

Argentinean military officers testify on arms shipment to Bolivia

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The declarations were divided into two rounds and the first one started on February 21 and will be in session until March 2. | Photo: abi.bo

Buenos Aires, February 22 (RHC)-- About 20 officers of the National Gendarmerie of Argentina were summoned to testify as witnesses in the case that investigates the alleged aggravated smuggling of ammunition from this country to Bolivia in the context of the coup against former President Evo Morales in December 2019.

Those who gave statements were part of the two groups of gendarmes that were stationed in Bolivia, and succeeded the Alacrán commando that traveled in November 2019 in the same C120 Hercules aircraft where the ammunition traveled.

The testimonies have been structured in two rounds. The first round would run from February 21st to March 2nd and has the gendarmes stationed in Bolivia between January 10 and March 1, 2020. The second will be from March 7 to 16 and includes troops who were in La Paz between February 28 and June 27, 2020.

These were the provisions imposed by the Economic Criminal Judge, Alejandro Cataia, in December 2021.

At that time, some twenty evidentiary measures were foreseen to be developed in both countries to reconstruct the destination of the ammunition that left Argentina to allegedly defend the Argentine Embassy in Bolivia and the ambassador's residence.

After listening to the twenty gendarmes in this first round, the magistrate will have to evaluate the summoning of the members of the entity who traveled on November 13, 2019.

According to the internal investigation entity, it was known that the ammunition taken to Bolivia was not used by the Gendarmerie personnel who were displaced to that country, so it is expected that the judge will obtain the same information as part of the judicial file.

As soon as all the documentation arrives with all the supporting information of the operations in Bolivia already provided by the complainants and included in the file, the justice system needs to investigate what was unloaded in the November 2019 flight, who unloaded it, where the documentation was taken to in this regard.

The Minister of Justice, Martín Soria, the former Minister of Security, Sabrina Frederic and the head of the Federal Administration of Public Revenues (AFIP), Mercedes Marcó del Pont, signed the complaint filed on July 12 and thus the investigation was launched.

Among those charged since July 16 are the former president Mauricio Macri; his ministers of Security and Defense, Patricia Bullrich and Oscar Aguad; the then ambassador to Bolivia, Normando Álvarez García; the former general director of the National Gendarmerie, Gerardo José Otero; and the then directors of Logistics and Operations of that force, Rubén Carlos Yavorski and Carlos Miguel Recalde, respectively.

Subsequent rulings also charged former officials of the Cambiemos Government, Marcos Peña (Chief of Cabinet), Jorge Faurie (Foreign Minister) and Fulvio Pompeo (Secretary of Strategic Affairs of the Nation).

According to the file signed by the prosecutor Claudio Navas Rial, the Gendarmerie commander Adolfo Héctor Caliba was charged, as he was the coordinator of the dispatch of repressive elements with the Bolivian Police during the Coup.

Rial accused Caliba of the role he played at the airport of El Alto, La Paz, for the reception of personnel, weapons and ammunition. He was in charge of coordinating the movements before and after the arrival of the flight.



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