

Lat/Am

Noriega out for surgery: Former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega has been released from prison for three months to have surgery to remove a brain tumor, his lawyer said on Saturday.

Noriega, who ruled Panama from 1983 to 1989, left prison under heavy police guard to undergo treatment ahead of the surgery planned for Feb 15, and was taken to the apartment of one of his daughters in an upscale

part of Panama City.

His defense lawyer, Ezra Angel, said judicial authorities had granted 82-year-old Noriega a period of home arrest until April 28 to go through with the operation.

Afterwards an assessment will be made on whether he should return to prison or recover outside, judge Katerin Pitti said.

Noriega, who is serving time for murder, was initially sentenced in the United States in 1992. (RTRS)

3 policemen decapitated: Authorities found the decapitated bodies

of three municipal police officers on Saturday in a suspected gang-related slaying in southeastern Mexico, an official from the area said.

The bodies, which showed signs of torture, were found in the municipality of Huimanguillo in Tabasco state near its border with Veracruz state, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. One of the three was a woman, the official said.

The three victims were kidnapped from the nearby Veracruz municipality of Las Choapas on Friday, the official said. Although the motive was unclear, the perpetrators were believed to be part of a criminal

gang.

Veracruz and Tabasco lie on Mexico's Gulf Coast, an area long ravaged by drug smugglers and people traffickers.

Home to Mexico's main Atlantic port, Veracruz suffered a surge in violence in 2016, with murders leaping by 123 percent to 1,258 from the previous year, official data showed.

Javier Duarte, the previous state governor, is wanted on corruption charges and has been a fugitive since shortly before his term was due to finish at the end of November. (RTRS)

Chile forest fires toll 11: Forest fires ravaging southern Chile have now killed 11 people, President Michelle Bachelet said Saturday, as firefighters waged an all-out battle to extinguish the raging infernos.

Bachelet told reporters that more than 9,000 firefighters and other responders have been enlisted to battle the fires, which have destroyed almost 1.2 million acres (480,000 hectares) in seven regions of the South American nation.

"We are fighting the fire without pause and without precedent," Bachelet declared.

More than 4,500 volunteer

firefighters and members of the country's national forest brigades plus some 4,600 police officers and other public officials are battling the blaze.

The fires have forced more than two thousand people into shelters, and have damaged or destroyed more than 4,000 dwellings.

Among the countries that have dispatched aid to help put out the infernos are Argentina, Spain, France, Portugal and Mexico.

A Russian aircraft with a 42-ton water-carrying capacity is due to arrive on Sunday, while Brazil and Peru were also expected to send firefighting aircraft. (AFP)

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