

Beat: Vips

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez dead at 58

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USPA News - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, the firebrand socialist who dominated his country for fourteen years with sweeping political change and flamboyant speeches, died Tuesday in the capital Caracas, the government said. He was 58 years old.

Venezuelan Vice President Nicolas Maduro, with a broken voice and tears streaming down his face, said Chavez was pronounced dead at 4:25 p.m. local time at the Military Hospital in Caracas, the country's capital. He described the death as a "historic tragedy" with "immense pain." "Thank you, president, wherever you are, and to our people we ask you to channel this pain in peace," Maduro stated as he addressed the country on national television and radio. He called on all Venezuelans to maintain peace, respect, and calm of the nation. Chavez, the polarizing presidential figure who first assumed office in 1999, ruled the country for fourteen years through his "21st century socialism." Due to his health condition, he was never formally inaugurated after his fourth reelection in October, creating political controversy and tension. Rumors surrounding Chavez's health condition had been circulating since June 2011 when the Venezuelan president first stated that he was recovering from an operation that removed an abscessed tumor with cancerous cells. He later declared in July 2012 that he had fully recovered from cancer, only three months before the presidential vote. But the cancer returned and Chavez again underwent surgery on December 11, 2012. He never made a public appearance ever since, triggering further doubts regarding his health condition. A photo of Chavez, posing with his daughters, was released on February 14, four days before he was moved to the Military Hospital in Caracas. Last week, Maduro said Chavez was receiving "complementary chemotherapy treatments" at the Military Hospital, and on Monday evening, Communication and Information Minister Ernesto Villegas stated that Chavez's health condition was worsening with the discovery of a new and severe respiratory infection.

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