

# US warplanes fly over Caracas in provocative show of semi-colonial dominance

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On Saturday morning at approximately 10:00 a.m., two enormous Boeing MV-22B Osprey military cargo planes flew provocatively low over the Venezuelan capital before landing at the U.S. Embassy. The warplanes delivered a large group of troops and Gen. Francis L. Donovan, head of the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), which oversees Pentagon operations across Central and South America.

While ostensibly a visit to hold talks with leaders of the US puppet regime and to conduct an emergency response drill at the Embassy compound, the show of force was aimed squarely at intimidation and demonstrating who is in control. Top generals and warplanes can land and depart as though the country were a military outpost on US soil.

The Ospreys took off from the USS Iwo Jima, which participated along with its Amphibious Ready Group and 22nd Marine Expeditionary Force in the Caribbean in Operations Absolute Resolve and Southern Spear.

The Saturday flyover directly revived the trauma Caracas suffered during Operation Absolute Resolve on January 3, a brutal predawn military assault openly aimed at seizing Venezuelan oil. That morning, high-rises and the city center trembled as helicopters dropped troops, the Presidential Guard was annihilated, and President Nicolás Maduro was seized with his wife Cilia Flores from his compound and flown out of the country. At least seven explosions ripped across northern Venezuela, with strikes on military infrastructure, including the Generalissimo Francisco de Miranda Air Base, Fort Tiuna, Higuero Airport and La Guaira port, while a blackout across southern Caracas cloaked the operation.

On Saturday, the helicopters echoed once again across the capital, flying low near residential areas and schools. The acting government of Delcy Rodríguez, Maduro's former vice president, announced it had approved the exercise, a concession too humiliating for even a section of the ruling Chavista United Socialist Party to absorb.

Protesters connected to Chavismo and the pseudo-left demonstrated in several sectors of Caracas against the US military drill. A university professor among them declared: "We have been in a state of war from the moment they bombed us." Another protester warned: "We are practically already under tutelage—perhaps tomorrow we will be a colony."

In fact, the Trump administration now exercises comprehensive political, economic, judicial and military control over Venezuela. The Pentagon is now using Venezuela as a forward base overseeing the Caribbean as the Trump administration escalates preparations for a military assault against Cuba and continues Operation Southern Spear—the bombing of 59 fishing boats, killing nearly 200 people in Latin American waters since September, on baseless charges of drug trafficking.

Venezuelan oil proceeds flow directly into U.S. Treasury accounts to be administered by Washington. Military control over Venezuelan territory is openly demonstrated. Social austerity is being enforced by Wall Street firms.

Judicially, Caracas last week handed former Venezuelan Industry Minister Alex Saab to US authorities on money laundering charges—a surrender the Rodríguez government euphemistically termed a "deportation," claiming that as a Colombian-born citizen his transfer violated no Venezuelan norms. The cynicism is remarkable: Saab had been arrested in 2020 during a refueling stop in Cape Verde while traveling to Iran to negotiate fuel and food imports during acute shortages in Venezuela. Maduro had launched an international solidarity campaign on his behalf, and upon Saab's release named him industry minister in October 2024.

The architect of this arrangement operates not from Washington but from Miami. When US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with reporters on May 21, he announced that Acting President Rodríguez was traveling to New Delhi to discuss Venezuelan oil sales to India—and that he would personally oversee the negotiation.

Rubio's announcement of her trip, made before she had announced it herself, perfectly illustrated Washington's new relationship with Caracas. According to sources with close contacts in both governments, Rubio's influence over Rodríguez runs through former Trump Latin America envoy Mauricio Claver-Carone. "Mauricio is picking who can operate and Delcy is taking instructions," one insider told *The Grayzone*.

Hours after Maduro's abduction, Rubio placed a call to Rodríguez with her brother Jorge, head of the Venezuelan legislature, and Claver-Carone on the line. Since then, Claver-

Carone has become, in the *Washington Post's* words, the “unofficial US viceroy of Venezuela,” operating primarily by phone from his home in southern Florida without any official governmental position. A former senior US official described him plainly: “Mauricio’s calling the shots on private sector economic positions, and if anyone wants in, they have to go to him.”

Claver-Carone is now at the center of the latest pillaging operation of Venezuelan resources: restructuring approximately \$170 billion in defaulted sovereign debt. In May, the U.S. Treasury authorized Caracas to hire a financial adviser for this undertaking. The Venezuelan government selected Centerview Partners, a top New York investment advisory firm. According to the former senior US official, Claver-Carone’s romantic partner and business colleague Jessica Bedoya—founder of the Miami-based Lara Fund investment firm where Claver-Carone serves as managing partner, and a former CIA and National Security Council operative—subsequently flew by private jet to Caracas with a senior Centerview adviser.

The corruption is flagrant: An unelected operative is shaping the economic architecture of a sovereign nation on behalf of his creditors.

The entire project rests on maintaining Venezuelan workers in poverty and desperation. Acting President Rodríguez renege on her promise to raise Venezuela’s minimum wage, instead raising only the government bonus to the equivalent of \$150 to \$200 per month alongside a \$40 food bonus. The actual minimum monthly wage remains frozen at 130 bolívares—roughly \$0.27 at the current exchange rate. Teachers earn \$2 per month in addition to the bonus, which accrues no pension or benefits.

The logic is explicit: Oil proceeds must be kept away from wages and social programs to service Wall Street creditors and provide super-low costs to investors.

One major bondholder, Tina Vandersteel of Boston-based Grantham Mayo Van Otterloo, long placed her bet on Venezuelan bonds and today owns a major share of them. She summarized the complete indifference to Venezuelans from the financial aristocracy: “The lower the price, the more I’ll buy. ... You just had to wait. Someday they will pull oil out of the ground and pay bondholders.”

Meanwhile, Venezuelans are not returning home. The government has boasted of 28,000 migrant returns through programs like “Grand Mission Return Home”—a negligible figure against an exodus of more than 8 million over the past decade. The latest polls show a third of Venezuelans are still considering emigrating.

Leon Trotsky’s analysis of the 1930s semi-colonial world contains a grave warning to workers as the Trump administration moves to recolonize the region.

In 1938, Trotsky explained that fascism in Latin America is not the expression of an aggressive domestic imperialism, as in Germany or Italy, but rather “the expression of the most servile

dependence on foreign imperialism.” The ruling clique is the instrument to smash any independence of the working class that could block the extraction of profits by Wall Street. This is the logic that is being followed by the Rodríguez regime.

“The ascending national bourgeoisie cannot launch a serious struggle against imperialist domination out of fear of unleashing a mass movement that would in turn threaten their own social existence,” Trotsky wrote. Instead, the bourgeoisie, structurally incapable of independence, must suppress the proletariat in order to guarantee the “stability” demanded by its imperialist overlords.

The Chavistas and their bourgeois nationalist allies Lula da Silva in Brazil, Sheinbaum in Mexico and Petro in Colombia have now completed that arc as they accommodate to Trump. Having spent two decades dressing the management of a capitalist petro-state in the language of “anti-imperialism” and “socialism,” the Chavistas have surrendered the country to Wall Street, while already turning their riot police on workers demanding higher wages in Caracas.

The workers of Venezuela and across Latin America face not a series of local crises but a single, internationally coordinated offensive of imperialism directed from Washington and enforced by regional proxies to impose neo-colonial shackles and social misery. No bourgeois nationalist leadership or trade union bureaucracy will defend workers against this offensive—Those forces are its transmission belts for imperialist domination.

The answer to Trump’s dreams of a “Greater North America” and hemispheric hegemony is the revolutionary unity of workers across the entire Americas, including those in the United States itself, fighting to end capitalist exploitation and to establish the United Socialist States of the Americas.



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