



Glenn Dismantles the LIES Justifying War with Venezuela

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Omar and AOC, but by members of the military, by long-term Republican members of Congress who have fought in wars and who take these codes of war seriously. He's posting cartoons that are designed to depict himself as really tough and powerful. Here's one of the things he posted over the last 24 hours. That's from his X account. A classic Franklin story: *Franklin Targets Narco Terrorists*, and you see a little turtle figure on a US helicopter blowing up boats that are filled with drugs, even though there's absolutely no evidence that what's in the boats that the United States has been building up. Now, one of the things that ought to concern you, no matter how convinced you are that removing Maduro somehow is a good thing for the lives of people in Ohio and Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and Iowa and Arkansas, and that it'll somehow benefit the lives of the forgotten man and woman on whose behalf Trump said he was running, even if you're convinced of that, you ought to be concerned about the outlandish, contradictory claims being offered to justify this new war. Here's something the President said in New Jersey on September 14th.

Journalist: On just one more Venezuela. The President of Venezuela called the strike on the boat illegal. Are you concerned that Maduro might escalate something?

Donald Trump: So what's illegal are the drugs that were on the boat and the drugs that are being sent into our country and the fact that three hundred million people died last year from drugs, that's what's illegal.

GG: This whole time up until about four seconds ago, when we're talking about the problem of drugs entering the country, the problem was fentanyl, and the countries that were blamed were Mexico and China. That was a big part of why there was all this anti-China sentiment, they're sending fentanyl into our country. What was discussed during the campaign was bombing the drug cartels of Mexico. Nobody claims – I shouldn't say nobody, there are people who are just lying now and saying that fentanyl is coming from Venezuela, and that's why we have to do this. Alex Karp, the CEO of Palantir, made that lie in the Wall Street Journal, affirmed that lie that, Oh, we need to go and take out Maduro because of all the fentanyl deaths in the United States, even though again Venezuela has nothing to do with fentanyl. We've shown you the government reports on this, all kinds of reports over and over

about this. That's why nobody ever talked about war in Venezuela when talking about fentanyl. Trump claimed that 300 million people died of drug overdose in the United States last year. It's an extremely odd claim, given that if you look at government reports here from the CDC, you see the total number of drug involved overdose deaths from 1999 to 2020. And the highest number is less than 60,000. And if you see here at the top, this blue line, which by far is responsible for the greatest number of overdose deaths, it's all synthetic opioids other than methadone. And it says primarily fentanyl. Fentanyl is what's killing Americans. Here you can see if you go down, you have cocaine, which is this blue line all the way at the bottom. It's killed fewer than 20,000 people, which is the only type of drug that you could link to Venezuela, but it comes primarily from Colombia. Remember Pablo Escobar and FARC and all of the drug militias that we've been waging war on with what had been our long-term right wing allies in Colombia, never made a dent in the drug trade. So even if you want to say, Oh, well, it's because of drug deaths, overdose deaths, this is all from fentanyl. It has nothing to do with Venezuela. And even if you think cocaine is now suddenly the big problem, even though no one's been saying that, very little of that comes from Venezuela.

Here is the JAMA network, Joinpoint And Analysis of Drug Overdose rates. And you can again see it's nowhere near 300 million people. This one at the top is all drugs, and you can see the number of overdose deaths in the United States is actually declining rather precipitously. Headed back to 2020 levels, 2019 levels. By far the biggest number continues to be this orange line here, which is opioids, which again are people consuming fentanyl-laced heroin or oxycontin or other types of opioids, again, primarily fentanyl, that's the vast, vast majority of deaths, from overdose. If that were really concerning, you would go after fentanyl, not Venezuela. The next number of deaths is methamphetamine. Again, now it's a small number, it's on decline. And then at the very last line is cocaine. Cocaine causes the fewest amount of overdose deaths of the major drugs. You don't go to war over drug overdoses and do so because a small number that actually hasn't increased very much at all, going back to 2015 levels. Maybe it's gone up some, peaked in 2023, and now it's headed back down. Anyone who believes that the war is about anything like this having to do with drugs is thinking very irrationally, to put that as generously as I can.

Here is the CDC, and this is the 12-month ending number for drug overdose deaths in 2025. Trump said 300 million people died of drug overdoses last year. Here you can see the number of total drug overdose in the United States for the year ending January or December 2024. That would be about 70,000. Again, you see the number declining. Probably because there have been successful efforts about fentanyl and combating fentanyl. So we're not suddenly going to war and removing Nicolas Maduro because of having anything to do with drugs. But that is the claim. That is the primary claim. And of course, it's very sensationalistic. It's very provocative. It's tribalistic. Maduro is evil because he's sending in drugs that are killing our kids and our citizens. You are like, Oh, wow, that sounds bad. It's like Saddam Hussein needs to be taken out, not because he's a bad guy for Iraqis, but because he's developing chemical and biological nuclear weapons. He's going to give it to Al Qaeda to kill us all. Oh, wow. That is terrible, that's like a direct threat to us. We didn't think about Saddam Hussein. They might as well just accuse Maduro of having weapons of mass destruction. It'd be easier and it

would be more convincing than all this. Here's Marco Rubio a week ago justifying why we're blowing up the drug boats and angling to remove Maduro.

Marco Rubio (MR): Yeah well I mean the question is bottom line, these are drug boats. If people want to stop seeing drug boats blow up, stop sending drugs to the United States.

Journalist: But does it matter if it's in the United States for..?

MR: Well these are all in international waters. The boat..

Journalist: Would you strike in the United States or if there were American people...?

MR: Well that's a different matter. Now you're talking about a law enforcement matter. In this particular case there are people travelling on international waters headed towards the United States with hostilities in mind, which includes flooding our country with dangerous, deadly drugs. And they're going to be stopped. And that's what's happening. And in the case last week you saw there was a submarine. It was a submarine, it was a submersible. That's a drug boat all the way through. We know what these boats are, the President just said it. We tracked them from the very beginning. We know who's on them, who they are, where they're coming from, what they have on them.

GG: They have no idea who's on these boats. It is exactly the same thing that was happening when Obama would go and kill a bunch of people at a wedding party, and afterwards they would release a press release saying: Oh, we just killed 14 militants. And Reuters would say: U.S. Drone strike kills 14 militants, White House says. No evidence presented, just claims. And then when I was at The Intercept, we were able to acquire the drone papers. My colleague Jeremy Scahill and others reported on those. And these were internal FBI documents and other Pentagon documents that revealed that when they killed people, nine times out of ten, they had no idea who they were killing. That is the same thing here. And even if you knew they were drug boats somehow, even though these are small speed boats, you have no idea that they're headed toward the United States. That's such an inefficient way to send drugs to the United States. But again, the way you're never going to eliminate the drug problem or even make a dent in the drug problem through the war on drugs, through warring to get rid of the drug trade. That's been tried for 60 years, 70 years. It hasn't worked. Have you ever heard anyone inside the United States say, Oh my God, there's a war on drugs. I can't get this drug I want?! Drugs are everywhere. The only way to ever solve the drug problem is to address the question of why there's so much demand inside the United States among Americans for drugs. That's a lot harder of a question. A lot harder problem to solve. You have to solve the material deprivation and spiritual crisis in the United States that causes people to turn to drugs. Instead, we're gonna get a bunch of theatrics about blowing up boats and then lies about how we're taking out Maduro because that'll stop the flow of drugs into the United States, none of which is going to happen.

END

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