

WORLD

Exiled Morales says will create Bolivia militias if he returns



Ex-president Evo Morales, exiled in Argentina, was the first indigenous leader of Bolivia

La Paz

Exiled former Bolivia president Evo Morales says he will call for the introduction of popular local militias similar to those in Venezuela if he returns home.

In a recording played Sunday on a Bolivia's Radio Kawsachum Coca (RKC) -- owned by the coca planters union to which he belongs -- Morales repeated his belief that he had been the victim of "a coup".

He first took refuge in Mexico, but is now in Argentina.

Morales said it had been a "colossal mistake" for his government not to have "plan B" in the face of the right-wing opposition that led to him fleeing.

He said he intends to return to Bolivia when campaigning for May 3 elections starts, but he risks arrest as prosecutors have issued several warrants against him.

"Before long, if I return to Bolivia, we will have to organize popular armed militias, as Venezuela has done," Morales told RKC.

He confirmed to Reuters that the recording was genuine, but added that he did not want people to arm themselves

with guns. Morales later tweeted that indigenous peasant movements had defended themselves in the past.

"In some regions it was called a communal guard; In other times: militias. Now, union police or union security. All within the framework of our uses and customs, and respecting the Constitution," he tweeted.

In Venezuela, about 3.2 million civilians belong to a Militia created by former president Hugo Chavez, an ally of Morales and mentor of the country's current socialist President Nicolas Maduro.



The first indigenous leader of Bolivia, Morales resigned in November under pressure from opposition demonstrators who deemed his re-election to be fraudulent

Philippines on alert as volcano spews ash, lava

Talisay City | Philippines

Lava and broad columns of ash illuminated by lightning spewed from a volcano south of the Philippine capital yesterday, grounding hundreds of flights as authorities warned of a possible "explosive eruption".

Fine grit weighed down trees and turned roads into muddy messes across the region surrounding the Taal volcano, which burst to life Sunday and has forced over 20,000 people to seek refuge in evacuation centres, a provincial governor said.

Geologists said the volcano remained active, spurring red-hot lava some 500 metres (1,600 feet) into the air from new cracks that have opened in its northern flank, as accompanying earthquakes rattled the area.

"We are really scared of what might happen to us... that our house might collapse in a strong earthquake and that we'll all be killed by falling debris," said Bienvenido Musa, aged 56.

"Who wouldn't be scared? That's why I decided to send my family to an evacuation centre."

Taal is a tourist attraction that sits in a picturesque lake, yet is also one of the most active volcanoes in a nation where earthquakes and eruptions are a frightening and destructive part of life.

The Philippines sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide deep below the Earth's surface.

Schools in the region around Taal, some government offices in Manila and the Philippine Stock Exchange were closed as authorities issued warnings against breathing the ash.

Stores quickly sold out of dust



A volcanic lighting caused by eruption is seen over Tagaytay City, Cavite province, Philippines



Scenes from the City

masks, which health officials said could help protect against potentially harmful effects of the powder-like soot.

"I'll just stay at home and tie a handkerchief around my face. I think that's OK," Manila resident Menchie Claveria said, after attempting to buy a mask.

Limited flight operations resumed mid-Monday at Manila's main international airport, nearly a day after authorities halted them due to the safety risk volcanic ash poses to planes.

However, travellers booked on over 240 cancelled flights still faced delays at Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

"I'm disappointed because this (delay) means additional expense for me and it's tiring to wait," said stranded traveller Joan Diocaras, a 28-year-old Filipino who works in Taiwan.

"But there's nothing we can do." The eruption began with an explosion of superheated steam and rock, but by early Monday

"fountains" of lava had been spotted on Taal, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said.

Stunning lightning shows have periodically played out above the volcano in a little-understood phenomenon that has been attributed to static electricity.

Authorities raised the volcano alert level to its second-highest on Sunday, saying an "explosive eruption" could happen in "hours to days".

Musicians 'play Ghosn' by squeezing into instrument cases in web craze

Tokyo

Yamaha has warned musicians in Japan against stuffing themselves into their instrument cases to mimic the escape technique allegedly used by fugitive ex-tycoon Carlos Ghosn.

Ghosn, who faces financial misconduct charges in Japan, managed to slip past authorities at the end of December reportedly by smuggling himself on board a plane inside an audio equipment box.

The 65-year-old has refused to shed light on how he ghosted out of Japan to Lebanon, but that has not stopped a string of internet users "playing Ghosn" by posing in cases usually meant to protect big instruments.

In one picture posted to Twitter, a young woman curled up inside a padded green harp case, while another post appeared to show somebody standing in a double bass gig bag.

The stunts have not chimed with Japanese instrument man-



A baby was placed into a guitar case as the 'playing Ghosn' craze swept Japan

ufacturer Yamaha, however, who sounded a note of caution warning people against the trend.

"There have been a large number of tweets showing people climbing into large instrument cases," tweeted Yamaha Wind



WSJ has obtained a photo of the audio-equipment case used by Carlos Ghosn to sneak out of Japan. The case has holes drilled in the bottom so Ghosn could breathe.

Stream, the company's account for information on wind instruments.

"To avoid the possibility of a tragic accident, please do not do this... Musical instrument and audio equipment cases are designed to hold musical instruments and audio equipment. Please use them correctly."

Ghosn, arrested on financial misconduct charges in 2018, jumped bail and fled in mysterious circumstances to Lebanon, where he gave a rambling press conference last week.

The Wall Street Journal reported that he was snuck on to a private jet in Osaka in a large case for audio equipment, which was later found at the back of the cabin.

The newspaper cited unnamed sources

close to the investigation in Turkey as saying that holes had been drilled into the container to ensure the businessman could breathe.

The report was accompanied by a picture of a large black case which The Wall Street Journal claimed was the one used by Ghosn.

