

Venezuela: RExxon Tillerson's Petro-Imperially Perfect Regime Change Threat, "By Direct Military Force"?

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It takes a lot for anything anybody in the Insane Clown Trump administration says to get my attention these days. The longtime Exxon-Mobil CEO and current United State Secretary of State Rex Tillerson did the trick with these 48 words two days ago:

"We are evaluating all of our policy options as to what can we do to create a change of conditions where either Maduro decides he doesn't have a future and wants to leave of his own accord or we can return the government processes back to their constitution."

That is the United States' top "diplomat" saying that a democratically elected head of sovereign state, Venezuela's president Nicolas Maduro, must leave office or "we" – the U.S. government that is – will reserve the right to remove him (absurdly described as "return[ing]" the Venezuelan government "back to their constitution.") It is a declaration of the United States' presumed entitlement to conduct internationally criminal regime change, confident that it is exempt from global sanction or prosecution. Because we own the world and what we say goes – especially in our hemisphere. Capisce?

Nobody should doubt that Tillerson is signaling Washington's willingness to carry out a coup in Venezuela. The Bush administration tried and failed to do precisely that in April of 2002 – and Washington has never stopped waiting for its next best moment to depose the democratically elected socialist government there. That moment is now, perhaps, with Venezuela weakened by low oil prices and years of economic poaching and sanctions, and with U.S.-fueled street protests led by a fanatical right wing racist and upper-class opposition to the Bolivarian Revolution.

Latin Americans know all too well about Uncle Sam's penchant for regime change and other forms of interference in their not-so sovereign political "processes." Here are just some of the worst highlights of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America over the last six plus decades:

1954, a CIA-orchestrated coup removed the democratically elected Guatemalan and Left government of Jacobo Arbenz. Over the next four decades, U.S.-backed right-wing Guatemalan regimes killed tens of thousands of peasants, workers, students, and activists.

The U.S. responded to the 1959 Cuban Revolution with what [historian David Boring](#) called "years of futile covert programs under three different American presidents to depose Castro. U.S. efforts included every arrow in the covert quiver, from organizing and supporting a

proxy exile invasion to economic and political destabilization, from sabotage and propaganda to psychological warfare and assassination plots.”

In 1973, a CIA-engineered coup overthrew the democratically elected socialist government of Chilean president Salvador Allende and replaced him with the fascist butcher and close U.S. ally General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet’s regime killed 30,000 workers, students, peasant, intellectuals and activists killed while introducing U.S.- (University of Chicago-) imported economic policies during the 1970s and 1980s.

A U.S.-sponsored and U.S.-assisted fascist regime and allied death squads in Argentina killed as many 30,000 workers, students, intellectuals, and activists in that country between 1974 and 1983.

US-sponsored authoritarian and death-squad regimes in Central America killed over 300,000 people during Ronald Reagan’s two terms. Lavish funding, training and equipment from Washington fueled this epic bloodshed. Victims were murdered and maimed as punishment for—and warnings against—participation in [popular struggles](#) to redistribute land and improve working and social conditions for peasants and workers in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

In the early summer of 2009, the right-wing Democratic Party presidency of Barack Obama, with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the lead, helped the Honduran business and military elite carry out a coup against Honduras’ democratically elected president Manuel Zelaya. Zelaya had angered Washington by joining with Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador in advocating social democratic reforms and national independence from U.S. direction in Latin America. Thousands have been killed since by the right-wing Honduran regime.



Why does the U.S. want to overthrow the Maduro government in Caracas, threatening now to do so by direct military force? Washington’s claim of concern for hardship and oppression in Venezuela should not be taken seriously. Uncle Sam has been fueling poverty in Venezuela with economic sanctions and coordinated political disruption for years. Washington has just cut another in its long line of giant arms deals with its longtime oil-rich client and ally Saudi Arabia, the single most reactionary government on Earth. The United States’ alliance with the Saudis, other absolutist Persian Gulf oil monarchies, and numerous other authoritarian rulers and regimes around the world gives the lie to its pretense of worry for the causes of democracy and justice. When will Tillerson call for the departure of the rotten right-wing rulers of Honduras, Columbia, and now Brazil, not to mention those of the Persian Gulf, Indonesia, the Philippines, Ukraine?

“The situation from a humanitarian statement is already becoming dire” in

Venezuela, Tillerson said.

Right – as if the Trump administration or Washington more broadly could care less about people’s lives in other countries. An ongoing U.S.-funded and assisted Saudi-led bombing campaign has recently devastated much of Yemen’s basic infrastructure, putting seven million Yemini at risk of famine. A 19th century disease, cholera, has gone epidemic there, thanks to the collapse of water sanitation. Cholera has already killed nearly 2000 Yemini civilians; 300,000 Yemini are currently infected. A child dies from preventable causes on the average of once every ten minutes in Yemen now. Wolfgang Jamann, head of the human rights organization CARE, recently took a five-day trip to Yemen.

“We are now in the 21st century and the current situation is an absolute shame on humanity,” Jamann [told reporters](#).

The Trump administration has increased direct U.S. attacks on Yemen and has affiliated Washington more directly with the Saudis’ war on Houthi rebels there.

U.S. troops will not be heading anytime soon down to Honduras to overthrow the vicious government that stands atop a nation where nearly [two-thirds of the rural populace](#) lives in abject poverty and [where](#) :

“Too many... children live on the streets because their families cannot provide for them. Their homes – often made of cardboard and tin pieced together – offer no space or running water, and little hope of a better future. Usually it is just one room, sometimes with a wood burning stove in the middle, which of course, adds smoke and pollution to the room. There may be a latrine outside but not necessarily close by. The latrine may be shared by several families. There may be only one bed with other family members sleeping on the floor. There is little, if any, furniture. Despite the many children who may be living there, one rarely sees any toys or books. Some homes do have electricity in the form of bare bulbs and exposed wires hanging overhead often covered with duct tape.”

The U.S. considers the regime that enforces this misery in Honduras part of the democratic and “free world.” Honduras’ mass of brown-skinned poor are technically unworthy victims in the reigning U.S. media-politics culture. Not so the wealthy and lighter-skinned Venezuelan elite, who are enraged by the Venezuelan revolution’s effort to raise millions out of poverty.

In Washington’s view, Venezuela’s left government must be punished for the twin sins of national independence and egalitarian social-democracy – the same transgressions that doomed Arbenz, Allende, and allied left leaders and forces across Latin America and the world (think Lumumba, Sukarno, Mossaddegh) in past episodes of U.S. “democracy promotion.”

How perfect is it that RExxon Tillerson is the petro-imperial mouthpiece for the threat of regime change in Venezuela? The climate-wrecking transnational super-corporation he headed for many years has sought through a World Bank Tribunal to extract \$1.6 billion as compensation for properties nationalized when the great Venezuelan populist Hugo Chavez (the man Bernie F-35 Sanders dismissed last year as “just a dead communist dictator”) acted to take back control of Venezuela’s oil wealth to (*imagine*) channel the profits into

social programs at home rather than profits for multinational companies.

Nobody should be surprised by Tillerson's chilling message given this history and Tillerson's statement during his confirmation hearings for Secretary of State:

"If confirmed, I would urge close cooperation with our friends in the hemisphere, particularly Venezuela's neighbors Brazil and Colombia, as well as multilateral bodies such as the OAS, to seek a negotiated transition to democratic rule in Venezuela,"

The translation for "transition to democratic rule": overthrow of the Bolivarian socialist Revolution and the restoration of the U.S.-friendly Venezuelan business elite to oligarchic power.

Washington is irked by Maduro's call for a Constituent Assembly to re-draft the Venezuelan constitution. How ironic. The ancient and explicitly un- and even [anti-democratic U.S. Constitution](#) of how and why the United States itself is a corporate oligarchy. The United States itself is in dire need of a revolutionary movement that must demand among other things a Constituent Assembly to [draft a new U.S. Constitution](#) consistent with the ideal and practice of the U.S. Founders' ultimate nightmare – popular sovereignty.

Meanwhile, the Venezuelan crisis may provide a useful yardstick for helping sort out those who understand the need for such a movement from those who don't. If you want to know the dividing line between actual Leftists and the neoliberal Resistance masquerading as a Left in the Age of Trump, take statements or non-statements on Venezuela as a litmus test. Venezuela can help us expose the U.S. fake Left, showing us the richly imperialism that lurks behind the label of Resistance.

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