

Destabilizing Venezuela: Washington v. Chavismo

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Destabilizing Venezuela is longstanding US policy. Chavez denounced it many times. President Nicolas Maduro does now.

After his April 2013 election, he accused opposition candidate Henrique Capriles of coup plotting against him.

"Preparations are under way for an attempt to de-recognize democratic institutions," he said.

Dark forces never quit. Washington prioritizes regime change. Venezuela is a prime target.

At the time, Maduro accused US embassy officials of plotting "acts of violence." He expelled two Obama military attaches.

He accused another embassy employee of plotting sabotage against Venezuela's electrical grid.

"I will use a hard hand against fascism and intolerance," he said. "I declare it. If they want to overthrow me, come and get me."

He asked Venezuelans to "(d)ecide who you are with...the country and peace and the people (or) fascism."

Destabilization continues. Obama wants regime change. On Sunday, Maduro addressed thousands of supporters.

He accused fascist elements of coup plotting. He called on Venezuelans to "combat in the streets with ideas, with values, in high quality debate, with respect for people's rights, without violence."

Roy Chaderton is Venezuelan Organization of American States (OAS) ambassador. He sent Maduro a report listing US demands. They include:

- dialoguing with opposition leaders;
- releasing detainees arrested during violent protests; and
- threatening that "the arrest of (fascist Popular Will party head) Mr. Leopoldo Lopez could cause negative consequences in their international ramifications."

Obama demands no legal action against him. Maduro called his demands "unacceptable and insolent...I don't accept threats from anybody," he said.

"They will be hard to stop us," he stressed. (W)e are willing to go to the end in defense of peace and democracy."

On Monday, he called other Latin American presidents. He urged them to denounce US threats. He asked Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) Secretary General Ali Rodriguez for support.

He told Foreign Minister Elias Jaua to declare three US embassy officials persona non grata. He ordered them expelled.

He accused them of involvement in destabilizing Venezuela. They weren't identified by name.

A Foreign Ministry statement said Washington seeks to "promote and legitimize the attempts to destabilize the Venezuelan democracy that have sparked violent groups in last days."

"...Venezuela strongly rejects the statements of...John Kerry..."

"...Obama lies when he...question(s) the validity of human rights and democratic guarantees in our country."

Bolivarian institutions guarantee "the exercise of political rights to all its citizens, in a framework of broad civic freedoms enshrined constitutionally."

"The US government is lying when it denounces the detention of (so-called) peaceful anti-government protesters."

"Venezuela has acted and will continue to (confront) violent actions by small groups of extreme (hardliners) conspiring against the liberties (and threatening) the life of our fellow citizens..."

Both countries have no ambassadorial relations. Last September, Maduro expelled Washington's charge d'affaires and two other embassy officials.

"...John Kerry...defends violent leader Leopoldo Lopez...(S)ufficient evidence" shows his involvement in anti-government street rioting.

"The people and the Venezuelan government...will continue imperturbably exercising all (legal) actions...necessary to...defeat" Washington's anti-Bolivarian agenda.

"We call (on all independent) governments...and peoples of the world against this serious US intervention."

US/Venezuelan relations have been strained since Chavez took office in February 1999. They remain so now.

Venezuela is infested with US coup plotters. CIA operatives have been involved for years.

Corporate funded right-wing think tanks want Venezuela returned to its bad old days. They go all-out to vilify Bolivarian fairness. Lies substitute for truth.

Heritage Foundation (HF) misinformation claims Venezuelan “economic and political freedom is nonexistent.” Maduro is vilified for relations with China, Cuba, Russia and Iran.

Venezuela is a model of democratic fairness. Media freedom is the hemisphere’s best. Not according to HF.

It lied claiming Maduro “persecutes political adversaries and critics.”

“Restrictions on media freedom undermine the opposition,” it added.

Doomsayers claim Venezuela’s economy is troubled. Economist Mark Weisbrot calls pre-Chavez years “economic(ally) disast(rous).”

From 1980 – 1998, per capital income fell. Chavez turned disaster into success. Predictions of economic collapse deny reality.

Venezuela isn’t Greece. Its “long awaited apocalypse” isn’t likely, said Weisbrot. Around \$100 billion in oil revenue avoids balance of payments problems.

About \$40 billion of reserves adds stability. Bank of America calls Venezuelan bonds a good buy. Possible hyperinflation is remote.

Despite challenging problems, Venezuela’s economy is far from troubled. Growth was positive for 13 straight quarters.

Jobs are available for most Venezuelans who want them. Chavez cut poverty from 60% to 26%. Extreme poverty decreased from over 16% to 7%.

Venezuelans have Latin America’s highest minimum wage. According to Weisbrot, “Venezuela has sufficient reserves and foreign exchange earnings to do whatever it wants to do.”

Over-dependence on oil can be overcome in time. So can other longterm structural problems.

Overcoming Washington’s regime change agenda is most challenging. Right-wing think tanks support it.

Harold Trinkunas heads Brookings’ Latin America Initiative in the Foreign Policy program.

He formerly chaired the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School.

On January 23, he [headlined](#) “Venezuela Breaks Down in Violence.” It was a memo to Obama. It’s a thinly veiled call for regime change. He urged US intervention.

He claimed “economic mismanagement.” On the one hand, he said it “reached such a level that it risks a violent popular reaction.”

Later in his memo he called the “risk of a violent outcome low.”

“(I)t is in the US interest that Venezuela remain a reliable source of oil,” he said.

“Popular unrest in a country with multiple armed actors, including the military, the militia, organized crime and pro-government gangs, is a recipe for unwelcome chaos and risks an interruption of oil production,” he added.

He urged Obama to enlist help from Brazil. It’s interests are at risk, he claimed. He recommended efforts made “to convince (Maduro) to shift course.”

If crisis conditions erupt, he wants Maduro ousted. He couched his language as follows:

Begin “quiet conversations” with other regional countries. Plan “steps to take should Venezuela experience a violent breakdown of political order.”

Washington “would need to work with key states in the region – Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Peru and Colombia – on a regional consensus in favor of rebuilding ‘democracy’ in Venezuela.”

The kind Trinkunas favors is none at all. He wants Obama enlisting help from regional allies. He wants Venezuela returned to its bad old days.

“(S)hould violence erupt,” he wants Obama “to prepare a concerted regional response that leads to Venezuela’s re-democratization.”

In other words, he wants regime change. He wants pro-Western puppet leadership replacing Maduro. He favors coup d’etat.

He wants a repeat of April 2002. He wants it working this time. Why he expects above named countries to help, he’ll have to explain.

Fearing Venezuela collapsing into violence doesn’t square with reality. Trouble makers are relatively few. Chavistas way outnumber them.

Venezuelan democracy is the world’s best. So is Bolivarian fairness. Not according to Trinkunas. He calls the political playing field “hardly level.”

Maduro “undermined democratic institutions” he claimed. He “centralized power in the executive branch...”

He “prevent(s) other branches of government, opposition parties or civil society from influencing policy.”

“There are no checks on the executive when it uses state resources to win elections and selectively applies the law to intimidate opponents.”

He “foreclosed peaceful options.” He’s “interventionist and increasingly authoritarian.”

He “put the armed forces on the street to enforce his economic decrees...” He fosters “popular discontent.”

His memo reads like straight State Department propaganda. Fiction substituted for facts. Misinformation drowned out truth.

He supports regime change. So does Obama. Not if Venezuelans have their say. They did before. Expect no less this time if necessary.

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