

US Imperialism's Decomposition Accelerates: Outsourcing 'Regime Change'. Mercenary Incursions into Venezuela

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Global Research, May 14, 2020
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Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)
Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#),
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On May 3rd a bunch of mercenaries, led by Rambo-like US soldiers of fortune attempted to disembark on the coastal town of Macuto in the La Guaira state in Venezuela's Caribbean coast, in a so-called Operation Gedeon.

Their leader, 'contractor' Jordan Goudreau, CEO of US 'security company', SilverCorp, in interview with Miami-based extreme right wing Venezuelan opposition journalist, Patricia Poleo, candidly explained that the aim of their military incursion against the South American nation was to attack the presidential palace so as to overthrow the government of President Nicolas Maduro and install a de facto Guaidó-led government. Goudreau claimed to have deployed a mercenary force of 300 to carry out the military 'mission'.

The mercenaries received training in at least three camps in Riohacha, Colombia, had the full support of the Colombian government that has declared explicitly its desire to overthrow the government of President Maduro. All sorts of their logistical needs were resolved by well-known narco-trafficker and paramilitary, Elkin Javier López Torres, alias 'Doble Rueda'¹, leading member of the La Guajira drug cartel, who offered his own ranch to host the mercenaries and financed all Gedeon's preparation expenses. It would be impossible for Doble Rueda or any other Colombian drug kingpin to happily engage and participate in such a hefty political adventure without the Colombian government approving, supporting and collaborating with it. There is nothing surprising about this: It was the Colombian drug cartel Los Rastrojos who gave armed protection to Juan Guaidó after he illegally crossed the border to attend the Branson-led Cucuta concert in February 2020. After Los Rastrojos took pictures of themselves with Guaidó, handed him over to Colombia's presidential guard who took him to the presidential helicopter who would fly him to the concert.

What was even more astonishing was that Goudreau showed on camera the contract for his services for which he would be paid US\$212 million, "plus other expenses" (more on this later), signed by himself, 'self-proclaimed interim president' Juan Guaidó, Juan Jose Rendon, Sergio Vergara, and finally Manuel Retureta as witness. That is, Juan Guaidó and key members of his cabinet contracted the services of a mercenary company to launch a military attack on the presidential palace in Caracas, kidnap and/or assassinate president Maduro, also assassinate key members of the Bolivarian government such as president of the National Constituent Assembly and leader of the PSUV, Diosdado Cabello, Vladimir Padrino López, commander in chief of the armed forces, Delcy Rodriguez, vice-president of Venezuela and other high officials and Chavista political leaders.



Source: PRR

JJ Rendon, a Venezuelan extreme right winger, specialist on black propaganda, has been advisor to presidential candidate Henrique Capriles, to Colombian presidents Alvaro Uribe and Juan Manuel Santos, Enrique Peña Nieto (Mexico), and a few other high level right wing politicians. Rendon signed the contract in his capacity as High Presidential Commissioner General Strategy and Crisis Management; Vergara, member of extreme right wing party Voluntad Popular, is Guaidó's right hand and in charge of the his ghost cabinet, signed as High Presidential Commissioner for Crisis Management; Retureta, the witness, has been defense lawyer for Colombian paramilitary leader, Salvatore Mancuso; Dámaso Lopez, right-hand man to Sinaloa cartel leader, Chapo Guzman; Tony Hernandez, brother of Honduran president Juan Orlando Hernandez, convicted by a US federal judge of large-scale drug trafficking; and Fabio Lobo, son of former Honduran President, Lobo, son condemned to 24 years in prison in the US for drug trafficking (Retureta is known as the 'drug traffickers' lawyer'). He is JJ Rendon's personal lawyer.

The mercenary attack

A strategic objective of the mercenary incursion was to create distractions so as to disperse Venezuela's military and police forces so as to facilitate their plans to drive in several SUVs with high calibre machine guns of their rooftops (a la ISIS) the 1-hour trip to central Caracas to both attack the presidential palace and secure the Simon Bolivar airport in Maiqueitía.

As a distraction, a fake confrontation between criminal gangs in the poor and populous Petare barrio was organized seeking to divert crucial military and police forces from the coastal areas. This was confessed in video by José Alberto Socorro Hernandez, alias 'Pepero', a Venezuelan drug traffickers who in video confessed to being a DEA agent and said: "The DEA asked me to bring about chaos in several poor areas of Caracas. The DEA asked me to contact drug traffickers, and threaten them so they collaborated in this." Pepero goes on to say that he hired Petare gang head 'Wilexis' so as to feign armed confrontation between gangs with war weapons but no casualties. If anybody has strong connections with drug traffickers is the DEA. President Maduro correctly drew the conclusion that the DEA seemed to have been in charge of the operational and logistical aspects of Gedeon.²

To top it all up, it has transpired that Goudreau's company have performed security services as part of the personal guard of President Donald Trump himself. Goudreau "had been introduced to Keith Schiller, President Trump's long time bodyguard, and accompanied him to a Miami meeting with representatives of Venezuelan opposition figure Juan Guaidó in May 2019".³ And, Goudreau was in charge of security of the Branson-led Cucuta February 'concert' aimed at pushing so-called 'humanitarian aid' into Venezuela by military force, seeking military confrontation so as to justify an external (US military) intervention.

The full complexion and cobweb of links and connections of the mercenary incursion began to emerge slowly but inexorably. As all trails of the conspiracy led to Bogota and invariably ends up in Washington DC, President Nicolas Maduro has charged the US and Colombian governments of being behind the mercenary incursion. As expected, presidents Trump and Duque strenuously denied any involvement. In TV interview Rendon admitted he had signed the contract, which he characterised as 'exploratory' but denied Guaidó had signed it. Guaidó himself has denied signing it, even though the whole world has actually seen the contract with his signature.⁴

Three gunships carrying large quantities of heavy ammunition belonging to the Colombian Navy that certainly were abandoned by mercenaries on the run ended up in Venezuela. They were seized by Venezuelan military authorities. The Colombian Navy issued a statement 'explaining' the gunships had ended up in Venezuelan territorial waters because they had been dragged there by water currents.⁵ President Maduro has publicly said that as soon as the Colombian government formally requests it his government would immediately return them.

On April 29th, Pompeo, announced that James Story, US ambassador to Venezuela and all his staff, who have been running a virtual US embassy for Venezuela from Bogota, "would soon be moving to Caracas". Next day (April 30th) war criminal Elliott Abrams, Special US Envoy on Venezuela, tweeted "Transition in Venezuela is coming". And infamous John Bolton in twitter message announced (April 30th) "Morning is coming to Venezuela - again." Similar twitter messages were posted by prominent oppositionists such as Ivan Simonovis, Guaidó appointee to the White House on matters of defence: "What is coming is unavoidable and unstoppable". This was one or two days before the mercenary attack. The US clearly knew about it.

As has been widely reported, the mercenary attack failed because it was stopped in its tracks by the Bolivarian armed forces which had a confrontation with one contingent of mercenaries in one of the boats in the small coastal town of Macuto which resulted in the death of 8 of them on May 3rd. On May 5th, 8 more mercenaries were captured by the inhabitants of Chuao, a small fishing village in the Aragua state. The image of a Chuao barefoot Black fisherman, member of the people's militia, holding a gun in his right hand, supported by the community and a few municipal police officers, ordering the mercenaries to raise their arms behind their head in surrender was indeed symbolic. In Chuao the captured mercenaries, including two US mercenaries, Luke Denman and Airan Berry, were tied one next to each other. It poignantly symbolises the struggle of Venezuela against a powerful but immoral world power. Both, Denman and Berry have appeared on videos confirming the key features of Operation Gideon, including securing the airport to wait for the arrival of an airplane to take kidnapped President Maduro to the United States. Berry said that one of the tasks was to kill President Maduro.⁶ When Denman was asked who he

received orders from, he said, 'Jordan Goudreau' and when asked who gave the orders to Goudreau, his reply was, 'President Donald Trump.'

In the last few days, more fugitive mercenaries are being mopped up by Venezuelan security forces, the militia or communities in a national mobilization of alert and, though God knows what else Trump and Co have in store for Venezuela, Operation Gedeon has been defeated and crushed by what President Maduro calls the 'Bolivarian fury'.

Who is really behind this?

Since it would be impossible for training camps for such a number of mercenaries to operate in Colombia without government knowledge and agreement, even less so if it happens with the collaboration of powerful drug kingpins, for which the knowledge and connections the DEA has in Colombia and elsewhere are very convenient. Despite massive US military presence (at least 10 military bases established in 2009 entrusted with the task of precisely combatting drug trafficking) the training went on without detection. Furthermore, the DEA would not have been so collaborative without the State Dept. and President Trump himself agreeing to the carrying out of Operation Gedeon. Guaidó and his corrupt entourage follow orders from the Yankee paymaster that not only finances but owns them.⁷ Thus, it looks like the line of command of all Colombia-originated terrorist operations against Bolivarian Venezuela perforce of existing hierarchies, can be traced to the Four Apocalypse Horsemen: Abrams, Pompeo, Pence and Trump, as must have been the case with Gedeon. Additionally it is impossible for Guaidó to have undertaken such a hefty financial commitments with SilverCorp without consulting and the specific authorisation of the US and especially Steven Mnuchin US Secretary of the Treasury, body that is managing all Venezuelan illegally confiscated monies.

The ostensibly puzzling feature of Operation Gedeon is the deployment of about 60-70 mercenaries who were expected, if one follows the full details of the tasks to be undertaken if Gedeon was successful, could not possibly have been carried out by such a small number confronting a well-armed, well trained, well equipped, and fully alert and mobilised Bolivarian armed forces and police supplemented by about 3.5 million people's militia. This scepticism holds even if the number of mercenaries was 300 as claimed by Goudreau.

This has allowed the world corporate media to present Operation Gedeon as the narcissistic whim and money ambition of one crazy individual, Jordan Goudreau. In this regard, the worst was an AP piece by journalist Joshua Goodman who in an extremely long account of the whole saga desperately seeks both to 'demonstrate' no connection with Duque and Trump but also convince us that Guaidó and Co, having entered into 'exploratory' talks and even drawing a 'drafts contract', had abandoned the project with Goudreau. Goodman claims "Guaidó's envoys, including Toledo, ended contact with Goudreau after the Bogota meeting because they believed it was a suicide mission, according to three people close to the opposition leader."⁸ The Guardian's Julian Birger, Joe Daniel Parkin and Chris McGreal echoed the narrative and mount a sturdy defense of Guaidó who they quoted as having said "that if the Venezuelan president let the operation go ahead in that knowledge, he had blood on his hands."⁹ And the BBC forcefully reported that "Mr Guaidó denied having anything to do with Mr Goudreau. In a statement, he said he had "no relationship nor responsibility for any actions" taken by the US war veteran."¹⁰ These two 'bastions' of the struggle for democracy rather than condemn a criminal and illegal mercenary attack against

a sovereign nation they end up, though deviously, the side of the criminals.

So almost monolithically most of the corporate media pumped the same narrative. It was a big effort aimed to get international public opinion away from focusing on Trump, Duque, the DEA and, if possible, Guaidó. It feels as though the world corporate media is intensely compliant when it comes to communicational narratives required explicitly or not by the State Dept.

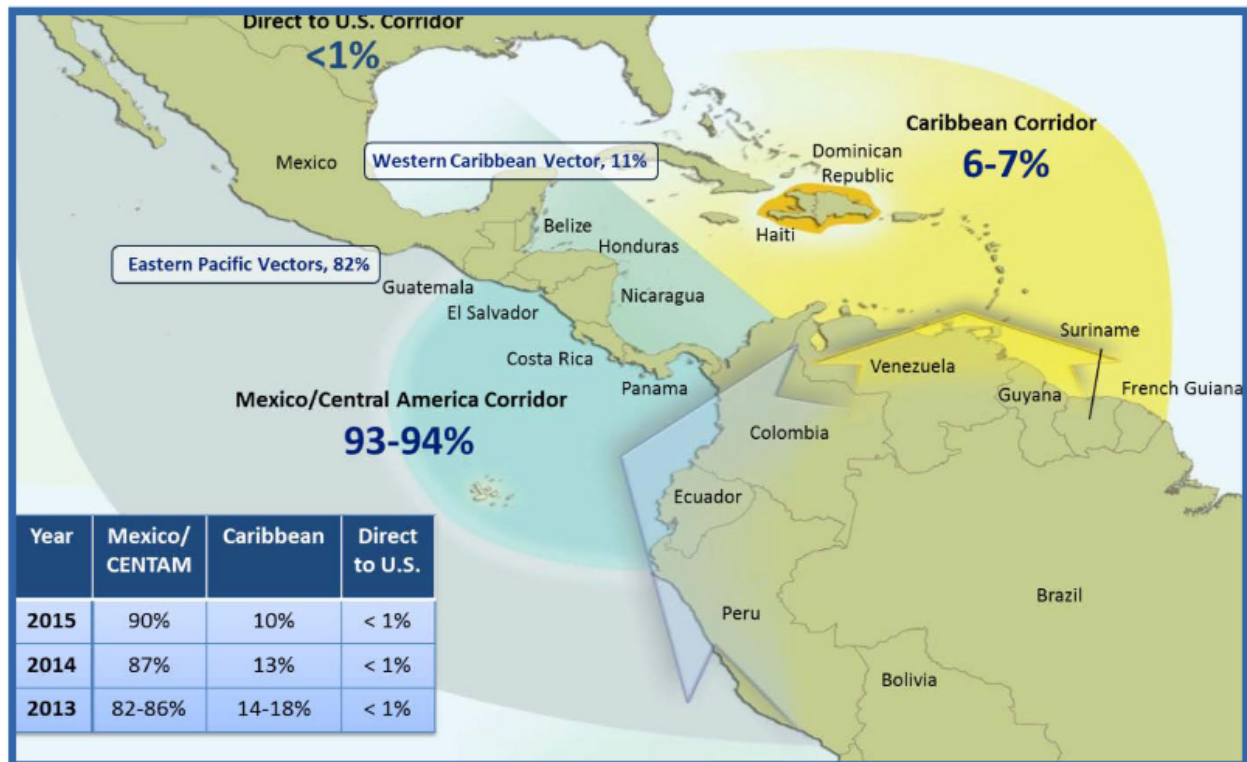


The feasibility of Operation Gedeon takes an entirely different complexion when other contextual factors are taken into account. First, not only La Guaira is at 1-hour drive from Caracas (the airport to be secured by the mercenaries is even closer), and Juan Guaidó was elected to the National Assembly for the state of Vargas, where La Guaira happens to be.¹¹ The plan, after the attack on the palace and the kidnapping (or killing) of President Maduro, mercenary forces involved taking control of Macuto, a Restoration Patriotic Government Junta headed by Juan Guaidó would be flown in, proclaimed it as 'liberated territory', calling upon the 'international community' to be recognised, followed by the immediate recognition by the US government and all its vassals in Latin America, starting from Colombia and probably, the European Union.

This was almost certainly to be followed by an intoxicating media frenzy 'reporting' the fall of Maduro filling the waves with images of confrontations, corpses, blood and 'heroic resistance by freedom fighters', showing Guaidó making an impassionate call for foreign assistance to be responded in the first instance probably by the anti-drug US-led air and sea fleet deployed recently by Trump in the Caribbean Sea (which includes warships from Holland, France and the UK).¹² Thirdly, where was the plane to take President Maduro to be flown to the US coming from? Not only the US has 10 military bases in Colombia, it also has military facilities in Aruba, Curacao, and recently they have obtained control over Brazil's Alcántara military base and have also been granted control over military facilities in the Galapagos islands, Ecuador, plus plenty of more in the Lesser Antilles. When added up to the NATO bases in the region, Venezuela is completely surrounded by hostile military installations. The US-led air-sea combined fleet deployed on the false premise to 'cut off links between the Venezuelan government and drug traffickers', was followed after an indictment by US General Attorney, Bill Warren¹³, against President Maduro and his government on charges of drug-trafficking and terrorism, so as to purposefully create a scenario, legitimising and generously rewarding in law any endeavour leading to the capture of President Maduro and other indicted high officials in the Bolivarian government, as in 1989 Panama with Manuel Noriega.¹⁴

The Dept. of Justice held a media show with President Trump leading it, and accused President Maduro and 14 high ranking Venezuelan officials of Allegedly Partnered With the FARC to Use Cocaine as a Weapon to "Flood" the United States."¹⁵ Incredibly as it may sound, during the whole media show, with all kind of speakers including President Trump and Barr himself who, with ardent rhetoric they castigated drug trafficking, Colombia was not mentioned once. Warren issuing of the indictment took place barely one month before the mercenary forces was unleashed. As though in the Far West the US offered a US\$15 million reward for any information leading to the capture of Nicolas Maduro.

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



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

The US characterization of Venezuela as ‘narco-state’ (repeated by sections of the media ad nausea) are not only false but thoroughly contradict the DEA’s own reports whose data lead it to conclude that “92% of cocaine seized in the U.S. comes from Colombia”.¹⁶ Worse, since 2009, date of the installation of the 7 extra U.S. military bases in Colombia to combat cocaine production and trafficking, both problems have massively increased according to the DEA itself, institution whose data also shows that 82% of the cocaine produced in Colombia reaches the US through the Pacific Ocean.¹⁷ Figures and trends broadly consistent with official UN Office on Drug and Crime. Furthermore, Venezuela does not have geographical access to the Pacific.

US harassment, aggression and criminal sanctions against Venezuela have intensified during the pandemic because US strategists think that the complications, extra expenditure, lockdown and dislocation that Covid-19 brings in its wake are likely to be conducive to implement successful ‘regime change’ rogue operations. There must be the additional consideration that Venezuela has received international recognition for its efficient programme to control the pandemic (see article by Francisco Dominguez on this in Transform N°8), something Washington finds intolerable therefore it is not reported in the world corporate media.

Thus, a coalition to carry out the mercenary attack was put together which must have had the OK from Washington with the DEA in charge of its operational and logistic features which involved high levels of decision making in the US, the Colombian government and its para-state outfits, including well known paramilitary drug traffickers (Doble Rueda), SilverCorp, Guaidó, his close entourage (JJ Rendon et al), and petty criminals in Caracas coerced by local DEA agents. All crisscrossed from top to bottom by vast sums originated in the cocaine trade in Colombia.¹⁸

What were the political objectives?

The speculation about the central role that large foreign military forces would play to support the mercenary attack, is relevant and valid when one considers the full plan of 'regime change' involved in the Guaidó-Goudreau contract, especially since the legal and political framework for a military strike against President Maduro had been created by the Dept. of Justice. Once the Guaidó-Goudreau contract's appendixes were published the tasks to be carried out by a successful coup d'état are so enormous and so multifaceted that unless the golpistas had at their disposal a massive invading military force, they could not be accomplished. The plan amounts to the full and complete dismantlement of the Venezuelan state brick by brick until its total demolition. Given the size and commitment of Chavismo in all its thousands upon thousands of local committees, grassroots organizations, trade unions, women bodies, the 3.5-million strong people's militia, the armed forces and so forth, the dismantlement of the Bolivarian state necessitates perform a gigantic social and political purge involving mass killings to a level that would make Pinochet like a naughty school boy. The full 41-page Appendixes of the Guaidó-Goudreau contract¹⁹ stipulate among other tasks, for the military force in command – Goudreau – after the successful 'regime change' to stay for a preliminary period of 450 days, a year and a half, renewable depending on the evolution of the situation in the country. In short, US plans for Venezuela is total and thorough demolition of the Bolivarian state and for which Goudreau would be paid, to start with, US\$212 million.

In the appendix (page 3), there is mention to an Investors' Group, who would put together the US\$212 million, but because such a sum was not immediately available, Goudreau would request a bank loan to finance the preliminary operations and for which Guaidó commits his government to pay it back with a 55% interest. If the mission has been accomplished, additionally Goudreau would receive an extra bonus of about US\$10 million.

The mercenary military force would constitute itself in a Military Task Force who would be under the direct command of Guaidó, but it would exert military authority over all the existing military and police forces and over the whole of the Civil Service. Thus, by virtue of the Guaidó-Goudreau contract, the latter becomes the most powerful body in the land.

The Task Force would declare hostile certain military forces (military, naval, air, police, etc. both conventional and non-conventional) associated with the V Republic (page 8) and that have emerged and evolved with the 1999 Constitution and Bolivarian Revolution that must be "neutralised", i.e., assassinated. Furthermore, any military force loyal to Maduro in the eventuality of putting up resistance, must be eliminated (sic). Among key figures to be eliminated are Diosdado Cabello and forces loyal to him and to Maduro would be declared hostile and also eliminated (page 9).

By decision of Guaidó (page 9) as stipulated in the contract, authorises Goudreau to order and approve any military attack and to start any hostilities he deems necessary, against groups such as non-conventional troops, over any private or public buildings, weapons storage facilities, roads, motorways, any media, and can order attacks on buildings associated with the V Republic government that have been declared hostile (page 7). Thus, for example a building of the Housing Programme where a local cultural committee operates can be declared hostile and be attacked so as to be eliminated. The same applies to thousands of such premises throughout the country that house trade unions, communal councils, local committees, cooperatives, and such like. That is, by virtue of the Guaidó-

Goudreau contract the whole of the Chavista movement or anything that may resemble it can, to the prejudiced and racist eye of a Rambo-style gringo mercenary, be a military target for elimination. One can imagine extreme right wing armed Venezuelans 'guiding' members of the Task Force to attack just about any target as they themselves have done so many times during their guarimbas: health centres schools, universities, houses of the Housing Mission, crèches, and burning dark-skinned people alive. Guaidó, additionally authorises the Task Force to make use of any lethal weapon, including personal or other type of mines.

Page 15 authorises the Task Force to arrest any civilian 'involved in a criminal activity', that interferes with any military mission of the Task Force, that is on a list of persons to be arrested, for security reasons, this includes even priests can be arrested.

In page 20 of the contract, confirming how much US neocon mindset influences the desired outcome, since "Any person providing support to or a member of the following international terrorist organizations, or any group/cells/facilities associated therewith: ELN, FARC, Drug Cartels, Al Qaida, Hizballah, Hamas, Taliban and about 10 other organizations in the Middle East are deemed to be hostile forces and therefore targets for the Task Force (page 20).

Any form of disturbance, demonstrations, marches, etc., would be dealt with by force as follows, first a call to stop, then deployment of weapons showing the intention to use it, a shot is fired as warning and, if not heeded, then the threat or disturbance is eliminated. Any civilian can be arrested and held prisoner with no legal rights. The contract stipulates that the Task Force can make use of force at any time, even lethal force. The Task Force would also assume the role of security for Guaidó and his entourage, assistants and the golpista government. Furthermore, (page 21), the contract grants "all privileges, exemptions and immunities"" from prosecution for the use of lethal force as you would 'to any country's security force', well before the perpetration of the announced Force's military attacks. The contract also grants the Force and its members to get in and out of the country without passport and are exempted from visa protocols, all they need is to show their SilverCorp staff card and for travel they would only need a written authorisation from Goudreau (page 24). And SilverCorp is not responsible for any destruction or loss of life that occurs in the carrying out of the mission contained in the contract and were there to be any litigations emanating from the US, Venezuela or any other source, the 'Venezuelan Guaidó state' would cover all costs and were the litigations to be lost Guaidó would indemnify them financially (page 38).

If any member of the Task Group is wounded, killed or arrested, Guaidó commits himself to insure them by paying US\$450,000 to their closest relative, this means that because Berry and Denman have been captured, Guaidó already owes Goudreau's SilverCorp US\$900,000. And if any member of the Task Group loses a limb or eyesight during the carrying out of the mission they will be paid US\$250,000 (page 28).

The chain of command in the planned golpista Guaidó government would be as follows: Juan Guaidó, Commander in Chief; Overall Project Supervisor, Sergio Vergara; Chief Strategist, Juan Jose Rendon; On Site Commander, To Be Determined. That is to say, the democratic institutional apparatus of the Bolivarian Republic would have been simply pulverised by a de facto rogue government supported militarily by a bunch of rogue US mercenaries very likely with the collaboration of invited 'friendly' military forces from at least the US and Colombia. A bunch of 300 mercenaries have no chance in hell to carry out such a mammoth task as the dismantlement of the Bolivarian state apparatus. As with the April 2002 brief coup

against Hugo Chavez, all state institutions (National Assembly, Supreme Court, National Electoral Council, all ministries, the Ombudsman, the government, the Constitution, national sovereignty and so forth, would be simply dissolved). The difference with 2002 is this time their dissolution would have been carried out by military force followed by mass elimination of Chavistas.

Bolivarianism versus barbarism

President Maduro and the Bolivarian government have responded to yet another US-inspired, and probably US-funded mercenary attack with political calm and military efficiency. As we write social networks report that over 37 mercenaries have been rounded up whilst an intense search throughout the nation but especially around the areas La Guaira, Aragua and the whole Caribbean coast are being combed inch by inch, continues, and the border with Colombia is tightly secured. They have also responded by telling the truth and fully informing their people and the world through various press conferences on national TV to journalists from all around the world. President Maduro himself has led the truth offensive and it is clear that whatever the level of unscrupulous cynicism of Trump, Pompeo, Abrams et al, there is no question they did not expect such a swift outcome favourable to Maduro. Nor probably did they expect such a crushing and humiliating defeat for the US mercenaries. The Bolivarian government has already submitted a formal accusation against the US in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague for all its aggression, sanctions and threats. On national TV President Maduro instructed Jorge Arreaza, minister of foreign affairs, to add the charges related to the US government involvement in the recent mercenary attack. Another accusation to the ICC will be presented by the Venezuelan government against President Duque and his government for his undeniable participation in Goudreau's Rambo criminal adventure.

This is essential since the skilful diplomacy of the Bolivarian government has led to interesting and fruitful collaboration with various UN bodies, including the UNHRC Michelle Bachelet, but also with the International Red Cross, the WHO, plus powerful international voices such as the Non-Aligned Movement, several Latin American countries, Russia, China and plenty of others. Additionally Venezuela enjoys worldwide solidarity support from international trade union federations, mass political parties everywhere particularly in Latin America, social movements, intellectuals and solidarity bodies. During the few days following the mercenary attack, literally hundreds of messages of support came from all over the globe.

What is disgusting is the sickening silence of the European Union that has been so preoccupied with just about anything and everything with Bolivarian Venezuela for the last decade at least taking a highly negative stance and being led by the nose from Washington's views and foreign policy on Venezuela. They knowingly took a skewed view of US-led extreme right wing forces violent efforts to oust the democratically government of Venezuela in 2014 and 2017. The EU pretended it did not see Guaidó collaborating with criminal gangs of Colombian narco-paramilitaries in February this year to attend the Branson-led concert in Cucuta. Worse still the EU did not condemn the coup attempt led by Juan Guaidó and Leopoldo on April 30 this year and they pretended. By then however doubtful Guaidó's credentials were since he was never elected nor did he even stand as a presidential candidate yet most European governments recognise his thoroughly unconstitutional self-proclamation as 'interim president' which ought to have been sufficient for European governments to withdraw that recognition. And now Guaidó contracts mercenaries with the explicit and written aim to kidnap a head of state and assassinate him

as a prelude to establishing a de facto rogue military dictatorship with the declared aim to eliminate a whole political current by the use of lethal force which is deemed genocide in international law nevertheless the European governments continue to recognise him as the 'interim president of Venezuela' and keeps silent about the mercenary attack. Is the EU decomposing politically as well as falling apart?

Conclusion

The US continues with its 'regime change' policy through violent means against Venezuela but keeps failing. The mercenary attack clearly took a long gestation period since it included the US Dept. of Justice indictment against President Maduro and high officials in his government of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism so as to create Panamanian conditions for US military intervention. However, they know Venezuela is not Panama and the US of 2020 is increasingly becoming a shadow of its 1989 self. Yet, US imperialism will persist because it desperately needs to lay its claws on the largest deposits of oil and gold in the planet but more importantly Venezuela's resistance is a key obstacle in its efforts to fully reassert its hegemony regionally which will give it a better position from which to face the formidable China challenge.

Therefore, our solidarity with the heroic Venezuelan people must be redoubled and we must demand, echoing international voices such as UN General Secretary, Antonio Guterres, and Pope Francis I, the immediate suspension of US sanctions against Venezuela during the period of the pandemic so as to allow Venezuela to engage in financial transactions to purchase food, medicines and vital health inputs, essential to combat the pandemic and keep saving tens of thousands of lives.

The international labour movement should call upon the US stop interfering in the internal affairs of Venezuela, a fully sovereign and proud nation and demand the immediate and unconditional return of all assets and resources illegally confiscated to the Venezuelan state by the Trump administration. By 12th May 2020, the US has about 1,4 million people infected with Covid-19 with over 80,000 deaths, greater than the deaths of US Marines of the entire Vietnam War, whilst Venezuela on the other hand has 422 cases of infection, with 10 deaths. The argument for the US to abandon its wasteful and criminal 'regime change' efforts against Venezuela to instead concentrate on saving US lives and allow Venezuela the breathing space to continue with saving Venezuela lives.

This applies to Europe as well where banks and financial institutions are illegally retaining Venezuelan assets to the tune of over US\$5 billion (notably Venezuelan gold in the Bank of England), they should be immediately and unconditionally return to its legitimate owner the state of and the people of Venezuela.

There is no legal or political justification on earth for the EU to continue its untenable policy of recognising Juan Guaidó as 'interim president' of Venezuela when de facto they work with the Bolivarian government of President Maduro, especially now that his criminal credential have been (again) conclusively proved.

US Hands Off Venezuela! Fight the Pandemic Not Venezuela!

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Notes

1 *Doble Rueda* is a close relative of Martha Gonzalez, wife of Venezuelan military deserter Cliver Alcalá Cordones. In interview to Colombian radio stations and in a video Alcalá confessed he was preparing such an attack by training mercenaries and unsuccessfully trying to smuggle large quantities of weapons into Venezuela; surrendered to the DEA and is now under their protection in the US; Alcalá faces charges of terrorism and narco-trafficking yet when he was discovered seeking to smuggle weapons into Venezuela was not arrested nor tried by the Colombian authorities.

2 <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/352332-agente-dea-bandas-petare-caracas-venezuela>; there has been a rather large amount of academic and other research that persistently show strong connections between sections of the US security community (CIA, NSC, DEA, etc.) with drug traffickers not just in Colombia, the most notorious case being the Iran-Contra Affair, when seeking to illegally fund the Contras against Sandinista Nicaragua, led high US officials and agencies to collaborate with drug traffickers; declassified “documents demonstrate official knowledge of drug operations, and collaboration with and protection of known drug traffickers.” “The Contras, Cocaine, and Covert Operations *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 2* (<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB2/index.html>).

3 https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/v7g4d8/venezuela-mercenaries-silvercorp-gordon-goudreau-trump-ally

4 <https://albaciudad.org/2020/05/contrato-silvercorp-41-paginas-guaido-rendon-goudreau-pdf/>

5 <https://www.elciudadano.com/latino-america/cual-es-la-explicacion-que-dio-la-armada-colombiana-sobre-las-lanchas-incautadas-por-venezuela/05/10/>

6 See video of his interrogation where he admits that killing Maduro is one of the tasks to be accomplished (minute 6:05') – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3eOrNHfoRQ>

7 Even though the US government has ritually continue their support for Guaidó, he is a DHA: Disposable Human Asset.

8 Joshua Goodman, “Ex-Green Beret led failed attempt to oust Venezuela’s Maduro”, *AP*, May 1, 2020(<https://apnews.com/79346b4e428676424c0e5669c80fc310>

9 ‘His head wasn’t in the world of reality’: how the plot to invade Venezuela fell apart, *The Guardian*, 8th May 2020 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/08/his-head-wasnt-in-the-world-of-reality-how-the-plot-to-invade-venezuela-fell-apart>)

10 Venezuela: Trump denies role in bungled incursion, *BBC*, 8th May 2020

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-52592824>)

11 At the 2015 elections to the National Assembly, Guaidó was elected deputy for the state of Vargas with 97,492 votes; his mandate will end in the coming National Assembly elections scheduled for this year.

12 RFA Argus, Dixmunde are the warships sent from the UK and France respectively to help Trump's efforts to cut 'the links between narco-traffickers and the Maduro government';

<https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2020/04/03/el-reino-unido-anuncio-el-envio-de-un-buque-de-guerra-al-caribe/>

13 Barr is a longtime proponent of the [unitary executive theory](#) of nearly unfettered presidential authority over the [executive branch of the U.S. government](#).^{[1][2][3]} In 1989, Barr, as the head of the OLC, justified the [U.S. invasion of Panama](#) to arrest [Manuel Noriega](#). As deputy attorney general, Barr authorized an FBI operation in 1991 which freed hostages at the [Talladega federal prison](#). An influential advocate for tougher criminal justice policies, Barr as attorney general in 1992 authored the report *The Case for More Incarceration*, where he argued for an increase in the [United States incarceration rate](#).^[4] Under Barr's advice, President [George H. W. Bush](#) in 1992 [pardoned six officials involved in the Iran-Contra affair](#).

14 In December 1989 27,000 troops landed in Panama to arrest of strongman Manuel Noriega; Marines killed up to 5,000 Panamanians; see full details in excellent documentary *The Panama Deception*, Barbara Trent and writer/editor David Kasper, <https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-panama-deception/>

15

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/nicol-s-maduro-moros-and-14-current-and-former-venezuelan-officials-charged-narco-terrorism>

16 <https://colombiareports.com/92-cocaine-seized-us-comes-colombia-dea/>

17 DEA Intelligence Brief, *Colombian Cocaine Production Expansion Contributes to Rise in Supply in the United States*, Aug 2017

(https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-07/DIB-014-17%20Colombian%20Cocaine%20Production%20Expansion_1.pdf)

18 In August 2019 President Duque publicly announced the decision to arrest Doble Rueda for drug trafficking; in December 2019 the DEA requested his extradition to the US; yet he is free and in charge of major US-led terrorist operations against Venezuela.

19 See attachments to the General Services Agreement between the Venezuelan opposition and Silvercorp, *Washington Post*, 7th May 2020,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/context/read-the-attachments-to-the-general-services-agreement-between-the-venezuelan-opposition-and-silvercorp/>

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