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The 'Big Stick' is back: And it's pointed at Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba

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October 25, 2025



Supporters of President Nicolás Maduro during a rally in Caracas, Venezuela.

The U.S. continues to escalate military pressure against Venezuela — and against Colombia and Cuba as well.

On Friday, Oct. 24, 2025, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth announced the deployment of the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN-78) to the Caribbean.

The USS Ford — the most lethal strike platform in the world — joins an already massive U.S. military buildup in the region: 10,000 U.S. troops, at least eight warships, P-8 surveillance planes, and F-35 jets are now deployed under the Trump administration's so-called "counter-narcotics" operation. U.S. troops have also landed in Trinidad and Tobago, just miles from Venezuela, for five days of "joint exercises" seen across the region as a clear act of intimidation.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro called it a violation of international law and Latin American sovereignty. Petro charges Washington with illegal acts of imperialist aggression driven by economic motives rather than genuine counter-narcotics efforts.

Petro has condemned the U.S. missile strikes on vessels in the Caribbean and Pacific as “acts of tyranny” and “extrajudicial executions.” He charged that U.S. forces violated Colombia’s sovereignty, describing the attacks as “murders” carried out in territorial waters.

The Colombian leader highlighted the case of Alejandro Carranza, a Colombian fisherman allegedly killed when his small vessel suffered engine failure and raised a distress signal.

“They committed a murder and violated our sovereignty in territorial waters,” Petro said, stressing that the victims were not drug traffickers but “poor young people from Latin America.” He confirmed that at least one Colombian vessel was struck and that Colombian citizens were killed in the attacks.

Cuba is also a target in Washington’s expanding war drive.

Havana’s Foreign Ministry denounced the U.S. military buildup in the Caribbean as “an aggressive show of force” that threatens peace and stability across the region. Cuban officials warned that U.S. maneuvers near the island represent “a real and imminent danger,” aimed at intimidation and destabilization.

Venezuela’s history as a battleground of empire

Venezuela’s long history shows how U.S. imperialism evolved from Teddy Roosevelt’s “big stick” diplomacy to today’s mix of sanctions, economic strangulation, and ‘big stick’ warfare. Oil made Venezuela a prize for foreign capital a century ago; it still makes the country a strategic battleground between imperialist

control and national sovereignty. The Bolivarian Revolution, led by Hugo Chávez, tried to break that pattern — and Washington has treated that challenge as an existential threat.

The oil-looting era

In the early 20th century, U.S. oil barons — anchored to Rockefeller's Standard Oil — carved out vast concessions from the colonial puppet regime that ruled Venezuela on behalf of Wall Street. By the 1920s, companies like Standard Oil of New Jersey (later Exxon) and Royal Dutch Shell dominated production. The profits flowed north; Venezuelan workers remained poor under repressive regimes that enforced foreign concessions.

By mid-century, oil accounted for over 90% of Venezuela's exports, but ownership, technology and pricing power stayed in foreign hands. The state's courts, ports and pipelines served Wall Street; infrastructure and social investment lagged, producing sharp inequality and long dependence on external markets.

The 1976 nationalization and the creation of PDVSA altered ownership on paper, but Big Oil's control remained deep. Technical links, commercial contracts, and international financing meant that de facto control — and much of the profit — remained tied to U.S. and European oil giants.

Big stick imperialism

Teddy Roosevelt turned the Monroe Doctrine into a license for U.S. policing across the Americas — asserting the right to intervene whenever Washington judged instability a “threat.”

Roosevelt's gunboat diplomacy forced Venezuela to satisfy European creditors and put U.S. naval power at the center of Washington's imperialist domination of the Americas.

The pattern never changed: U.S. coups and invasions — in Guatemala, Chile, Grenada, and Panama — were sold as defending “democracy” but served Wall Street and the Pentagon.

The Bolivarian Revolution

Elected in 1998, Hugo Chávez launched the Bolivarian Revolution to reclaim national control over oil and redirect its revenue toward social programs. His government expanded free health care, education and food programs, cut poverty, and deepened Latin American solidarity through ALBA and Petrocaribe.

Oil revenues funded mass literacy drives, subsidized food distribution, new housing and broadened health care — material gains that changed millions of lives and built grassroots organizations that anchored the revolution.

A U.S.-backed coup briefly removed Chávez in 2002; mass popular mobilization returned him to power within 48 hours. That moment crystallized Venezuela’s turn toward a politics of sovereignty — and Washington’s determination to push back.

Sanctions and war

After Chávez’s death in 2013, the U.S. escalated economic pressure. Sanctions aimed at oil, banking and trade were tightened under successive administrations and intensified under Trump. These measures froze assets, choked imports of medicine and spare parts, and restricted Venezuela’s access to global finance — turning sanctions into a tool of collective punishment.

Trump said recently, “When I left [after his first term], Venezuela was ready to collapse. We would have taken all the oil.”

Beyond sanctions, Washington has funded opposition groups, backed parallel leadership claims, and deployed disinformation campaigns in an attempt to erode

the Bolivarian Revolution.

Despite interference, Venezuelans have repeatedly defended their institutions at the polls. International delegations and regional observers have documented consistent mass participation and contested the phony U.S. claim that Venezuelan democracy lacks popular support.

Sovereignty and resistance

Millions remain mobilized — in communal councils, unions and militia structures — defending the Bolivarian Revolution in the streets and at the ballot box.

Venezuelans have shown repeatedly they will resist recolonization — by voting, organizing and arming for self-defense when necessary.

Across Latin America, Africa and Asia, states and movements have condemned U.S. sanctions and military threats. Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba's struggles have become a symbol for the Global South's resistance to imperialist domination.

The U.S. cannot recolonize Venezuela, only destroy it. The Venezuelan people will fight back, and the world will support them.

