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INTRODUCING CARIBBEAN VISIONARIES

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Back To Today's News**Three detained with guns as Venezuela closes TV**

Published on Tuesday, May 22, 2007

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CARACAS, Venezuela (AFP): Three men were detained on suspicion of conspiring to commit violent acts to coincide with the controversial closing of a television network in Venezuela, the country's interior minister said Monday.

Two men were arrested on Thursday outside Caracas for "conspiracy" with three submachine guns, a handgun and shotguns, minister Pedro Carreno said.

Carreno said another man was arrested also on Thursday "for a presumed crime to attack the national security." Rifles, shotguns, pistols and power scopes were confiscated.

He did not reveal any further details of the alleged plot.

The arrests came amid street protests over President Hugo Chavez's announced plans not to renew a 20-year concession for the RCTV station, which ends on May 27. He plans to grant the frequency to a new public-service channel.

Chavez accuses the channel of having participated in an April 2002 coup, which removed him from power for two days.

The private-sector news media have lined up against Chavez's far-reaching "revolution" to create a "socialism for the 21st century."

Thousands of protesters marched through Caracas on Saturday in support of the private channel and accusing Chavez of stifling freedom of expression.

Protesters in four parts of the city carried signs saying "Don't Close RCTV" and converged on the Chacaito neighborhood, where actors and opposition politicians spoke.

The channel has one of the largest audiences in Venezuela and is one of the strongest opposition voices as well.

Former presidential candidate Manuel Rosales, who was defeated by Chavez in December's election, attended the protest.

The government plans to replace RCTV with Teves, backed by four million dollars in start-up money, to begin broadcasting on Friday.

With the creation of Teves, the government will control two of the four channels with national reach in Venezuela.

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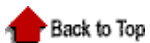
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