

Press Releases: Sanctions Against PDVSA and Venezuela Oil Sector

Press Statement
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
January 28, 2019

Today, the United States has taken necessary actions to prevent the illegitimate former Maduro regime from further plundering Venezuela's assets and natural resources.

The United States has determined that persons operating in Venezuela's oil sector may now be subject to sanctions pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13850 signed by President Trump on November 1, 2018. Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA) has been designated for operating within this sector.

Maduro and his cronies have used state-owned PDVSA to control, manipulate, and steal from the Venezuelan people for too long, destroying it in the process.

Today's action will prevent Maduro and other corrupt actors from further enriching themselves at the expense of the long-suffering Venezuelan people. It will also preserve the core pillar of Venezuela's national assets for the people and a democratically elected government.

These new sanctions do not target the innocent people of Venezuela and will not prohibit humanitarian assistance including the provision of medicine and medical devices, which are desperately needed after years of economic destruction under Maduro's rule. The Department of the Treasury is issuing a series of general licenses to support U.S. companies, interests, and allies.

The United States will continue to take concrete and forceful action against those who oppose the peaceful restoration of democracy in Venezuela, and serve their own interests rather than those of the Venezuelan people.

The United States stands with interim President Juan Guaido, the democratically elected National Assembly, and the people of Venezuela as they peacefully restore constitutional order to their country.

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Press Releases: Representative of the Government of Venezuela to the United States

Press Statement
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
January 27, 2019

The United States accepted interim President Juan Guaidó's designation of Carlos Alfredo Vecchio as the Chargé d'Affaires of the Government of Venezuela to the United States on January 25. Mr. Vecchio will have authority over diplomatic affairs in the United States on behalf of Venezuela.

After his accreditation, Mr. Vecchio met with Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale, who reaffirmed the United States' strong support for interim President Guaidó's leadership of Venezuela. The United States looks forward to working with Mr. Vecchio and other diplomatic staff as designated by interim President Guaidó.

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Press Releases: Remarks at a Press Stakeout

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

United Nations

New York City

January 26, 2019

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good morning. The United States is very proud that we had a long overdue meeting here of the UN Security Council today and we are equally proud to stand with the Venezuelan people as they protest and restore democracy in their nation. Former President Maduro's socialist experiment has ruined a once proud nation, as I said earlier, and we're – we stand with the Venezuelan people to restore democracy and return that country to its rightful condition. Got a whole nation starving, massive malnutrition, refugees fleeing. This is an international crisis to be sure. And nations like Cuba and Russia and China have shamefully cast their lot in support of

the former president. They don't have the best interests of the Venezuelan people at heart.

We hope that every nation will join us in recognizing interim president Juan Guaido. We hope too that each of those nations will ensure that they disconnect their financial systems from the Maduro regime and allow the assets that belong to the Venezuelan people to go to the rightful governors of that state.

We hope too that this peaceful transition can continue. We must stand for the rule of law and support the leader who the Venezuelan people have affirmed through their constitution as the interim president of their country.

Happy to take a couple questions.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: Reuters, Michelle Nichols.

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hi.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Michelle Nichols from Reuters. Couple of questions. First of all, in there the Russian ambassador had a very direct question for you about the U.S. taking military action. If you'd like to answer that here, feel free.

What economic measures does the U.S. plan to impose on Venezuela? And do you think the Venezuelan opposition should assume the UN seat here, and does the U.S. plan to draft a General Assembly resolution to make that happen?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Michelle, let me take two of those three questions. First, this is the first step of what we hope will be real progress here at the United Nations. We think every member of the United Nations ought to join in support of Venezuelan people, so we will continue to work to get more and more support. We're already a great deal along the way and we do think that there will be appropriate resolutions when the time is right, and we'll certainly support those. They won't come just from us, they'll come from other nations who care deeply about the Venezuelan people as well.

The other two questions involve what the United States will do next. I'm not going to speculate or hypothesize. I know only this: we're determined to support the Venezuelan people so that they can ultimately have the democratic institutions they deserve and they can return this once vibrant, wealthy, wonderful nation to its rightful place.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary –

MR PALLADINO: Voice of America. Voice of America, Celia Mendoza.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you, Secretary. So what exactly are you prepared to do for the Venezuelan people? You had announced the \$20 million in

humanitarian aid, and also today you said something in your speech: it is "time for every nation to pick a side." Will the U.S. consider secondary sanctions against countries who recognize the Maduro regime, like Washington did in Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the United States has already done a great deal for the Venezuelan people. We will continue to do that. You mentioned the initial monies, \$20 million, to ensure that food and medicine and we can get some level of order to begin to be restored. There'll be much more to do. We'll call upon other nations. We will join with them to create development and humanitarian assistance projects that actually deliver for the Venezuelan people. Those are all part of what will come when we get the democratic changes that we're working towards achieving.

You had a second question too?

QUESTION: About secondary sanctions possibly for nations –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, again, I'm not going to speculate on what other processes the United States might undertake, but know that we think now that the National Assembly is the rightful governing body. They've chose interim President Juan Guaido to represent them and so we think that the resources that belong to the Venezuelan people ought to go to the leaders that they have under their constitution duly elected.

Anybody else?

QUESTION: Sanction anybody that will do business with them?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'm not going to speculate on what we're going to do next.

MR PALLADINO: (Inaudible) final question. Associated Press, Edith Lederer, please. Edith?

I'm sorry.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MR PALLADINO: (Inaudible) CBS right here. (Inaudible.)

QUESTION: Okay, thank you. Thank you. Mr. Secretary – Mr. Secretary, it's Pamela Falk from CBS. How concerned are you about the military-to-military contact between Russia and the deliveries of equipment last month to Venezuela, and have you had any contact with the military of Venezuela? Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I spoke this morning about Cuban security and Russian influence, Russian interference. We want the Venezuelan people to have their say. And so the Russians have chosen to support the Maduro regime, I hope they'll change their way, I hope they will come to see that the rightful people to run this country are those that the Venezuelan people chose. And so we'll have conversations with every country, including the Russians. We'll talk with the Chinese, we'll talk with everyone. We think the whole world

ought to get behind what it is that the Venezuelan people have demanded for their country.

Thank you. Thank you all.

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[Press Releases: Remarks at a United Nations Security Council Meeting on Venezuela](#)

Remarks
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

United Nations
New York City
January 26, 2019

Good morning. On behalf of President Trump and the American people I first want to thank Foreign Minister Miguel Vargas of the Dominican Republic, the current president of the Security Council, for scheduling this meeting. My former colleague, Ambassador Haley, lobbied for a year to get the council to address Venezuela but her pleas fell on deaf ears. This meeting is long overdue. And you all know why it's overdue.

Take Carlos Aquino, a 37-year-old construction worker, weeping over the tiny coffin of his deceased infant son who had died of starvation.

Such scenes of misery are now the norm in Nicolas Maduro's Venezuela where millions of children are suffering from malnutrition and starvation thanks to a socialist experiment that caused the economy to collapse. This human misery isn't a secret. Stories like this one are well documented by our press corps. You can read about men like Carlos every day. People like him are why the United States has called this meeting.

We're here because Maduro has reduced ordinary Venezuelans who once lived in prosperity to rooting through dumpsters to find something to eat.

We're here because scores of Venezuelan women, some of them teenagers, have fled Maduro's madness to other countries, and in desperation turned to prostitution to survive.

We're here because of Maria Vielma, a school psychologist who said through tears, "We have a government that is dedicated to destroying, not to constructing."

Another man, a farmer named Vladimir Sequera, who never got more than a sixth grade education but he hoped that his stepdaughter Gabriela could fulfill her dreams of being a lawyer – she now says, "Our whole future has been taken

away." That future, for her and all Venezuelans, didn't magically disappear on its own. The Maduro regime's failed policies, oppression, and corruption stole that future.

The United States is helping to recover a brighter future for Venezuela. We're here to urge all nations to support the democratic aspirations of the Venezuelan people as they try to free themselves from former President Maduro's illegitimate mafia state.

The humanitarian situation demands action now; it demands action today. Today nine out of ten citizens live in poverty. Millions lack access to drinking water and food. Three out of four hospitals have been abandoned. Three million Venezuelans have been forced to flee their homeland thereby flooding the region and threatening international peace and security. Maduro's prisons are full of political prisoners unjustly behind bars and the graveyards hold dissidents and protesters that have been killed by this regime.

I want to talk to you about just one of them, a member of the city council of Caracas named Fernando Alban. Just four months ago he came here to this city to meet with the world's representatives who gather here every year during the United Nations General Assembly. He came here to speak about the failures of the Maduro regime and about his hopes for a more democratic and a more prosperous future for his country.

After that he went home. He went home to the country that he loved. Maduro's secret police arrested him at the airport as soon as he landed. He died in their custody three days later and the pathetic explanations for this death have convinced absolutely no one.

The time is now to support the Venezuelan people, to recognize the new democratic government led by interim President Guaido, and end this nightmare. No excuses.

The United States stands with the Venezuelan people. So far, many other nations have chosen to do the same and they too have recognized the legitimate government of interim President Guaido. The United States stands proudly with you as we stand together in support of Venezuela. You knew the Venezuelan people did not have a moment to spare.

And now it's time for every other nation to pick a side. No more delays, no more games. Either you stand with the forces of freedom or you're in league with Maduro and his mayhem.

Some countries have publicly taken former President Maduro's side. China, Russia, Syria, and Iran are just four of them. Just this morning we tried to find a way for this council to speak in one voice in support of the Venezuelan people and the democratic ideals through a presidential statement on this council, but our Russian and Chinese colleagues refused to let this move forward. It's not a surprise that those who rule without democracy in their own countries are trying to prop up Maduro while he is in dire straits.

Nor are these countries supporting international norms as they cynically

claim. China and Russia are propping up a failed regime in hopes of recovering billions of dollars in ill-considered investments and assistance made over the years. This money was never intended to help the Venezuelan people, it lined the pockets of the Maduro regime, its cronies, and its benefactors.

But no regime has done more to sustain the nightmarish condition of the Venezuelan people than the regime in Havana. For years, Cuban security and intelligence thugs, invited into Venezuela by Maduro himself and those around him, have sustained this illegitimate rule. They have trained Maduro's security and intelligence henchmen in Cuba's own worst practices. Cuba's interior ministry even provides a former – provides former President Maduro's personal security. Members of this body often use their microphones here to condemn foreign interference in internal affairs. Let's be crystal clear: the foreign power meddling in Venezuela today is Cuba. Cuba has directly made matters worse and the United States and our partners are the true friends of the Venezuelan people.

On Wednesday, the Venezuelan people chose to take their country back on the anniversary of the day the dictator Marcos Jimenez Perez was forced out of power back in 1958.

We call for Venezuelans to work now together to peacefully restore the constitutional government and return the country to a secure, democratic, and prosperous path. As we read reports of peaceful Venezuelan protesters killed or wounded, we also repeat our insistence that Venezuela's security services show restraint.

And I want to be 100 percent clear: President Trump and I fully expect that our diplomats will continue to receive protections provided under the Vienna Convention. Do not test the United States on our resolve to protect our own people.

We hope that the international community will support the people of Venezuela and the transitional government led by Juan Guaido. On January 23rd, Guaido declared himself interim president of Venezuela in accordance with Venezuela's own constitution. He made this declaration with the full support of the National Assembly and of the Venezuelan people. Our nations must stand up for the rule of law and support the leader who the Venezuelan people have affirmed as their legitimate interim president. It is our hope that free and fair elections happen as soon as possible.

Back in 1961, President Kennedy spoke in Caracas. He declared, "We will be partners in building a better life for our people."

America's ambition has not changed since that day. We stand with the Venezuelan people as they seek to build a better life for themselves and we cannot ignore the suffering or tyranny taking place in this proud nation. Neither should other countries who care about freedom and prosperity.

Today we call on all members of the Security Council to support Venezuela's democratic transition and interim President Guaido's role in it. Thank you.

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Press Releases: Remarks Before a Procedural Vote at a UN Security Council Meeting on Venezuela

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

United Nations

New York City

January 26, 2019

Thank you, Mr. President. The focus of the UN Security Council is to

safeguard international peace and security. The former Maduro regime has oppressed its people for years, forcing millions of Venezuelans to flee the country merely to gain very basic access to food and water. This has overwhelmed the capacity of regional countries to adequately address urgent humanitarian needs. Former President Maduro bears full responsibility for this tragedy, allowing Venezuelans to languish without food and humanitarian assistance.

On January 10th, the OAS passed a resolution that refused to recognize the illegitimate Maduro regime and called for further attention to address the suffering of the Venezuelan people. Last week we all received a letter under Article 54 from OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro which specifically described the destabilizing impact of this crisis in the region. And yet, despite this tragedy, despite the calls from regional bodies for more attention, the United Nations has yet to hold a formal session on this subject.

Now we have a new leader, Juan Guaido, in Venezuela, who has promised to bring elections and constitutional order back to Venezuela and security back to the region. We cannot delay this critical conversation which has the world's attention. For the sake of Venezuela and the region, we must support the Venezuelan people and do so right now. Thank you.

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