

Haiti's president killed by foreign hit squad of ex-Colombian military and Haitian-Americans

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Suspects in the assassination of President Jovenel Moise, Port-au-Prince, Haiti July 8, 2021 © Reuters / Estailove St-Val??

Port-au-Prince, July 9 (RHC)-- Haiti's national police force has claimed that two Americans and 26 Colombians were responsible for the assassination of President Jovenel Moise, while Taiwan has confirmed that 11 arrests were made at its diplomatic compound.

At least 28 people carried out the murder plot earlier this week, police chief Leon Charles told reporters on Thursday, noting that several suspects were brought into custody, while others were killed in firefights with authorities.

"We have arrested 15 Colombians and the two Americans of Haitian origin. Three Colombians have been killed while eight others are on the loose," Charles said, adding that police had recovered "weapons and materials used by the assailants." Rifles, machetes and other tools that were seized were displayed on a table near the police chief.

Colombian Defense Minister Diego Molano announced on Thursday that early findings suggest that several former members of his country's armed forces took part in the operation. He vowed to support Haitian authorities in their probe.

Later in the evening, Taiwan's diplomatic compound in Haiti said that 11 "mercenaries" had been arrested on the facility's grounds, but did not elaborate beyond stating that the police operation "went smoothly." The nationalities of those suspects remain unknown.

Haiti is among a small handful of nations to recognize and keep formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, which Beijing considers to be a province of China proper.

The U.S. State Department told Reuters it could not confirm whether American citizens had been arrested, but said it is in contact with Haitian officials to determine the next steps. The island's elections minister, Mathias Pierre, identified the two Haitian-Americans as James Solages, 35, and Joseph Vincent, 55.

Moise was fatally shot by a group of gunmen at his home near the capital of Port-au-Prince early on Wednesday morning, with his wife also seriously wounded and airlifted to Miami, Florida for treatment. Few details about the attackers have emerged, though interim Prime Minister and acting President Claude Joseph previously claimed that they spoke both Spanish and English and may have posed as American Drug Enforcement Administration agents.

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