

Trump Floated “Military Option” in Venezuela with Sen. Graham

By [Zero Hedge](#)

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Military option on the table — that’s what Axios reporter Jonathan Swan was told when discussing the Venezuela crisis with Sen. Lindsey Graham. In a breaking exclusive Sunday evening, Axios has revealed key explosive contents of a recent meeting between President Trump and Sen. Graham wherein the president “mused to him about the possibility of using military force in Venezuela, where the U.S. government is currently pushing for regime change using diplomatic and economic pressures.” According to [Axios](#):

Graham, recalling his conversation with Trump a couple weeks ago, said: “He [Trump] said, ‘What do you think about using military force?’ and I said, ‘Well, you need to go slow on that, that could be problematic.’ And he said, ‘Well, I’m surprised, you want to invade everybody.’”

Graham laughed. “And I said, ‘I don’t want to invade everybody, I only want to use the military when our national security interests are threatened.’”

Sen. Graham explained further to Swan in a phone call that “Trump’s really hawkish” on Venezuela, and added the president’s willingness to use military force against the Maduro regime actually surpasses Graham’s.

Graham summarized the unusual and unexpected takeaway from the contents of his discussions with president with [the conclusion that](#) “Trump was even more hawkish than he [Graham] was on Venezuela.”

This follows a week of [unrest and mass protests](#), along with some very limited [military defections](#), inside the socialist country and after about a dozen countries have joined the United States in recognizing opposition held National Assembly head Juan Guaido as the “Interim President of Venezuela” possessing sole legitimacy. After Trump’s controversial declaration of Maduro’s illegitimacy as president last week, a senior administration official followed [by saying](#) that “all options are on the table”.

And now it appears the “military option” is perhaps more prominent on that table in Trump’s mind than many believed, which Axios muses is [related to being](#) “stymied at home” after the wall/government shutdown crisis, thus “Trump is now moving faster than ever on foreign policy.”

While this doesn’t mean Trump will invade Venezuela anytime soon, it increasingly appears escalating diplomatic and economic pressures could fast put Washington on such a path toward *overt* regime change in Caracas. Toward this end, Axios notes: “We expect the

Trump administration will target Nicolás Maduro's oil and offshore wealth in the coming weeks and try to divert that wealth to the opposition leader, Juan Guaidó...”.

The worry over potential military confrontation or civil war inside the country is increasingly looking very real as over the weekend reports surfaced online of a build-up of Venezuelan military assets along the borders, specifically near Columbia — a key US ally in Latin America.

#Breaking: Reports of [#Venezuela](#) army forces, including Russian made self-propelled howitzer 2S19 Msta-S, allegedly on the move towards [#Colombia](#) border. pic.twitter.com/yH7YlmiLiS

— Sotiri Dimpinoudis (@sotiridi) [January 27, 2019](#)

Since taking office, and prior to the current crisis [as recently as 2017](#), Trump has spoken of a “military option” when Venezuela policy arises; however, his aides have reportedly attempted to dissuade him from taking any hasty action.

Meanwhile, according to Bloomberg, opposition leader Juan Guaido has called for consecutive days of nationwide protests to continue this week to put pressure on Maduro to hold a new election, in accord with EU demands that he announces fresh elections within eight days. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, issued the following ultimatum Saturday [alongside France, Germany and Britain](#):

“If within eight days there are no fair, free and transparent elections called in Venezuela, Spain will recognize Juan Guaido as Venezuelan president.”

Guaido last week specifically appealed to the military to switch sides following a local and short-lived attempt of 27 officers to lead a revolt on Monday (1/21). To encourage more such defections, which so far hasn't appeared to penetrate the top layers of military leadership, Guaido has offered amnesty protection to any officer previously accused of corruption or human rights abuses should they defect.

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