

ANNEX 5

Highlights of the Preparations of the Armed Aggression Against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela by the Governments of the Republic of Colombia and the United States of America (February-April 2020)

FEBRUARY 2020:

1. On February 4, both Juan Guaido and Ivan Simonovis were special guests of President Donald Trump at the State of the Union address¹.
2. On February 5, US President Donald Trump met with Juan Guaido at the White House². The following day, February 6, 2020, Juan Guaido held a meeting with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo³. In both meetings they agreed to "redouble efforts to provide the Venezuelan people with what they have been asking for years: the end of the Maduro dictatorship and the restoration of democracy, economic prosperity and dignity for the people of Venezuela.
3. On February 13, Ivan Simonovis, designated by Juan Guaido as the person in charge of Security and Intelligence Affairs, held a meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House⁴.

MARCH 2020:

1. On March 2, Colombian President Ivan Duque made a sudden visit to the United States. During the visit, Duque discussed Venezuela with President Trump, Defense Secretary Mark Esper and White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien. During his meeting with Donald Trump, he asked for more sanctions against the government of President Nicolas Maduro. According to press reports, Iván Duque went to Washington to coordinate the end of the "dictatorship" in Venezuela⁵⁻⁶.

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/special-guests-for-president-trumps-3rd-state-of-the-union-address/>

² <https://usoas.usmission.gov/united-states-stands-with-interim-president-guaido-and-venezuelas-freedom/>

³ <https://usoas.usmission.gov/united-states-stands-with-interim-president-guaido-and-venezuelas-freedom/>

⁴ <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-responsable-seguridad-inteligencia-guaido-eeuu-reune-trump-casa-blanca-20200213163405.html>

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-president-duque-colombia-bilateral-meeting-2/>

⁶ <https://www.voanoticias.com/america-latina/duque-dictadura-venezuela-trump>



2. From March 3 to 5, a meeting of the Operational Network of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) was held, followed by a workshop on sanctions and other measures, in Washington DC. The workshop sought to coordinate methodologies for the application of new sanctions against Venezuela. Some countries wanted to apply the methodology of the UN sanctions committee, but the US, Canada and Colombia wanted to impose their own⁷.
3. On March 4, President Trump stated at the Latin Coalition Legislative Summit in Washington DC that "The tragedy in Venezuela is a reminder that socialism and communism bring misery and pain wherever they are applied. We are with Venezuela all the way and we are doing a lot. And we have a lot planned. The United States supports the suffering people of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua in their just struggle for freedom".⁸
4. On March 4, Admiral Craig Faller, Commander of the United States Southern Command, met with General Luis Navarro Jimenez, Commander General of the Colombian Armed Forces. The meeting dealt with regional security and defense cooperation issues⁹.
5. On March 5, the Bolivarian National Guard seized war weapons at Valencia International Airport that were coming in a flight from Bogota. They seized AK 47 rifle clips, AK 47 rifle butts and magazines¹⁰.
6. On March 5, the commander of the Strategic Region of Integral Defense, Los Andes, Major General Federico Guzmán Bornia, accompanied by the protector of the state of Táchira Freddy Bernal and General Moronta Juliao, commander of the Operational Zone of Integral Defense of the state of Táchira, denounced the seizure of 650 kilos of explosives, the detention of 37 alleged paramilitaries and the neutralization of 12 more in the last month. Likewise, 50 vehicles, 30 motorcycles, cattle trucks, 450,000 liters of fuel and more than 570 kilograms of drugs, all of this within the framework of Operation Bolivarian Shield 2020¹¹.

⁷ <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/politica/guaido-ratifico-a-paparoni-para-la-proxima-cumbre-del-tiar-sobre-venezuela/>

⁸ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-latino-coalition-legislative-summit-2/>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1235271450350755840>

¹⁰ <https://mundo.sputniknews.com/america-latina/202003051090688474-la-fuerza-armada-venezolana-incauta-armas-de-guerra-en-un-avion-procedente-de-colombia/>

¹¹ <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/general/incautados-mas-de-650-kilos-de-explosivos-en-operativos-en-tachira/>



7. On March 5, the government of Jair Bolsonaro announced the withdrawal of its diplomats from the Embassy and some consulates in Venezuela (Caracas, Ciudad Guayana and the vice-consulate in Santa Elena del Uairén)¹².
8. On March 5, the Government of the United States of America renewed the Executive Order declaring Venezuela an unusual and extraordinary threat to its national security¹³.
9. On March 6, the White House website published a fact-sheet about the level of bilateral relations between the United States and Brazil, which emphasizes the measures Brazil has taken against the government of President Nicolas Maduro¹⁴.
10. On March 6, Carlos Vecchio, Guaidó's representative in Washington, D.C., told U.S. television station VPItv that the government of President Nicolas Maduro is a threat to regional security, and that this issue was addressed during Juan Guaidó's visit to the U.S.¹⁵.
11. On 6 March, the United States Army deployed at least three CH-47F Chinook heavy transport helicopters to Colombia as part of the joint military exercises to be held between 9 and 20 March in the department of Guajira, on the border with Venezuela, precisely in the region where the three mercenary camps of "Operation Gideon" were located¹⁶.
12. On March 6, in a telephone call with the press by senior officials of the U.S. Government about the meeting between President Trump and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro. During the call he stressed the following: "I believe that, in the days and weeks ahead, there will continue to be an escalation towards the maximum pressure that we seek and that we have set as our policy. Hopefully we will not have to reach 100 percent of the maximum pressure sometime, but we are all dedicated, together with our allies - Colombia and Brazil in particular, but also the rest of the members of the Lima Group - to achieving democratic transition and free and fair elections in Venezuela. (...) We have many plans, there is a lot of coordination going on, but the Maduro tyranny, as it stands - and I am quoting the State of the Union - needs to be and will be crushed and destroyed if there is no path to free and fair democratic elections in the near future - presidential elections in the near future"¹⁷.

¹² <https://www.diariolasamericas.com/america-latina/brasil-retira-once-funcionarios-diplomaticos-venezuela-n4194318>

¹³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/message-congress-continuation-national-emergency-respect-venezuela/>

¹⁴ <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-and-brazil-partners-for-a-prosperous-hemisphere/>

¹⁵ https://vpitv.com/ultimas_noticias_sobre_venezuela/carlos-vecchio-el-mensaje-es-claro-ee-uu-continuar-presionando-a-maduro/

¹⁶ <http://www.webinfomil.com/2020/03/ejercito-de-eeuu-desplego-helicopteros.html?m=1>

¹⁷ https://publicpool.kinja.com/subject-background-press-call-by-senior-administration-1842181821/amp?_twitter_impression=true

13. On 7 and 8 March, President Jair Bolsonaro visited the United States. The President of Brazil met with President Donald Trump¹⁸, various members of the United States Government, including the head of the Southern Command, Craig Faller¹⁹.
14. On March 9, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Finance and Counter-Threat Sanctions David Peyman said that new sectors could be added as sanctions against Venezuela intensified²⁰.
15. On 9 March, the joint military exercise between the armies of Colombia and the United States of America, known as "Exercise Vita", began in the region of Alta Guajira, on the border with Venezuela. The purpose of this exercise, which was allegedly for humanitarian purposes, was to "conduct combined military-to-military training reflecting the commitment, good relations and joint work between the armies of Colombia and the United States." Several units of the Colombian Army, as well as the US Joint Task Force Bravo, which is permanently based in the US military garrison of Palmerola, Honduras²¹, participated in this exercise. This military exercise, which was scheduled to last until 30 March, had to be suspended on 16 March due to the measures being taken by the Colombian government to confront the COVID-19²². The United States Joint Task Force Bravo issued the following statement on Twitter: "We regret that we are unable to complete the impressive work we began with our partners #Colombians last week. Given the rapidly evolving situation throughout the region, we need to re-establish our responsiveness as a dynamic force for @Southcom²³" "Despite its early conclusion, #ExerciseVita provided valuable training and preparation for our teams. Together, we saw nearly 1,300 patients in communities in #LaGuajira, provided \$65,000 in humanitarian donations and increased our collective interoperability and #preparedness"²⁴.
16. On March 10, a demonstration called by the opposition sectors of the country took place. However, it did not count with a significant participation. U.S. Senator Rick Scott tweeted: "The fight for liberty & democracy is not easy, but it's a worthy and necessary fight. I stand with the people of Venezuela as they go to the streets

¹⁸ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/statement-press-secretary-meeting-president-jair-bolsonaro-brazil/>

¹⁹ <https://www.southcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/Article/2105124/brazilian-president-visits-southcom/>

²⁰ <https://mundo.sputniknews.com/politica/202003091090726235-eeuu-amenaza-a-nuevos-sectores-a-medida-que-aumenta-sanciones-a-venezuela/>

²¹ <https://www.infobae.com/america/venezuela/2020/03/10/ejercicio-vita-colombia-y-eeuu-iniciaron-un-entrenamiento-humanitario-en-la-frontera-con-venezuela/>

²² <https://twitter.com/jtfbravo/status/1239701521102786560?s=20>

²³ <https://twitter.com/jtfbravo/status/1239702029955559424?s=20>

²⁴ <https://twitter.com/jtfbravo/status/1239702404460949505?s=20>



today and continue to make their voices heard. @NicolasMaduro will be out of power soon & VZ will finally see #freedom. #10mar"²⁵.

17. On March 11, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo presented the State Department's annual Human Rights Report. The document accuses the government of President Nicolas Maduro of committing abuses "every day against Venezuelans," including "extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture and arbitrary detentions"²⁶.
18. On 11 March, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo in Washington DC. During the meeting, Secretary Pompeo expressed his support for "Brazil's continued leadership in the search for a solution to the political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, including the expulsion from Brazil of Maduro-aligned diplomats"²⁷.
19. On March 11, Southern Command Chief Craig S. Faller testified before the House Armed Services Committee during a hearing on "National Security Challenges and U.S. Military Activity in North and South America." He said, "In recognition of the threats ... in our neighborhood, there will be an increased military presence in the hemisphere this year. This will include an increased presence of ships, aircraft and security forces, to provide security for our partners, improve the readiness of the U.S. and our partners and interoperability, to counter a range of threats including illicit narco-terrorism (...) The Maduro regime continues to cling to power, and brutalize the population and this year's human rights report listed significant human rights violations by the Maduro regime. Maduro remains in power because of the thousands of Cubans who protect and care for him (...) Russians numbered in the hundreds, right next door, working to upgrade air defense systems, Russian Special Forces working to train Maduro's forces and China, to a lesser extent, but China involved particularly in some cyber areas, (...) this has allowed Maduro to cling to power and continue brutalizing the population. Drug traffickers have profited from this as have ELN terrorists and FARC dissidents, and this instability, along with migrants, has generated instability in the region. You have to give credit to partners like Colombia, which has handled it so well."²⁸
20. On March 13, Colombian President Ivan Duque announced the closure of the border crossings with Venezuela as of Saturday, March 14, as a measure to address the pandemic caused by the COVID-19²⁹.

²⁵ <https://twitter.com/SenRickScott/status/1237451332740661248>

²⁶ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-on-the-release-of-the-2019-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>

²⁷ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-pompeos-meeting-with-brazilian-foreign-minister-ernesto-araujo-3/>

²⁸ <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1237772467218919425>

²⁹ <https://www.infobae.com/america/agencias/2020/03/14/colombia-cierra-frontera-con-venezuela-y-restringe-ingreso-de-extranjeros-desde-europa-y-asia/>



21. On March 23, the Colombian transit police seized an arsenal of weapons that were intended for the training camps of the mercenaries that would go to Venezuela to execute the operation to assassinate President Nicolas Maduro Moros³⁰.
22. On March 24, the period of general quarantine began in Colombia as part of the measures taken by the government of Iván Duque to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus³¹.
23. On March 25, the sectorial vice-president of Communication, Culture and Tourism, Jorge Rodríguez, denounced that selective assassinations against President Nicolás Maduro, Diosdado Cabello and other high-ranking Venezuelan officials were being planned in Colombia for the month of March³². Rodríguez said that on March 23rd it was published in the Colombian media about the seizure of an arsenal of war in La Ciénaga, Barranquilla, valued at around 500 thousand dollars that were to be introduced into Venezuela through the border of Paraguachón in the state of Zulia. "In the seized arsenal there were 26 AR-15 assault rifles, 36 rifle butts, 28 two-eyed night vision goggles, 9 one-eyed night vision goggles, eight rifle silencers." The vice president denounced that "U.S. President Donald Trump is involved in this conspiracy plan, as well as former Attorney General Luisa Ortega Díaz, self-proclaimed president Juan Guaidó and even Venezuelan military deserter Clíver Alcalá Cordones³³.
24. On March 25, U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper issued an order to the U.S. military to halt travel and movement abroad for up to 60 days in an effort to limit the spread of the coronavirus through U.S. military ranks³⁴.
25. On March 26, Attorney General William Barr, in conjunction with other U.S. judicial and law enforcement authorities, filed official charges against President Nicolas Maduro and 14 other current and former Venezuelan government officials for "narco-terrorism, corruption, drug trafficking and other criminal charges. The president Nicolás Maduro, Diosdado Cabello, Tareck El Aissami, Hugo Carvajal and Cliver Alcalá "have each been charged with: (1) participating in a narco-terrorism conspiracy, which carries a 20-year mandatory minimum sentence and a maximum of life in prison; (2) conspiring to import cocaine into the United States, which carries a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence and a maximum of life in prison; (3) using and carrying machine guns and destructive devices during and in relation to, and possessing machine guns and destructive devices in furtherance

³⁰ <https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/incautan-armamento-de-guerra-entre-cienaga-y-barranquilla-476388>

³¹ http://spanish.xinhuanet.com/2020-03/26/c_138917132.htm

³² <https://albaciudad.org/2020/03/jorge-rodriguez-3-campamentos-riohacha-colombia-arsenal-armas/>

³³ <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/politica/jorge-rodriguez-revela-plan-de-ataque-terrorista-a-funcionarios-de-gobierno/>

³⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-pentagon-exclu/exclusive-pentagon-orders-halt-to-overseas-movement-for-u-s-forces-for-up-to-60-days-over-coronavirus-idUSKBN21C3A2>



of, the narco-terrorism and cocaine-importation conspiracies, which carries a 30-year mandatory minimum sentence and a maximum of life in prison; and (4) conspiring to use and carry machine guns and destructive devices during and in relation to, and to possess machine guns and destructive devices in furtherance of, the narco-terrorism and cocaine-importation conspiracies, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison³⁵.

In conjunction with this, the State Department announced a series of rewards offered through its Narcotics Rewards Program for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of the five Venezuelans on drug trafficking charges: \$15 million for Nicolas Maduro and \$10 million for Diosdado Cabello, Tareck El Aissami, Hugo Carvajal and Cliver Alcalá³⁶.

26. On March 26, after the Justice Department announced the charges against President Nicolás Maduro and other current and former Venezuelan government officials, Cliver Alcalá confessed in a series of videos posted on his social media networks that the arsenal of weapons seized in Colombia days before, and denounced by Jorge Rodríguez as part of a plan against President Maduro and other high officials, had been bought by Juan Guaido to carry out military action against President Nicolás Maduro; that this would be part of a plan he was directing, and that it had been agreed by Juan Guaido and US advisors. Alcalá confessed that as evidence of the arms' purchase, there was a contract signed by Juan Guaido and his political strategist JJ Rendón, and added that personalities such as Leopoldo López and Iván Simonovis were aware of the operation³⁷.

27. On March 26, the Colombian government ordered the militarization of border crossings with Venezuela, as part of the measures implemented to reduce the spread of COVID-19³⁸.

28. On March 27, the U.S. virtual Embassy launched a risk alert for Americans in Venezuela. On its website, the virtual U.S. Embassy to Venezuela indicated that it "has received credible information that U.S. citizens in Venezuela may currently be at risk of threats or aggression from the Venezuelan regime's armed mercenary groups, known locally as collectives"³⁹.

³⁵ <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/nicol-s-maduro-moros-and-14-current-and-former-venezuelan-officials-charged-narco-terrorism>

³⁶ <https://www.state.gov/department-of-state-offers-rewards-for-information-to-bring-venezuelan-drug-traffickers-to-justice/>

³⁷ <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/politica/cliver-alcala-confiesa-que-las-armas-son-de-guaido-y-de-eeuu/>

³⁸ <https://www.efe.com/efe/america/sociedad/colombia-militariza-paso-fronterizo-con-venezuela-para-controlar-las-trochas/20000013-4205044>

³⁹ <https://www.voanoticias.com/estadosunidos/eeuu-embajada-venezuela-alerta-ciudadanos>



29. On March 27, former general and fugitive from Venezuelan justice, Cliver Alcalá Cordones, was transferred to the United States of America by U.S. government authorities to be brought to justice on charges of drug trafficking⁴⁰.
30. On March 27, the Free Party and other social movements in Honduras published a statement to the public in which they denounced and rejected the military aggression operations against Venezuela that were being planned from the U.S. military base in Palmerola, precisely the same military base of the U.S. Joint Task Force Bravo. Similarly, they rejected the communiqué issued by the Honduran Foreign Ministry⁴¹ on Venezuela, calling it an expression of complicity in the aggression⁴². Through a communiqué, the Honduran Foreign Ministry supported the measures taken by the U.S. government against Venezuela, affirming that, for many years, Venezuelan drug trafficking has tried to corrupt the country and its institutions⁴³.
31. On March 27, French Navy warships Mistral (L9013) and Dixmude (L9015) set sail for the Caribbean in support of Coronavirus relief efforts. These new deployments took place as part of the new operation "Résilience", which is described as an "unprecedented military operation dedicated to supporting public services and the French people in the fields of health, logistics and protection"⁴⁴.
32. On March 28, according to press reports, the Colombian police raided one of the houses in Riohacha, La Guajira, where the mercenaries were training. In this alleged raid, the police reportedly found uniforms, badges, propaganda, identification documents of the Venezuelan Armed Forces, political maps of Venezuela, toiletries, personal items and some kitchen utensils⁴⁵.
33. On March 30, at 00:45 hours, the Venezuelan Coast Guard vessel "Naiguatá" (GC-23), of the Bolivarian Navy, observed a vessel stationed within the Venezuelan territorial sea, eight miles north of Turtle Island, without any authorization. When initiating the maritime traffic control procedure, the Venezuelan authorities identified the vessel as the Portuguese-flagged passenger RCGS Resolute, which admitted to having stayed for two days in that location, reason why the Venezuelan authorities, having confirmed that the RCGS had violated the principle of innocent passage after having remained for longer time at the same position, without any sort of authorization or explanation, it was requested to change course to the

⁴⁰ <https://www.eltiempo.com/justicia/conflicto-y-narcotrafico/general-cliver-alcala-se-entrego-a-la-justicia-de-estados-unidos-477960>

⁴¹ <https://twitter.com/CancilleriaHN/status/1243369539200602112?s=20>

⁴² <https://twitter.com/manuelzr/status/1243749546527686656/photo/2>

⁴³ <https://proceso.hn/politica-nacional/36-proceso-electoral/honduras-respalda-posicion-de-eeuu-respecto-al-narcotrafico-por-parte-del-gobierno-de-venezuela.html>

⁴⁴ <https://news.usni.org/2020/03/27/french-sending-amphibious-warships-to-caribbean-indian-ocean-for-coronavirus-response>

⁴⁵ <https://www.elheraldo.co/judicial/primicia-policia-hallo-uniformes-militares-en-casa-la-que-llegaria-armamento-incautado>



Venezuelan port of Pampatar. The RCGS Resolute refused to comply with the instructions of the Venezuelan Coast Guard vessel, ramming into it and causing its sinking⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷.

34. On March 30, according to an article published by the Miami Herald, a senior Trump administration official said that President Nicolas Maduro "should accept the U.S. government's offer to negotiate his exit from power in Venezuela. "History shows that those who do not cooperate with U.S. law enforcement agencies do not get away with it. Maduro probably regrets not taking up the offer six months ago. We urge Maduro not to regret not taking it now," the official said during a call with reporters. The official added that the Justice Department's drug trafficking accusations against President Maduro and other top Bolivarian government officials "make the situation more complex from a legal point of view, but politically, they would negotiate the conditions for his departure"⁴⁸.
35. On March 30, the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, had scheduled the departure of a flight to repatriate Americans and residents who were then stranded in Colombia. This flight was then cancelled⁴⁹ for that day and rescheduled for 2 April.⁵⁰⁻⁵¹
36. On March 30, a White House press release reported that, during a call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, President Trump "reiterated that the situation in Venezuela is serious, and we all have an interest in seeing a democratic transition to end the current crisis"⁵².
37. On March 31, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo presented during a press conference a "Framework for Democratic and Peaceful Transition in Venezuela" proposed by the U.S. government, which calls for the creation of a "Council of State" made up of members of the National Assembly to serve as a transitional government to administer "free and fair" presidential elections. It also offers a way to lift general and individual sanctions against Venezuela if the conditions are met. Among those conditions are: the dissolution of the National Constituent Assembly, the election of new members of the National Electoral Commission and Supreme Court of Justice by the National Assembly, the release of political prisoners and the departure of foreign security forces. The framework offers as guarantees that the military high command (Minister of Defense, Vice-Minister of Defense, commander of CEOFANB and Chiefs of Service) would remain in place

⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR2ncGOPd9k>

⁴⁷ <http://www.mindefensa.gob.ve/mindefensa/2020/03/31/comunicado-oficial-de-la-fuerza-armada-nacional-bolivariana-5/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/venezuela/article241619806.html>

⁴⁹ <https://tubarco.news/tubarco-noticias-colombia/cancelado-vuelo-humanitario-de-estados-unidos-en-colombia/>

⁵⁰ https://caracol.com.co/radio/2020/04/01/internacional/1585703874_987639.html

⁵¹ <https://co.usembassy.gov/humanitarian-flight-on-spirit-airlines-2/>

⁵² <https://publicpool.kinja.com/subject-in-town-pool-report-2-putin-call-1842564733>



during the transitional government, as would the state or local authorities. In a State Department statement, Pompeo also warned that as part of his strategy to pressure the Venezuelan government, "sanctions will remain in place and increase until the Maduro regime accepts a genuine political transition"⁵³.

APRIL 2020:

1. On April 1, President Trump announced, along with Defense Secretary Mark Esper, Attorney General William Barr and other administration officials, an anti-drug operation that would double the U.S. military presence in the Western Hemisphere with a Caribbean deployment off the Venezuelan coast and in the Eastern Pacific. According to officials, the operation is due to the "growing threat" from drug cartels taking advantage of the coronavirus pandemic for their benefit, particularly those operating from Mexico and Venezuela, where President Nicolas Maduro and other senior Venezuelan government officials are accused of being involved. During the announcement, officials made it clear that the deployment of more military forces in the Caribbean is intended to put pressure on the Venezuelan government. National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien explained that with this counter-narcotics operation the U.S. government "hopes to further limit the funds coming into Maduro's regime from drug trafficking" after Secretary Esper accused the Venezuelan government of "relying on the profits from the sale of narcotics to maintain its oppressive power." The officials also reported that the operation will be supported by 22 partner countries. It involves the deployment of Navy warships, AWACS surveillance aircraft and special forces on the ground⁵⁴.
2. On April 2, the British ship RFA Argus headed to the Caribbean in preparation to support the British Overseas Territories during the hurricane season and assist with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic if necessary. The French Navy has also sent ships to the Caribbean on coronavirus support missions. All of this took place just a day after the U.S. government announced the deployment of more military assets to the Caribbean as part of a 22-nation counter-narcotics operation primarily targeting Venezuela⁵⁵.
3. On April 2, in an interview with ETV Miami, former U.S. Security Council director for the Western Hemisphere and White House advisor for South America Mauricio Claver Carone said that President Nicolas Maduro and those around him are at a "juncture of cooperation or confrontation" and added, "this is not the time for bravado, this is the time for common sense. And common-sense dictates that no

⁵³ <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-proposes-a-framework-for-a-peaceful-democratic-transition-in-venezuela/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-vice-president-pence-members-coronavirus-task-force-press-briefing-16/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2020/04/british-casualty-ship-rfa-argus-dispatched-to-support-the-caribbean-region/>

one who has, historically, confronted American justice has come out well... If what they are looking for is confrontation, then I don't know what model they are studying because no model of confrontation with justice has a happy ending. For democracy, for justice, yes, but not for them⁵⁶.

4. On April 2, a former senior U.S. administration official told Foreign Policy that the Defense Department refused to send naval assets to the counter-narcotics operation deployed in the Caribbean Sea because resources are limited as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. According to the official this opposition to the operation did not matter to President Trump and added that this is "all political"⁵⁷.
5. On April 4, according to Newsweek, Trump administration officials said that the announcement about the deployment of a counter-narcotics operation near the Venezuelan coast made during the Coronavirus Working Group press conference was intended to divert attention from criticism of the administration's mishandling of the coronavirus epidemic. Officials reported that discussions with military personnel such as Mick Milley and Craig Faller about increasing military assets for this counter-narcotics operation took place in February of this year and "this was not supposed to be released to the public until May"⁵⁸.
6. On April 4, twenty-three members of Congress and fifteen local unions sent a letter to Colombian President Ivan Duque, asking him not to intervene in the event that the United States makes an incursion into the neighboring country. "The support of the Colombian government to a military action in the Venezuelan territory in the middle of the planetary crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, would bring catastrophic consequences, not only for the Venezuelan people, but also for our country"⁵⁹⁻⁶⁰.
7. On April 7, during a press conference, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated the following regarding Venezuela: "I want to express my gratitude to the dozens of countries that have expressed their support for the new framework for Venezuela that I announced when I was here last week. The goal is to replace Maduro's illegitimate dictatorship with a legitimate, transitional government that can hold free and fair elections - presidential elections to represent all Venezuelans. It is time for Maduro to go"⁶¹.

⁵⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=404amv_P7_Y

⁵⁷ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/02/trump-plan-deploy-anti-drug-mission-navy-ships-caribbean-backlash-pentagon/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.newsweek.com/trump-administration-drug-venezuela-operation-distract-coronavirus-1496044?amp=1>

⁵⁹ <https://www.msn.com/es-co/noticias/colombia/grupo-de-congresistas-advierte-a-duque-sobre-apoyar-posible-invasión-a-venezuela/ar-BB12cobr>

⁶⁰ https://twitter.com/Carlozada_FARC/status/1246626881799143430?s=20

⁶¹ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-remarks-to-the-press-8/>



8. On April 7, the former Ambassador of the United States of America to Venezuela, in an interview with the Colombian newspaper El Tiempo, stated that the last three measures announced by the U.S. government can be seen as "a package of actions with the same end," the last one announced by the administration, an anti-drug operation near the Venezuelan coast, "the application of the military option in the context of the 21st century." From the interview, the following stands out: "There are many military options that do not resemble those of the last century and do not require thousands of soldiers landing on Venezuelan beaches... There are ways of making indirect interventions or using technology, of causing disruption to the chain of command, of establishing humanitarian zones on the border or precision attacks that can be launched from thousands of kilometers away if one wants to send a message without putting the population at risk (...) With the US strategy, the head of state is accused of drug trafficking and a price is offered for his capture. This assures that Maduro will not be able to stay or return to Venezuela anymore. It is unlikely that he will want to stay when he knows there is a reward for his capture⁶².
9. On April 7, in an interview with TVV Noticias, the former U.S. chargé d'affaires in Venezuela, James Story, assured that Venezuelan government officials are considering the "Framework for Democratic Transition in Venezuela" proposed by the State Department. According to Story, the framework "is firmly in place and has a good chance of being successfully implemented in the country, especially because those within the regime know that they cannot face all the crises they have at this time; that they have to seek a peaceful, democratic and constitutional way out as soon as possible"⁶³.
10. On April 8, the Colombian Naval Forces' Multinational Orion Campaign began⁶⁴. The Colombian Navy, along with 24 other countries including Spain, France and the Netherlands, joined the anti-drug operations led by the United States Southern Command in the Caribbean basin, in waters close to the Venezuelan coast. This has been called by the Colombian President "the greatest strategy in the world against drug trafficking, with which we have dismantled criminal structures, increased naval interdiction operations and seizure records"⁶⁵.
11. On April 8, the US Special Representative for Venezuela, Elliot Abrams, participated in a teleconference organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIC) in which he assured that people within the Venezuelan government would be communicating with the US government

⁶² <https://www.eltiempo.com/amp/mundo/eeuu-y-canada/entrevista-a-wiliam-brownfield-sobre-estrategia-para-transicion-en-venezuela-481744#click=https://t.co/H03TOiufDI>

⁶³ <https://www.elnacional.com/venezuela/james-story-hay-funcionarios-del-regimen-que-estan-evaluando-el-marco-para-la-transicion/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.defensa.com/colombia/n-25-paises-campana-naval-contra-narcotrafico-orion-v>

⁶⁵ <https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2020/04/07/ivan-duque-anuncio-el-inicio-de-la-quinta-fase-de-la-campana-multinacional-orion-contra-el-narcotrafico/>



regarding the "Framework for Democratic Transition in Venezuela". In this interview he also threatened the Venezuelan government stating that "Things don't get better, they get worse if you reject the American proposals. I think that's something Nicolas Maduro should think about. If he thinks he's going to be better in three months, six months, he's wrong. It's not going to get better, it's only going to get worse." And in reference to his role in the overthrow of Noriega, in Panama, and analogies to the Venezuelan situation, he said: "I was at the State Department in 1987 and 1988 when we were actually trying to get Noriega out and negotiating with him about his departure. And he rejected all the US proposals, which in a sense led to the invasion (...) What could we say on the military side? We can say that things are not getting better, but worse, if the American proposals are rejected. I think that is something that Mr. Maduro should think about. (...) Obviously there are many military options. When we said all our options are – it is because they exist, you know, they are on the table, you know, I was always saying, look, saying all options are on the table is not really a policy statement. It's a statement of fact. Every president has all those options. At one end of the spectrum is that kind of full-blown invasion: Panama, Iraq. And there's a wide spectrum. And there's... I read the interview with Ambassador Brownfield. There's a lot of other things on that spectrum. You know, I'm not going to speculate on them today. They exist in real life. They're always there, if the president wants to use them⁶⁶.

12. On April 8, U.S. government officials, speaking off the record with Reuters news agency, said that gasoline shortages in Venezuela were worsening after the United States asked foreign firms to refrain from supplying it and only provide diesel. One official said the U.S. wants to see a reduction in gasoline shipments to Venezuela as part of Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Maduro (...) In more recent calls with Venezuela's fuel suppliers in early March, U.S. officials insisted that "the restriction be maintained even though humanitarian conditions in the country were already showing signs of worsening." A source from one of the companies said that Trump administration officials "stressed the 'no gasoline' message for Venezuela as part of the 'changes' for Venezuelan oil," adding that his company has only supplied diesel and gasoil to Venezuela since September⁶⁷.

13. On April 10, Jaime Caicedo, secretary of the Communist Party of Colombia, denounced: "There were naval exercises in Cartagena, actions in the Guajira (Venezuelan border) and very precise training of taking over airports like those used in the invasion of Panama in 1989 (...) Exercises were carried out on the Guajira peninsula and in the North of Santander, and naval tests in Cartagena"⁶⁸.

14. On 13 April, the Amphibious Landing Ship HNLMS Kareel Doorman departed from Der Helder naval base in the Netherlands for Caribbean waters. It will remain

⁶⁶ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/conversation-us-special-representative-venezuela-elliott-abrams>

⁶⁷ <https://lta.reuters.com/articulo/eeuu-venezuela-gasolina-idLTAKBN21Q27O>

⁶⁸ https://mundo.sputniknews.com/radio_voces_del_mundo/202004101091069485-eeuu-y-colombia-ensayan-desembarcos-y-operaciones-en-el-limite-con-venezuela/



patrolling the Caribbean Sea, south of Aruba and Curacao, in waters next to the jurisdictional border with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela⁶⁹.

15. On 17 April, Admiral Craig Faller, head of the United States Southern Command, said at a telephone press conference: "Maduro and his cronies have been accused of drug trafficking, and they benefit enormously from the illicit trade - a 50 per cent increase in illicit drug trafficking to and from Venezuela in recent years. That makes drug traffickers working in and out of Venezuela a target for our disruption, dismantling and defeat operations like any other transnational criminal organization (...) So we continue to look for ways to put pressure on the networks that will take the illicit funding out of Maduro's pockets (...) we cannot all come together to achieve a legitimate democracy in Venezuela soon enough." When asked if the United States of America is providing enough support to Colombia in the development of its operation "Orion" to allow its army to enter Venezuelan territory if requested at any time, Commander Faller said: "(...) my work, my focus is on our mission, and that is in support of the State Department's efforts for economic and diplomatic pressure. We do that primarily, as I mentioned, through the exchange of intelligence with our best partners - Brazil, Colombia, their professional security forces. We do it through planning. We have a major planning effort the next day here at SOUTHCOM, working with other partner nations and our State Department, so that we're prepared for the kinds of assistance that may be needed in a post-Maduro scenario⁷⁰.
16. On April 29, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated in a press conference that the effort to restore democracy is gaining momentum and plans are being updated to reopen the U.S. Embassy in Caracas when Maduro leaves power⁷¹. That same day, he wrote on his Twitter account that he had a good conversation with Brazil's Foreign Minister @ernestofaraujo. "The partnership between the U.S. and Brazil is stronger than ever, and we must continue to advance the Democratic Transition Framework for Venezuela. Together we will fight #COVID19 in the hemisphere"⁷²
17. On April 29, the government of the United States of America advised all U.S. citizens in Venezuela to take refuge in a safe place until commercial flights resume operations⁷³.

⁶⁹ <https://www.webinfomil.com/2020/04/paises-bajos-despliega-el-buque-de.html>

⁷⁰ <https://www.state.gov/telephonic-press-briefing-with-admiral-craig-faller-commander-u-s-southern-command/>

⁷¹ <https://twitter.com/WHAAsstSecty/status/1255590532694360064?s=20>

⁷² <https://twitter.com/SecPompeo/status/1255638631701712897?s=20>

⁷³ <https://twitter.com/usembassyve/status/1255563104672497668>



18. On 30 April, President Donald Trump activated the United States military reserve⁷⁴ to attend to the operations they are carrying out in the Caribbean, which are part of the policy of pressure and military siege against Venezuela⁷⁵.
19. On April 30, the special envoy for Venezuela, Elliot Abrams, in an interview conducted by the Hudson Institute, stated that for the United States of America to be able to reopen its Embassy in Venezuela, it must be certain that a new government has taken office that provides the necessary security conditions. In this context he stated that "if you want to be optimistic, this could be happening tomorrow. Maduro could leave tomorrow. It would not be the smoothest transition in the world (...) we have to be honest about that, but I think that once Maduro and the Cubans leave, you will find that the Army really wants to serve as a National Patriot Army and bring security to the country"⁷⁶.

⁷⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-ordering-selected-reserve-armed-forces-active-duty/>

⁷⁵ https://es.panampost.com/sabrina-martin/2020/04/30/trump-activa-reserva-militar-para-operacion-antinarcoticos-al-norte-de-venezuela/?cfchljschltk=cee487c3bc1c0b060b615659a63aa56f7093d06c-1588281593-0-AWPjAHLgmHCYT6svyAfiH-NfKN8KIFQIBI22BNnWzWis6CRcJOAIsd01LVOulzZd53ST2_Si6ITpcT5IsYr0PdZa-6YY9vwfl7rd7eOGDGi4tHBN3r5Frk8MxL0FsNoiKm_0lBe_LobNmPUqhrmCshYd7JsOW6A2UXJtUABi8KzHVJlb45-5l2ojAzWj8dS163_LgDmw0qmAzZszlGCSTmIPKq9FORXjIWfdxRdfz0TBcMHf-u_QmniC7YAXL8IIM5EUMnOqjXLvEq6pdM_ZCTV1uquWr8VzeEqOqjBwUWd2WkOyocHewdZ3TpwtH_6rUJlcDU1_E3p8mAm4ikdNk2VqfKCC_2OvKnfFwDfzOODTA0-xOeL0pm_hFMxY1UGMWZUviicn5quhOSbQXpvg-AwHDIPTKnKt97nljnAuh1DPH9xypxr3rre5zRZVnoE6d3UEQAYEY5FcDpp5WmKVB2zXsecOy1gyBK2KMRrg-fC

⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=op0DibGROKE&t=1s>