

Trump's Caribbean massacre: A naked crime of US imperialism

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The Trump administration launched an airstrike Tuesday on a small vessel in the southern Caribbean on the pretext that it was carrying drugs and alleged members of the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua gang. The White House and the Pentagon have boasted of killing 11 people in the strike, demonstrating a further use of illegal mass murder to pursue imperialist interests abroad and to justify a dictatorship at home.

The White House immediately trumpeted the massacre on official social media pages, declassifying an aerial video of the boat being blown to smithereens.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth warned Wednesday that this is part of an ongoing escalation. "We've got assets in the air, assets in the water, assets on ships, because this is a deadly serious mission for us, and it won't, it won't stop with just this strike," he said on Fox News. Speaking to reporters at the White House, Trump threatened, "And there's more where that came from."

The attack takes place amid the deployment of a growing US naval flotilla off the Venezuelan coast, including at least eight warships, aircraft and 5,000 sailors and Marines. Trump has cast the entire Venezuelan government as nothing more than a "narco-terrorist" cartel, doubling a bounty on the head of President Nicolas Maduro to \$50 million.

In a social media post boasting of the attack, Trump claimed Tren de Aragua is "operating under the control of Nicolas Maduro" and is responsible for "acts of violence and terror across the United States and Western Hemisphere."

This is absurd. Not only does the United States represent the largest drug market in the world, but the US state has long been the main purveyor of violence and terror across Latin America and the Caribbean through countless military invasions, CIA-orchestrated coups and fascist-military dictatorships. According to every credible intelligence report, Venezuela accounts for an insignificant share of the drugs flowing northwards from Latin America. As for Tren de Aragua, the gang has largely ceased to exist, even in

Venezuela. In the US, there has been not a single murder conviction of an alleged member of the gang.

In this context, the strike was, first of all, an act of imperialist aggression as part of longstanding efforts to incite a coup or civil war in Venezuela. The aim is to provoke divisions within the country's security forces in order to install a US puppet regime and take control of Venezuelan oil reserves, the largest in the world.

The *World Socialist Web Site* strongly condemns this criminal act of imperialist aggression. Despite the limited information currently available, it can be stated unequivocally that this was an unwarranted act of mass murder in violation of US and international law, against people who have not been convicted of any crime.

While the Pentagon has presented no evidence of wrongdoing, Trump dodged questions Wednesday as to why the boat was not intercepted and its occupants arrested by avoiding the issue, pointing instead to "massive amounts of drugs coming into our country to kill a lot of people, and everybody fully understands that."

To portray this one small vessel as an instrument of "narco-terrorism" is a pseudo-legal justification for a gross war crime, not to speak of sheer nonsense. Any legitimate drug interdiction operation would have entailed stopping and searching the boat and, in the event that it was carrying narcotics, their confiscation. Moreover, it does not take 11 people to transport drugs; it is much more likely that the passengers were fishermen or migrants.

The use of a Special Operations aircraft and advanced missiles to blow up a small speedboat, as acknowledged by US officials, was wildly out of proportion.

The timing, moreover, demonstrates clearly the connection between the Trump administration's threat to open up a Latin American front in the emerging third world war and its ongoing coup to establish a police-military dictatorship in the United States itself.

Earlier on Tuesday, a federal appeals court rejected Trump's attempt to use the Alien Enemies Act to deport Venezuelan migrants, ruling that there existed no valid

evidence of an “invasion or predatory incursion” by a foreign entity, as required for the law’s invocation.

The court determined that the administration’s claim linking migrants to the Tren de Aragua gang did not amount to a wartime condition justifying unchecked executive authority simply by invoking emergency powers, given constitutional constraints. The ruling in itself makes the case that the act of war against the alleged Tren de Aragua vessel was unconstitutional.

Significantly, a lengthy dissenting opinion drafted by a Trump appointee argued that the president should have unrestricted powers to wage war and that his declaration of a “predatory incursion,” and for that matter any presidential fabrication, should be held as “conclusive.”

The US Navy attack on the boat in the Caribbean sent a clear message: The United States is a nation at war, and the President intends to claim dictatorial powers to wage war and will wage war to claim dictatorial powers.

Such a bloodthirsty pursuit of the interests of US banks and corporations is a warning of the willingness of the White House—and the Pentagon—to resort to the same methods of mass murder employed under the pretext of a “war against terrorism” in the Middle East, from Afghanistan to Iraq to the ongoing genocide in Gaza, against any group, domestic or foreign, that is perceived as a threat to the US drive to global hegemony, including in what US imperialism has long regarded as its “own backyard.”

Secretary of State Rubio acknowledged as much on Tuesday when he said: “The president is very clear that he’s going to use the full power of America, the full might of the United States, to take on and eradicate these drug cartels, no matter where they’re operating from.”

Only hours after boasting of the attack on the alleged Venezuelan vessel, Trump sarcastically wrote to Chinese President Xi Jinping to give his “warmest regards to Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un, as you conspire against the United States of America.” The Russian and North Korean heads of state attended a major military parade in China to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II.

The use of military force under Trump to counter the growth of Chinese economic and political influence in US imperialism’s near-abroad is a strategic corollary to the “Pivot to Asia” aimed against China initiated under the Obama administration in 2011. China has become the main trade partner for South America, while its total trade with Latin America as a whole has grown nearly 30-fold in the past quarter-century.

As a headline in *Foreign Affairs* last December put it, “Latin America is about to become a priority for U.S. foreign policy.” In the article, analyst Brian Winter explains:

Trump and his team may save their energy for what they see as the larger threat: China ... No one on Trump’s team believes the new administration can convince Latin American countries to turn their backs on Beijing entirely, but officials do plan to be more aggressive in trying to keep the Chinese away from the most sensitive civilian and military assets in the region, which they see as a matter of national security.

The use of an advanced missile system to obliterate a small boat and murder 11 people in the southern Caribbean, together with the deployment of a naval armada capable of raining Tomahawk cruise missiles on Caracas and deploying Marines on Venezuelan shores, goes hand in hand with the 50 percent tariff imposed on the largest economy in the region, Brazil, the threats to bomb and even invade Mexico and other provocations in the region.

For its part, the Venezuelan government has responded by claiming that Rubio created the video of the airstrike using Artificial Intelligence to impress Trump and trick him into supporting further aggression. This attempt to uncover divisions in Washington and appeal to the “better nature” of the fascist at the head of the US imperialist state, as Maduro has done repeatedly, exposes the bankruptcy of bourgeois nationalism in opposing imperialist oppression.

The onslaught against Latin America, the emerging world war and the threat of fascist dictatorship in the United States itself can only be stopped by a united movement of the working class across the Americas and beyond to end the capitalist nation-state system and reorganize society on a socialist basis.



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