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Venezuela Closes Colombia Border Amid Paramilitary Violence

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Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has vowed to take a hard line against paramilitaries and cross-border violence.

Venezuela has closed its western border with Colombia in response to paramilitary violence, President Nicolas Maduro said Wednesday.

The border will remain closed for at least 72 hours.

Maduro said the order to close the border was issued after three soldiers were injured by a paramilitary ambush in the western state of Tachira.

"It's outrageous ... everyone should show solidarity with the armed forces; the military personnel who are at the border to defend the homeland," he told state broadcaster VTV.

He continued, "Enough of paramilitary terrorism! It's time for justice for Tachira."

Tachira's state government has already expressed support for the border closure, and Maduro has called on Bogota to cooperate in cracking down on cross-border crime.

The three soldiers came under fire while carrying out an anti-smuggling operation in a border area. At least one was in a critical condition after suffering a gunshot wound to the torso, while two other soldiers were hit by rifle fire.

The identity of the assailants remains murky, though in recent days Maduro has warned as many as 30 paramilitary groups are operating in Venezuela.

In a televised address on Tuesday, the president vowed to take a hard line on armed groups.

“We will capture all paramilitary groups who want to hurt Venezuela,” he said.

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