

Venezuela and US reestablish diplomatic relations as Chavistas hand over oil, minerals

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The US State Department announced Thursday the reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Venezuela. The move follows the January 3 military assault on Caracas in which over 100 were killed in an operation to abduct President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, now jailed in the US and facing life in prison on fraudulent charges of “narco-terrorism.”

Relations were severed in 2019 when the first Trump administration recognized CIA puppet Juan Guaidó as the “legitimate president” as part of a failed regime change operation.

The announcement follows a two-day visit by Interior Secretary Doug Burgum to Caracas, where acting president Delcy Rodríguez, Maduro’s former vice president, announced deals handing oil and critical minerals over to Washington and US-based multinational corporations.

As oil prices climb due to the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, Rodríguez signed a deal with Shell, while Exxon Mobil executives have scheduled a trip in March, and Chevron said it would expand production in the country. A day prior to Burgum’s arrival, the state oil company PDVSA announced a series of new sales contracts without providing details.

US officials have indicated, however, that the US Treasury Department not only has full control over which firms are granted licenses to sell Venezuelan oil, but over the disbursement of the proceeds. While the initial \$500 million in oil sales following the capture of Maduro were routed through Qatar, these are now going directly to accounts handled by the Treasury Department, with total discretion on whether to disburse the money to the Venezuelan government, or keep it as war booty.

As an indication of its priorities, the regime in Caracas announced in mid-February the axing of seven social programs and organizations, including the so-called “missions” that provided limited social aid to some of the

poorest layers of Venezuelan society.

Burgum also signed an agreement with Venezuela’s mining company to buy a thousand kilograms of gold, and Rodríguez announced a mining reform to open the sector to transnationals. The reform will be inspired by a hydrocarbons law passed in January that privatizes oil and cuts tax rates.

There are vast deposits of rare earths, niobium and platinum group metals in Venezuela, especially in ecologically sensitive areas including Cerro Impacto in the Amazon rainforest. But the country remains largely unexplored.

Days before his trip, Burgum said: “That first wave is oil and gas and getting them the equipment, often US-made equipment, that we need to help them increase their production. So, both the technology, the equipment, and the people to help raise that up. And then the next wave is going to be on critical minerals, because there’s a huge mining opportunity in Venezuela.”

In a matter of weeks, Rodríguez has handed over control of the economy and shaken hands with CIA Director John Ratcliffe, SOUTHCOM’s commander Gen. Francis Donovan, Energy Secretary Chris Wright and other top US officials. Despite once decrying Trump’s “perverse plans of fascism,” she now calls the would-be US Fuhrer her “friend and partner” and writes on social media: “I thank President Donald Trump for his kind willingness... to work together.”

A joint pact with the Pentagon and CIA has been signed ostensibly against drug cartels, turning Caracas into an imperialist hub even as the Trump administration adds insult to injury almost daily after the January 3 assault waged explicitly to take “all of the Oil, Land, and other Assets” of Venezuela.

Maduro’s lawyers have denounced Washington for blocking them from accessing money to pay for his defense, while Trump gloats in his State of the Union how

“Elite American warriors... overwhelmed all defense” in “a colossal victory.”

According to US sources speaking to Reuters, Rodríguez faces a potential Miami indictment for corruption as leverage to ensure compliance, while Washington demands the arrest of other Maduro allies for extradition.

This takes place in the context of extreme US sanctions—which killed 100,000+ per ex-UN rapporteur Alfred de Zayas and drove 8 million into a mass exodus. Venezuela’s refiner in the US, Citgo, faces auction to US financial vultures for debt. US bombings in the Caribbean/Pacific have killed 152 fisherman, including many Venezuelans, and thousands of Venezuelan migrant workers rot in US concentration camps.

In this context, the subservience of the Socialist Party of Venezuela regime is only comparable to semi-colonial regimes such as Porfirio Díaz’s Mexico, Juan Vicente Gómez’s Venezuela, the Somozas’ Nicaragua and Augusto Pinochet’s Chile, all of which combined savage repression and torture with extreme inequality and corruption. The Chavista leadership is doing everything possible to demonstrate that it can oversee US interests in Venezuela as effectively as the openly fascist CIA-financed opposition led by Maria Corina Machado.

The White House has repeatedly pointed to Venezuela as a case study for the “Trump corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine, which in turn is being framed ever more openly as the establishment of a hemispheric launchpad for global war.

At the Americas Counter Cartel Conference with representatives from US-aligned regional countries on Thursday, Deputy Chief of Staff, Stephen Miller roared: “We are NOT going to cede an INCH of territory in this hemisphere to our enemies or adversaries!” This was echoed by War Secretary Pete Hegseth, who threatened a unilateral onslaught to secure US domination: “America is prepared to take on these threats and go on offence alone if necessary.”

Globalization and financialization since the 1980s have intensified the drive of imperialism to gain control over strategic minerals, fuels and global production networks through recolonization and war. The response by all factions of the national ruling elites to globalization has been to subordinate all considerations to the vying for investments.

Chavez and Maduro were not exceptions but simply sought to gain better terms with imperialism by leveraging close economic and political ties with other

powers, mainly China and Russia.

Having come to power on the heels of major popular uprisings against inequality and dictatorship marked by the 1989 *Caracazo*, Chavez used surplus income from booming oil prices driven by Chinese growth to pay for limited social assistance programs. But, as soon as the commodity boom ended, the Chavistas themselves began major cuts.

Today, bourgeois nationalists find it increasingly impossible to exploit the opportunities once provided by rivalries between major powers as they face growing pressure of imperialism from above and the resistance of the working class from below.

The relinquishing by the Chavista leadership of economic, political and territorial sovereignty and the overall accommodation by nominally “left” governments across the region to Trump’s threats demonstrate that bourgeois nationalism is, without exception, a counter-revolutionary agency of imperialism.

The Socialist Party of Venezuela achieved a significant influence among broad layers of workers and the middle class. Now, the “pink tide,” “21st century socialism” and the other Chavista slogans promising equality, sovereignty and regional integration against fascism and imperialism are exposed as mere demagoguery.

While Stalinists and pseudo-left groups internationally climbed on the bandwagon, peddling illusions in and joining these governments, now these forces attack the WSWS arguing that the Chavistas have a “gun to their head.” What else are they to do? Such is the demoralization of the petty-bourgeois layers that these tendencies speak for.

But the current explosion of US imperialism is rapidly radicalizing workers, amid a global leftward lurch. The issue is not how best the Chavista government can respond to conditions it helped to create, but rather mobilizing workers and youth to overcome these nationalist betrayals and politically arming them for the overthrow of capitalism, independently of all nationalist and pro-capitalist political forces.



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