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‘We will blow you out of existence,’ Trump’s Caribbean spectacle

written by Carlos Ron
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Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel congratulates Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro for his victory in the presidential elections. In August, the U.S. State Department raised its bounty for Maduro's capture to \$50 million. Photo: Prensa Latina

On 23 September 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump delivered a dramatic address, explicitly threatening those allegedly involved in drug trafficking to the United States with being blown "[out of existence](#)". This statement, taken as a blatant disregard for international law and due process, made reference to the latest escalation in the decades-long U.S. War on Drugs, a campaign historically used to justify U.S. foreign intervention in Latin America, and now, prominently aimed at

Venezuela.

For the last 26 years, Venezuela has undergone a profound political transformation successfully asserting sovereignty over the world's largest proven [oil reserves](#) primarily by using revenues to attack decades of poverty and social exclusion through [social programs](#). It also embarked on ending Washington's historical political influence.

Venezuela has crafted an independent foreign policy aimed at building a multipolar world, forging closer ties with countries like [Iran](#), [Russia](#) (with whom it has just approved a strategic partnership) and [China](#), with an "All-Weather Partnership" signed in 2023. It has also promoted regional alliances free of U.S. dominance such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States ([CELAC](#)) and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America ([ALBA](#)); promoting South-South cooperation with renewed participation in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries ([OPEC](#)) and the [Non-Aligned Movement](#); and leading the formation of the [Group of Friends of the United Nations Charter](#).

These shifts prompted the U.S. to declare Venezuela an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" in [2015](#). This opened the door for a comprehensive campaign of unilateral sanctions — rather, coercive measures — that has continued across the Obama, Biden, and both Trump Administrations. This campaign has damaged the Venezuelan economy, contributed to the loss of [lives](#), and fueled [migration](#) to the U.S. and to neighboring countries.

As the U.S. seeks to reassert its influence in the region in its global competition with adversaries like China, this policy on Venezuela represents not just as a tool to modify conduct but as an instrument of a broader, sustained regime change operation — a goal that has remained unsuccessful.

This objective is reinforced by domestic pressures, particularly from Latin American

ultra-right factions with close ties to the Venezuelan American community. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), there are approximately 120,000 U.S. registered voters of Venezuelan descent, with the largest concentration —about 57,000— in Florida. where in 2018, less than 32,000 thousand votes decided the 2018 Governor’s race. In a state where the 2018 Governor’s race was decided by fewer than 35,000 votes, the political weight of this community is considered significant.

The current U.S. military posture is a continuation of Trump’s earlier “maximum pressure” campaign. Recent weeks have seen a significant deployment of U.S. naval assets to the Caribbean Sea, including a nuclear submarine, a squadron of F-35 planes, 7 warships, and at least 4,500 marines. The real intention of this deployment is not to curb drug trafficking but to destabilize the Venezuelan government.

To justify the military presence, the U.S. has undertaken operations against alleged drug-trafficking. However, available data, including from sources such as the United Nations and even the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), indicates that approximately [87 percent](#) of drugs reaching the U.S. pass through the Pacific Ocean, while only about 5 percent attempt to pass through the Caribbean Sea, where the entire Venezuelan coast lies.

On [September 2](#), President Trump publicly announced a lethal attack on a boat allegedly carrying drugs and tied to the Tren de Aragua, an extinct Venezuelan criminal gang that the U.S. government claims is still active and operating on U.S. soil. The U.S. Intelligence Community reportedly [denied](#) ties between President Nicolas Maduro and these claims. Nonetheless, these allegations have been used to justify the invocation of the [Alien Enemies Act](#) of 1798 for the third time in history —the first during the War of 1812 and the second during World War II, now targeting Venezuelans living in the U.S. during peacetime. This led to the deportation of 252 Venezuelans, without due process, and to their imprisonment and

torture in a concentration camp in El Salvador. Some were even separated from their [children](#).

Trump's rhetoric has also linked Venezuelan immigrants to criminality and mental illness, aligning with the nativist agenda in his own base. Driven by his policy of immigrant expulsion, the U.S. migrant population dropped by 1.4 million between January and June of 2025, [according](#) to the Pew Research Center, causing the immigrant share of the population to decrease from 15.8 to 15.4 percent. After [breaking](#) diplomatic and consular ties in 2019 over the recognition of a self-proclaimed President, direct deportations were halted until February 2025, when the U.S. allowed Venezuelan planes to [repatriate migrants](#). Venezuela had already been implementing its Return to the Homeland (*Vuelta a la Patria*) program since the pandemic, but its airline was banned from the U.S. by sanctions. The Trump Administration also increased its internal persecution of Venezuelans by [ending](#) temporary migratory measures set under the Biden Administration.

In the weeks leading up to the UN address, Trump claimed that at least two more lethal attacks on boats were carried out, posting videos that only showed people being killed by aerial bombardment, with no independent verification of the drug trafficking claims or the victims' nationality. The Venezuelan government has also [denounced](#) the harassment of Venezuelan fishermen by U.S. military officers. During his UN speech, Trump boasted that "there aren't too many boats that are traveling on the seas by Venezuela," suggesting that all sea vessels are now under threat. Furthermore, he also openly claimed that President Maduro was leading "terrorist and trafficking networks", without presenting any evidence. In August, the [bounty](#) for Maduro's capture was raised to \$50 million despite earlier intelligence community reports reportedly disregarding the claim.

Venezuela, its government, and its citizens are currently under threat from the most powerful military power in the world. Yet Venezuela has continued to seek a

peaceful resolution. President Maduro sent a [letter](#) to Trump in the first week of September via an intermediary, calling for dialogue and refuting the drug-trafficking claims. The historical precedent of [Operation Brother Sam](#) in 1964 —where the deployment of U.S. warships near Brazil catalyzed the military overthrow of democratically-elected president João Goulart is a parallel that hints at a regime change operation. The difference is that this time, there have been no anti-government defections.

The Tricontinental Institute's study [Addicted to Imperialism](#) argues that for over 50 years, the War on Drugs has been a mechanism to promote U.S. military expansion, the forced displacement of rural communities, the criminalization of popular organizations, and further political interventionism. In contrast, despite massive military spending, U.S. drug consumption has not declined; conversely, the U.S. remains, both the main consumer of drugs, and the main provider of weapons to the drug cartels.

Minister Diosdado Cabello [denounced](#) a DEA coordinated false flag operation seeking to provoke the Venezuelan Bolivarian Armed Force into direct confrontation with the U.S. military. But the Venezuelan government has established a [National Council for Sovereignty and Peace](#) where the unlikely combination of pro-government and opposition forces have joined in rejecting foreign intervention. Many Venezuelans even [enlisted](#) in the national militias and are ready to act in defense of the nation in the case of U.S. invasion or a targeted attack such as those carried out months earlier against Iran.

What is being carried out against Venezuela, is not an operation against drug trafficking but rather, a regime change operation. Yet Venezuelan morale is high. People continue to carry on with their daily lives in a state of caution, and enthusiastically defend of their national project by reminding anyone that Venezuela is spelled with a V — like Vietnam — and that the national liberator, Simon Bolívar

once [wrote](#) to a U.S. diplomat: “Fortunately, we have often seen a handful of free men defeat powerful empires!”

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