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Evo Morales affirms U.S. orchestrated coup to tap Bolivia's lithium

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Buenos Aires, December 27 (RHC)-- Bolivian leader Evo Morales says he was forced from office by a U.S.-backed coup aimed at gaining access to the South American country's vast lithium resources. The remarks came in an exclusive interview with AFP news agency, over a month after Morales resigned as president on November 10th following protests against his re-election.

"It was a national and international coup d'etat," Morales told AFP in Argentina's capital Buenos Aires, where he has been living in exile since claiming asylum. "Industrialised countries don't want competition." He said Washington had not forgiven his country for choosing to seek lithium extraction partnerships with Russia and China rather than the US.

"That's why I'm absolutely convinced it's a coup against lithium," he said. "We as a state had begun industrialising lithium, As a small country of only 10 million inhabitants, we were soon going to set the price of lithium."

"They know we have the greatest lithium reserves in the world of 16,000 square kilometres (more than 6,100 square miles)." Experts say that the lithium reserves in Bolivia are widely thought to be of poor quality and the country lacks the infrastructure to exploit them profitably. Edited by Ed Newman