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**U.S. mercenary says group plotted to seize Venezuela's presidential palace**

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By: RHC  
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Caracas, May 8 (RHC)-- A U.S. mercenary captured during a failed attempt to seize Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has claimed his group had plotted to raid the presidential palace before spiriting him away "however necessary."

Airan Berry, 41, was one of two U.S. mercenaries captured by Venezuelan security forces this past weekend after trying to execute an attempt to sneak into the South American country in a pair of high-speed boats.

In a televised confession, broadcast by Venezuelan state television on Thursday, Berry claimed one of the group's key objectives was to commandeer the heavily fortified Miraflores palace in the capital, Caracas. Asked how they planned to extract Maduro from the building, the Iraq veteran answered: "I'm not exactly sure – however necessary."

Berry said the group had also planned to "secure the airstrip" at La Carlota, a military airbase at the heart of Venezuela's capital, in order to fly Maduro out of the country. The base is six miles west of the Miraflores palace and was the scene of a failed attempt to spark a military uprising against Maduro on April 30th last year.

Asked where the plane would have taken Maduro, Berry, a former special forces engineer sergeant in the U.S. Army, replied: "I assume that it is the United States."

Berry's declarations were broadcast one day after a similar video featuring the group's other U.S. mercenary, Luke Denman. Denman, 34, said his mission had been to apprehend Maduro and take him to the United States. "I thought I was helping Venezuelans take back control of their country," he said.

Berry named two other highly sensitive targets in his statement: the installations of Venezuela's military counter-intelligence service, DGCIM, and the Bolivarian national intelligence service, Sebin.

