

## Update on Venezuela

[Issued by Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, as part of her weekly briefing to journalists, in Moscow, Feb 14, 2019](#)

The situation in Venezuela, which is trying to uphold its statehood, independence and sovereignty, continues to be aggravated by external pressure and a growing number of provocative statements. With Washington's unprecedented obsession with the need to overthrow the legitimate government of a sovereign state, disregarding the norms and principles of international law, the range of the so-called options under consideration continues to shrink. In effect, the matter comes down to acting on an *idée fixe* – a coup d'état in a single country and the overthrow of its lawful leader who is supported by the people and the army. One gets the impression that the verdict "he must go" is permanently on Washington's table. Only the names are different, but the principles and methods remain the same. They are simply used in new geographical locations of our planet.

The hasty formation of parallel government structures fails to achieve the desired effect. The number of participants in anti-government rallies is below the plan. The use of resources does not help consolidate the domestic opposition. The international support for the self-proclaimed authorities is rapidly taking on numerous nuances of the positions of sovereign states. There is every indication that the White House has opted in Venezuela for a scenario of an acute confrontation with the use of force.

All methods of information and psychological pressure are being used: from manipulation and provocative information attacks to the fanning of hatred. The main target is the armed forces of the Bolivarian Republic. Massive brainwashing of personnel continues. The Venezuelan military are openly urged to stage a rebellion. High-ranking officials from Washington are calling on the armed forces of another state to side with its new political leadership. What moral right does the U.S. have after this to discourse about democracy and legal foundations either within an individual state or in the international arena? None at all.

Literally the other day (February 11), Senator Rubio presented a "personal ultimatum" to six Venezuelan generals, including the defence minister, and the commanders of the Ground Forces, the Army and the Navy. The U.S. Senator promised the Venezuelan generals pardon and immunity from sanctions of the Venezuelan opposition parliament for "the surrender" of their supreme commander-in-chief. This is some kind of computer graphics. Puppets are real dolls that can be touched, but this is simply a virtual fairy tale that some politicians want to bring to life.

All this is taking place against the backdrop of toughening sanctions so as to explain inside and outside Venezuela that its people must be saved from hunger and cold. After all, it is necessary to explain to the democratic forces throughout the world why Washington is so concerned over the situation in Venezuela. People are suffering. Sophisticated unilateral restrictions are not only undermining the oil industry, which is the backbone of the Venezuelan economy, but are also leading to the rapid degradation of the financial and socioeconomic situation, marginalisation of society and eventually, the destruction of Venezuelan statehood. Could U.S. economists,

politicians, and, most important, journalists be unaware of this? Not in the least. They see all of this and cover it up.

What Washington wants to do with Venezuelan economic and financial assets, primarily with PDVSA in its sanctions frenzy, could be described as “the seizure of the century”. This is not just the imposition of coercive unilateral measures in defiance of international law but also a clear signal to everyone: the U.S. can do what it feels like doing with the property and assets of any country at its own discretion. This is the market economy for you--free trade and opposition to protectionism. In this case, we are seeing the raid of an entire state.

They went so far as to predict that Russia and some other countries will be denied the return of loans to Venezuela. Indicatively, these threats are made in Washington whereas Venezuelan opposition leaders emphasise in every way their willingness to honour their commitments to international creditors if they come to power. Russia is directly mentioned as one of the creditors.

I am bound to speak about the international humanitarian aid that is being imposed on Caracas. It would seem that helping people and providing humanitarian aid is a good thing. But it only seems like this at first glance to those who do not understand how it is being made up and supplied and what stands behind it. We are hearing that Russia is allegedly against humanitarian relief for Venezuela and that its draft resolution in the UN Security Council is ostensibly aimed at derailing the humanitarian actions planned by the U.S. and its allies. This is not the case. This is a lie and an attempt to divert attention from the fact that the U.S. draft resolution in the UN Security Council is aimed at covering up planned provocations that are obscured by humanitarian aid with a view to destabilising the situation in Venezuela and probably building a pretext for military interference. We have seen these scenarios at work in other countries. Recall the saga on the delivery of humanitarian relief, with supposed good intentions, to various other countries, including those in the Middle East and North Africa.

The Red Cross openly announced that the planned action has nothing in common with humanitarian aid and publicly distanced itself from participation in this more than dubious project. It has refused to take part in what it does not consider humanitarian aid.

Russia stands for a respectful attitude towards the UN mechanisms for providing humanitarian relief to Venezuela. All issues related to humanitarian aid should be resolved in accordance with universally accepted international procedures and via lawful channels, including the UN office in Caracas and other humanitarian organisations. The International Committee of the Red Cross has already announced its willingness to cooperate with Russia on the Venezuelan track.

We categorically object to any attempts to politicise the issue of humanitarian aid to Venezuela and to use it to cover up the manipulation of public opinion and to mobilise anti-government forces for a coup. We know what goals the Americans are pursuing in handing out their cookies and what tragic consequences this could lead to. There are many examples to this effect.

And yet, it would be interesting to ask the organisers of the U.S. humanitarian mission about their goals. Is it to help the people of Venezuela? Are you serious? After all, this is yet another very dirty provocation. If you insist that this is aid it would be logical to provide it via

specialized UN mechanisms dealing with humanitarian support, which follow principles of objectivity, neutrality, independence and humanity. But if this is what we are talking about, we have another confirmation of our version of this from the current events in the city of Cucuta. So, let's not delude ourselves. A provocation with victims is being prepared under the cover of a humanitarian convoy to create a pretext for the use of outside force. Absolutely everyone should be in the know about this. It seems that the organisers have miscalculated again. Armed intervention is a red line for all of Latin America and the rest of the world that considers itself civilised.

We deem it necessary to abstain from any actions and statements that can provoke an escalation of tension in Venezuela, in part, from any appeals to the armed forces of Venezuela, which may involve them in a domestic civil confrontation.

We continue to repeat that the task of the international community is to help the various political forces in Venezuela find an understanding.

We have paid much attention to the formula of mediation suggested by Mexico, Uruguay and the CARICOM countries in the Montevideo Mechanism format that envisages a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue without ultimatums and preconditions. We believe this initiative and the form in which it was announced deserve broad international support. In this context, Russia would be ready to join any mediation efforts with a view to overcoming the crisis in Venezuela.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about Russia's efforts in this area. We are maintaining the broadest possible contacts on the Venezuelan issue. We are consistently explaining our position to the U.S., among others. But these are not the consultations mentioned by the media in quoting Elliot Abrams's speech in U.S. Congress yesterday. Honestly, it is unclear what he meant. Please be more attentive when translating into Russian.

Let me recall that the day before yesterday, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov spoke over the telephone with U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo at the latter's initiative. During the conversation he warned against any external interference in Venezuelan affairs. The question is what the U.S. wants. If it wants Russia to change its position, this is not possible because it is not based on considerations of expediency. Russia proceeds from international law and state sovereignty based on the principles of the UN Charter. This is the vein in which we are ready to talk with anyone, including our U.S. partners. [End update.]