



## How is the U.S. Going to RUN VENEZUELA?

*This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.*

---

**We recently launched our crowdfunding campaign so that we can continue our independent and non-profit journalism in 2026. Support us today:**

**BANKKONTO:**

Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.  
Bank: GLS Bank  
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600  
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

**PAYPAL:**

E-Mail: [PayPal@acTVism.org](mailto:PayPal@acTVism.org)

**PATREON:**

<https://www.patreon.com/acTVism>

**BETTERPLACE:**

Link: [Click here](#)

The association acTVism Munich e.V. is a non-profit association with legal capacity. The association pursues exclusively and directly charitable and benevolent purposes. Donations from Germany are tax deductible. If you require a donation receipt, please send us an email to: [info@acTVism.org](mailto:info@acTVism.org)

---

**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** I do want to talk a little bit about just the facts of what has happened in the bombing and invasion of Venezuela and the abduction of Nicolás Maduro back to New York. Because I do think that there are several things that have to be noted about this. And on Saturday morning when I woke up and heard the news – and of course it was building, we had done a lot of shows about Venezuela, about the case for regime change of Venezuela that was being made by the Trump administration, the reasons why the pretext being offered, "oh, this is about drug smuggling or it's to free the peoples of Venezuela" made absolutely no sense. We're just simply unsupported based on the facts that were being offered. We've done a lot of shows on it, so it was hardly a surprise. I did an about 20 to 25 minute analysis on Saturday morning that we put on YouTube where we broadcasted it quickly there. I'm not going to repeat all that, so if you haven't seen that and you want to go watch that, you can go and do so.

I do think it's very important to note that this is a war. And again, I gave the reasons why I call it a war. If you don't want to call it a war, it's fine. Ultimately, it's a semantic point. What I mean is the sending of our military for months as a build up, the bombing off the coast of Venezuela, the authorized CIA covert regime change and instability operation, the abduction of their country's leader, the killing of his presidential guard, the killing of dozens of innocent Venezuelans throughout Caracas with our bombing campaign, the declaration by President Trump that we are now governing and ruling Venezuela – when I say war, that's just a shorthand for that. You can call it whatever you want – special military operation. I really don't know what else to call it.

The reason why this is such an odd conflict is because we just had a presidential election between President Trump and first Joe Biden and then Kamala Harris, and none of this was ever raised. None of this was ever debated. None of this was ever proposed. We did have a discussion about the dangers and the destruction of the importation and smuggling of fentanyl into our country and the number of people that that is in fact killing in the United States. And there are several ways you could deal with that. You could try and address demand and try to ask why so many Americans are spiritually broken or broken in other ways that they're so susceptible to addiction. Or you can work on supply, as we've been doing in the war on drugs for the last eight decades with complete futility.

But during the campaign, the only mention any of this received was when President Trump said, and this part is true, "fentanyl comes primarily from the precursors due from China, and then they get imported as constructed fentanyl through Mexico". And the solution that he offered during the campaign that people were able to hear and decide if they wanted to vote for it or not was that he was going to bomb the drug cartels of Mexico, the place where fentanyl that kills so many Americans is coming from. Venezuela was never mentioned as a source of fentanyl. President Trump never once suggested that he would launch a regime change operation against Venezuela. This was not debated, it was not discussed during the entire 2024 campaign. There wasn't anyone in MAGA, there were no Trump supporters demanding that President Trump do this in the 2024 campaign. It was a non-issue.

And then there was no debate in Congress. There was no request for military authorization, authorized use of military force in Venezuela, no requirement of White House officials or administration officials going to the Congress and presenting arguments about how this would in any way benefit Americans. So it's basically been a military conflict, a war, a regime change operation that has been almost entirely unaccompanied by any reasoned debate. There have been a few snippets of interviews of White House officials, some phrases and slogans they've offered, some leaks that are constantly changing, but there's no real sustained debate about a decision this monumental. It was just done. And that's why overnight you see huge numbers of Trump supporters who never once talked about regime change in Venezuela, to the extent they talked about it at all in a generalized way, it was by saying "we don't want any more regime change wars". That was a central plank of the

America First movement, of MAGA, of the Trump campaign. And then overnight they just turned into shooters for the war. It's really remarkable.

And this is one of the points that I always made from the very beginning when we first started talking about the decision of the Biden administration to finance the war in Ukraine. And I stress this – I don't know how many times, definitely dozens, probably hundreds, in all the times that we covered the war in Ukraine – the only decision, the only question that really matters with any war policy, is how does this benefit the American people? The reason why I was so opposed and still am so opposed to the US financing and arming of the war in Ukraine is because I never thought and still do not believe that the provinces in Eastern Ukraine, which is what that war is about, Russians or Ukrainians, Kiev or Moscow, some semi-autonomous zone that we can turn it into, I never believed that that affects the lives of American of Americans, which is the ultimate responsibility of the government, the supreme responsibility. For that reason, I never wanted the United States to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on a very dangerous war. I saw huge amounts of danger, huge amounts of costs in human lives and American treasure, possibly in the risk of escalated conflict, which is still very real, and no benefit to the American people.

And that's exactly the same argument here. Who is benefiting from this removal of Nicolás Maduro? At best you can say, Oh, I think oil companies are going to benefit, Chevron's going to benefit, Exxon is going to benefit, they now have more unfettered access to Venezuelan oil. We already had access to Venezuelan oil if we wanted it. They were willing to sell it to us whenever we wanted to buy it. They weren't keeping Venezuelan oil from us. We had access to Venezuelan oil. But now, presumably, at some point in the very long-term future, once you rebuild the very creaky, rusted infrastructure of the Venezuelan oil industry, at some point, I guess Chevron and Exxon will benefit more in the future – do you think any of those benefits when massive multinational oil companies with no nationalistic oil to the United States start maximizing their profit, do you think that benefits the working class people of Pennsylvania or Ohio or West Virginia, coal miners and factory workers in the Rust Belt? None of this is going to redound to their benefit.

Or we freed the Venezuelan people – even if you actually believe that was our goal, even if you actually believe that that was something that we achieved – in what way does that redound to the benefit of the American people? And note that we didn't actually even change the regime of Venezuela. The entire regime of Venezuela is exactly the same. We just removed the leader, Nicolás Maduro. His vice president, who's just as much of a hardline lifelong dogmatist and socialist as he is, assumed the presidency of Venezuela today. President Trump was very clear he doesn't want to install the pro-Western opposition, because as he said correctly, they don't have anywhere near the respect and support within Venezuela to run the country. So we're not dismantling the military or the police. This isn't like the de-Ba'athification of Iraq. The entire governing infrastructure of Venezuela is in place. We didn't liberate anybody or anything. That's obviously not the goal. That's not what we're trying to do. So what is it that we're trying to do? And who benefits? And what way do the American people benefit? We spent billions and billions and billions of dollars on these

months of massive military assets deployed to the region, the CIA covert operation. Who knows what else we're going to have to do there? We're already threatening future action if the new Venezuelan leaders don't sufficiently do what we tell them to do. So it's very easy to assume and to envision a lot more. But even if nothing else happens, what has been achieved for the American people?

All right, let's look at some of the most recent developments, because we want to catch you up on the most recent events. So first of all, former President Nicolás Maduro appeared in a Manhattan court along with his wife today, where they face multiple felony charges of drug smuggling and gun possession charges. The federal judge who's presiding over their case is a 92-year-old senior judge named Alvin Hellerstein. When I saw that he was the judge, I was actually shocked. I practiced in front of him when I was still a practicing lawyer in the Southern District of New York more than 20 years ago. He was extremely old then. But anyway, he's the judge presiding over this case. At some point in 2027 there'll be a verdict. So now we're going to have this massive long trial to try and prove that Nicolás Maduro, while leading Venezuela, was also the head of some kind of drug smuggling operation.

And he was in court today and according to the New York Times that reported on the court appearance, quote, "Nicolás Maduro, the ousted Venezuelan leader, insisted on Monday that he was still his country's president and had been 'kidnapped' in the US military raid on Caracas that captured him and his wife two days ago. Both pleaded not guilty in a lower Manhattan federal courtroom to charges including narco-terrorism and conspiracy to import cocaine. During a swearing-in ceremony on Monday, Venezuela's interim leader, Delcy Rodríguez, decried the 'illegitimate military aggression' of the United States and said that Mr. Maduro was still the country's president. She also said Mr. Maduro and his wife were hostages a day after she struck a conciliatory tone and offered to work with the United States". So that's so far what the impact is. We dragged Maduro into a court along with his wife. And even though President Trump just a month ago issued a pardon to easily the most documented and destructive drug trafficker in Honduras, just pardoned him and walked him out of prison, we're now being told that, oh, the real concern here is that we want to stop drug smuggling.

And note that fentanyl, which is what kills people in the United States, is not even mentioned in the indictment. Maduro's not accused of smuggling or importing or exporting rather fentanyl into the United States, just cocaine. And if you look at the amount of cocaine that comes to the United States, the amount that comes from Venezuela is extremely small. Fentanyl is basically zero. So this is not about drugs. This is not about drug trafficking.

Here is President Trump at Mar-a-Lago, where he was asked on January 3rd, the day after the operation, who actually is going to run Venezuela. And here is what he said:.

**Donald Trump (DT):** We're going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition. So we don't want to be involved with having somebody else get in and we have the same situation that we had for the last long period of years. So we are

going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition. And it has to be judicious because that's what we're all about.

**GG:** All right, so basically the United States is now running Venezuela. Isn't that something that would have been or should have been mentioned during the election that we just had a little bit more than a year ago? "Hey, we want to run Venezuela, we want to govern Venezuela". You can't even govern the United States. Here is President Trump also at Mar-a-Lago, when asked, Well, how is the United States going to govern Venezuela? We are going to have a military presence there, we're going to have boots on the ground? How do you govern a country, especially one that has a massive military and police force? How do you govern Venezuela without putting many, many boots on the ground of American service members? Here's what he said.

**Press:** Mr. President. Does the US running the country mean that US troops will be on the ground? How will that work?

**DT:** Well, you know, they always say "boots on the ground". We're not afraid of boots on the ground if we have to have them. We had boots on the ground last night at a very high level, actually. We're not afraid of it. We don't mind saying it. But we're going to make sure that that country is run properly. We're not doing this in vain. This is a very dangerous attack. This is an attack that could have gone very, very badly. Could have gone very badly. We could have lost a lot of people last night. We could have lost a lot of dignity, we could have lost a lot of equipment. The equipment is less important, but we could have lost a lot and we're going to make sure that this is proper. We're there now. We're ready to go again if we have to. We're going to run the country right. It's going to be run very judiciously, very fairly. It's going to make a lot of money, we're going to give money to the people, we're going to reimburse people that were taken advantage of. We're going to take care of everybody. It's very important. We couldn't let them get away with it. You know, they stole our oil. We built that whole industry there, and they just took it over like we were nothing, and we had a president that decided not to do anything about it. So we did something about it. We're late, but we did something about it. Yeah, please.

**GG:** So we're running Venezuela, we're going to run it very judiciously, very fairly, we're going to give them a lot of money, the people of Venezuela, we're going to make them wealthy, we're going to make them rich, we're going to make Venezuela great again. I thought the whole distinction that a lot of Trump supporters are drawing between themselves and neocons, is that there's no neocons who go and nation build. They don't just go and take, they try and build the nation into something, they try and transform it into something different. That's exactly what Trump is saying he's going to do. We're going to govern Venezuela. We're not just taking their oil, we're going to govern it. We're going to run it, we're going to rule it, we're going to do it for the benefit of Venezuelans. That's what he said.

And then, of course, the question is well, how are you going to do that? The people in that country, I'm not saying all of them, or even most of them, but a lot of them. It's a country of

30 million people, there's a huge contingent of followers of Hugo Chavez and now Nicolás Maduro. These people have been indoctrinated for decades to hate the United States, to see the United States as their enemy, exactly like Americans are indoctrinated to think about Cuba or Venezuela. Just as much as Americans automatically assume that those are bad countries, that's how they think about the United States. They don't want the United States running their country. Some might, I'm sure some do. In every country, there's some people who would welcome a foreign army coming and taking down the government. There are Americans who would celebrate in the street if some foreign army came and took down the Trump administration. I promise you that. They think Trump is Hitler, a fascist. But there's a lot of people in that country that would fight and are armed and don't want the United States running their country.

But that sounds like nation building. We're going to turn Venezuela into this fair, justly administered country. We're going to be governing it. And Trump said if we have to put boots on the ground, we're not afraid of that. We're going to have a prolonged military presence in Venezuela. Is this remotely consistent with anything that the American First movement said that it was about? That Donald Trump's campaign or candidacy or prior presidency claimed he was intending to achieve? One of the people who is incredibly thrilled by all this, who has been a driving force behind it, is someone who, not coincidentally, grew up in the Latin American immigrant community of South Florida, of Miami, and that's Marco Rubio, whose parents came from Cuba. There are a lot of members of Congress from that area who represent Venezuelan and Cuban immigrants. They have been long obsessed with having the United States military go and "fix their region", is how they see it. And Marco Rubio went on ABC News with George Stephanopoulos over the weekend, and Stephanopoulos asked him about exactly who is going to be running Venezuela and how. And here's what Rubio said.

**George Stephanopoulos (GS):** President Trump was pretty clear yesterday. He said the United States is going to run Venezuela. Under what legal authority?

**Marco Rubio (MR):** Well, first of all, what's going to happen here is that we have a quarantine on their oil. That means their economy will not be able to move forward until the conditions that are in the national interest of the United States and the interest of the Venezuelan people are met. And that's what we intend to do. So that leverage remains, that leverage is ongoing, and we expect that it's going to lead to results here. We're hopeful that it does, positive results for the people of Venezuela, but ultimately, most importantly for us, in the national interest of the United States. We will no longer have, hopefully, as we move forward here, we'll set the conditions so that we no longer have in our hemisphere of Venezuela, that's the crossroads for many of our adversaries around the world, including Iran and Hezbollah, is no longer sending us drug gangs, is no longer sending us drug boats, is no longer a narco trafficking paradise for all those drugs coming out of Colombia to go in through the Caribbean and towards the United States. And obviously we want to have a better future for the people of Venezuela. We want them to have an oil industry where the wealth goes to the people and not to a handful of corrupt individuals and stolen by pirates all over

the world. That's what we're working towards and we intend to use the leverage we have to help achieve that.

**GS:** Let me ask the question again: What is the legal authority for the United States to be running Venezuela?

**MR:** Well, I explained to you what our goals are and how we're going to use the leverage to make it happen. As far as what our legal authority is on the quarantine, very simple. We have court orders. These are sanctioned boats and we get orders from courts to go after and seize these sanctions. So I don't know – is a court not a legal authority?

**GG:** You know, none of that answer makes any sense. I don't really care about legal authority, to be perfectly honest. I care, but I know no one else in the United States cares. We've given up on the idea that we have a constitution that says Congress has to authorize new wars. We haven't done that for decades. Nobody really seems to mind. International law is really just an illusion, it just means whatever we want it to mean at any given time. I think it's just best to drop the pretense that there's any legal authority. Rubio saying that we had court orders makes no sense. Yeah, there are court orders to authorize a seizure of particular sanctioned boats, not to go in and remove Maduro and then govern Venezuela. But again, I don't really care about the legal authority because nobody else does. It's just not a meaningful avenue of inquiry.

But what is a meaningful avenue of inquiry is what he's saying there. So the way we're going to benefit is we're going to go and we're going to help the Venezuelan people have a more prosperous future. Is that what Americans voted for? They wanted to make sure that President Trump governed Venezuela to make sure that the people of Venezuela prospered? And then just to give you a sense of how frivolous these pretexts are, the first thing Rubio said is: we want to make sure Venezuela is no longer a crossroads for Iran and Hezbollah. Two of, coincidentally, Israel's most devoted enemies. Iran and Hezbollah – how is Iran or how is Hezbollah using their supposed access in Venezuela to threaten Americans or the United States? In what conceivable way are they doing that? I can understand how if you're Israel, you want to make sure Iran and Hezbollah don't have access – but what does that have to do with the United States? And it's not even true. What are Iran and Hezbollah – this is like WMD level stuff.

And then the stuff about the drug gangs – again, we just went over that. You can go and read government reports, dozens and dozens of them, think tank reports, all of which we've covered on this show about the flow of fentanyl in the United States – none of them mention Venezuela, none! Nobody ever said Venezuela was the cause of fentanyl before. And cocaine – which doesn't even cause a small fraction of the deaths in the United States – a small fraction of that comes from Venezuela. How are drug gangs going to be magically dismantled without US troops on the ground in Venezuela? The reason drug gangs thrive in Colombia, in all sorts of places throughout Latin America, is because there's huge numbers of people in the government profiting and the police profiting and the military profiting from it. None of the

drug trade is going to disappear and the more instability you create in Venezuela, the more you're going to enable drug gangs to thrive. This is all nonsense. Absolute nonsense there will not be an iota of fentanyl there will not be a gram of cocaine that is impeded from coming to the United States as a result of this action. Nobody in the United States who wants opioids or fentanyl or cocaine will in any way be impeded from getting it as a result of anything that has been done here. This is just a drug war, but on a tiny scale. And it's failed for eight decades, and this is going to fail also.

**END**