

Secretary of State Marco Rubio

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

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Thank you, Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, and distinguished Members of this Committee, for inviting me to address you today.

On January 3rd, the United States carried out a surgical operation facilitated by our military against two indicted fugitives from American justice, Nicolás Maduro and his coconspirator Cilia Flores. Thanks to the leadership of President Trump and the professionalism of the United States Armed Forces, a man who built his power on drugs, corruption, and repression will now face justice.

I would like to begin by placing recent events in context.

There is no war against Venezuela, and we did not occupy a country. There are no U.S. troops on the ground. This was an operation to aid law enforcement. The United States arrested two narcotraffickers who are now going to stand trial in the United States for the crimes they committed against our people.

Maduro is an indicted drug trafficker, not a legal head of state. We should note that Western nations including the European Union, Latin American countries and the United States, in total over 50 countries, rejected Maduro's purported re-election following the disputed 2024 elections and do not recognize him as Venezuela's legitimately elected President. In defiance of Venezuelan law, Maduro refused to peacefully cede power after Venezuelans voted him out of office in the most recent election, resorting to violence to retain office.

Nicolás Maduro and his co-conspirators plundered Venezuela's resources, leaving the populace to starve, as they turned the nation into a base for an international criminal enterprise. *Cartel de los Soles* flooded the United States with drugs, sharing the proceeds with the Cuban regime whose armed thugs oppressed the Venezuelan people while protecting Maduro from justice. As the Venezuelan people suffered poverty, starvation, and a fuel shortage despite the nation's vast reserves, Venezuelan energy production was looted to prop up the Castro regime.

Even the suffering of the Venezuelan people was weaponized against this country and Venezuela's other neighbors, as Maduro and the *Cartel de los Soles* drove

more than 8 million Venezuelans, approximately a quarter of the population, from their homes, creating the world's largest mass migration crisis.

President Trump's actions have created the conditions for Venezuelans to begin returning home and rebuilding their country. The United States is prepared to help oversee Venezuela's transition from a criminal state to a responsible partner.

All of this was accomplished without the loss of a single American life, or an ongoing military occupation. History features few examples where so much was achieved at so little cost as was accomplished four weeks ago for the American people in Caracas.

Delcy Rodríguez has assumed leadership of the interim authorities and has stated her intention to cooperate with the United States. She has committed to opening Venezuela's energy sector to American companies, providing preferential access to production, and using revenues to purchase American goods. She has pledged to end Venezuela's oil lifeline to the Cuban regime and to pursue national reconciliation with Venezuelans at home and abroad. Rodríguez is well aware of the fate of Maduro; it is our belief that her own self-interest aligns with advancing our key objectives.

We will closely monitor the performance of the interim authorities as they cooperate with our stage-based plan to restore stability to Venezuela. Make no mistake, as the President has stated, we are prepared to use force to ensure maximum cooperation if other methods fail. It is our hope that this will not prove necessary, but we will never shy away from our duty to the American people and our mission in this Hemisphere.

The President has made clear that the Western Hemisphere is our home, and we will not tolerate criminality within this Hemisphere that harms American citizens or permit territory to become platforms for our adversaries. Last month the President acted to uphold that principle in Venezuela, and we will continue to do so as is required to keep the American people safe and secure.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.