

## Opinion

Venezuela under attack with border dispute as pretext Page 8

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## Politics

Socialist primaries invigorate 2015 elections

Despite ongoing opposition attempts to portray the Bolivarian Revolution as a dwindling political movement, recent nationwide held by the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) indicate just the opposite. With over 3,000,000 people voting for candidates to December's National Assembly election, the PSUV mobilized six times the number of voters who participated in opposition primaries weeks earlier. Page 3

U.S. Senator meets with opposition and officials

Republican Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Bob Croker visited Venezuela this month. While radical opposition politician Maria Corina Machado, among others, celebrated Croker's visit as an opportunity to "complement the perception of the Venezuelan crisis", Croker also met with public officials tasked with protecting human rights. Page 4

Venezuela Highlights Human Rights Record

Venezuelan Attorney General Luisa Ortega Diaz went to Geneva this month to present her country's ongoing efforts to protect and advance human rights. Insisting on the democratic and inclusive nature of the country's Bolivarian Revolution (1999 to present), Diaz questioned those who equate violent street demonstrations with peaceful protest. Page 5

## Integration

Venezuela and Palestine defend medical school program

In response to recent media reports belittling Venezuela's solidarity with Palestine, the governments of both countries reiterated their firm commitment to supporting Palestinian youth who want to study medicine in the Caribbean nation. The comments came after the Associated Press claimed dozens of Palestinian students were quitting the program. Page 6

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## Venezuelan people and President committed to peaceful settlement of dispute with Guyana



In response to hostile rhetoric from US-backed Guyanese President David Granger, the Venezuelan government this month launched a massive campaign to educate its people about the historic dispute with neighboring Guyana while at the same time calling on relevant international institutions to encourage Granger to come to the table and discuss the contested territory known simply as the Essequibo. Speaking to the National Assembly, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro committed his country to finding a peaceful resolution to the tensions with Guyana, questioning President Granger's decision to favor transnational oil firm Exxon over regional integration and development. Page 2

## Venezuela blasts U.S. official for defending disgraced politician

T/ Telesur English  
P/ Agencies

A top U.S. official is defending former Venezuelan politician Maria Corina Machado, who was suspended from office for violating Venezuela's laws.

Venezuela hit back at U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson Wednesday, after she took to social media to defend a controversial, far-right politician who was suspended from holding office.

Comments like Jacobson's make it "very difficult" for Venezuela and the United States to improve their currently rocky



relations, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez said.

"Respect the institutions of Venezuela, respect our democratic life," Rodriguez said via Twitter. She followed up Spanish-language tweets with a few in English.

The tweets were provoked by a tirade of anti-Venezuela and anti-Cuba tweets from Jacobson earlier in the day, in which she

accuses both countries of problems with their democratic processes. In one of them she specifically mentions Maria Corina Machado, who was is currently facing a 12 month suspension from holding public office in Venezuela, after the government's auditing body for elected representatives said it found evidence of inconsistencies in Machado's financial statements.



## Venezuela detains two ex-military officers for suspected drug trafficking

T/ Z.C. Dutka, venezuelanalysis.com  
P/ AVN

Last week, two former members of the Venezuelan armed forces (FANB) were arrested on suspicion of drug trafficking. The pair are accused by local and international courts of working with drug cartels to ship cocaine to Mexico and the United States.

Vassyly Villarroel Ramirez, 43, and Robert Alexander Pinto Gil, 32, were detained by Venezuelan police at a road block in Caracas.

Villarroel has been accused by the US of using his military authority from 2004-09 to provide "protection" for large shipments of cocaine arriving from Colombia to Caracas's international airport, Maiquetia. From there, the cocaine would be shipped to Mexico and eventually distributed in the United States.

According to Venezuelan interior minister Gustavo Gonzalez, the former captain is a leader of the infamous Forties Cartel, as well as a "financier and protector of the illicit capital of the Sinaloa Cartel", which was headed by the recently escaped kingpin Chapo Guzman.

Pinto, a former lieutenant, was detained in 2010 after being captured with 336 kilos of cocaine, though he escaped from prison two months later.

The United States government and private media have repeatedly accused the Venezuelan socialist government of abetting drug traffic regionally, partly due to the country's refusal to accept DEA mandates within their borders.

Last week's arrest was conducted through an operation led by the National Anti-Drugs Command, developed under the ongoing Operation Liberation and Protection of the People (OLP), spearheaded by the Maduro administration.



## Venezuela seeks diplomatic solution to dispute with Guyana

T/ Paul Dobson  
P/ Minci

Following months of tension between Venezuela and Guyana, the national debate over a territorial dispute which dates back to colonial times continued this month, as Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro advanced in efforts to find a peaceful diplomatic solution to the problem.

“Today it is very positive to see the public debate our history and the various phases which we have lived” explained President Maduro, whose government is leading efforts to distribute brochures, historical documents, and pamphlets in public institutions, workplaces, and the means of communication to increase consciousness about the colonial abuses which are yet to be resolved in the Caribbean.

“The Essequibo has always been part of Venezuela” exclaimed Maduro in reference to the 159,500km<sup>2</sup> strip of land which is rich in natural resources in dispute between the two neighbors.

“We are reclaiming what is fair and what belongs to us, what was taken from us by the British Empire”, he explained.

The Essequibo historically was part of Greater Colombia (Venezuela, Panama, Colombia, and Ecuador) following the end of the Spanish colonial rule in the region, and upon its break up into sovereign nations, the zone continued to be part of Venezuela.

In 1899 a colonial settlement ruled that the Essequibo would come under the control of the British Empire who ruled Guyana at the time. Venezuela did not have any representation at the settlement, but was represented by two North Americans. It was later unveiled that bribes and development contracts passed hands as the British and Americans divided up the Caribbean.

Following decades of protests, an international accord was signed in Geneva in 1966 by the British, Guyanese, and Venezuelan Governments. The Accord nullified the 1899 ruling, hence returning the Essequibo to its original owner. It also established that no nation was to set up development or economic projects in the region, and that the solution to the dispute must be diplomatic.

Years of abandonment from both parts followed, until early this year when the Guyanese

Government granted exploration rights to the US multinational oil firm, Exxon Mobil, who found vast oilfields off the Essequibo’s coastline.

“The Geneva accord is the basis of a fair, legal, reclamation in the mark of international law” stated Maduro in addressing the Venezuelan National Assembly. “President David Granger (of Guyana) is failing to recognize this agreement, is failing to recognize international law, and we hope that sooner rather than later he rectifies his position which is damaging the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, our brother people, and is creating unnecessary tension in South America and the Caribbean”, he continued.

“Venezuela maintains its position that the Arbitrary Court of 1899 is nullified”, Maduro affirmed.

“There are plenty of documents of evidence, and I hope that during this national debate we can instruct the people regarding the strategic objectives which the imperial diplomacy saw in capturing the wealth of the South” explained Maduro, whilst displaying original maps which include the Essequibo in Venezuela’s borders.

the situation at the recent Summit of MERCOSUR, the Common Market of the South as well as ordering his cabinet to “deploy themselves in an intense, far reaching tour to all the Caribbean and Latin American nations to explain the fair cause of Venezuela and undo the lies which are being created”.

### GRANGER VISITS U.S.

Harvard educated rightist Guyanese President David Granger demonstrated his political alliances by visiting the US this month, seeking advice and support in the face of a unified Latin American voice against the actions taken by his Government. Whilst in the US, Granger is to meet with “high level representatives of the State Department”.

We “have plain authority to explore and exploit the living and non-living resources within our jurisdiction” stated Granger recently, whilst emphasizing that “we are not going to allow” the Essequibo to be recuperated by Venezuela.

“The actual Government of Granger forms part of a strategy to provoke Venezuela, to stimulate the drums of hate, of contempt towards Venezuela” denounced Maduro, repeatedly accusing Granger of “not representing the Guyanese people but rather representing Exxon Mobil” and their imperialist pretensions.

“There is a political, diplomatic, economic, and media operation against Venezuela to try to create high intensity conflicts... who could be behind this? Where are so many resources being spent? A conflict in the Caribbean will only benefit European and North American imperialist interests!”, Maduro reiterated to the nation.

### BORDERS REASSESSED

As part of his policies to address the situation, President Maduro has created the Presidential State Council for the Guarantee of the Territorial Integrity and Border Affairs which is comprised of high ranking military and political figures and which will be presided over by Executive Vice President, Jorge Arreaza.

This body will, according to Maduro, “guarantee the territorial sovereignty with all the weight of the law and diplomatic channels, having the great task of ordering, rescuing, and fulfilling the validity of the work done on the theme of the Essequibo during the last two centuries”.

### MEDIATION SOUGHT

As part of his policy to find a diplomatic solution, President Maduro has requested mediation from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the United Nations (UN). This “has no military solution” he pronounced.

“Venezuela has understood this since the 19th and 20th centuries and today we still understand it. Peaceful, firm, clear, and direct diplomacy are needed”.

As part of his efforts, Maduro sent a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, requesting that he “initiate proceedings for the designation of a personal representative with the objective of advancing in accordance with the Geneva Agreement”, following the passing away of Norman Girvan who filled the role until 2014.

In the letter, Maduro explains that “as Head of State, I am obligated, in the defense of the rights of Venezuela, to call your attention to the behavior of Guyana which has tried to unilaterally take over vast areas – both land and maritime – of the territory in controversy without notification nor any type of convention” as well as “ignoring and failing to recognize the validity of the Geneva Accord of 1966, showing an obstinate and ambivalent attitude and inflicting serious and grave offenses on my country and my people”.

As part of diplomatic efforts, Maduro also exposed

# Socialist primaries invigorate electoral process

T/ Paul Dobson  
P/ PSUV

With massive participation, the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) held primaries this past 28th June for the upcoming national assembly elections, in a process which President Maduro described as “inspiring”.

With 1,162 PSUV pre-candidates disputing 98 candidatures in the 87 circumscriptions in the country, the voting centers had to extend their hours until 10pm to cope with a larger than expected turnout. Voting was open to all citizens regardless of their political affiliation or party membership. The 3,162,400 votes cast surpass the 2,539,852 votes of their last internal elections in 2010, and correspond to over half the 6,193,662 votes cast for them in the 2014 Presidential elections.

“We are satisfied that the PSUV has called primary elections to select its candidates to the National Assembly and what we have seen today is an immense manifestation of popular participation” stated the First Vice President of the PSUV and current President of the country’s National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello.

“Today we have received a very clear message from the people”, affirmed PSUV President Nicolas Maduro.

“Two models are battling each other: one from the right which excludes its voters, its leaders, the youth, this is the model which Venezuela knew for 40 years, the elitist model” he explained in ref-



erence to the limited opposition primaries held in May.

“And here is the model of direct democracy, of inclusion, constitutionality, where there is equal campaign propaganda, where the best candidates are being selected” he went on to explain in reference to the PSUV primary process.

“We congratulate the people and we are preparing for new victories”.

## “THE REVOLUTION WON”

The PSUV stressed that their pre-candidates were not competing against each other but rather offering their services to the people in a non-competitive selection process.

Candidates had access to equal publicity and often appeared campaigning together,

underlining the unity of the revolutionary process and putting to rest rumors of divisions and currents within the governing party.

“With much participation of the People across the national territory, the primaries were historic due to their high political content” explained Cabello. “Today we hear the mandate of the People, today the nation, the Revolution, Chavismo, and true democracy won”.

## “MAKING THINGS DIFFICULT FOR THE RIGHT

Following the results of the primaries, many started making comparisons with the opposition Democratic Unified Roundtable (MUD) primaries held in May, which took place in only 33 circumscriptions.

Leader of the MUD alliance, Henrique Capriles Radonski, described the PSUV primaries as a “farce”, accusing the PSUV of suffering from “shortages: shortages of people”.

Diosdado Cabello, however, interpreted the primaries in a much more positive light, claiming that “these elections make things difficult for you (the opposition)... the 6th of December we will be celebrating the victory of the Revolution in the streets and they will be continue to be bitter”.

PSUV electoral campaign manager, Jorge Rodriguez, explained that they achieved a much higher national participation than the MUD, as well as out-doing them in the few sectors where the MUD decided to test their strength: “in the

33 circumscriptions where the MUD held primaries they accumulated 543,723 votes and (in the same 33 sectors) we accumulated 1,287,743 votes, i.e. 70.3% against 29.7%”.

On a national level “we had surpassed the votes of the MUD primaries by 9.30am”, he explained.

## GPP AWAITS “DEBATE”

Following the naming of the PSUV candidates, the allied parties of the pro-government Great Patriotic Pole (GPP) congratulated the PSUV on their primaries but also invited them to the debating table to negotiate a unified list of candidates for the upcoming elections, taking into account other political forces within the revolutionary process in an ample, anti-imperialist, patriotic alliance.

“We await the debate with the PSUV and the GPP to unify their great, necessary, historic effort and to guarantee another victory for the revolutionary movement” stated the Patria Para Todos Party.

The Venezuelan Communist Party “congratulated the successful session of the PSUV, which shows that the majority of the People are willing to participate to preserve this process of changes, but that they also want to deepen it. We reaffirm our commitment to struggle together, our priority is total unity”.

Many consider that economic problems and continuing crime levels may threaten a socialist majority in the National Assembly, but the defining factor may end up being the unity achieved within the GPP, with the opposition’s MUD alliance marred by infighting and lack of participation.

## U.S. solidarity delegation visits Venezuela, praises democratic model

T/ Lucas Koerner, venezuelanalysis.com  
E/ COI  
P/ Defensoria del Pueblo

A group of twenty US social justice activists visited Venezuela this month as part of a delegation in solidarity with the South American nation following escalating US aggression in past months.

Organized by the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), the Marin Task Force on the Americas (TFA), School of the Americas Watch, and Alliance for Global Justice, the delegation comes in direct response to the Obama administration’s

executive order this past March branding Venezuela a “national security threat” and imposing a further round of sanctions against top officials.

“When the US sanctions happened, we knew we had to come here and in any way possibly show our solidarity with the Venezuelan people and the Venezuelan government and explain that our government’s policies do not represent us”, explained TFA director Dale Sorensen, who has coordinated solidarity delegations to Venezuela since 2004.

With the December 6 parliamentary elections fast approach-



ing, the group had the opportunity to sit down with Tibisay Lucena, president of Venezuela’s National Electoral Council (CNE), which has been celebrated internationally for its fairness and rigor.

“The democratic processes that we’ve been able to ob-

serve as an organization and in our individual capacities have been inspirational model that even former United States president [Jimmy Carter] has said the world should follow”, affirmed NLG president-elect Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan,

who has traveled to Venezuela several times as an electoral observer.

Nonetheless, the delegates arrived in the midst of new efforts on the part of the Venezuelan opposition to delegitimize the country’s electoral process, pinning recognition of the December 6 outcome on the presence of Organization of American States (OAS) and EU observers.

For Bannan, this call for observation by “political bodies” such as the OAS and the EU in lieu of the CELAC or UNASUR represents a “political request that has nothing to do with a sense of trust or distrust in the electoral system”, especially given that the OAS has been widely criticized for its pro-US bias in judging election outcomes.

# U.S. senator meets with venezuelan opposition

T/ Rachael Boothroyd,  
venezuelanalysis.com  
E/ COI  
P/ Agencies

Republican Senator and Chairman for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Corker, arrived in Venezuela this month to take part in a low profile meeting with the country's political opposition and Venezuelan government figures.

While official voices from the US government have been less than forthcoming with information surrounding Corker's visit, which has generally been kept under wraps, rightwing hardliner Maria Corina Machado said that she had written to Corker and a number of other senators recommending that they visit the country.

"I firmly believe that your visit is an opportunity to complement the perception that you have of the Venezuelan crisis. In this spirit of urgency, I would like to invite you as part of a bipartisan delegation to consult with our political leaders, civil society representatives and victims of the repression of the political and economic crisis which worsens everyday", Machado wrote.

Machado, who has links to former US President George W. Bush, confirmed to Spanish news agency EFE that Corker had met with opposition leaders in the US embassy after touching down in the Venezuelan capital.

The meeting was later also confirmed to have taken place by the opposition's principal coalition, the Roundtable of Democratic Unity (MUD).

"We asked and highlighted to him the need for greater international pressure on the issue of all political prisoners, but he told us that that wasn't on the discussion agenda with the government", said MUD legislator, Julio Borges.

The opposition member of parliament, who has been linked to last year's violent "Guarimba" protests but is protected from prosecution by parliamentary immunity, told press that the MUD had also petitioned the senator for action on "three main points," including human rights, press freedoms and international observation of the upcoming December parliamentary elections later this year.



The demands correspond to an opposition-led media campaign that has intensified in recent weeks, with the MUD accusing the government of unproven human rights violations, as well as of holding so-called "political prisoners" ahead of this December's National Assembly elections.

Machado has been particularly active in the media over

the past few weeks for the public launch of her new political party, "Vente Venezuela". The politician and engineer, who garnered less than 5% of the vote when she stood in the 2012 opposition presidential primaries, has given a series of interviews claiming that the country is "heading into an election in the midst of a dictatorship" and urging people to "step up

pressure in the streets" at a forum in the Central University of Venezuela.

Nonetheless, the majority of Venezuelans have so far failed to heed Machado's calls for further protests, with the notable exception of ongoing violent altercations with police in Tachira state.

While the MUD coalition has attempted to frame Corker's

visit as emblematic of "growing international concern surrounding the situation in Venezuela", other news agencies have chalked Corker's decision to visit to improved dialogue between Caracas and Washington.

On Wednesday, the Senator sustained a meeting with Venezuelan Ombudsman, William Tarek Saab, where the two men discussed issues relating to "democracy, human rights and national peace".

"We have informed Senator Corker of the real situation affecting the Venezuelan people in terms of guaranteeing their human rights in the country, which is different to how the transnational media characterise it", stated Saab to press.

Corker's visit follows on from what has been described as a detente in Venezuela-US relations, which reached boiling point earlier this year when President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order saddling a third set of Venezuelan government officials with sanctions. The order was reportedly carried out on the advice of anti-Venezuelan Republican Senators and bypassed congressional approval.

Nonetheless, the Venezuelan government has held several discreet meetings with senior US diplomat and State Department envoy, Thomas Shannon, since April in a bid to ease tensions and mend the tattered diplomatic relationship.

## Comptroller applies corruption law to several tainted politicians

T/ Paul Dobson  
P/ CDO

With the Law Against Corruption in hand, Venezuelan Comptroller General Manuel Galindo Ballesteros took action this month to disqualify numerous corrupt politicians who were looking to run in the December Parliamentary elections.

Maria Corina Machado, an outspoken ultra-right politician, was disqualified from holding public office for 12 months due to "inconsistencies and the withholding of information which should have been presented in her juridical declaration of social security payments and allowances which she declared to the National Assembly", Galindo explained.

The Law Against Corruption stipulates a sanction of

administrative disqualification for 12 months. Machado, who is also facing legal proceedings for conspiracy, rejected the disqualification and promised to appeal.

Support arrived from her allies in the pro-US opposition bloc, the Democratic Unified Roundtable (MUD), who cited "ferocious persecution" and "crafty aggression" from the "misogynistic regime" against Machado.

President of the National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, however, explained that "Galindo directly asked if, whilst a lawmaker, she received financial resources or goods which compensate the costs of living such as food, housing, or transport allowances. She responded that she didn't. However, a Deputy receives more in such allowances than in wages!"



Rightist ex mayors Enzo Scarano and Daniel Ceballos were also disqualified for 12 months by the Comptroller. Both were recently imprisoned for their roles in the street violence which left 43 dead in 2014. Though both had hoped to participate in this year's national assembly elections, they are now disqualified due to the financial irregularities that plagued their time in office.

Ex-Governor of Zulia State, Pablo Perez, was also disquali-

fied from holding public offices by the Ombudsman for 10 years under Article 105 of the Organic Law of the Comptroller and the National System of Fiscal Control.

Perez is currently being investigated by the National Assembly for financial irregularities during his mandate in oil-rich Zulia, including the disappearance of 63,567 student grants, recurrent payments for public works, and irregularities in the regional health accounts.

# VENEZUELA defends human rights record at U.N.



T/ Paul Dobson  
P/ Agencies

The issue of human rights are frequently used in attempts to delegitimize the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela. This month, Caracas tackled the issue, speaking at the UN and inviting the entire country to contribute ideas to strengthening ongoing efforts at protecting human rights.

Speaking at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Venezuelan Attorney General Luisa Ortega Diaz affirmed “in Venezuela the right to life is inviolable, it’s sacred”.

“There is very real freedom of expression, access to information, the right to peaceful protest, and the continual holding of elections”, she added.

Following last year’s violent uprising which looked to overthrow the democratically-elected government, Diaz explained that “it’s very serious that in the international arena people say that the 43 deaths from the violent deeds of 2014 were due to police actions. Only 6 of these 43 are due to this and there are 14 policemen behind bars for them”, she explained.

Diaz also explained that “the right to protest and meet is sacred in the judicial ordering

of the country as long as it is pacific and unarmed... if these conditions are absent then, simply, it is no longer a right”.

In relation to prisons, Diaz assured the UN Council that Venezuela has “eradicated torture” and has “special legislation which prohibits it”.

“If there were a policeman or military who incurred in this practice, we would process them immediately” she reassured. The state is also making advances in “attending to prisoners whilst guaranteeing their rights” such as recreation and education.

Finally, Diaz reiterated the political rights and freedom of expression in the country. “Since 1999, the people have participated in 19 electoral processes, demonstrating their democratic vocation and the reaffirmation of sovereignty and self-determination through secret, free, and universal voting”.

“This”, she explained, contrasts sharply with “our cruel past”, which the state is investigating “with the objective of sanctioning the human rights violations which happened between 1958 and 1998”.

Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez summarized that Venezuela is “writing a new history in human rights. The Bolivarian Revolution gave a consti-

tutional dimension to them, guaranteeing, promoting and protecting them”.

## NATIONAL PLAN

Venezuelan Executive Vice President, Jorge Arreaza, presented a National Plan for Human Rights 2015-2019 to the nation this month, inviting civil society and social movements to participate in a consultative process to enrich it.

The proposed plan addresses five areas: the construction of a liberating culture; institutional strengthening; the leading participation of the people; relationships with international human rights organisms; and human rights focus in legislation, politics, and state actions.

The proposals include a series of measures in the commune movement, including creating “areas which promote human rights to the rest of the community”, and in the international arena they look to “take steps forward in the understanding, respect, and guaranteeing of Venezuela’s human rights which are often misunderstood”.

Also, the proposal suggests “the promoting of a human rights system within the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA)”.



## “Here there is a state that respects human rights”

T/ Lucas Koerner, venezuelanalysis.com  
E/ COI  
P/ CdO

According to human rights activist Sister Eugenia Russian, president of Venezuela’s oldest human rights organization, the Latin American Foundation of Human Rights and Social Development (FUNDALATIN), “all you have to do is walk around the city and see the gains in order to see that here there is a state that respects human rights, a Constitution that guarantees human rights”.

“These are aspects that must be emphasized”, she added, “though there are indeed many things that need to be improved, which we are working towards insofar as the people are becoming more conscious and self-educated. It’s not only the responsibility of the state, but of society together with its state powers that must work in synchrony with the people”.

In a recent interview with *Venezuelanalysis.com*, Sister Eugenia explained the nature of human rights advocacy in Venezuela:

“Among the NGOs that have been around during this political process Venezuela is experiencing, we encounter CONFAVIT, which was trying to seek redress for [the massive human rights violations that occurred during] the Caracazo [1989], only to later take on a rightwing party posture, abandoning precisely the mission for which it was created...”

We also encounter other [human rights] NGOs who are very clearly paid by transnationals and the US, who want to destabilize all other models of society different from theirs. The US, which is the number one violator of human rights that has never ratified any

of the international [human rights] conventions, wants everyone else to uphold human rights. The US is the principal financier of NGOs to destabilize other countries, above all countries that are seeking to build another world, one not defined by the commodification of life, of the mother Earth. These NGOs have been created to constantly attack Venezuela and the other Latin American countries with leftwing tendencies that have sought to radically transform democratic structures and visibilize the poor, accusing them of human rights violations and appropriating spaces such as the OAS [Organization of American States] and the UN, where principal human rights violators like the US have weight...

NGOs like PROVEA and others go constantly to the meetings of the OAS general assembly to denounce Venezuela, demanding ‘freedom of expression’, ‘freedom for political prisoners’, etc. What they fail to see are all of the rights that are guaranteed in Venezuela, such as the right to healthcare, in which Cuban and Venezuelan doctors attend to our poor people who never before had access to medical attention in their own neighborhoods. They [the NGOs] don’t see that now poor people are included in the university system, that elderly people have learned to read and write within their communities that were always invisibilized. They don’t see the advances at the level of housing, nor do they see all the advances in nutrition, where the poor now have the possibility of eating three times a day, an achievement which was recognized by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization”.

# Latin America shows solidarity with the people of Greece



T/ Paul Dobson  
P/ Agencies

Abundant solidarity flowed from the shores of Latin America to the embattled Greek people this month following their historic rejection of the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity measures.

“The Greek people have spoken with a giants voice – 61% of men and women defeated the fear campaign and gave a great leap towards dignity and bravery” stated Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro at activities to mark 204 years since his country’s independence.

“We consider it to be our victory too, of the brave people

of Latin America. Long live Greece!”, he affirmed.

Maduro, who held a “good and long conversation” with his “companion Alexis Tsipras”, classified the behavior of the IMF and ECB as “financial terrorism”, highlighting that “the Greek people did not kneel to them. They have the right to life and they will construct their own economy...

President Maduro declared that Venezuela will take all necessary steps to turn their solidarity into concrete actions which support the Greek posture against the pressure of Europe.

they have given a lesson to the world”.

Venezuela, who broke relations with the IMF and World Bank in 2006/7, offered some advice to Greece.

“Don’t be afraid. The road of breaking ties with Capital, with the IMF, to liberate oneself from the bonds which try to swallow the blood of the peoples, the wealth of the countries, this is the correct road and we admire what the Greek people are doing. It is a war to stop the Greek people from taking those steps towards freedom and independence, to stop Europe from waking from its slumber, from its domination”, stated President Maduro.

The Venezuelan National Assembly also declared in favor of Greece, explaining that “it fills us with great satisfaction and joy as the people are talking and they are saying to the dictators of the world’s wealth that they should go find some other place to make profit... Greece is a spark in the forest: the other peoples of the world will start talking with the same voice, with a dignified and courageous voice”, proclaimed President of the National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello.

President Maduro declared that Venezuela will take all necessary steps to turn their solidarity into concrete actions which support the Greek posture against the pressure of Europe.

“We have various agreements (with Greece) such as those in energy, touristic cooperation, commercial, cultural, and educational agreements. We are going to further relations with Greece to the highest level”, he declared.

Solidarity also arrived from the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of our America (ALBA), which issued a statement expressing “its firmest support and solidarity to the people and government of Greece” who are “confronting the voracious siege of world financial capitalism”. ALBA “sends a message to breathe life into the brave People and Government of Greece” in the knowledge that “another world is possible”.

Argentinian President Cristina Fernandez also expressed her support of the Greek resistance to the IMF, after her country lived through similar circumstances in 2001 with an induced IMF default.

“Today Greece is living through a situation which is almost identical to that which we lived through: the drama of terrible, neoliberal policies of permanent adjustments which drag misery, hunger and unemployment into the country”.

The Greek government later signed a new agreement with Europe which includes many of the neoliberal policies it committed to fighting against. As a result, protests have erupted across the country.

## Venezuela and Palestine dispel rumors over scholarship program

T/ Lucas Koerner, venezuelanalysis.com  
E/ COI  
P/ AVN

Venezuelan and Palestinian authorities reaffirmed their close ties this month following rumors of diplomatic friction circulated by an Associated Press report. The two countries, with firm relations since the start of the Bolivarian Revolution (1999), denounced the rumors as “attempts to discredit” solidarity between both nations.

Titled “Palestinians Quit Medical Study in Venezuela”, a recent AP story cited anonymous sources suggesting that one-third of Palestinian medical students studying in Venezuela had dropped out of the program, which allegedly “raised diplomatic tensions between the two allies”.

These allegations were, however, roundly dismissed by the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry, which denounced the AP article as a “speculative work based on anonymous sources” intended to “discredit the initiative of the Bolivarian government to support Palestinian students in studying medicine in Venezuela”.

According to the Ministry, 129 Palestinians are currently in Venezuela pursuing their medical studies “with complete normality”, with two dozen now in their final stage of training as integral communitarian doctors – an intensive training program designed by Cuba and recognized internationally for its successful expansion of medical care to numerous countries’ poorest citizens.

In a press statement, the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry also



denied rumors of diplomatic tension between the two nations, insisting that “relations between Venezuela and Palestine, sister peoples and governments, have been and are evidently excellent”.

The AP story, which was republished in various newspapers including the privately-owned Venezuelan daily El Nacional, as well as the New York Times, and Israel’s Ha’aretz and Ynet, was also

flatly rejected by the Palestinian Ministry of Education.

The Palestinian Ministry asserted that those students who have left the program had done so for personal reasons unrelated to the quality of the program, which it described as “one of the best medical accomplishments which helped reduce the high mortality rate among women and children”.

Contrary to the allegations circulated by AP, relations be-

tween Ramallah and Caracas remain “strong and deep”, the Palestinian Ministry stated.

For his part, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki reaffirmed his government’s commitment to continue the program.

“We continue to work with the official authorities in Venezuela to bring new students to study medicine and other specializations offered by universities and schools in Venezuela”.

Last November, 119 Palestinian medical students arrived in Venezuela as part of the Yasser Arafat Scholarship Program, which seeks to train 1,000 Palestinians in diverse fields.

Under Chavez and Maduro, Venezuela has become one of Palestine’s firmest allies, supplying oil to Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories at a preferential rate as well as shipping humanitarian aid to Gaza during Israel’s brutal assault last summer that killed thousands of innocent Palestinians.



## U.S.-Venezuela detente still going, for now

T/ Mark Weisbrot\* - Al Jazeera English  
E/ COI  
P/ Agencies

For a couple of months I have noted the unprecedented diplomatic thaw between the US and Venezuela. Now it is getting some attention in the major media.

“The United States and Venezuela have embarked on their most extensive dialogue in years in an attempt to improve their acrimonious relations, according to a senior U.S. administration official”, Reuters reported this week, citing an unnamed source.

On Thursday afternoon, July 2, just as everyone (including much of the media) was skipping town for the three-day holiday weekend, Secretary of State John Kerry issued a statement sending his “best wishes to the people of Venezuela as you celebrate 204 years of independence on July 5”.

“I am pleased that we have found common cause in our support for Haiti’s elections,

reconstruction, and development, as well as in our shared commitment to the Colombian government’s ongoing efforts to achieve a lasting peace”, Kerry said.

“I look forward to further cooperation between our people and governments as we seek ways to improve a historically strong relationship that has endured for nearly two centuries”.

Remarkably, the statement contained no criticisms or remarks that might be seen as insulting to the Venezuelan government. I cannot remember seeing a comparable statement about Venezuela from the U.S. Secretary of State for at least 14 years.

Of course, not everyone is happy with this about-face in relations. As I noted last month, efforts to sabotage the diplomatic effort were under way rather soon after it began. There will be more such efforts, and some of the reactions of the right to the Obama administration’s opening to Venezuela could provide a preview.

Carl Meacham, director of the Americas Program at the well-funded, center-right think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) was a senior foreign policy advisor and staffer for former Senator Richard Lugar, the six-term Republican from Indiana who was very influential on foreign policy. It was Lugar’s office that torpedoed President Barack Obama’s 2010 attempt to restore ambassadorial relations with Venezuela. So Meacham, who is well connected with State Department officials and others in Washington who are involved in Latin America, is likely to have a good idea what the strategy is for people within and outside the Obama administration who do not want normal relations with Venezuela.

Meacham wrote last month that one of the objectives of the Obama administration’s current overtures is “ensuring the presence of Organization of American States (OAS) and European Union observ-

ers in Venezuela’s upcoming parliamentary elections”. But the Obama administration hasn’t said anything about such observers. It is possible that Meacham is saying this because the demand for OAS and EU observers will be part of the right-wing strategy to de-legitimize the upcoming National Assembly elections in December.

The strategy makes sense if the right can convince the media that the demand for OAS and EU observers is a reasonable one, that these observers are likely to provide an independent assessment of the integrity of the election process. However, the OAS has a very mixed track record. In 2000, for example, the OAS reversed its original approval of Haitian parliamentary elections after Washington decided it didn’t like the results. In 2011, also in Haiti, an OAS commission stacked with pro-Washington members took the astounding and unprecedented step of actually reversing the result — not recommending a

new election or a recount, as is sometimes done with disputed elections — of a first-round presidential election. These and other interventions by the OAS raise questions about whether an impartial delegation from the OAS could be established, given Washington’s strong influence over the OAS bureaucracy.

Recall that in Venezuela’s presidential election of April 2013, the United States was the last government in the world to recognize the result — and only under pressure from the rest of the region, including Brazil. But there was no doubt about the result. In Venezuela, voters press computer touch-screens and receive printed receipts, which they then deposit in ballot boxes. For a random sample amounting to about half of the total ballots, the paper votes are compared with the electronic tally in the presence of observers and witnesses. In the 2013 election, a statistical analysis showed that the probability of getting the official vote count if the election were actually stolen was less than one in 25,000 trillion.

Yet the White House in 2013 wanted a “recount” before Washington would recognize the result. Given that there were violent opposition street protests at the time seeking to overturn the election results, this was not only dishonest but — until Obama finally gave in — quite a hostile and reckless position to take. This is just one of many episodes, going back to the U.S.-backed military coup of 2002, that help explain why it is difficult for many Venezuelans to trust the U.S. government.

So it won’t be surprising if there are attempts to destroy the White House’s detente initiative that involve conflict over the upcoming elections. But as long as the White House’s new approach lasts, it’s a good thing. With the U.S. scheduled to open an embassy in Cuba on July 20 for the first time in half a century, more Americans and maybe even some of our politicians and journalists might begin to wonder why we can’t have normal relations with Venezuela as well.

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## Opinion

## U.S. targets Venezuela using border dispute as pretext

T/ Eric Draitser- TeleSUR English  
E/ COI  
P/ Agencies

The ongoing border dispute between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its eastern neighbor Guyana is no simple disagreement over an arbitrary line on a map. Actually, it is a conflict of significant political and economic dimensions, one which will have deep and far-reaching geopolitical implications in the near and long term.

The area in question is known as Guayana Esequiba (Essequibo), a region with competing territorial claims going back more than a century to a time when British imperial interests dominated the contours of the political map of much of the world, including Latin America. Since 1966, when Guyana became a nominally independent country, this territory has been under dispute by the interested parties; Venezuela has claimed the territory as part of its sovereign authority going back to an odious 1899 decision in favor of Britain. However, that has not stopped Guyana from seeking to undermine the stability of the region by claiming de facto sovereignty over the whole of the territory, selling highly valued oil and gas exploration concessions to key North American corporate energy interests. These actions have led to an intensification of the conflict, forcing Venezuela to respond with diplomatic and political pressure.

But of course, as with all things pertaining to Venezuela on the international stage, there is a hidden agenda rooted in the imperial politics of Washington. In its attempt to stifle Venezuela's political and economic development as an independent regional actor, the US is using its influence to destabilize the region. The goals are distinct, but intimately connected: enrich US energy corporations at the expense of Venezuela and, simultaneously, both position military assets and shape propaganda that paints Venezuela as an aggressor, thereby providing the pretext



for US escalation. In this way, Washington is attempting to reassert by stealth the hegemony it once maintained with brute force.

#### THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF ESEQUIBA

At the heart of this border dispute is energy and the billions of dollars in profits likely to be extracted from the offshore territory. According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), "The Guyana Suriname Basin [is] 2nd in the world for prospectivity among the world's unexplored basins and 12th for oil among all the world's basins – explored and unexplored." The basin, which stretches from eastern Venezuela to the shores of northern Brazil, is one of the major prizes in the world for energy corporations and governments alike.

Indeed, the USGS estimates that roughly 15 billion barrels of undiscovered oil and 42 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves lie under the basin, just waiting to be extracted. Such staggering economic potential has made the territorial waters off Venezuela and Guyana highly sought after, especially since the contesting border claims make

the legal obstacles to exploration far more surmountable as they allow companies to deal with a compliant government in Georgetown, rather than an independent one Caracas.

The unresolved conflict over territorial claims has not stopped the newly elected Guyanese government of David Granger from picking up where its predecessor left off, and supporting Exxon Mobil's exploration drilling in the Stabroek Block, which lies in the heart of the disputed territory. The importance of the competing claims is further underscored by the fact that the very week of Granger's election victory, Exxon Mobil reported a "significant oil discovery" in the very same area. Whether the announcement of the discovery was timed to coincide with the accession of Granger to the presidency, or it was mere coincidence, is somewhat secondary to the critical fact that this announcement infuses the dispute with a significant economic component; it is no longer merely about potential energy deposits, but actual energy extraction. This development provides an added imperative for the US to flex its muscles in this conflict.

#### A NEW FRONT IN THE DESTABILIZATION OF VENEZUELA

It is no secret that that the US has sought to undermine and destroy the Bolivarian revolution from almost the very moment of its birth with the ascendance of Hugo Chavez. While perhaps the most prominent example of such subversion came with the 2002 coup against the legal government of Venezuela – a failed regime change supported by Washington despite almost universal international condemnation – it is by no means the only attempt at destabilization. Since Chavez's passing, the soft power subversion and sabotage of the government has only increased, from economic warfare to the funding and support of Venezuela's opposition. It is within this context that the developments in the Venezuela-Guyana dispute must be understood.

Essentially, the conflict with Guyana is both an economic one, and a military/strategic one. While there is not a hot war between the two countries, the US has positioned its assets in such a way as to make that a very real possibility. Though downplaying the

US role, Washington has been sending a clear message – one might say a veiled threat of force – to Caracas with some of its recent comments. The Charge D'Affaires of the US Embassy in Guyana recently stated that, "The US has a long-standing relationship with the Guyana Defence Force (GDF). We have engaged in a number of co-operative and developmental efforts over the years to provide training and expertise...and exchange experience in a wide variety of areas." Such statements may seem relatively innocuous, but they are to be read as an acknowledgment of the military capacity of US power in the region, which in many ways sees Guyana as a de facto proxy.

Indeed, there is much evidence upon which to base such an assertion aside from just the words of US officials. Since 2010, the US Navy has had a cooperative relationship, including docking and training, with its Guyanese counterparts based in Port Georgetown. In addition, Guyana figures prominently in the Pentagon's project in South America known as SOUTHCOM, with the country seen as an outpost for US military power projection against Venezuela.

Of course, the US continues with its propaganda campaign against the Bolivarian Republic as well. From imposing sanctions against Venezuela for trumped up "human rights abuses," to declaring the country "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" that constitutes a "national emergency," Washington has clearly taken the decision to ratchet up tensions in 2015. The dispute with Guyana is clearly a new vector in this broader destabilization strategy.

And that is how the border conflict must be understood – a new front in an old war. Though there may be billions at stake for energy corporations, as well as military imperatives for the Pentagon, ultimately the dispute is geopolitical in nature. The Guayana Esequiba issue is, at its root, an issue of US hegemony and imperialism.