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Guide S.Korea charges Roh, Chun over Kwangju massacre

LN# TEXT

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1 <A2> BC-KOREA 2NDLD (SCHEDULED, PICTURE)<A1><ep>  
2 <A2>S.Korea charges Roh, Chun over Kwangju massacre<A1><ep>  
3 (Adds fresh quotes, opposition reaction)<ep>  
4 By Kim Myong-hwan<ep>  
5 SEOUL, Jan 23 (Reuter)--South Korean prosecutors on Tuesday  
6 formally charged ex-presidents Roh Tae-woo and Chun Doo Hwan  
7 with sedition over events surrounding the 1980 army massacre of  
8 pro-democracy activists in Kwangju, prosecutors said.<ep>  
9 It was the latest in a string of charges against the two  
10 former heads of state.<ep>  
11 Chun and Roh already face mutiny charges over the 1979 coup  
12 that propelled them to power. They have also been indicted on  
13 corruption charges for amassing slush funds of hundreds of  
14 millions of dollars during their rule.<ep>  
15 The brutal quelling of the popular uprising against military  
16 rule in the southwestern city is one of the most traumatic  
17 chapters in South Korean history. Secrecy has for many years  
18 surrounded the event.<ep>  
19 "Chun, as the mastermind, and Roh...As a key player in  
20 various violence, mutiny and seditious activities committed a  
21 crime of trampling on the constitution," a prosecution  
22 statement said.<ep>  
23 It said Chun and his military associates "'believed protests  
24 in Kwangju could pose barriers to their bid to seize control,  
25 restricted media reports on Kwangju demonstrations on fear of  
26 worsening protests and intended to crush them.'"<ep>  
27 Along with Chun and Roh, six former senior military officers  
28 were indicted on sedition charges. They include former army  
29 chief of staff Hwang Yung-si and generals-turned-politicians Lee  
30 Hak-bong and Yoo Hak-seong, who have already been arrested.<ep>  
31 The others, who have not been held, are former defence  
32 minister Choo Young-bock, then martial law commander Lee  
33 Hui-sung and former military academy president Cha Kyu-hun.<ep>  
34 "'The Kwangju incident took place as the new military  
35 leadership tried to follow programmes aimed at seizing political  
36 power,'" a prosecutor said.<ep>  
37 The programmes included the closure of parliament, arrests  
38 of politicians, purging of journalists, a crackdown on democracy  
39 campaigners and a revision of the constitution.<ep>  
40 About 200 people were killed by official count when members  
41 of crack special forces trained for combat with North Korea  
42 stormed the city to end the revolt. But residents say as many as  
43 1,000 may have died.<ep>  
44 The Kwangju rebellion erupted a day after the Chun-led  
45 military ordered the imposition of martial law across South  
46 Korea in May 1980 following a military coup in 1979.<ep>  
47 Many Kwangju residents were also angry at the arrest of  
48 opposition leader Kim Dae-jung, a local political hero whom the



49 military accused of fanning protests.<ep>

50 A statement by the main opposition National Congress for New  
51 Politics, headed by Kim Dae-jung, said the prosecution failed to  
52 shed light on the fabrication of charges against Kim and accused  
53 the government of trying to end investigations quickly.<ep>

54 Prosecutors said the final authority for the order to send  
55 troops to Kwangju came from Chun.<ep>

56 The two former presidents could face execution if convicted  
57 although it is widely believed they will escape with jail terms.<ep>

58 Chun and Roh challenged the constitutional validity of a  
59 special law enacted to punish them and their former aides.<ep>

60 Last month parliament passed a law ordered by President Kim  
61 Young-sam to punish his two predecessors for leading the  
62 crackdown in the city.<ep>

63 The law made possible the prosecution of Chun and Roh, which  
64 President Kim described as "'unfortunate but necessary steps to  
65 put history to rights.'"

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