

Canada Joins with Imperial ‘Mafia’ to Threaten Venezuela

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Most Canadians think of their country as a force for good in the world, but recent efforts by Justin Trudeau’s government to overthrow Venezuela’s elected government have once again revealed the ugly truth about the Great White North. We are an important partner in imperialism, willing to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, up to and including the use of military force, to benefit the perceived self-interest of our elites.

Over the past two years Canadian officials have campaigned aggressively against President Nicolás Maduro. Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland has repeatedly criticized Caracas’ democratic legitimacy and human rights record. Recently she said, “[the Maduro](#) regime is now fully entrenched as a dictatorship” while in September Ottawa [asked](#) (with five South American nations) the International Criminal Court to investigate the Venezuelan government, which is the first time a government has been formally brought before the tribunal by another member.

In recent weeks Canadian diplomats have played an important role in uniting large swaths of the Venezuelan opposition behind a US-backed plan to ratchet up tensions by proclaiming the new head of the opposition-dominated National Assembly, Juan Guaido, president. The Canadian Press quoted a Canadian diplomat saying they helped Guaido “[facilitate](#) conversations with people that were out of the country and inside the country” while the *Globe and Mail* reported that

“[Freeland](#) spoke with Juan Guaido to congratulate him on unifying opposition forces in Venezuela, two weeks before he declared himself interim president.”

Alongside Washington and a number of right-leaning Latin American governments, Ottawa immediately recognized Guaido after he proclaimed himself president on Wednesday. Canadian officials are [lobbying European](#) leaders to recognize Guaido as president as well.

Ottawa has long provided various other forms of direct support to an often-violent opposition. In recent years Canada channelled [millions of dollars](#) to opposition groups in Venezuela and 18 months ago outgoing Canadian ambassador, Ben Rowsell, told the *Ottawa Citizen* that

“[we became](#) one of the most vocal embassies in speaking out on human rights issues and encouraging Venezuelans to speak out.”

Alongside its support for the opposition, Ottawa expelled Venezuela's top diplomat in 2017 and has [imposed](#) three [rounds](#) of sanctions on Venezuelan officials. In March the United Nations Human Rights Council [condemned](#) the economic sanctions the US, Canada and EU have adopted against Venezuela while Caracas called Canada's move a "[blatant violation](#) of the most fundamental rules of International Law."

Since its August 2017 founding Canada has been one of the most active members of the "Lima Group" of [governments opposed](#) to Venezuela's elected government. Canada is [hosting](#) the next meeting of the "Lima Group". Freeland has repeatedly [prodded](#) Caribbean and Central American countries to join the Lima Group's anti-Maduro efforts.

In September, 11 of the 14 member states of the "Lima Group" backed a statement distancing the anti-Venezuelan alliance from "[any type](#) of action or declaration that implies military intervention" after Organization of American States chief Luis Almagro stated:

"[As for military](#) intervention to overthrow the Nicolas Maduro regime, I think we should not rule out any option ... diplomacy remains the first option but we can't exclude any action."

Canada, Guyana and Colombia refused to criticize the head of the OAS' musings about an invasion of Venezuela.

Alongside the head of the OAS, US president Donald Trump has [publically discussed](#) invading Venezuela. To the best of my knowledge Ottawa has stayed mum on Trump's threats, which violate international law.

Why? Why is Canada so eager to overthrow an elected government? Recent headlines in the *Globe and Mail* ("Venezuelan crisis buoys prospects for Canadian heavy crude oil producers") and *Wall Street Journal* ("Bond Prices in Venezuela Jump on Prospect of Regime Change") suggest some short term reasons. But looking at the situation from a historical perspective confirms Noam Chomsky's [claim](#) that international affairs is run like the Mafia. The godfather cannot accept disobedience.

Thus, while the scope of the Trudeau government's current campaign against Venezuela is noteworthy, it's not the first time Ottawa has supported the overthrow of an elected, left leaning, government in the hemisphere. Canada passively supported military coups against Guatemalan President [Jacobo Arbenz](#) in 1954 and Brazilian President [João Goulart](#) in 1964 as well as 'parliamentary coups' against Paraguayan president [Fernando Lugo](#) in 2012 and Brazilian President [Dilma Rousseff](#) in 2016. Ottawa played a slightly more active role in the removal of Dominican Republic president [Juan Bosch](#) in 1965 and [Chilean president](#) Salvador Allende in 1973. In a more substantial contribution to undermining electoral democracy, Ottawa [backed the](#) Honduran military's removal of Manuel Zelaya in 2009.

Canada played its most forceful role in the removal of a progressive, elected, president in the hemisphere's most impoverished nation. Thirteen months before Jean-Bertrand Aristide was, in his words, "kidnapped" by US Marines on February 29, 2004, Jean Chrétien's Liberal government [organized an international](#) gathering to discuss overthrowing the Haitian president. JTF2 special forces [secured](#) the Port-au-Prince airport the night Aristide was ousted and 500 Canadian troops were part of the US-led invasion to consolidate the coup.

With regards to Venezuela it's unclear just how far Ottawais prepared to go in its bid to oust

Maduro. But, it is hard to imagine that the path Canada and the US have chosen can succeed without Venezuela being plunged into significant violence.

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