



Security Council

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Letter dated 3 April 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to write to you to alert you to the dangerous actions being taken by the Government of the United States of America, which threaten the peace and security of Venezuela and the entire region. On 1 April 2020, the United States Government announced the deployment of warships to the waters of the western Caribbean, near the Venezuelan coast. This is the latest step in the implementation of its military aggression plans against my country.

The Government of the United States of America is acting extremely irresponsibly towards its population and the rest of the world by diverting attention from its humanitarian catastrophe caused by COVID-19 and taking advantage of the worldwide disruption resulting from the largest pandemic in the last century to impose its geopolitical ambitions and open a new front of conflict by establishing a naval blockade against my country, with cruel disregard for the cries of all the peoples of the world for the efforts of the international community to be focused on fighting our common enemy, COVID-19.¹

On 1 April 2020, at the daily White House press briefing on COVID-19,² the United States Government announced that the United States Southern Command was undertaking a hostile operation in waters near the Venezuelan coast in the western Caribbean. This has the practical effect of establishing a naval blockade that will without a doubt have catastrophic consequences, particularly at a time when my country is directing all of its State capacity to the protection of the population in the context of a terrible pandemic.

While the Government of the United States of America justifies these actions before international public opinion by claiming that their purpose is to double the country's capacity to conduct counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere, the comments made against President Nicolás Maduro by Mark Esper, the Secretary of Defence of the United States of America, at the time of the announcement reveal the true intention of the United States Government: to take coercive political and military action against the Venezuelan Government and people, in violation of our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

At the press briefing, Secretary Esper stated that “the Venezuelan people continue to suffer tremendously due to Maduro’s criminal control over the country” and that “drug traffickers are seizing on this lawlessness”.³ Similarly, President

¹ <http://mppre.gob.ve/en/comunicado/bolivarian-government-repudiates-threats-by-donald-trump/>.

² www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRKRE7OglD8.

³ <https://twitter.com/MaihenH/status/1245488242104901636?s=20>.



Donald Trump said, “We must not let the drug cartels exploit the pandemic to threaten American lives.”⁴ This is a monstrous argument at a time of unprecedented air and land travel prohibitions, border closures and quarantines covering entire countries. Such opportunistic narratives are devoid of credibility and make a mockery of the intelligence of all humankind.

It is striking that the United States of America is strengthening its military presence in an area where there is little transit of narcotics, according to the World Drug Report 2019 published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)⁵ and figures published by the Government of the United States⁶ in its databases,⁷ which indicate that most (more than 80 per cent) of narcotics trafficking towards the United States of America takes place along the Pacific coast, from Colombia to Guatemala, not through the western Caribbean, near the Venezuelan coast, which is where the United States Government has established its naval presence (see annex).⁸

My Government has responsibly fulfilled its international obligations related to combating drug trafficking, as the continued strengthening of multilateral cooperation mechanisms is a policy priority. Figures published by the United Nations show that there is little drug trafficking through Venezuela, reflecting the significant efforts that have been made to destroy illicit crops and intercept and seize drug shipments. We therefore condemn the attempts to use the crucial fight against drug trafficking as a pretext to justify a false flag military operation against my country.

In letters sent to the Security Council on 6 August 2019 (S/2019/641) and 20 September 2019 (S/2019/765), we denounced at an early stage the intention of the Government of the United States of America to impose a naval blockade on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and asked the Security Council to use its powers to take action, under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations, to prevent an increase in the regional tensions resulting from the warmongering threats of the Government of the United States. Unfortunately, we have as yet seen no action from the Security Council, and we believe that that has encouraged the aggressive behaviour of the United States of America.

The announcement of these operations on 1 April came one day after the Department of State of the United States of America published a “democratic transition framework for Venezuela”,⁹ with which it seeks to supplant our national Constitution,¹⁰ presenting the document as an order that must be accepted by the Venezuelan people and institutions in order to prevent the use of military force by the United States. This is a violation of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides as follows:

All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

My country, in accordance with its pacifist tradition, will exhaust all means of dialogue and dispute settlement; however, it reserves the right to take action under Article 51 of the Charter, in the exercise of its right of self-defence, in the event of aggression on the part of the Government of the United States or the Governments of its allies.

⁴ <https://twitter.com/Southcom/status/1245482173248999424?s=20>.

⁵ <https://wdr.unodc.org/wdr2019/>.

⁶ www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-07/DIR-040-17_2017-NDTA.pdf.

⁷ https://ndews.umd.edu/sites/ndews.umd.edu/files/dea-colombian-cocaine-production_expansion-contributes-to-rise-in-us-supply2.pdf.

⁸ <https://twitter.com/EsperDoD/status/1245478372546883587?s=20>.

⁹ <https://translations.state.gov/2020/03/31/marco-para-la-transicion-democratica-de-venezuela/>.

¹⁰ <http://mppre.gob.ve/comunicado/gobierno-bolivariano-reitera-venezuela-pais-libre-soberano/>.

This progressive course of action involving threats and extortion also includes covert military operations, such as those denounced by President Nicolás Maduro in his letter of 29 March 2020 addressed to all Heads of State and Government,¹¹ in which he condemned the fact that a group of mercenaries and paramilitary personnel was being organized, trained, financed and armed in Colombian territoriality, under the auspices of the Government of Colombia and the Government of the United States of America, with a view to the perpetration of terrorist acts in my country in the last week of March 2020 and the realization of a change of Government through force of arms.¹²

The seizure of a war arsenal destined for use in Venezuela by these terrorist groups trained in Colombia, which intended to enter the country through the border region of La Guajira, was confirmed publicly by the head of the operation himself. On 26 March 2020, Clíver Alcalá, a retired general of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces and a fugitive from Venezuelan justice, stated that he had been the head of a “surgical operation” terrorist plot to assassinate President Nicolás Maduro and other high-ranking Venezuelan officials using weapons bought from United States agents and under the protection of the Government of Colombia.¹³

On multiple occasions, my Government has denounced publicly, in particular to the governmental authorities of Colombia, the conspiracies that are brewing in that country. However, we have not received a positive response with regard to the dismantling of the training centres, even though we have actually provided specific information regarding their locations; the seizure of weapons; or the arrest of the persons responsible. This proves that the Government of Colombia is violating Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) by permitting all the conditions conducive to the planning, financing and training of these groups, for the purpose of the commission of terrorist acts in my country, to exist in its territory. It is also violating the resolution by refusing to provide assistance in connection with criminal investigations or criminal proceedings relating to the financing or support of the organization of terrorist acts, even though Venezuela has always been ready to collaborate as much as possible on this important matter on the basis of mutual legal assistance and the principle of extradite or prosecute.

Moreover, the Government of Colombia and the Government of the United States of America are working together to carry out an act of aggression against Venezuela. This behaviour is irresponsible with regard to international law and is also a flagrant violation of Article 1, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations.

As if that were not enough, when these plans were made public, on 26 March 2020, the Government of the United States of America, through its Department of Justice, openly violated Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter by attempting to impose its justice system on the sovereign State of Venezuela. The Attorney General of the United States of America accused the President of the Republic, Nicolás Maduro Moros, of being a drug trafficker and offered a \$15 million reward for information leading to his arrest.¹⁴

This infamous accusation is nothing more than the reiteration of the racist and degrading narrative about the Latin America people that has been put forth during more than a century of supremacist colonial practice by the United States of America in order to justify its many military interventions across our continent. The subordination of the international legal order to the national laws of a State is unacceptable, as it contravenes the principle of sovereign equality provided for in

¹¹ <http://mppre.gob.ve/2020/03/30/carta-presidente-nicolas-maduro-a-lideres-mundo/>.

¹² <http://mppre.gob.ve/2020/03/26/vicepresidente-jorge-rodriguez-evidencias-de-plan-terrorista-involucran-a-juan-guaido/>.

¹³ www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHe-BQTfaLI&feature=youtu.be.

¹⁴ www.justice.gov/opa/video/attorney-general-barr-and-doj-officials-announce-significant-law-enforcement-actions.

Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations. Acceptance of this violation committed by the United States Government amounts to the subordination of the international legal system to the domestic legal system of the United States of America.

In violation of the precepts of international law, the United States Government is attempting to claim the non-existent unilateral and selective extraterritorial power to “prosecute” the sitting Head of State of a sovereign country, who has immunity under international law by virtue of his office. There is no law or authority supporting this course of action, as Venezuela is an independent country and its laws and justice system emanate from the sovereignty of its people, not from foreign authorities with imperial ambitions seeking to exercise colonial jurisdiction.¹⁵

In the light of the erratic tendency of the Government of the United States of America to act in contravention of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, this action poses an outright threat to the moral, physical and psychological integrity of high-level representatives of my country. It amounts to political, judicial and military coercion by a Power that is seeking to exercise its national jurisdiction in an extraterritorial manner. Moreover, all of this is happening in the midst of a catastrophic global pandemic. It is contemptible and cruel opportunism that endangers peace and security in the region.

My country observes with concern that, in these extremely exceptional circumstances in which health concerns related to COVID-19 are presenting challenges with regard to the functioning the Security Council, the United States of America, acting like an outlaw State, is taking advantage of the opportunity to move forward with its plans for military aggression.

In previous communications, and under less pressing circumstances, we have asked the Security Council to use its powers under Article 34 of the Charter of the United Nations to open an investigation into this situation, as we consider that it “is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security”. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we have not had an effective response from the Council, and the situation has deteriorated in terms of security and respect for international law.

In the light of the above, my country requests that the Security Council take strong action by declaring the warmongering policy of the United States of America and Colombia against Venezuela to be a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security. We also request that the Security Council, in accordance with the powers conferred upon it by virtue of Article 39 of the Charter, urge those Governments to end their policy of aggression against my country in order to prevent the escalation of tensions in the region. At the same time, we join the call made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, on 23 March 2020, for an immediate cessation of hostilities in all conflicts so that, together, we can focus our energies on combating the terrible pandemic that is devastating humankind.

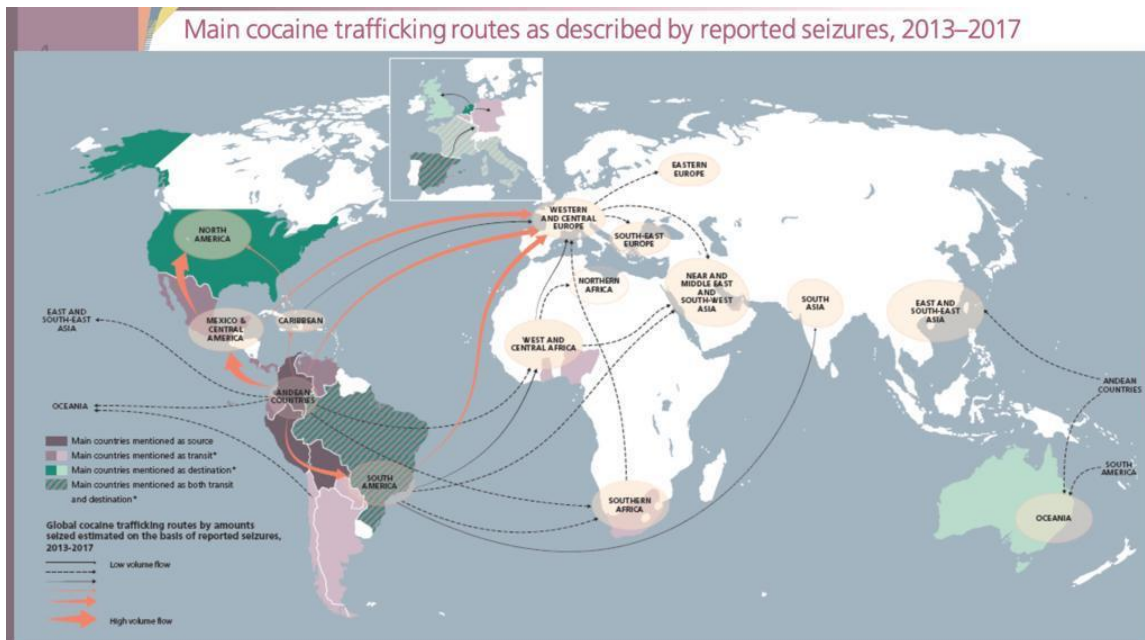
I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Samuel Moncada**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations

¹⁵ <http://mppre.gob.ve/comunicado/venezuela-denuncia-arremetida-eeuu-falsas-vulgares-acusaciones/>.

Annex to the letter dated 3 April 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

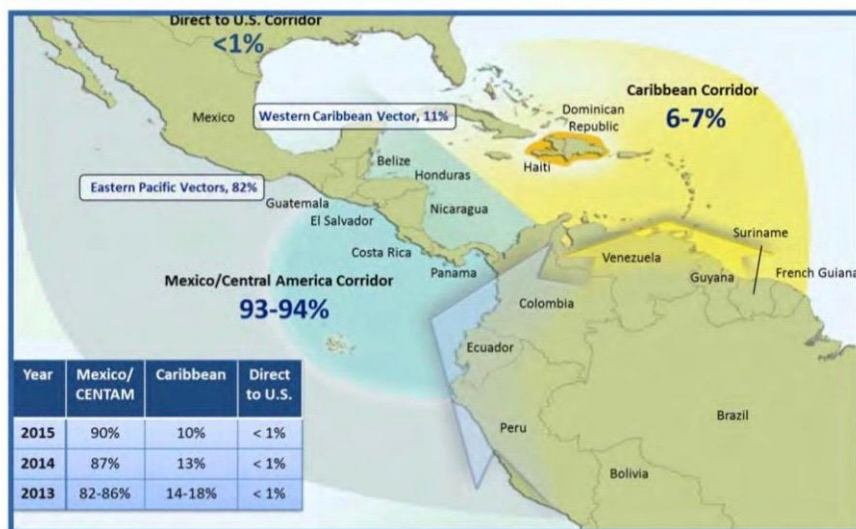
Figure I



Source: World Drug Report 2019, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.¹⁶

Figure II

(U) Figure 4. Cocaine Movement North from South America in 2016.



Source: U.S. Government Database of Drug Movement and Seizure Events

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration of the United States of America, October 2017.¹⁷


¹⁶ <https://wdr.unodc.org/wdr2019/>.

¹⁷ www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-07/DIR-040-17_2017-NDTA.pdf.

Figure III

 **Enhanced Counter-Narcotic Operations** 

On 1 April 2020, U.S. Southern Command will begin enhanced counternarcotics operations in the East Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea to disrupt the flow of drugs in support of Presidential national security objectives.



A flood of enforcement resources...

Ships

- Navy destroyers
- Coast Guard Cutters
- Navy littoral combat ships

Aircraft

- Helicopters on destroyers and cutters
- Navy P-8 patrol aircraft
- Air Force E-3 AWACS aircraft (ISR)
- Air Force E-8 JSTARS aircraft (ISR)

Ground Forces

- Security Forces Assistance Brigade (SFAB) Company

Position of the warships deployed as part of the counter-narcotic operation announced by the Government of the United States of America on 1 April 2020, according to the United States Department of Defence.¹⁸

¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/EsperDoD/status/1245478372546883587?s=20>.