

U.S. and Venezuela in new diplomatic crisis

By [Global Research](#)

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A new crisis has erupted in U.S.-Venezuelan relations after Washington responded to Caracas' refusal to welcome the United States' proposed envoy to Venezuela by revoking the visa of Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States Bernardo Alvarez, APA reports quoting foxnews.com website.

The decision to expel the ambassador followed a weeks-long diplomatic feud and came less than 24 hours after Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez dared the United States to cut off diplomatic ties.

Initially announced Wednesday by Venezuelan Deputy Foreign Minister Temir Porras on Twitter, the decision was later confirmed by the U.S. State Department.

"If the (U.S.) government is going to expel our ambassador there, then do it already!" Chavez said Tuesday at a military ceremony. "If they're going to cut diplomatic relations, then do it already!"

The president reiterated that he will not allow Larry Palmer to take office as the next ambassador to Venezuela.

"It's not my fault, it's theirs for naming an ambassador and the first thing he does is rant against the country where he's going (to serve as) ambassador. That violates the most basic international laws. He disqualified himself," Chavez said.

Chavez withdrew his approval of Palmer in August over some statements about Venezuela that the leftist president termed "unacceptable."

Palmer had told the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the morale of the Venezuelan military was low and called for a probe into the alleged presence of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, and National Liberation Army, or ELN, guerrilla groups in Venezuela.

Former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe had earlier sparked a bilateral spat with Venezuela by making similar accusations, although the ties between the two neighbors were restored shortly after Uribe was succeeded by Juan Manuel Santos.

Although a State Department spokesman initially told reporters it was in the U.S. national interest to have an ambassador in Caracas to keep communications at "the highest level," the U.S. government confirmed its decision to evict the top Venezuelan envoy Wednesday night.

“Yes, we’d said there would be consequences and we’ve taken an appropriate, proportional and reciprocal measure,” a State Department spokesman told Efe on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

The current crisis is similar to the diplomatic feud of September 2008, when Chavez declared U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela Patrick Duddy “persona non grata” to show solidarity with close ally Bolivia, which had expelled its U.S. ambassador for allegedly promoting rebellion in that Andean nation.

The White House also retaliated at that time by expelling Alvarez, although the countries decided to return their respective ambassadors in June 2009.

Chavez, who has been in power since 1999, has repeatedly accused Washington of wanting to overthrow his government to gain control of massive oil and natural-gas reserves in Venezuela.

Despite the frequent diplomatic spats, Venezuelan remains a key oil supplier to the United States.

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