# Trump threatens neo-colonial war of plunder against Venezuela

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US imperialism is again on the warpath, this time threatening Venezuela as part of a systematic drive to subjugate all of Latin America. President Donald Trump told *Politico* last week that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro's "days are numbered" and declared Friday that ground attacks would begin "pretty soon."

The *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial board characterized his actions as a pledge to carry out regime change, writing that Trump is now "obliged to follow through" on his commitment to oust Maduro.

Trump's threats have been backed by the largest US military deployment in the Caribbean since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. The Pentagon has deployed more than 15,000 troops, a dozen warships, including the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, and scores of aircraft within striking distance of Venezuela.

Since September, US forces have launched more than 22 drone and missile strikes against boats in the southern Caribbean and eastern Pacific, murdering at least 87 people.

The White House's claim that these operations are aimed at combating drug trafficking is a transparent fraud. The real aims of the US intervention in Venezuela were made clear last Wednesday when the administration seized a Venezuelan oil tanker carrying 1.1 million barrels of crude oil worth approximately $78 million.

Asked the following day what would happen to the seized oil, Trump replied in the language of a gangster: "Well, we keep it, I guess." The tanker has now arrived under US military escort in Galveston, Texas, a center of the US oil industry.

The predatory aims of the campaign against Venezuela, and the broader intervention in Latin America, were outlined in the National Security Strategy published by the White House last month. The document announces a "Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine," explicitly establishing a goal of restoring "American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere" and denying China "the ability to ... own or control strategically vital assets in our Hemisphere." It directs the government to "identify strategic acquisition and investment opportunities for American companies in the region."

This document effectively asserts US ownership over two continents, presented as "our hemisphere." The US will "own" and "control" Latin America's resources, because it plans to seize them by force to use as a power base for confrontation with Russia and China.

Venezuela holds the world's largest proven oil reserves—more than 300 billion barrels. Beyond oil, Latin America possesses vast reserves of lithium and copper—materials essential for motors, semiconductors, and batteries. Chile is the world's top copper producer and holds the largest lithium reserves.

The US plan to seize Venezuela's oil and natural resources targets both Russia and China. China is Venezuela's largest creditor, having provided over $62 billion in loans since 2005, largely repaid through guaranteed oil sales, and currently purchases 80 percent of Venezuela's exports. Russia has invested billions in Venezuelan energy infrastructure.

In its campaign against Venezuela, the Trump administration has dispensed with even the most flimsy pretenses to legality. In the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which was itself criminal, the Bush administration at least attempted to construct some legal justification—however fraudulent—for its actions. No such effort has been made here. The administration has simply declared its right to murder people on the high seas, seize the property of foreign nations, and overthrow governments at will. There is no meaningful difference between the policy the United States is now pursuing toward Venezuela and Hitler's invasions of neighboring countries in the late 1930s.

The United States has a long history of interventions in Venezuela. In 1908, the US backed a coup that installed Juan Vicente Gómez, who ruled as a brutal dictator for the next 27 years, opening Venezuela's oil wealth to American corporations.

This was only one chapter in a long, bloody history of American regime-change operations throughout Latin America—whether through direct military intervention or CIA coups. The United States overthrew governments in Guatemala (1954), Brazil (1964), and Chile (1973); armed death squads in El Salvador in the 1980s; invaded Panama in 1989; and in recent years has supported the far-right governments of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Javier Milei in Argentina.

The Trump administration's aim is to overthrow the governments of Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba and install

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bloody dictatorships that will loot these countries of their natural resources and brutally suppress the working class.

The American media has functioned as the propaganda arm of this operation. Over the weekend, CBS News broadcast a fawning interview with Venezuelan opposition figure María Corina Machado, who openly advocated US military intervention. The reason Machado and the Venezuelan opposition require a US invasion is simple: they have no popular support within Venezuela itself. After years of US-backed destabilization efforts, the opposition has been unable to oust Maduro through internal means because the Venezuelan population has no desire to be ruled by Washington's puppets.

Within the US political establishment, there has been no opposition to the Trump administration's escalation against Venezuela. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, asked Wednesday whether he opposes regime change in Venezuela, replied: "You know, obviously, if Maduro would just flee on his own, everyone would like that."

Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, appeared on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday. When host Martha Raddatz asked Warner "do you agree" with Trump's "effort to oust the dictator" Maduro, Warner replied, "I agree that the Venezuelan people want Maduro gone."

Last week, the Democratic congressional leadership joined with Republicans to pass the largest military budget in US history. The $901 billion National Defense Authorization Act—pushed to over $1 trillion when combined with supplemental funding—received votes from Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Whip Katherine Clark, and Democratic Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar.

The *New York Times*, which speaks for dominant sections of the Democratic Party, has published a series of editorials under the headline "OVERMATCHED: Why the U.S. Military Needs to Reinvent Itself." Arguing that the Pentagon is failing to sufficiently prepare for a new world war, the *Times* acknowledges, "In the short term, the transformation of the American military may require additional spending." To the extent that the Democratic Party establishment has a difference with Trump, it is that they believe he is insufficiently committed to military confrontation with Russia.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders have remained silent amid the military buildup. And New York Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani met Trump for a grinning photo-op at the White House where he praised Trump's efforts at promoting "affordability"—as Trump's forces were blowing unarmed civilians out of the water off the coast of Venezuela.

The Trump administration is lighting a fuse to a powder keg—not only in Venezuela, but throughout Latin America and within the United States itself. A war to conquer and occupy Venezuela would meet enormous resistance from the Venezuelan working class and from workers across the continent. Latin America is already a region of mounting class struggle, and a US invasion would vastly intensify this opposition and accelerate revolutionary upheavals throughout the hemisphere.

Workers in the United States have a profound stake in opposing the imperialist subjugation of their class brothers and sisters in Latin America. The Trump administration confronts growing opposition to its Gestapo-style immigration raids, which have provoked protests and walkouts in cities across the country. Anger is also mounting over mass layoffs, falling real wages, the destruction of public education and health care, and the military budget that funds the Caribbean buildup will be paid for through cuts to food stamps, Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security.

War abroad is being used to intensify repression at home. The same administration that claims the right to murder people in international waters without evidence or due process is laying the groundwork to criminalize dissent within the United States. The Trump administration has justified its murders off the coast of Venezuela by claiming, without offering any evidence, that the people it killed were "terrorists." This precedent, set abroad, will be imported to the United States, where the Trump administration has used the same word—"terrorists"—to describe Americans opposed to fascism.

When the US was preparing for full-scale war in Central America in the 1980s, particularly targeting Nicaragua, plans were drawn up by the Reagan administration to round up and imprison 300,000 likely opponents of such a war. The preparations for mass repression are far more advanced 40 years on, with a fascist cabal in the White House.

The struggle against the imperialist assault on Venezuela must therefore be understood as part of a broader fight by the international working class against war, dictatorship and social counterrevolution.

Opposition to war must be unified with the struggle against immigration raids, austerity and the destruction of social rights. This requires a conscious break with both capitalist parties and the building of an independent, international socialist movement of the working class. Only on this basis can the descent into war and dictatorship be stopped, and society reorganized to serve human needs rather than the profits and power of a tiny financial oligarchy.

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