Maduro Says Serra's Murder Financed by Colombian Politician

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Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Julio Velez, a Colombian politician with ties to former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, was the person who financed and directed the assassination of Venezuelan socialist lawmaker Robert Serra, who was murdered last year.

President Maduro made the accusation during the broadcast of his weekly television program Tuesday, saying that Velez “is an important figure, this person is the right-hand man of Alvaro Uribe Velez in North Santander, Cucuta.”

According to the Venezuelan president, investigations by Venezuelan authorities indicate that Velez also operates illegal currency exchanges on the Colombian-Venezuelan border as part of a money laundering operation.

Venezuelan authorities said last year that the murder plot cost around US$250,000, with this sum allegedly coming from Velez and being transferred to Leiver Padilla, a Colombian paramilitary and one of the main suspects of Serra's murder. Padilla was handed over to Venezuelan authorities last month after being extradited from Colombia.

Velez is currently is wanted by Colombian authorities for his alleged role in the death of his wife in 2010.

Maduro ordered police in Venezuela to cooperate with Colombian police in order to secure the arrest of the former municipal Councillor.

According to Maduro, apart from Velez, only one suspect in the murder of Serra remains at large.

President Maduro had previously stated that authorities suspected the involvement of Colombian paramilitaries in Serra's murder, which formed part of broader efforts to destabilize the Venezuelan government. Former far-right Colombian President Alvaro Uribe has long been accused of having ties to paramilitary organizations.

Serra and his partner were murdered in their home on October 1, 2014. Surveillance images showed a group entering Serra’s house, assisted by his head of security, and subsequently leaving in under five minutes.

The 27-year-old Serra, who was the youngest serving member of the National Assembly, was seen as a rising star of the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela.

Venezuelan President Maduro stated that Julio Velez, an ally of Alvaro Uribe, financed the murder of Venezuelan socialist lawmaker Robert Serra. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Julio Velez, a Colombian politician with ties to former Colombian president Alvaro Uribe, was the person who financed and directed the assassination of Venezuelan socialist lawmaker Robert Serra, who was murder last year. President Maduro made the accusation during the broadcast of his weekly television program Tuesday, saying that Velez “is an important figure, this person is the right-hand man of Alvaro Uribe Velez in North Santander, Cucuta.” According to the Venezuelan president, investigations by Venezuelan authorities indicate that Velez also operates illegal currency exchanges on the Colombian-Venezuelan border as part of a money laundering operation. Venezuelan authorities said last year that the murder plot cost around US$250,000, with this sum allegedly coming from Velez and being transferred to Leiver Padilla, a Colombian paramilitary and one of the main suspects of Serra's murder. Padilla was handed over to Venezuelan authorities last month after being extradited from Colombia. Velez is currently is wanted by Colombian authorities for his alleged role in the death of his wife in 2010. Maduro ordered police in Venezuela to cooperate with Colombian police in order to secure the arrest of the former municipal Councillor. According to Maduro, apart from Velez, only one suspect in the murder of Serra remains at large. President Maduro had previously stated that authorities suspected the involvement of Colombian paramilitaries in Serra's murder, which formed part of broader efforts to destabilize the Venezuelan government. Former far-right Colombian President Alvaro Uribe has long been accused of having ties to paramilitary organizations. Serra and his partner were murdered in their home on October 1, 2014. Surveillance images showed a group entering Serra’s house, assisted by his head of security, and subsequently leaving in under five minutes. The 27-year-old Serra, who was the youngest serving member of the National Assembly, was seen as a rising star of the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela.

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