



Tragedy in Colombia, three young officers lose their lives during the "Lanceros" course

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Bogotá – The Education and Doctrine Command of the National Army of Colombia released new details on Tuesday about the tragic incident that occurred on July 14, when three cadets from the **Escuela de Lanceros** lost their lives during a training exercise in the Magdalena River. The news shook Colombia, the first and only Latin American country to be a global partner of NATO, a status obtained in 2017.

From disappearance to discovery

The tragedy began on Monday morning when authorities reported the disappearance of three soldiers engaged in an exercise of the rigorous *Curso de Lanceros*, a demanding course designed to train elite soldiers, established in the 1950s and 60s with the collaboration of U.S. special forces.

According to an official Army statement, a group of 11 cadets was tasked with “*conducting improvised raft training for tactical movement in water*”, a standard activity of this type of advanced training, in the jurisdiction of the Cundinamarca department, in the center of the country.

Although the participants wore life jackets and had passed rigorous physical tests, including swimming tests, the raft they were traveling on was sucked in by the powerful current of the Magdalena and dragged under a **planchón**, a motorized platform used to transport vehicles and people from one shore to the other. The vessel became trapped under the structure, preventing the three second lieutenants from surfacing.

An intense search operation

For over 24 hours, a relentless search operation was conducted, involving units of the Armed Forces, National Police, Firefighters, Colombian Civil Defense, and a specialized team composed of 17 divers, a reconnaissance drone, and 2D sonar technology to scan the riverbed.

Eventually, authorities confirmed the discovery of the three officers' lifeless bodies.

A maneuver that turned into tragedy

According to preliminary information, the raft was dragged by the strong current and sucked under *the planchón*, a motorized platform for river transport, trapping the soldiers without giving them a chance to surface.

The Army explained that it was a training exercise for raft management within a standard “*tactical movement*”. However, the river conditions turned the maneuver into a tragedy.

Three young officers with a strong military vocation

The National Army paid tribute to the memory of the three second lieutenants, highlighting their dedication to the homeland and vocation for service:

- **Second Lieutenant Jhonatan Esteban Cortés Salamanca**, from Bogotá, belonged to the Communications Corps. He would have turned 25 on November 2. His comrades remember him as a friendly and dreamy young man, determined to become a *Lancero*.

- **Second Lieutenant Nicolás Chaparro Guillén**, also from Bogotá, was 23 years old and was part of the Artillery Corps. He was appreciated for his sunny disposition and deep family ties.
- **Second Lieutenant Elián Sebastián Beltrán Vanegas**, originally from Caparrapí (Cundinamarca), belonged to the Infantry Corps. He would have turned 24 in December. He had recently been promoted to the rank of second lieutenant after a brilliant career as a non-commissioned officer.

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The Colombian Army announces an investigation

The Army commander, General **Luis Emilio Cardozo**, ordered a *“rigorous investigation”* to clarify the causes of the incident and prevent the recurrence of similar tragedies.

In an official statement, the institution expressed its deepest condolences to the families of the soldiers, highlighting the exceptional commitment and contribution offered to the country by the three young officers.

News link: <https://defensanews.com/tragedia-en-colombia-tres-alumnos-lanceros-pierden-la-vida-en-el-rio-magdalena/>