

Trump threatens second strike against Venezuela if interim president does not bow to US demands

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In interviews and comments to the press, US President Donald Trump followed up the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in a US commando raid with mafia-style threats against the country and Maduro's successor, Delcy Rodríguez.

In a phone interview with NBC's Kristen Welker and related media appearances over the past 48 hours, Trump threatened a "second strike" on Venezuela if newly sworn-in President Delcy Rodríguez does not submit fully to US demands.

"If they don't behave, we'll do a second strike," he boasted, declaring that regime change and the US decision to "run" a country of 30 million people is "better than what you have right now." Trump also suggested he had initially expected to have to send in American forces again already.

While making the threats, Trump and his officials also insist that the US is "not at war" with Venezuela and that the operation is a limited action aimed at "security" and "counter-narcotics." However, the basic facts of the events of Saturday morning expose these claims to be a calculated lie.

The coordinated airstrikes on Caracas and multiple states in Venezuela, the abduction of an elected president on foreign soil, the declaration of a state of emergency and the mobilization of armed forces across the country is a violation of international law and a war crime.

Delcy Rodríguez, previously Maduro's vice president, was sworn in in Caracas as interim president under conditions of extreme crisis created by the US raid that captured the President and his wife and flew them, in shackles, to the United States.

On Saturday, Rodríguez denounced the abduction as

an "atrocity" and vowed loyalty to Maduro, even as US media reported that Washington had identified her weeks earlier as a potential "business partner" for Wall Street and the oil majors.

By Sunday, she was reported to have told the public that her government was ready to "work with" the US to stave off further attacks by US imperialism. However, Trump has responded to this show of "cooperation" with further threats, making clear that any hesitations or appeals to national sovereignty will be answered with escalation.

Previously, Trump had threatened Rodríguez with a fate worse than that inflicted on Maduro. He declared that "if she doesn't do what's right, she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro," an unambiguous death threat from the head of the US state. The same message runs through his other comments that if Venezuelan officials "stay loyal" to Maduro, "the future is really bad, really bad for them," coupled with repeated references to a potential "second strike."

Rodríguez has publicly condemned the kidnapping of Maduro as an "atrocity" and issued appeals for the president's return, while also calling for "normalization" and signaling that she will not openly oppose US dictates.

New reports from Caracas and international news outlets continue shedding light on the scope of the US assault that preceded Maduro's abduction. Residents reported at least seven powerful explosions and low-flying aircraft over the capital in the early hours of Saturday, with smoke columns visible near military installations and power cut in areas around a base south of the city.

Venezuelan authorities have accused the US of attacking both civilian and military facilities in Caracas and the surrounding states of Miranda, Aragua and La Guaira, prompting the declaration of a national state of emergency and the activation of “national defense plans.” The weekend assault followed a months-long maritime campaign of US strikes on Venezuelan vessels and infrastructure that, according to critical reports, had already killed more than 100 civilians, underscoring that the latest operation is part of a sustained, escalating war, not a one-off “police action.”

According to a report by Associated Press (AP), Venezuela’s military announced on Monday that at least 24 Venezuelan security officers were killed in the US military operation to capture Nicolás Maduro, bringing the official number of deaths to at least 56 people.

In addition to the 24 Venezuelan security officers, 32 Cuban military and police officers working in Venezuela were also killed, according to Cuba’s government, prompting two days of mourning on the Caribbean island.

More civilians in Venezuela were killed in the strikes, AP reporting shows, but it wasn’t immediately clear how many. The Pentagon also reported that seven US servicemembers were injured in Saturday’s raid in Caracas. An anonymous official told AP that the injuries were gunshot wounds and shrapnel-related and that two were still recovering.

On Tuesday, Trump moved to reassure the ruling elite that the conquest of Venezuela would open up a profitable opportunity, boasting that the US government is prepared to pay or guarantee the costs of “rebuilding” and “upgrading” Venezuela’s decrepit oil infrastructure in order to lure American oil companies into the occupied country.

He told NBC that big oil firms will “either get reimbursed by us, or through revenue” if they finance massive investments in Venezuela’s nationalized oil fields, promising that “they’ll do very well” and claiming that turning Venezuela into a US-controlled producer will push down oil and gas prices.

The fact that White House is preparing to guarantee tens of billions of dollars in investment to the Venezuelan oil industry infrastructure to secure agreements with giant American oil corporations—while slashing funding of Medicaid, SNAP and WIC

benefits—reveals the financial interests driving the imperialist operation.

On the ground in Caracas, the combined effects of US bombardment, Maduro’s abduction and the state of emergency have produced conditions resembling a city under siege. Reports and images from the capital show soldiers and armored vehicles deployed near the Miraflores presidential palace, blackouts in neighborhoods around strategic bases and residents fleeing buildings in areas near the explosions.

The government has called “people to the streets” in pro-government mobilizations while simultaneously ordering the implementation of “all national defense plans,” a framework that grants sweeping powers to the armed forces and security services and allows the suspension of basic democratic rights.

There have been reports of anti-aircraft fire in the skies over key installations and of the mobilization of Venezuelan troops and police not only against the threat of further US attacks, but also in preparation for the repression of protests and demonstrations as popular anger over the assault, the kidnapping and the dire social conditions mount.

The unfolding crisis in Venezuela exhibits the same features as previous US regime-change operations reported on and analyzed by the *World Socialist Web Site*—from Afghanistan to Iraq and Libya to Syria—which invariably combined military aggression with the fomenting of internal civil war.

The forced removal of Maduro, the threats against Rodríguez and the scramble over Venezuela’s oil are not accidental outcomes, but the expression of the drive by US imperialism to reassert its hegemony over the Western Hemisphere under a revived Monroe Doctrine.

Under conditions of mass poverty, inflation and deep social inequality, the launching of a neocolonial conquest will intensify the class struggle within Venezuela, throughout Latin America and within the United States itself.



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