

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article9346>



Venezuela

The United States takes Venezuela's territory and government by storm

- Features -

Publication date: Sunday 4 January 2026

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The entire international legal system has been torn to shreds this 3 January 2026. The military intervention by the United States against Venezuela, the kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro along with his wife, and the announcement of installing a government directed from the United States, take us back to the time of the colony and the rule of the strongest. Latin America has received a wound to its dignity and sovereignty that will not heal easily.

The revival of the Monroe Doctrine in its Trumpian version confirms that the United States has entered a new phase of assaulting territories home to a wealth of natural resources in order to seize it, and no people in the region will be exempt from this orientation.

The leader of the most powerful nation in the world has just confessed that in the early hours of this morning he used 20 bases, launched an attack of 150 planes, helicopters and state-of-the-art drones to overthrow the Venezuelan government, massacre troops and civilians and install a new model of coups d'état openly directed from the White House using his naval, air and fire power. For those who thought it was just a bravado, the era of continental territorial domination by the United States has begun. Trump's words were precise: "Venezuela must realize that what happened to Maduro can happen to anyone who does the same."

"The United States will direct the transition until the country is on track, and will make money for the people" is the unacceptable neo-colonial sentence formulated by Trump. Neither Maduro, nor Delcy Rodríguez, or even opposition leader María Corina Machado or opposition presidential candidate Edmundo González Urrutia are seen as national figures with sufficient weight to oversee the neo colonial transition. Instead, Trump has proposed that a group of "good people" of his choosing will manage the transition. That is, a submissive and unconditional transitional authority "Made in the USA".

Donald Trump also announced that Cuba will be in the eye of the storm, to which Marco Rubio added: 'If I lived in Havana I would be worried'. In other words, closing ranks in defence of Venezuelan sovereignty is the only way to guarantee the sovereignty of the entire region. Only a united Latin America can stand up to the foreign neo-colonial offensive.

Certainly, María Corina Machado, an ultra-rightist who has supported the genocide in Gaza and aligned herself with all the illiberals in the world, has until now been the Trojan Horse of the latest US administrations. Although MCM, as Trump said, does not enjoy the respect of the entire Venezuelan people, and her speech aims to deepen the polarization and division of the Venezuelan people, this is not what worries the US. It is the possibility that her leadership will at some point contradict the neo-colonial agenda that they want to impose. Abruptly pushing her aside, as Trump did, expresses the US decision to prevent any leader with mass appeal from being at the head of the Venezuelan government and state. The US needs weak governments, with no organic link to the masses, that cannot stand up to foreign neo-colonial policies at any time.

Trump threatened that the military attack on Venezuela, which began at 2am on 3 January, could be repeated at any time if the remnants of Madurism did not quickly agree to the neo-colonial transition. Vice President Delcy Rodríguez's response has been to emphasize that Venezuela's only president is Nicolás Maduro, which creates a dangerous power vacuum, because Venezuela has spent the last few hours without a president functioning in the country. The next few hours will be key to seeing the course of events.

Maduro's kidnapping and the presidential succession

According to Donald Trump and his war cabinet against Venezuela, the capture and kidnapping of Maduro - there is no legislation to support a detention of this kind - was an operation planned over months, combining the intelligence work of agencies like the CIA with field work by the US army. Once Maduro's place of residence was located, his guards were overcome and he and his wife detained, in and then taken out of the country. American justice will be in charge of judging him.

Maduro's kidnapping creates a power vacuum that must be resolved by activating the line of command. The 1999 Constitution stipulates that the temporary or permanent absence of the first president must be replaced by the vice-presidency, in this case occupied by Delcy Rodríguez. If it is a permanent absence, she would have to be sworn in as president in order to call for elections within 30 days; if, on the other hand, she takes over as a result of a temporary presidential absence, she can take over for 90 days, extendable for another 90, meaning that she could be in charge of the government for six months. Sixteen hours after Venezuela was left without a president qualified to hold office, the permanent presidential succession had not yet been activated, but there was no mention of a temporary absence, creating a dangerous situation of ungovernability and vacancy of power.

The events

The operations began at 2 a.m. local time and ended at 3:29 a.m. on 3 January 2026. During this period of time, the buzz of state-of-the-art aircraft, drones with missiles, helicopters and troops specialized in surgical operations overran Caracas' airspace with total impunity. Local military resistance was minimal. While the entire population wondered about the situation in the Miraflores Government Palace, Maduro was captured and secluded in a conditioned villa with a bunker, which served as his residence in a sector of the Tiuna Military Fort. The US action constitutes a flagrant violation of the first and second articles of the United Nations Charter, which contemplate the inviolability of the sovereignty and legal equality of States, prohibiting the use of force to dominate or annex territories.

One element that draws attention when analysing the US attack is the precarious or non-existent resistance of the Venezuelan armed forces. For an hour and a half, US aircraft moved with great impunity, attacking predetermined blanks and it was Trump's team who would announce, hours later, that only one aircraft had been hit, but had managed to return to the base of operations.

The rumours on social media, as counter-information, were that it was an internal coup and that the Minister of Defence had been shot down. In the early hours of the morning, Vladimir Padrino, head of the military office, appeared alive, confirming the US attack, with state-of-the-art missiles and rockets fired from foreign helicopters, drones and aeroplanes. It specified that the attack had extended to the states of Miranda, Aragua and La Guaira, without providing statistics on casualties and wounded. A few moments later, the Minister of the Interior and Justice, Diosdado Cabello, appeared, indicating that there were no public order problems following the attacks and that basic services were running smoothly, although some areas of Caracas reported power outages.

At 3:54 am, the official communiqué from the Bolivarian government was released, rejecting the military aggression perpetrated by the Trump administration against Venezuelan territory, omitting information about Nicolás Maduro Moros' parade. It's worth noting that contrary to the bureaucratic times to which the Venezuelan government has become accustomed, the communiqué came out in record time.

At 5:20 am, Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino López issued a statement in which he ratified his support for the Foreign Concession Decree issued for the whole of Venezuelan territory. Not only did he not inform about what had happened to the president, but he ratified his due obedience to Maduro himself, who was already being taken to the United States in seclusion.

It was 5:40 when a communiqué from the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) repudiating US military aggression against Venezuela was released.

It was around 6am when Cuban President Miguel Díaz Canel's denunciation was announced, condemning the military attack on Bolívar's homeland. Later, Colombian President Gustavo Petro expressed his condemnation of the attack perpetrated by the United States against Venezuela.

When the clock struck 6:30 in the morning, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez demanded a feather in President Maduro's cap, recognizing that he had been overthrown by a foreign military operation. Minutes later, the government of Turkey, a country allied to Madurismo, expressed its support for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

At 6.46am, the Venezuelan chancellery announced that it was requesting an urgent meeting of the United Nations Security Council. Minutes later, the Kremlin condemned US aggression against Venezuela.

At 8:12 a.m., the Attorney General Tareck William Saab demanded that Donald Trump's government recognize President Maduro. Eight minutes later, the Brazilian Foreign Minister, on behalf of the Rio de Janeiro government, strongly condemned the US military aggression against Venezuela. At 8:39 am, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Keir Starmer, clarified that London had not 'participated in any way' in the operation.

It was barely 8:47 a.m. when Uruguay rejected the US military intervention, which was clearly contrary to international law and the United Nations Charter. Five minutes later, it became known that the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs was holding emergency meetings on the Venezuelan case, with highly-placed representatives of the European Union.

At 8.57am, the Mexican government announced its condemnation and rejection of the military actions carried out unilaterally in the last few hours by armed forces of the United States of America, against objectives in the territory of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Minutes later, President Ignacio Lula da Silva questioned Trump's military operation, indicating that the Americans were crossing an unacceptable line. At 9.30am, the US Attorney General, Pamela Bondi, announced that President Maduro would face trial in the US, with US judges and courts. The following hours would see diplomatic pressure from governments such as Russia, China, South Africa, Colombia and Caricom condemning the attack and demanding a return to the channels of international justice.

In the afternoon, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez issued a statement, accompanied by the military high command and representatives of the public authorities, in which she insisted that the president of Venezuela is Nicolás Maduro, advancing in the dangerous direction of the power vacuum.

However, in the wee hours of the night, Delcy Rodríguez ended up being sworn in by the Supreme Court of Justice, as a presidential substitute in the face of a temporary vacancy, a fact that entitles her to be at the head of the Executive for 180 days, more than the month needed to call and hold new elections.

Trump's press conference: aggression will

continue

The US president's press conference took place at 12.45pm Venezuelan time. The central elements addressed by Trump were:

- a) Recognizing the capture of Maduro, with whom a transition had been negotiated, but according to the president the talks had stalled,
- b) Staying that if a swift transition agreement is not reached with the Venezuelan authorities, the US will carry out a much more lethal attack on the territory, that is, the actions of 3 January are the beginning not the end of the conflict by military means,
- c) Announcing the decision of the United States to remain in control of the Venezuelan situation, maintaining the naval siege and providing a government of 'good people' who respond to the team led by him, accompanied by the Secretaries of War, National Security, and the Chief of Staff of the US army,
- d) María Corina Machado will not be the figure of the transition because according to Trump "It would be hard for her to be a leader. She's a great woman, but she doesn't have the respect of her nation (...)",
- e) Recognizing Delcy as the line of succession to have a dialogue with during the transition, not to leave her in power; in this regard he says "they have a vice-president chosen by Maduro (Delcy Rodríguez), who is certainly now president. She talked to Marco Rubio and said that they will do what we say. She doesn't want to do things the way Maduro did,"
- f) The United States will remain in control of the transition until the full potential of the oil industry is recovered and the "recovery of the country" is set in motion.

Trump's press release is a declaration of Venezuela's neo-colonial situation, the loss of territorial and political sovereignty and the capture of Venezuelan wealth (especially energy) with the incoherent request for the return of stolen lands, which never belonged to North America.

Donald Trump's press conference on Saturday 3 January is the practical and tangible launch of his national security strategy, which sees the entire continent (the Western Hemisphere) as an extension of his imperial borders.

Questions that demand answers

Doubts and questions, the answers to which will allow us to analyse the situation in greater depth over the next few days: Why did the military and security apparatus of President Maduro fall so catastrophically? Why was the military response to US operations so weak or almost non-existent? Who benefits from a transition without Maduro or María Corina Machado? Why has the government been silent for so many hours about the kidnapping of Maduro? Are we facing a transfer of power to a civic-military junta negotiated between the current government authorities and the Trump administration? If this negotiation fails, will we be entering a prolonged military action until Madurism is overthrown? Will the US intervention until the country's situation is normalized involve the placement of military bases on Venezuelan soil? In future articles we hope to address some of these questions.

The popular reaction

Vice President Delcy Rodríguez - the president in charge of the presidential succession contemplated in the Constitution - called for popular mobilization in defence of President Maduro and the Bolivarian government. Unlike the coup d'état against Chávez in 2002, this time, almost 24 hours after the start of hostilities by the Trump administration, this call to demonstrate in the streets in support of Madurism has not been echoed by the people. Only small gatherings of around 100 people each have been shown, broadcast by the government's television channel. The anti-imperialist sentiment is not widespread and there are large sections of the population, on the contrary, are most moved by anti-Madurism.

Although, in this moment, the priority is anti-imperialism and denouncing US meddling in Venezuelan affairs, it is necessary to point out that this feeling of frustrated nationalism on the part of an important part of the population is due to the terrible mistakes of the Maduro government, which decided to put itself on the back foot of the popular social programme that Chávez had embodied, applying neoliberal recipes with left-wing discourse. Maduro is the architect of the waning of anti-imperialist sentiment in Venezuela, a phenomenon that ended up devouring its own creator.

What to do?

The democratic, progressive, left-wing and revolutionary sectors need to build a broad and diverse global alliance that places anti-imperialism and the struggle for the sovereignty and self-determination of the people as a global priority, in the era of Trumpism and its doctrine of national security.

It is time to prioritize convergences, and in this sense we are supporting the call that broad sectors are making at international level to meet on 10 January, online, to launch a global anti-imperialist platform.

In the face of the US neo-colonial offensive, sovereignty must be defended with the impetus of multicoloured alliances that defend the right of the people to decide our destiny.

3 January 2026

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Viento Sur](#).

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