've also been fined \$50,000 which must be paid before they leave the country.

After their expulsion, seven of the officials will not be able to return to Chile for a 10-year period. The other two military officers will not be able to return for 20 years because they were found guilty of illegal arms possession.

On Tuesday, the prosecution requested three years imprisonment for the two Bolivian military officers and seven customs officials for alleged robbery and intimidation and illegal weapons possession.

The nine Bolivians were detained on March 19 when they were involved in anti-smuggling efforts during a

border incident. Three days later they were preemptively imprisoned.

On June 15, Bolivian Foreign Minister Fernando Huanacuni denounced the “unjust and arbitrary” detention of their officials at the Organization of American States General Assembly and denied the charges imposed on them.

Bolivia's President Evo Morales said on March 20 that there had been a "kidnapping" of his compatriots and demanded their release.

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