

Venezuela's Maduro Confirms Secret Trump Talks as US Navy 'Ready' for Action

US Southern Command chief said US Navy will "do what needs to be done."

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Global Research, August 26, 2019

[Venezuelanalysis.com](#) 23 August 2019

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence, US NATO War Agenda](#)

Venezuelan government officials have had secret contact with US officials for "months," President Maduro revealed Tuesday.

"I confirm that for months there have been contacts between senior officials from the Trump administration and from the Bolivarian government, with my express permission," he said, adding that there had been "various contacts" to "regularize" the conflict with Washington.

The Venezuelan president went on to add that he is always "ready for dialogue," urging Trump to "really listen" to Venezuela. No details of the contents of the discussions were disclosed.

Maduro's comments followed an Associated Press report that a Trump administration intermediary had held "secret talks" with National Constituent Assembly President Diosdado Cabello. The report did not disclose the identity of the intermediary, claiming that the goal of the meeting was to increase pressure by contributing to a "knife fight" allegedly taking place behind the scenes.

Cabello later confirmed that a meeting had taken place with Maduro's blessing, dismissing claims of divisions among high ranking officials.

Caracas broke diplomatic relations with Washington after the latter's recognition of self-proclaimed "Interim President" Juan Guaido as head of state on [January 23](#), with Maduro giving US diplomatic staff 72 hours to leave the country. Following unsuccessful talks to [downgrade](#) the embassies to "interests sections," US embassy staff [left](#) Venezuela in March.

Washington's recognition of Guaido came alongside an escalation of unilateral sanctions targeting key sectors of Venezuela's economy, including [mining](#), [banking](#), and especially [oil](#). The sanctions regime was elevated to an [embargo](#) on August 5, blocking all Venezuelan state assets in US territory and threatening secondary sanctions against third parties trading with the Caribbean nation.

The embargo led the Venezuelan government to [suspend](#) dialogue with the opposition, which was being mediated by Norway in [Oslo](#) and later in [Barbados](#). While Norwegian officials have held meetings with both sides in Caracas, neither side has signaled willingness to return to the negotiating table, with the opposition delegation reportedly traveling to the

United States for meetings with US officials.

Revelations about secret talks between Caracas and Washington coincided with a US top military commander pledging that the US Navy is ready to “do what needs to be done” on Venezuela.

US Southern Command chief Admiral Craig Faller made the comments in Rio de Janeiro on Tuesday as the US started its UNITAS maritime exercises alongside Latin American countries, the UK, Portugal and Japan.

“The United States Navy is the most powerful navy in the world. If a policy decision is made to deploy the navy, I’m convinced that we’ll be able to do what needs to be done,” Faller told reporters.

Faller’s statement comes weeks after President Trump told reporters he was considering a blockade or quarantine against Venezuela, while opposition leader Guaido had also called for “[cooperation](#)” with the US Southern Command in May.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo echoed Faller’s hardline stance on Thursday, telling the press that there will be “no change” in US policy towards Venezuela so long as Maduro remains in power.

Speaking alongside Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland, Pompeo said that both countries would continue working “on behalf of the Venezuelan people” to oust the Maduro government.

For its part, Russia reaffirmed its backing for the Maduro government after a meeting between Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday.

“We will always stand in solidarity with [Venezuela] and uphold every nation’s right to independently choose its own development path,” Lavrov told reporters.

Caracas and Moscow have signed a series of bilateral agreements in recent months in different areas, most recently a deal allowing both countries’ warships to visit each other’s ports.

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Featured image: Southern Command chief Admiral Craig Faller said the US Navy is “ready” to intervene in Venezuela. (Dvids)

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