

Is a Foreign Military Intervention in Venezuela Imminent?

James Jordan examines the US's interventionist move towards Venezuela alongside Colombia's recent history.

By [James Jordan](#)

Global Research, March 03, 2019

Venezuelanalysis.com 25 January 2019

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

According to conventional wisdom, there should be no serious talk of foreign military intervention in Venezuela. But these aren't conventional times. The conventional playbook would adopt a strategy of foreign coordination of the Venezuelan opposition, economic sabotage, infiltration of the military, and manipulation of popular movements against the elected government. All this is being done, however, so far, not successfully. The frustrations of the Bolivarian movement's enemies is palpable. Does this mean intervention is imminent? And what would such an intervention look like?

We know that the Trump administration met with Venezuelan coup plotters in 2017 and the Venezuelan opposition speaks openly of its coordination with the United States government. Officials in the U.S. and internationally have repeatedly called for the Venezuelan military and business people to take power, denouncing and refusing to recognize legitimate elections, and even having the audacity to “recognize” a “new president” in Venezuela who was not elected and who has no legitimate claim to office. Recent events have included the first ever attempted coup-by-drone, in August 2018; and the January 22nd mutiny by 27 National Guard troops led by a sergeant. One might infer a sense of desperation among the enemies of the Bolivarian government.

US National Security Advisor John Bolton called Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua a “Troika of Tyranny”, but the real triple threat faced by Latin America is the alliance of ultra-right administrations from the United States, Colombia, and Brazil of Donald Trump, Iván Duque, and Jair Bolsonaro, respectively. These Oligarchs of Overthrow have Venezuela in their sight, and military intervention is clearly an option on the table where they are seated.

Important circumstances have changed that had previously served as effective obstacles to intervention. Military engagements in the Middle East and Central Asia had made intervention in Venezuela untenable. In Colombia, the kind of military invasion advocated by former President Álvaro Uribe was impossible because the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were committed to defending Venezuela from within should war break out. Today the FARC has transformed into a political party, the unarmed Revolutionary Alternative Common Force (still called FARC). Meanwhile, President Trump has announced troop withdrawals from both Syria and Afghanistan. Trump is not a man of peace, and he has openly expressed his support for a violent intervention in Venezuela.

Certainly, there is a long-standing connection between the Colombian military and the war in Afghanistan. Colombia has sent advisors, trainers, and special operations troops to

Afghanistan, and there is a history of U.S. troop transfers between the two countries. In fact, the application in Afghanistan of lessons learned from decades of protracted war in Colombia is an oft-mentioned theme among military officials. Regarding Syria, Venezuelan expert on unconventional warfare, Jorge Negrón Valera wrote in October 2018 that, “A hypothesis of a direct conflict cannot be discarded. But all indications are that the the first thing on the Pentagon’s table will be Syria....” But as we enter 2019, the situation has changed. Should U.S. troops be withdrawn from Afghanistan and Syria, they could be well-suited for redeployment in a Colombia-based conflict with Venezuela.

Does all this mean that an invasion of Venezuela is imminent? Not at all. But it also doesn’t mean an invasion is *not* imminent, or that there are not scenarios that include other forms of military intervention. The US Empire and its Latin American partners want to use Venezuela as an example and put the nail in the coffin of socialist and popular advances in the region. They want it so badly that they are willing to consider options that had previously been unthinkable.

Back in the early 2000s, when then Colombian President Álvaro Uribe wanted the US to back him in a military assault on Venezuela, even an enthusiastic proponent of war like George W. Bush felt constrained to put the brakes on Uribe’s adventurous inclinations. At that time, traditional voices still were confident they could put together the coalition to force regime change. Nineteen years later, one cannot be surprised if some of that confidence has waned.

Until recently, talk about military intervention in Venezuela was roundly criticized and dismissed. Neither Wall Street nor the traditional right wing had any stomach for the disruption that would follow. But that was then, and this is now. Bess Levin makes this point in a September 2018 article published in Vanity Fair:

“Approximately one year ago, Donald Trump said that he was considering a ‘military option’ in Venezuela. At the time, virtually no one in Washington thought this was a good idea....

What has changed, alarmingly, is that now there are some people in Washington who have actually come around to the idea. Last month, Senator Marco Rubio said that... there is now a ‘very strong argument’ that the situation... could very well necessitate U.S. military involvement. Bloomberg notes that ‘security hawks with an interest in Latin America are taking positions in the administration, adding to a sense that Washington may be warming to intervention.’”

There has been a series of statements by world and national leaders concerning military intervention in Venezuela. President Trump famously declared “We have many options for Venezuela, including a possible military option”. In September 2018, Trump said that, Venezuela, “...frankly, could be toppled very quickly by the military if the military decides to do that.”

Likewise, in September 2018, Luís Almagro, General Secretary of the Organization of American States said, “With regards to a military intervention aimed at overthrowing the regime of Nicolas Maduro, I think we should not exclude any option.” Latin American opposition to military intervention is widespread, and a subsequent vote to denounce Almagro’s comment was passed by the Lima Group, specifically tasked to find a solution to

the Venezuelan crisis. Nevertheless, it is notable that Canada, Colombia, and Guayana refused back this censure.

Since then, the situation on the diplomatic front has only worsened. The OAS' Almagro, all thirteen members of the Lima Group, and the U.S. government have released statements that they would not recognize the election of Nicholas Maduro as Venezuela's President. Both Almagro and the U.S. State Department, in an act of brazen violation of Venezuelan sovereignty, have instead recognized the little-known Juan Guaidó, leader of the right-leaning National Assembly (as opposed to the more popular Constituent Assembly). While President Maduro was reelected overwhelmingly in May 2018, Guaidó has not even run in a national election. Former director of the Central Intelligence Agency and current Secretary of State Michael Pompeo released a statement on January 23 2019 saying,

"The United States recognizes Juan Guaidó as the new interim President of Venezuela, and strongly supports his courageous decision to assume that role pursuant to Article 233 of Venezuela's constitution and supported by the National Assembly, in restoring democracy to Venezuela. As President Trump said, "The people of Venezuela have courageously spoken out against Maduro and his regime and demanded freedom and the rule of law."

On the Colombian front, indications from President Iván Duque have been contradictory. Not only did Colombia refuse to censure Almagro's comments, but its ambassador in Washington DC, Francisco Santos has insisted that "all options are on the table". Nevertheless, Duque, in contrast with his mentor, Uribe, has said that the military option "is not the way." On the other hand, Duque has called for increasing spending on Colombia's air force and issued an order to put the air force on high alert. Following on the heels of Pompeo's announcement, Duque declared his recognition of Guaidó as Venezuela's president.

As mentioned earlier, the disarming of the FARC is a factor we must consider.

In a 2005 interview (while the FARC still existed as an armed force) conducted by Dick Emanuelsson and Ingrid Storgen, political analyst Heinz Dieterich makes the following points:

"There are 20,000 soldiers in the rear guard of an eventual military conflict between Colombia and Venezuela.... If these forces were not to exist, I am absolutely sure that today we would have the scenario that the Sandinistas had on the northern border with Honduras (in the 80s).... Objectively, by its mere existence, they fundamentally make impossible whatever strategy of military or paramilitary destruction by the forces of the United States or Uribe."

Similarly, in February 2005, the FARC made exclusively clear their position when FARC commander Raúl Reyes declared,

"In case of an invasion of our Venezuelan brothers by the United States War Hawks, the FARC would condemn it energetically and will offer its unconditional solidarity to the Bolivarian process of the country that saw the birth of our Liberator. In Bolívar we find everything."

Now the FARC are demobilized and Raúl Reyes himself was killed in a camp in Ecuador, working out terms for the release of prisoners of war.

With this absence of the FARC, the presence and activity of Colombian paramilitaries has grown and intensified. As previously mentioned, on August 4 2018, Venezuela's President Nicholas Maduros was targeted in an assassination attempt using drones. Venezuela says it has evidence that Colombian paramilitaries were involved. In October 2018, the Venezuelan military captured three Colombian paramilitaries in the state of Tachira along the border, citing evidence that the paramilitaries were in coordination with Colombian police and military. On November 5 2018, at least three members of the Venezuelan National Guard were killed in confrontations with Colombian paramilitaries in the state of Amazonas. On December 24, 2018, Venezuela captured nine Colombian paramilitaries entering the country to carry out a "mission in Caracas." Maduro maintains that as many as 734 Venezuelan and Colombian mercenaries are preparing to commit false flag operations attacking military units on the border in order to escalate and confuse popular opinion, and to justify a potential intervention.

Negrón Valera instructs,

"Finally, we must understand that within the doctrine of Non-Conventional Warfare, aggression will not come in the traditional army against army form.... It will be the Colombian paramilitaries operating on the border, the U.S.'s armed wing in the region. Only this time it will have the full logistical and military support of Washington and the support of Colombia on the ground."

Negrón Valera also notes the construction of wells in Colombia by the U.S. Army near the border with Venezuela as a possible precursor to intervention. He writes that,

"Let's turn our attention to the tweet of the Commander of the Colombian National Army, Ricardo Gómez Nieto, who in the framework of the UNITAS naval exercises, speaks of his gratitude to the U.S. Army for its help in the 'construction of a drinking water well' in the community of Rumonero.

The same 'altruistic' strategy has been used by the US army in Afghanistan to consolidate itself in the territory. In any case, the important thing to highlight is that it was precisely in this part of Guajira that Colombia established in 2015 the Task Force on Combined Medium Arms (FUTAM), equipped with armored combat weapons, artillery, infantry, logistical support and army aviation. Only by looking at the map where the 'water wells' are built do we understand why Venezuela has a right to be concerned."

Nevertheless, we must consider that there remain strong arguments that military invasion and other forms of intervention are not likely. It behooves us to soberly assess both Empire's voices for and against such a war before we jump to any conclusions.

The main argument is that such an invasion or other interventions would be far too disruptive not only to their targets, but to all those involved. Such efforts would throw the economy into yet further crisis and fuel a flood of refugees. A coup or invasion would also likely spur a civil war that, in the absence of a strong Venezuelan military component, would depend on foreign troops to stabilize. That in and of itself would be so offensive to most Venezuelans that, be they supporters of the Bolivarian government or not, many would

defend their national soil on patriotic grounds.

And that underscores the lack of popular backing for the Venezuelan opposition. Uruguayan journalist and Telesur cofounder Aram Aharonian observes,

“A Hinterlaces poll revealed that more than 64% of Venezuelans have an unfavorable opinion about the actions of rightwing leaders....There is another fact that stands out in the poll: 62% of Venezuelans prefer President Maduro to solve the economic problems of the country, while 34% prefer an opposition government. 61% blame economic problems on agents external to the government, such as the economic war, the fall of the price of oil, price speculation, and U.S. financial sanctions, while 37% attribute them to economic policies implemented by the government.

....However, it is clear that the US hawks may push for intervention: we must not let our guard down.”

Another factor that makes military intervention less plausible is the reality that the Venezuela military would not resist a military intervention alone. There are 1.6 million armed and trained civilian militia members ready to take to the streets to fight coup attempts and foreign invaders. At the same time, with the failures of the Colombian peace process, many former FARC insurgents are returning to the hills to join other armed groups and to perhaps form a new insurgency. The National Liberation Army (ELN) is still armed and several thousand strong. The ELN has claimed responsibility for a January 17 car bombing in Bogotá. Would the ELN be a pro-Bolivarian force within Colombia in the event of an invasion?

With or without an armed Colombian insurgency, there is a popular movement that can be expected to take the streets in Colombia in protest to any invasion. Colombia has a very large and well-organized opposition that could paralyze its streets with protest, should its people rise up to resist this war.

Internationally, countries such as Russia, China, and Cuba could be counted on to come to Venezuela's defense, perhaps even with arms. On December 10, 2018, Russia openly sent two nuclear-capable bombers to Venezuela. Likewise, Mexico's newly elected President Manuel Lopez Obrador has announced that Mexico will not participate in or support destabilization plans toward Venezuela.

When we weigh all the factors, it is not possible to say with any kind of certainty that there will be, or that there will not be, a foreign military intervention, invasion, or otherwise foreign directed coup in Venezuela. But Empire has been waiting a long time and faced failure after failure, so patience may be running thin. More, the prize of regime change in Venezuela, even with all the disruption and chaos that would entail, is that it would existentially threaten popular governments and movements throughout Latin America. We must not underestimate that temptation.

What is required of all those who stand in solidarity with Venezuela, and of all those who oppose Empire and its wars, is this: that we be ready for all eventualities on the table, including the military option. The best way to end a march toward war is to make sure that war never happens. To do that requires those who love peace to mobilize.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Featured image is from Venezuelanalysis

The original source of this article is Venezuelanalysis.com

Copyright © James Jordan, Venezuelanalysis.com, 2019

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [James Jordan](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca