

The Washington Post, Owned by CIA's Webmaster, Blasts Venezuela's 'State-Financed' News

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These unfortunate Venezuelans don't have the Washington Post to tell them that it's normal for the US president to make up national security crises in order to exercise emergency powers. (photo: Miguel Gutierrez/EPA)

Venezuelans are worried because US President Barack Obama declared a "national emergency" that called Venezuela "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

But there's no need for them to get upset, the Washington Post's Nick Miroff and [Karen DeYoung \(3/11/15\)](#) reassure. The Obama administration explained that it just wanted to impose sanctions on some of Venezuela's top officials because "it wanted to send a strong message in defense of human rights and democracy":

The "emergency" declaration and labeling of Venezuela as a "security threat" are legal formalities used in many other instances when sanctions are applied, administration officials said. The language does not represent a more severe assessment of the Maduro government, they said.

Ah—the administration is just *pretending* there's an "unusual and extraordinary threat" because it wants to invoke powers that it's only legally allowed to use in an actual emergency. No biggie. Thanks for clearing that up, Washington Post!

Unfortunately, Venezuelans don't have Washington-savvy publications like the Post to set them straight. Or, as Miroff and DeYoung put it:

Such nuances stood little chance in the meat grinder of Venezuela's rough political culture, where state-financed and pro-government broadcasters dominate the airwaves.

Hmm—so we should be wary of "state-financed and pro-government" media outlets, huh?



The Washington Post, as it happens, is owned by Jeff Bezos, the [15th richest person](#) in the world, who derives his fortune from his position as the main owner of Amazon.com, with an 18 percent share of the company.

You probably know Amazon as an online bookseller; less famously, they're also in the online data storage business, and one of their top clients is the US intelligence community, which paid Amazon Web Services \$600 million for a "cloud" to store and process information for the CIA, NSA and other US spy agencies. As the Atlantic ([7/17/14](#)) noted at the time, this is far from Amazon's only government contract; other agencies they store data for include NASA, the FDA, the CDC and HealthCare.gov.

Amazon "is rapidly becoming the leading supplier of cloud services to the federal government," the trade publication EnterpriseTech ([8/22/14](#)) reported. When the Defense Department looked to spend \$10 billion on cloud services, Amazon didn't bid directly for the contract-but it will partner with five of the 10 companies who won pieces of the contract, allowing it to get more than the \$1 billion each direct contractor is limited to (FCW, [8/28/13](#)).

Is this serious money for Bezos? Well, he paid [\\$250 million](#) for the entire Washington Post in 2013, so it's more than walking-around money. Suffice it to say that it's very unlikely any Venezuelan broadcaster gets as much state funding as the Bezos empire.

As for "pro-government"-the Post may be more or less friendly to any particular administration, but it's never going to lose its allegiance to the DC's permanent government. As Keane Bhatt (Extra!, [3/14](#)) pointed out, it's the Post's proximity to Washington's imperial power that makes it more than just another mid-size daily like the Denver Post.

And part of the job of being Washington's official court paper, apparently, is explaining to the inhabitants of lesser nations that they shouldn't take it personally when the US labels them "an unusual and extraordinary threat."

Messages to the Washington Post can be sent to letters@washpost.com or via Twitter [@washingtonpost](https://twitter.com/washingtonpost). Remember that respectful communication is the most effective.

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