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Venezuela announces arrest of U.S. Navy SEAL, weapons seizure

written by Struggle - La Lucha
September 18, 2024



Venezuelan Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello addresses the media in front of some of the 400 seized firearms linked to an alleged assassination plot.

Mexico City, Mexico, September 16, 2024 (venezuelanalysis.com) – Venezuelan Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello reported the arrest of a U.S. Navy SEAL alongside two Spanish citizens allegedly linked to intelligence agencies.

The foreign citizens are accused of plotting to assassinate President Nicolás Maduro and other high-ranking Venezuelan officials.

At a [press conference](#) on Saturday at the ministry's headquarters, in front of some of the 400 seized firearms linked to the reported plot, Cabello accused Wilbert Joseph Castañeda, an active duty U.S. sailor, of leading the effort on behalf of U.S. intelligence.

“Castañeda is the head of the operation, placed here by the CIA,” said Cabello.

Castañeda's arrest was first [reported](#) earlier this month. At the time, White House

Spokesperson John Kirby denied that the Navy serviceman was in Venezuela on official business and argued his travel was for personal reasons.

In his press conference, Cabello said the alleged assassination plot was uncovered after authorities were tipped off about a weapons shipment from the U.S. that was illegally smuggled into the country.

“The U.S. is behind this operation. The U.S. is handing over these firearms, they allow them to freely circulate so they can arrive in Venezuela and be used in an operation,” said Cabello. He claimed the weapon parts were disguised in containers to be assembled upon arrival.

The Venezuelan interior minister said the discovery of the firearms unraveled a “terrorist plot” that included an effort to kill the president alongside high-ranking figures such as Vice President Delcy Rodríguez and Cabello himself. He added that the conspirators aimed to attack public infrastructure, including water supplies, electricity, and transportation.

Cabello said security forces had also uncovered a conspiracy to launch grenades at the Argentinian Embassy in Caracas in order to generate a diplomatic incident to be blamed on the Maduro government. Venezuela recently [suspended](#) the agreement that allowed Brazil to assume custody of the Argentine diplomatic residence in Caracas where six individuals tied to the U.S.-backed opposition had sought asylum fleeing charges.

Venezuelan authorities likewise arrested five other foreigners in connection to the denounced plans, including two Spanish citizens, José María Basoa Valdovinos and Andrés Martínez Adasme, who were accused of having ties to Spain’s National Intelligence Center.

Two other U.S. citizens, David Estrella and Aaron Barrett Logan, were also detained

on charges of being “hackers.” Cabello went on to announce the arrest of a Czech individual by the name of Jan Darmovzal who was supposedly brought into the conspiracy as a mercenary.

The U.S. State Department issued a reaction denying the allegations, calling them “categorically false”.

Cabello shared images of conversations on a messaging application allegedly showing Castañeda discussing violent plans on election night with an individual identified only by his alias “El Flaco.” In these chats, Castañeda talked openly about taking advantage of the unrest in the country following the electoral authority’s announcement that Maduro had been reelected in order to assassinate the president.

“We want the world to know that Venezuela is under siege by U.S. imperialism,” stated Cabello. “The U.S. allows its territory to be used to arm [radical] groups.”

The Venezuelan official further demanded that the U.S. government address the allegations and “clarify” the role of its agencies and the control over weapons smuggled to “overthrow a foreign government.”

Several other Venezuelan nationals were accused of participating in the alleged operation. Cabello alleged ties to the hardline opposition, including to José Miguel Estrada who was convicted over his role in the [assassination attempt](#) against Maduro on August 4, 2018. Vente Venezuela, the organization led by far-right opposition leader María Corina Machado, considers Estrada a political prisoner. Cabello added a total of 14 individuals in Venezuelan prisons that were connected to the conspiracy.

Cabello compared the plot with “[Operation Gideon](#),” a paramilitary action that aimed to topple the Maduro government. In May 2020, the Venezuelan armed forces

neutralized the attempted incursion with speedboats that had departed from Colombia, with six invading operatives killed and dozens arrested.

Jordan Goudreau, a former U.S. Green Beret and the head of that operation, was recently [arrested](#) in the U.S. to face federal arms smuggling charges after allegedly shipping weapons, ammunition and other military equipment to Colombia.

Two other former green berets, Airan Berry and Luke Denman, were detained and handed 20-year sentences before returning to the U.S. on a [prisoner exchange](#) last year.

Edited by Ricardo Vaz in Lisbon, Portugal.

Source: [Venezuela Analysis](#)

