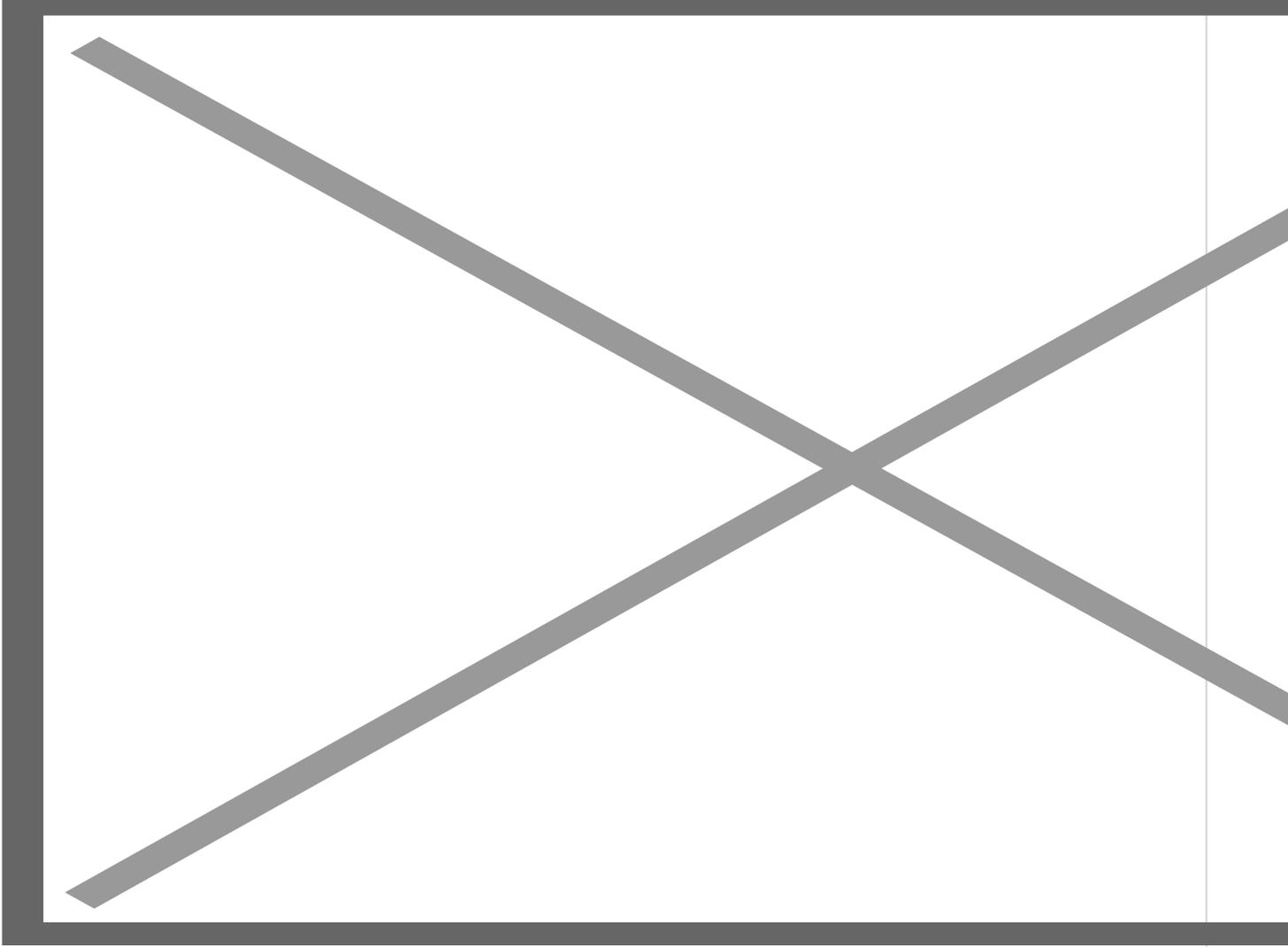


Venezuela's defense chief slams attacks by irregular Colombian forces

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Defense Minister General Vladimir Padrino

Caracas, April 4 (RHC)-- Venezuela's defense chief has condemned attacks by irregular Colombian forces in the South American country, describing them as false-flag operations aimed at terrorizing the Venezuelan population.

"They will not be able to frighten Venezuelans, and they will not make Venezuela become a lawless nation like Colombia," Defense Minister General Vladimir Padrino wrote in a Twitter post. He warned that such "false-flag" operations in Venezuela's Apure State were backed by Western media propaganda to sway public opinion.

He said the attacks by irregular Colombian forces using explosives and weapons targeted Venezuelan population centers and border military posts. In comments broadcast earlier in the week, the defense minister warned the armed groups of a "resounding response."

"Our problem is that an armed group, outside of the law, linked to narcotrafficking, and following a clear strategy of imperialism with the Colombian government, acts against Venezuela."

The defense minister said Colombia had now become a territory to conspire against neighboring Venezuela and added that the recent operations also involved the seizure of weapons, grenades, ammunition, explosives, military uniforms, vehicles, drug packages, and technological equipment containing information related to the activities of the irregular Colombian groups.

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