

Pence threatens war in Venezuela at Colombia summit: "There is no turning back". But some allies balk.



HELP ENLIGHTEN YOUR FELLOWS. BE SURE TO PASS THIS ON. SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON IT.

NOTE: Meeting with unexpected resistance to their plans for an invasion using proxies and possibly other South American armies, the gangsters in Washington may be forced to use "the long game" strategy and rely on gradual strangulation of Venezuela in the absence of quick and definitive military.



A pathetic photo (taken in Bogotá) captures three criminals boasting of their alliance: Traitor Juan Guaidó, Ivan Duque (who, as Colombian president serves the murderous US & Colombian oligarchies), and Mike Pence, the envoy from the mafia empire itself.

By Eric London • 26 February 2019 • WSWS.ORG

US Vice President Mike Pence delivered a bellicose speech before representatives of 14 Latin American countries at a meeting of the Lima Group in Bogotá, Colombia, yesterday. The remarks were timed to coincide with the US-orchestrated provocations at the Venezuelan border over the weekend, resulting in clashes that left several people dead.

Pence rehashed phrases plagiarized from speeches given by

George W. Bush in the run-up to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, combining them with denunciations of socialism.

“There is no turning back,” Pence said. “All options are on the table.”

“A new day is coming in Latin America,” he continued. “In Venezuela and across the Western hemisphere, socialism is dying and liberty, prosperity and democracy are being reborn before our eyes.” Pence issued an ultimatum to the Venezuelan military, threatening that if it did not overthrow Maduro, “You will find no safe harbor, no easy exit, no way out. You will lose everything.”

Pence announced that the US would place added sanctions on officials in the Venezuelan government and called on the right-wing governments of Latin America to “transfer ownership of Venezuelan assets in your country” to the government of US puppet Juan Guaidó.

In other words, the US is conducting cross-hemispheric highway robbery.

In his speech, Pence gave several justifications for intensifying US war threats against Venezuela. Venezuela exploits indigenous tribes, damages the environment through oil exploration and impoverishes its population, Pence said.

These claims would be laughable were it not for the seriousness of the threats. The United States is the world’s worst offender in each of these departments.

Particularly disgusting was Pence’s attack on Venezuela for refusing “shelter for those displaced” immigrants along its border.

The *Washington Post* wrote that Pence “embraced a sobbing elderly man,” an immigrant waiting to enter Venezuela. The *Post* reporters, tears welling in their eyes, wrote that Pence

“told the man in English, ‘We are with you.’”

The *Post* report made no mention of the thousands of immigrants currently sleeping on the streets in Mexican cities along the US-Mexico border after the US barred them from entering the country to apply for asylum.

Simultaneous with this weekend’s planned confrontation, the US military escalated its war plans. CNN reported that “the US military has flown an increased number of reconnaissance flights in international airspace off the coast of Venezuela during the last several days to gather classified intelligence” in possible preparation for a military intervention.

On Saturday, Puerto Rican Governor Ricardo Rosselló reported that the Venezuelan military threatened to “open fire” on an American ship that entered Venezuelan territorial waters without permission. Though the ship was registered in Vanuatu, it was flying under a US flag in violation of international maritime law. US officials claim the ship was carrying 200 tons of “humanitarian aid.”

Venezuelan officials allege that US “humanitarian aid” includes weapons shipments to Colombia. Last Wednesday, Colombian armed forces leader Maj. Gen. Luis Navarro Jiménez traveled to Florida, where he met with leaders of US Southern Command.

The *Washington Post* wrote yesterday that behind the scenes in Bogotá, Guaidó “sought assurances that the United States could use force if necessary.” Venezuelan right-wing opposition leader Julio Borges tweeted Sunday that the opposition “will urge for an escalation of diplomatic pressure and the use of force against the dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro.”

President Trump has long privately expressed his interest in waging war on Venezuela. In his recently published book, former acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe reports that Trump

once brought up Venezuela in his presence, saying, "That's the country we should be going to war with. They have all that oil and they're right on our back door."

The bellicose mood in Washington was exemplified by a reckless *Washington Post* opinion article published yesterday by Francisco Toro, who leads the think tank "Group of 50," founded by a former World Bank official with the backing of the imperialist Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Despite the article's title, "With US military action, Venezuela could become the Libya of the Caribbean," Toro makes the case for pushing the region to the brink of war. Last weekend's border confrontation "moved military action to dislodge the Venezuelan regime from fringe speculation to serious policy discussion," Toro writes.

The Venezuelan military, he continues, is "unlikely to rebel against Maduro unless they calculate US military action is genuinely imminent... The best solution now, then, is a strategy designed to convince Venezuela's generals that, unless they topple Maduro in short order, they'll be bombed out of existence—a message that should be delivered by people who understand actually bombing them out of existence would be a disaster. What the United States needs to do, in other words, is bluff, by taking further steps that raise Venezuelan generals' perception of a threat."

The article concludes: "God help us all."

This incendiary strategy has the bipartisan support of the US political establishment. As former Bush administration official José Cárdenas wrote in *Foreign Policy* :

"US policy toward Venezuela has enjoyed a bipartisan consensus in Congress through successive administrations. Democrats such as Sen. Bob Menendez, the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Rep. Eliot Engel, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, have been active critics of the breakdown in Venezuelan democracy over the years."

It is not certain, however, that the US will be able to line up its allies behind its threats of military intervention. The increased threats of war have deepened divisions between Washington and its allies in the region and in Europe.

While the Lima Group declaration called for the immediate resignation of Maduro, it also noted that “the transition to democracy should be conducted by the Venezuelans themselves peacefully... by political and diplomatic means, without the use of force.”

Brazil’s vice president, Hamilton Mourão, said Monday from Bogotá that “a military option was never an option” for Brazil, and that “we advocate for no intervention.” The foreign minister of Spain, Josep Borrell, told the Efe news agency on Sunday, “We have clearly warned that we would not support—and would roundly condemn—any foreign military intervention.”

Despite support from the governments of the region and in Europe for the US regime-change operation, these statements reflect concerns that the US is proceeding with a degree of recklessness that risks throwing the entire hemisphere into an unprecedented level of chaos.

The Trump administration has called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, now scheduled for Tuesday. The US will likely use the opportunity to denounce Russia and China, which are likely to exercise their veto power as permanent members to block a pseudo-legal international fig leaf to US imperialism’s machinations in South America.


Addendum

[The UK Guardian](#) (a paper which in general marches to the Anglo-American imperialist music) nonetheless ran this interesting news piece indicating that some of Washington's

"usual accomplices" may be balking at the impudence manifested by the American mafia.

Venezuela: US increasingly isolated as allies warn against use of military force

Mike Pence says 'all options are on the table' in effort to oust Maduro while key allies warn they would oppose sending troops

[Joe Parkin Daniels](#) in Bogotá, [Emma Graham-Harrison](#) in Caracas and [Sam Jones](#) in Madrid

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Pence (right) with Guaidó, meeting in Bogotá, Colombia. Pence is there as high emissary from the central mafia in Washington, putting final touches and giving assent to the

most impudent maneuvers to strangle a nation in broad daylight. The revolting collaboration of Democrats in this vile crime against international law and elementary decency should haunt them for generations. Unfortunately, as is usually the case, the American "establishment" appears united regarding this long announced new imperialist adventure.

[dropcap]T[/dropcap>he US vice-president, [Mike Pence](#), has repeated a veiled threat of military intervention in Venezuela, but Washington appeared increasingly isolated in its willingness to contemplate using force to oust President Nicolás Maduro.

European powers and some of Donald Trump's key Latin American allies – all of whom have recognised the opposition leader, Juan Guaidó, as Venezuela's legitimate leader – warned that they would oppose sending troops into the country.

'Venezuelan blood is being spilled': tension flares near border with Brazil

Guaidó had for weeks insisted his movement was focused on peaceful, democratic change. But after the opposition failed in a [weekend bid](#) to defy Caracas and bring aid into the country, he called on the international community to "keep all options open".

That hint at the use of military force won an enthusiastic response from hawks like US senator Marco Rubio, but sparked alarm elsewhere, particularly as Trump has [previously mooted ordering an invasion](#).

Speaking at an emergency summit of regional leaders in the Colombian capital Bogotá, Pence renewed the threat of intervention, describing Maduro as "a usurper", and calling for a global push to oust him.

“To leaders around the world: it’s time. There can be no bystanders in Venezuela’s struggle for freedom,” he said. “We hope for a peaceful transition to democracy, but as President Trump has made clear, all options are on the table.”

But beyond the US, few appear willing embrace the prospect of violence. In Latin America, there is a painful and bloody history of US interventions, and the terrible fallout from the 2003 invasion of Iraq is another deterrent to the use of military force.

An invasion would be complicated and bloody, with a strong chance of sliding into protracted civil war. [Venezuela](#) has armed forces that are more than 300,000 strong, thousands more members of pro-government gangs or guerrilla groups, complex terrain – and a government that still has some support from international partners including China and Russia.

Brazil’s vice-president, retired general Hamilton Mourão, said on Monday that under no circumstances would his country allow the United States to intervene militarily from Brazilian territory, even though the country’s rightwing president [Jair Bolsonaro](#) has [previously vowed](#) to do “everything for democracy to be re-established” in Venezuela.

Colombian president Iván Duque has also now ruled out intervention, according to sources in his administration. Chile and Peru were among other regional powers opposing military action on Monday.

There was similar concern across the Atlantic, where European nations including Spain and Germany made clear they considered the deployment of troops a line that should not be crossed.

Spain would 'roundly condemn' use of force in Venezuela

[“Not every option is on the table,”](#) the country’s foreign minister, Josep Borrell, told the Spanish news agency Efe on Sunday, in a blunt rebuke to both Guaidó and US supporters of

intervention.

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, insisted there could be no military solution to a political crisis.

"The origins of the ongoing crisis in Venezuela are political and institutional, hence the solution can only be a political one," she said in a statement. "We reiterate our firm rejection and condemnation of violence and of any initiatives that can further destabilise the region."

Before the meeting of the Lima group of Latin American powers and Canada, Pence told Guaidó, attending as Venezuela's interim president: "We are 100% with you."

The Lima group also said credible threats have been made against the life of Venezuelan opposition leader Guaidó and his family, adding that President Nicolas Maduro was responsible for Guaido's safety.

"We want to hold the usurper Maduro responsible for any violent action against Guaido, against his wife and against their relatives," said Colombian foreign minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo, speaking on behalf of the group.

Pence said he would urge regional powers to freeze Venezuela's oil assets and hand them over to Guaidó's control. The opposition have reportedly already [taken effective control](#) of US-based refiner Citgo, one of the few remaining profitable assets of Venezuela's state owned oil firm PDVSA.

Earlier that morning the US announced it had added four regional governors to an already long list of sanctioned Venezuelans, and Pence said that tougher measures were still to come.

"In the days ahead ... the United States will announce even stronger sanctions on the regime's corrupt financial networks.

We will work with all of you to find every last dollar that they stole and work to return it to Venezuela.”

But much of Venezuela’s government and industry are already sanctioned, making it harder for Guaidó’s allies to ramp up financial pressure on the regime. (sic)



[RT America](#)

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Several members of the Lima Group who met with US Vice President Mike Pence rejected his proposal to use military force to oust Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. RT’s Dan Cohen spent time on the ground in Cucuta, Colombia. He sits down with RT America’s Manila Chan to explain what could be next in Venezuela.

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