

Blockade is an act of war: Trump escalates attack on Venezuela

written by Gary Wilson
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Interior minister and PSUV leader Diosdado Cabello leading a mass demonstration in Caracas on Nov. 25, 2025. Photo: Francisco Trias

On Dec. 16, the Trump administration announced a “total and complete blockade of

all sanctioned oil tankers going into, and out of, Venezuela.” This act of war represents a major escalation in Washington’s campaign to overthrow the government of President Nicolás Maduro and seize control of Venezuela’s vast oil reserves and other natural resources.

In his announcement on social media, Trump declared that Venezuela is “completely surrounded by the largest Armada ever assembled in the History of South America,” threatening that “it will only get bigger, and the shock to them will be like nothing they have ever seen before.”

The administration demanded that Venezuela “return” its oil, land and other assets to the United States — a grotesque claim that exposes the purely colonial nature of this military campaign. Venezuela has stolen nothing from the United States. What the administration calls “theft” is simply Venezuela’s lawful assertion of sovereignty over its own natural resources and its refusal to allow U.S. corporations to control its economy.

Trump designated the Venezuelan government a “Foreign Terrorist Organization,” dispensing entirely with earlier pretenses that the military campaign aims to combat drug trafficking. This is naked imperialism: Washington demanding that a sovereign nation hand over its resources at gunpoint.

Massive military buildup

The Pentagon has deployed more than 15,000 troops, a dozen warships including the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, F-35 stealth fighters and EA-18G Growler electronic warfare jets to the region. This represents the largest U.S. military mobilization in the Caribbean since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

The administration has already established a de facto blockade. U.S. forces seized a Venezuelan oil tanker last week and have killed at least 95 people in 25 separate

strikes on boats since early September. On Dec. 15 alone, the military announced strikes on three more vessels in the Eastern Pacific, killing eight people.

The most brutal of these attacks occurred on Sept. 2, when U.S. forces carried out four separate strikes on a single vessel. The first strike killed nine people on board. As the smoke cleared, two survivors clung to the hull of the capsized boat. A second strike deliberately killed both survivors. The third and fourth strikes sank the vessel.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who was reported to have issued a verbal instruction to “kill everybody,” has refused to release video footage of this massacre, citing “long-standing Department of Defense policy” against releasing classified operational footage.

Economic warfare

A naval blockade constitutes an act of war under international law. The blockade announcement aims to cut off Venezuela’s primary source of revenue by preventing overseas oil sales, primarily to China. Venezuela holds the world’s largest proven oil reserves — more than 300 billion barrels.

The economic strangulation is already taking effect. Following last week’s tanker seizure, four supertankers originally headed for Venezuela reversed course. Venezuela’s supply of dollars — almost all tied to crude sales — has fallen 30% in the first 10 months of 2025. Annual inflation is expected to top 400% by year’s end.

Colonial plunder strategy

These threats against Venezuela form part of a broader imperialist strategy outlined in the administration’s National Security Strategy released last month. The document proclaims a “Trump Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine, declaring that the United States will “deny non-Hemispheric competitors the ability to. ... own or control strategically vital assets, in our Hemisphere.”

The strategy explicitly identifies Latin America's "strategic resources" — including oil and critical minerals — as targets for "acquisition and investment opportunities for American companies." This is colonial plunder presented as national security policy.

Bipartisan war drive

Both major parties support this march to war. The Democratic Party has refused to oppose the administration's preparations for regime change. When asked about opposing regime change in Venezuela, the Senate Democratic leadership expressed support for Maduro's ouster, merely wishing he would "flee on his own."

Last week, Democratic and Republican congressional leadership joined together to pass the largest military budget in U.S. history — over \$1 trillion when combined with supplemental funding. A House vote is scheduled for Dec. 18 on a war powers resolution that would require congressional authorization before launching war on Venezuela, but passage appears unlikely given bipartisan support for regime change.

Venezuela responds

The government of President Nicolás Maduro has mobilized its military in response to Washington's warmongering, denouncing Trump's announcement as a "grotesque threat" aimed at "stealing the riches that belong to our homeland."

The Venezuelan people have every right to defend their sovereignty and their resources. Working people in the United States must oppose this criminal war drive and stand in solidarity with Venezuela and all of Latin America against U.S. imperialism's campaign to reduce the entire hemisphere to colonial domination.

