

The U.S. campaign to overthrow Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution since 1999

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Hugo Chávez and Nicholas Maduro

Recent weeks have seen a marked U.S. [escalation](#) against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its President, Nicholas Maduro. Donald Trump and his generals have significantly increased U.S. naval activity throughout the Caribbean Sea.

This activity has included the transit of U.S. warships through the Panama Canal for deployment in the waters around Venezuela and a [drone strike](#) on a small boat allegedly carrying drug traffickers. President Maduro has sworn that the Venezuelan people will [defend themselves](#) against imperialist aggression.

Trump and company have justified this escalation with the stated goal of preventing alleged NarcoBaron Nicholas Maduro and his drug trafficking network from flooding narcotics across the Mexican border. These allegations are patently false. As in the past, these reasons are mere pretexts for an attempted overthrow of Venezuela's democratically elected government, led by the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV).

Since 1999, the U.S. military and intelligence community have targeted Venezuela for regime change. 1999 is when Hugo Chávez led a socialist movement to seize control of the country's government and resources on behalf of the Venezuelan people. Eventually, Chávez united socialist forces in Venezuela to form the PSUV in 2007.

The Bolivarian Revolution

Hugo Chávez's vision, known as the [Bolivarian Revolution](#), declared a war of economic independence. Its first casualties, in the eyes of Washington and corporate boardrooms, were the lucrative privileges long held by U.S. oil barons.

From the outset, Hugo Chávez sought to end the plundering of Venezuelan resources by Western companies and to reinvest the profits of those industries into the people's needs. To that end, Chávez's first moves were to nationalize key

industries, using the profits to fund poverty reduction and social welfare programs.

Over the last 26 years, there have been three major U.S.-backed attempts to overthrow the Bolivarian Revolution: in 2002, 2019, and 2020. Since Chávez died in 2013, U.S. efforts against Venezuela have escalated.

The Bolivarian Revolution, whether led by Chávez or Maduro, is an unacceptable roadblock for U.S. big oil and investment banks. In the minds of the imperialists and oil barons who run Exxon Mobile, Chevron, BP, and Shell, no one should profit from Venezuelan oil if they can't profit from Venezuelan oil. It doesn't matter that the oil isn't theirs. It doesn't matter that Venezuela is a sovereign nation.

All that matters is that someone is profiting off Venezuela's oil who is not a Western oil magnate or banker.

It is for that reason – not allegations of corruption or dictatorship or drug trafficking – that the U.S. has kept Venezuela under siege and waged covert war to overturn the Bolivarian Revolution for two decades. U.S. attempts to unseat the socialist movement in Venezuela began soon after Chávez took power and have continued to the present day.

2002 coup attempt

In [2002](#), then-President Hugo Chávez was briefly ousted by a [CIA](#)-assisted military coup. Venezuelan business owners pressured a group of generals and officers in the Venezuelan military to arrest Chávez and institute martial law. The military installed the head of the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Production (Fedecamaras), Pedro Carmona, as the new president. Fedecamaras is a coalition of wealthy Venezuelan businesses and capitalists who sought to stop Chávez's investments in social welfare. Fortunately for the people of Venezuela, [Carmona's](#) presidency only lasted 47 hours.

In response to the coup, the lower ranks of the military and [mass demonstrations](#) by Venezuelan workers came to Chávez's defense, demanding that he be reinstated. Without this intervention from the masses, the moment could have been lost.

After Chávez died in 2013, Nicholas Maduro was elected president in a free and democratic election. Maduro continued Chávez's policies of oil nationalization and Venezuelan independence from U.S. imperialism.

2019 coup attempt

January 2019 saw a U.S.-backed attempt to topple Nicholas Maduro after he was reelected the year prior. This coup was centered around a right-wing opposition figure, Juan Guaidó. Guaidó rose to the head of the opposition in Venezuela's Parliament in 2018.

Upon Nicholas Maduro's inauguration in January 2019, Juan Guaidó declared himself President at a separate ceremony. Guaidó's inauguration had no basis in the people of Venezuela. It was simply an attempt by the Venezuelan right wing, with U.S. support, to overthrow the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution.

In the days before Guaidó's "inauguration," U.S. Vice President Michael Pence assured Guaidó of complete U.S. support. Within minutes of Guaidó's oath, the United States government recognized him as the President of Venezuela. The U.S. recognized this man, who had never stood for a national popular election and had only served a short time as opposition leader in Parliament.

The situation between the legitimate Maduro/PSUV government and Guaidó's coup government continued to deteriorate for several months before coming to a head. On April 30, Juan Guaidó called upon the military to [overthrow](#) Nicholas Maduro. Dissident military officers, joined by a moderate crowd of demonstrators from Caracas's wealthier eastern districts and a handful of police supporting Guaidó,

attempted a march on the Miraflores Presidential Palace.

In response to the armed coup march, Maduro [called upon](#) the colectivos, or people's militias, along with the rest of the military, to defend the democratically elected government. That is exactly what happened. By the end of the day, the coup attempt dissolved after high-ranking Venezuelan officials maintained their loyalty to Maduro and the PSUV. Marches of millions in support of Maduro and PSUV occurred throughout the country in the days following the attempted coup.

On May 2, the illusion that this coup was remotely separate from the U.S. military and intelligence apparatus completely dissolved. CNN published an article reporting that President Trump sought to funnel [cash](#) to Juan Guaidó to revive the coup. Before this report, multiple U.S. officials, including Mike Pompeo, John Bolton, Marco Rubio, and Donald Trump himself, had all been on record teasing potential military action in support of the Guaidó coup.

Between the instant recognition of Guaidó's presidency, the saber-rattling in the press, and the planned cash injection, it is pretty clear that the U.S. imperialists and their cronies in the Venezuelan opposition are the ones who would benefit from the overthrow of Nicholas Maduro.

A year later, another attempt

Just over a year later, U.S. mercenary company [Silvercorps](#) attempted a coup against Maduro's government. Silvercorps owner Jordan Goudreau financed and supplied a group of fascist former Venezuelan soldiers. The Silvercorps plotters actually attempted to work with Guaidó and his small government in exile, but negotiations broke down over financial issues.

In May 2020, roughly 60 militants, including [two U.S. Green Berets](#), landed on beaches in northern Venezuela. The Venezuelan Navy quickly thwarted the attempt

and arrested the individuals involved. The coup's goal was to kidnap Nicholas Maudro, thus forcing a transfer of power to the opposition.

While sanctions against Venezuela persisted through the Biden administration, Trump signaled another provocative escalation against Venezuela.

It's not a secret that Venezuela has grown substantial diplomatic and economic ties with the People's Republic of China. Trump and his allies in the ruling class view the PRC as their fundamental enemy and an existential threat to their profits. As such, Trump is again attempting to ratchet up the pressure on Venezuela – this time by supporting an economic siege with a naval one.

This escalation should not be viewed as an independent crisis allegedly caused by Venezuelan narcotics smuggling. Trump's naval aggression against Venezuela is another move in a long-played chess game, a game with the goal of reopening Venezuelan oil reserves and markets to imperialist plunder.

