

# Guaidó returns to Venezuela for next stage of US regime-change operation

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5 March 2019

Self-proclaimed “interim president” Juan Guaidó returned to Venezuela after an 11-day absence Monday, escorted into the country by a phalanx of Western diplomats, including the ambassadors of the US, Germany, France, Canada, Brazil and several other countries.

In advance of his return, Washington issued threats of retaliation against any attempt by Venezuelan authorities to apprehend Guaidó, who violated an order of Venezuela’s supreme court barring him from leaving the country after state prosecutors announced the initiation of a criminal investigation into the right-wing opposition operative’s involvement in the US-orchestrated coup.

US National Security Adviser John Bolton warned that any interference with Washington’s Venezuelan puppet would provoke “a strong and significant response” from the US.

Similarly, US Vice President Mike Pence tweeted that any action taken against Guaidó would “not be tolerated & will be met with a swift response.”

After leaving the Simon Bolivar airport, Guaidó was driven to a rally in eastern Caracas, the wealthy district of Venezuela’s capital, where he told a crowd of supporters that the fact that he was not arrested upon arrival was proof that the Venezuelan security forces were not obeying the orders of President Nicolas Maduro’s government. “The chain of command is broken,” he said.

He directed much of his speech to the military, demanding that it not “stand idly by” and ordered them to arrest armed supporters of the Maduro government organized in so-called *colectivos* based in the poorer neighborhoods of Caracas and other Venezuelan cities.

Guaidó left Venezuela on February 22 to lead the Trojan Horse “humanitarian aid” operation organized by Washington. Both he and his US backers had promoted an attempt the next day to forcibly crash through the Venezuelan border from Colombia with a handful of trucks carrying food and other supplies stockpiled by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) as the event that would bring down the Maduro government, forcing the military to turn against it.

Nothing of the kind took place. The “aid” convoys were easily blocked, while clashes between security forces and protesters led to several deaths, concentrated among an indigenous population on Venezuela’s border with Brazil.

The “tidal wave” of aid and millions of supporters that Guaidó had promised failed to materialize. The entire operation was a filthy and cynical propaganda stunt staged by a US government that offered a pittance in terms of food supplies, even as it systematically strangles Venezuela’s economy and impoverishes its population with sweeping sanctions barring the country from the US-dominated financial system and blocking its export of oil.

In his speech in eastern Caracas Monday, Guaidó promised that even more sanctions are to come, but did not provide any details as to their scope.

During his 11 days outside of Venezuela, Guaidó met in Colombia with Pence and the so-called Lima Group, consisting of several Latin American governments along with Canada. He traveled on for meetings with Brazil’s newly installed president, the fascistic former army captain Jair Bolsonaro, as well as the right-wing government of Mauricio Macri in Argentina, and in Paraguay that of Mario Abdo Benítez, a former military officer who has extolled the legacy of the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner, whom his father served as private secretary. He also went to Ecuador for a meeting with President Lenin Moreno, who is attempting to curry favor with Washington.

Throughout this tour, Guaidó was accompanied by his US “handler,” the State Department’s assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Kimberly Breier, who is described on the department’s website as a “policy expert and intelligence professional with more than 20 years of experience.”

Guaidó, a member of the right-wing Voluntad Popular (Popular Will) party, which has received substantial financial aid from the National Endowment for Democracy and other US agencies, is a creature of US intelligence, groomed for a regime change operation and unknown to the Venezuelan population before he proclaimed himself

“interim president” on January 23.

The appeals made by Guaidó to the Venezuelan military, offering a blanket amnesty to anyone who supports his coup and guarantees of their interests, while threatening prosecution of those who fail to do so, have thus far produced few results. The Colombian government and the Venezuelan right-wing opposition claim that some 700 members of the security forces—out of a force of 235,000—have defected, while the Maduro government puts the number at 116.

Guaidó, both before and after the debacle of the “humanitarian aid” stunt of February 23, has appealed openly for a US military intervention to secure the overthrow of the Maduro government. He argued last month that the Venezuelan National Assembly, where he was installed as president in January, was authorized to approve the intervention of an “international force” to “restore the constitutional order and protect the lives of our citizens.” He also invoked the “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) doctrine used to justify previous imperialist regime-change operations, such as those in the former Yugoslavia and Libya.

The Lima Group has formally rejected military intervention in Venezuela, opting for “diplomatic and financial pressure” to topple the Maduro government.

In a March 1 interview with Patricia Janiot, the anchor of the US Spanish-language television broadcaster Univision, Elliott Abrams, appointed in January as the Trump administration’s special representative for Venezuela, denied that Washington is preparing to use military force, either to topple Maduro or to force through the “humanitarian aid” supplies it has stockpiled on Venezuela’s borders.

Abrams, it should be noted, is a convicted liar, who gave false testimony to the US Congress on the illegal conspiracy to arm and finance the CIA-organized “contra” terrorists who were unleashed upon Nicaragua in the 1980s. He served as the Reagan administration’s point man in justifying and covering up the atrocities of US-backed dictatorships in El Salvador and Guatemala.

In a Sunday interview with CNN, however, John Bolton gave a full-throated defense of US intervention in Venezuela, declaring, “In this administration we’re not afraid to use the word Monroe Doctrine.”

He was referring to the nearly 200-year-old canon of US foreign policy that supposedly endowed Washington with the right to use force in preventing outside powers from establishing a foothold in the Western Hemisphere.

Initially invoked as a US policy of opposing any attempt by European empires to re-colonize newly independent countries in Latin America, it was turned into a declaration

of a US imperialist sphere of influence and became the rationale for some 50 direct US military interventions in the region along with the fomenting of CIA-backed coups that imposed fascist-military dictatorships over much of the region in the second half of the 20th century.

If this doctrine is being resurrected today against Venezuela, it is because of the close economic and political ties established by Caracas with both Beijing and Moscow. The United States, as Bolton previously acknowledged, is determined to bring the country and its oil wealth—the largest proven reserves in the world—back under the domination of US imperialism and the US-based energy conglomerates.

An indication of Washington’s real intentions was provided by a column published in the Spanish daily *El Pais* by Hector Schamis, who is an instructor on Latin America at the US School of Foreign Service.

He writes that while “the diplomatic solution would be ideal” in Venezuela, “the problem is that, in politics, the ideal rarely takes place in reality.”

He goes on to state that “without American troops [Yugoslavian president Slobodan] Milosevic would not have gone to the diplomatic negotiating table. Much less would he have died as a prisoner in The Hague in 2006.”

Guaidó has called for anti-government protests on Saturday and announced that he is meeting with leaders of public employee unions today. The union leaderships are seeking to channel the widespread anger of workers over the austerity policies and repressive measures of Maduro’s bourgeois government behind the US imperialist regime-change operation.

The success of this operation would impose a brutal dictatorship of US imperialism and Venezuelan capitalist interests over the masses of working people, leading to far more severe austerity measures and police-state repression.

The desperate crisis created by capitalism in Venezuela and the threat of US military intervention can be countered only by means of the political mobilization of the Venezuelan working class, independently of Maduro’s capitalist government and its trade union stooges. The organization of workers’ assemblies to expropriate foreign and domestic capitalist interests and establish workers’ control over the country’s vast oil wealth must be combined with a struggle to unite the Venezuelan working class with workers throughout the hemisphere to put an end to capitalism.



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