



VENEZUELA-US CRISIS EXPLAINED

THE INDIAN ANGLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Context:	3
What is the history of USA - Venezuela relations?	4
What is Operation Absolute Resolve?	7
How did US plan Operation Absolute Resolve?	10
Question for debate:	15
Enlist key reasons for USA attack of Venezuela?	16
Questions for Debate:	17
What is Monroe Doctrine?	18
Question for Debate:	18
Who is Maduro and why has he been captured?	18
What have US officials said about Maduro's abduction?	19
Where were Maduro and his wife indicted?	19
What are the charges against Maduro?	20
Is the US operation in Venezuela legal under international law?	21
How Venezuela reacted to the US action?	22

How did the world reacted to the US bombing of Venezuela, 'capture' of Maduro?	22
What's next for Venezuela?	24
Questions for Debate:	28
Mention about the Venezuela's oil reserve?	29
What is Venezuela's oil paradox?	31
What is the socio-economic condition of Venezuela?	34
What are the reasons for declining Venezuela's Energy sector?	40
What are Venezuela's military capablities?	45
What is Delta Force?	46
Highlight geopolitical consequences of US attack on Venezuela?	47
What are the implications of the US–Venezuela tensions for India?	50
What are the key take away of US attack on Venezuela?	52
What is the relevance of the topic for UPSC CSE?	54

Context:

- In a move that stunned the world, the **United States bombed Venezuela** and **abducted President Nicolas Maduro** amid condemnation and plaudits.
- In a news conference on **January 3, 2026** at his **Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida**, **US President Donald Trump** praised the operation to seize Maduro as one of the “**most stunning, effective and powerful displays of American military might and competence in American history**”.

Why Did the US Capture Maduro?

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro captured in US military operation

What Happened?

- ▶ Airstrikes on Caracas
- ▶ Maduro captured & flown to US

Why Now?

Drug Trafficking Allegations	Oil & Control
Accused of Narco-Terrorism	Largest Oil Reserves, US Interests
Accused of Narco-Terrorism	Military on Alert, State of Emergency

Who's in Charge in Venezuela?

- ▶ Delcy Rodriguez Declared Interim President
- ▶ Military on Alert, State of Emergency

Global Reactions

- China, Russia & Iran Condemn US
- UN Calls Emergency Meeting

Key Questions Ahead

- ▶ Further US Military Action?
- ▶ Who Will Lead Venezuela?
- ▶ Risk of Prolonged Instability?

What is the history of USA - Venezuela relations?

- Before the rise of socialist President Chavez, Caracas and Washington largely maintained close economic ties.
- US companies invested in the oil sector in the early 20th century, and, by the 1920s, the US became the biggest market for Venezuela's oil exports.
- But Chavez's nationalisation of the oil industry and vocal stance against US imperial interests in Latin America soured the ties.
- In 2007, Chavez pushed out US oil giants ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips as part of his efforts to make the state oil company gain a majority stake in all new oil projects.

Year	Relations
1999	<p>Chavez takes office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigning on an anti-establishment, anti-US platform, Hugo Chavez is elected president and launches the so-called Bolivarian Revolution. • His early moves to rewrite the constitution and later to nationalise the oil sector set Venezuela and the US on a collision course.
2000s	<p>Escalation and hostility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US-Venezuela ties deteriorate as Chavez strengthens ties with Russia, China and Iran. • Venezuela expels US-backed NGOs and diplomats, and accuses Washington of destabilisation efforts. The US criticises Venezuela over "authoritarianism" and restrictions on the media.
2002	<p>The coup attempt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A short-lived coup removes Chavez for 48 hours.

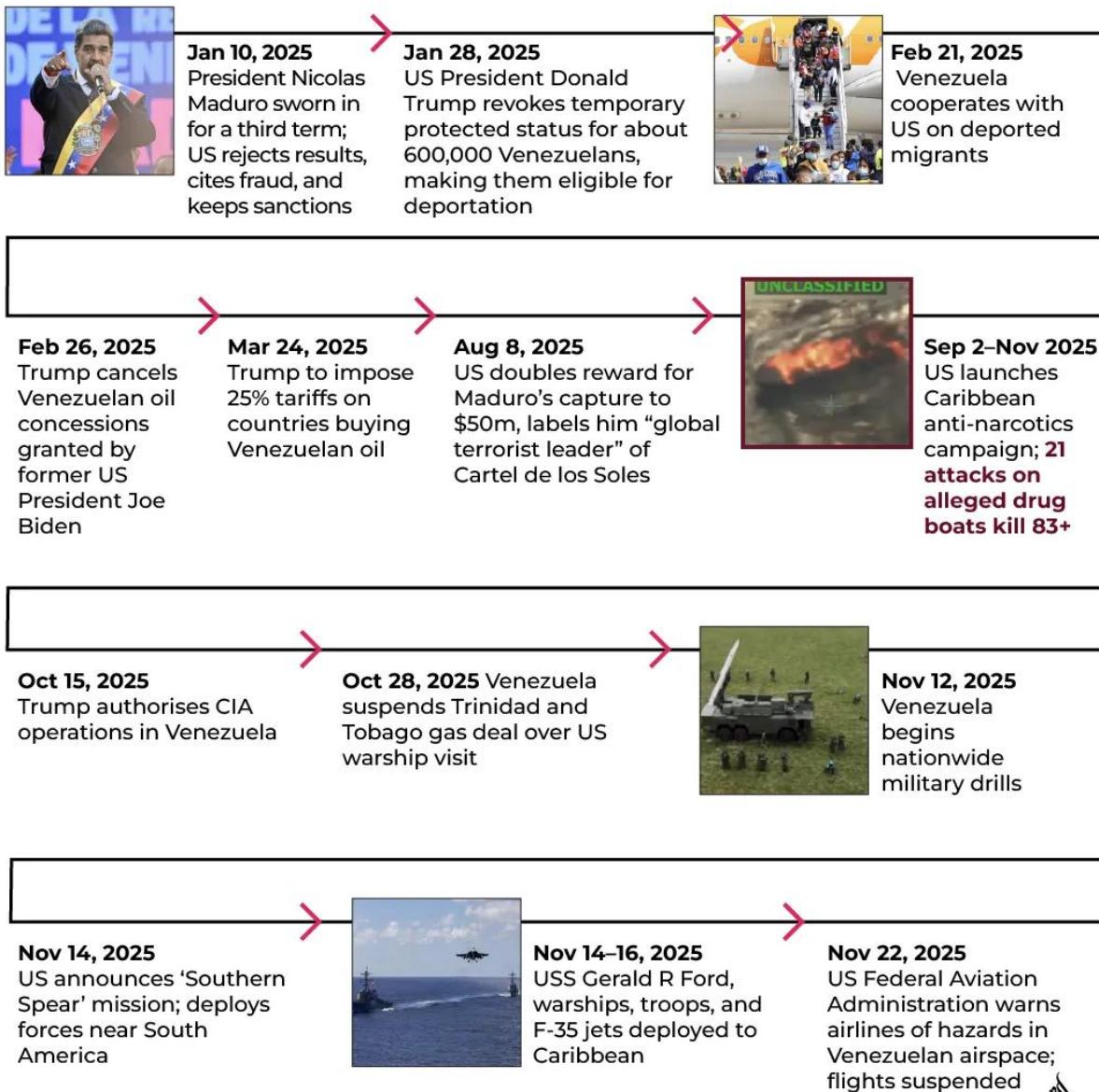
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Venezuela accuses the US of supporting the plot – a charge Washington denies. ● This event lays the foundation for two decades of distrust.
2013	<p>Maduro's rise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Following the death of Chavez, Maduro — his longtime deputy narrowly wins the presidency in elections. ● His tenure is immediately marked by economic decline, corruption scandals and worsening relations with the US.
2014-15	<p>First major US sanctions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amid growing protests and allegations of human rights abuses, the US imposes visa restrictions and sanctions on Venezuelan officials. ● This is a turning point: Sanctions exacerbate the economic crisis, and Venezuela begins to experience severe shortages of food and medicine. ● Inflation skyrockets, and migration out of the country surges.
2017-19 – Economic crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The US blocks Venezuela's access to its financial markets and bans the purchase of Venezuelan debt. ● Sanctions on oil imports intensify as Venezuela's economy collapses under hyperinflation and years of mismanagement. ● In 2019, inflation peaks at 345 percent. ● In April 2025, it stands at 172 percent
2018	<p>Maduro's disputed re-election:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maduro's controversial 2018 re-election leads to a political crisis. ● Key opposition candidates are barred from running, prompting

	<p>a boycott of the elections by most of the opposition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Opposition figure Juan Guaido declares himself interim president, winning recognition from the US and dozens of allies. Washington expands sweeping sanctions on Venezuela's oil, gold, mining and banking sectors.
2024	<p>A rerun of the 2018 election:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Six years later, Maduro again won a disputed election against independent opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez.● The opposition showed vote tallies from several booths that appeared to suggest a comfortable win for Gonzales, disputing the result announced by election authorities in Maduro's favour.● The United Nations criticised the conduct of the election.

VENEZUELA

US-Venezuela relations in 2025

US-Venezuela relations deteriorated sharply through 2025, marked by disputed elections, expanded US sanctions, rising military deployments, and growing tensions.

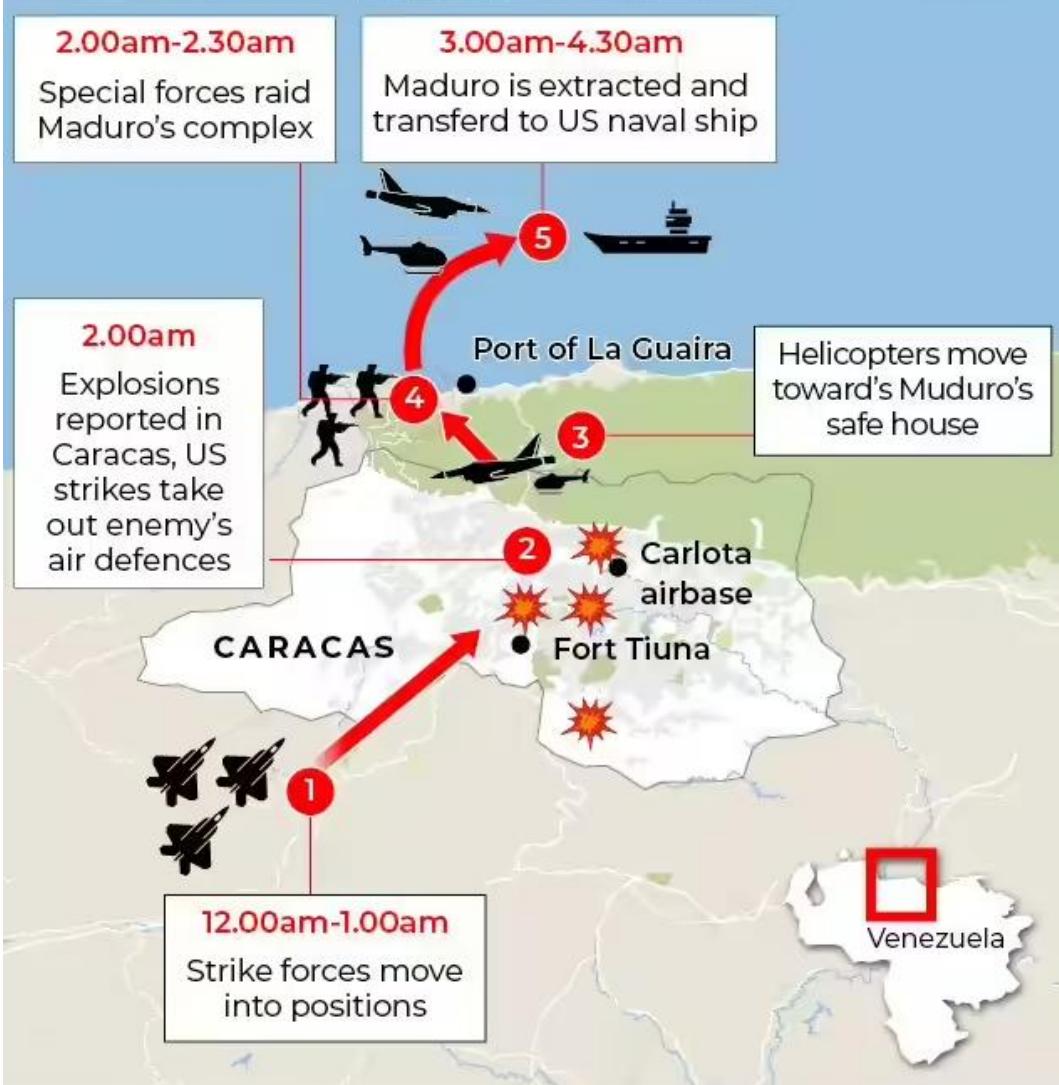


What is Operation Absolute Resolve?

- On 3 January 2026, the United States attacked Venezuela, capturing Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores.
- The attack, codenamed Operation Absolute Resolve, began around 2 am local time when explosions were observed.

OPERATION ABSOLUTE RESOLVE

Inside the stunning US military OP that captured Nicolás Maduro inside Venezuela



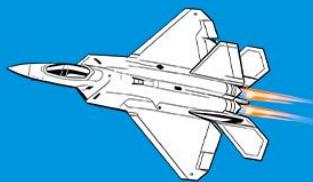
- More than 150 United States Armed Forces aircraft were involved in the operation, which bombed infrastructure across northern Venezuela to support an apprehension force that landed in Caracas.

US OPERATION ABSOLUTE RESOLVE AT A GLANCE

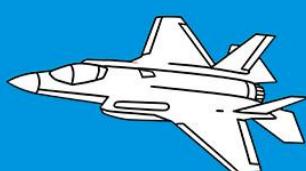
Bases: **20** land and sea bases
across the Western Hemisphere

Aircraft: **150+**

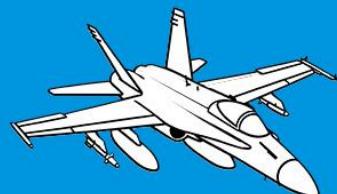
Assets involved:



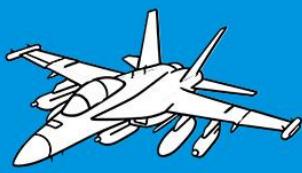
F-22



F-35



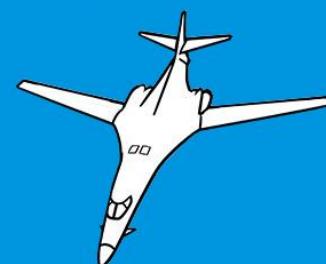
F/A-18



EA-18



E-2 aircraft



B-1 bomber

How did US plan Operation Absolute Resolve?



mint

Inside the US Plan to Capture Venezuela's President Maduro

MONTHS OF PLANNING

- Operation planned over several months
- Delta Force rehearsed assault using safe house replica
- CIA teams deployed inside Venezuela from August
- Maduro's movements tracked via "pattern of life" intel
- Asset inside inner circle tipped exact location



mintInside the US Plan to Capture
Venezuela's President Maduro

FINAL AUTHORISATION

- Core Trump team met regularly for months
- Mission cleared despite weather concerns
- Final approval at 10:46 PM EST Friday
- Operation named Absolute Resolve
- Over 15,000 US troops mobilised



- Planning for the **United States' operation to capture President Nicolás Maduro following strikes on Venezuela** was reportedly **carried out over several months and included extensive rehearsals**.
- **Elite US forces, including the Army's Delta Force**, reportedly built a full-scale **mock-up of Maduro's safe house** and rehearsed breaching the heavily secured compound.

US OIL COS TO GO INTO VENEZUELA: PREZ

Photo: AFP

► Operation lasted less than 30 minutes at 2am local time (11.30am IST), triggering **7-8 blasts across capital Caracas**. Trump says 'lights of Caracas were largely turned off due to a certain expertise that we have'

► **CIA source in Venezuelan govt monitored president's location.** Maduro & wife Cilia Flores plucked from their **home inside heavily guarded Ft Tiuna military complex**

► Couple whisked by helicopters to **US**



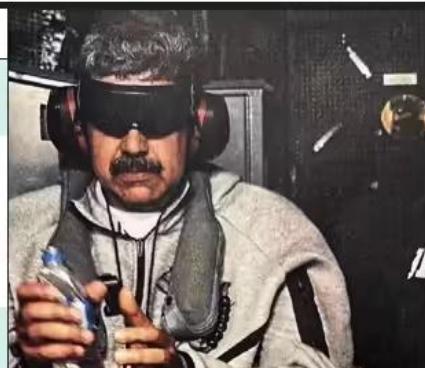
warship Iwo Jima, headed for New York

► Maduro and his wife **indicted in powerful court of Southern District of New York** where 9/11 cases were tried. Charges include **narco-terror conspiracy**

► Trump said no one killed. Venezuela said there were civilian and military casualties.

US Congress notified after the raid

► **China, Russia, Iran and Cuba condemned** the strikes; EU called for restraint

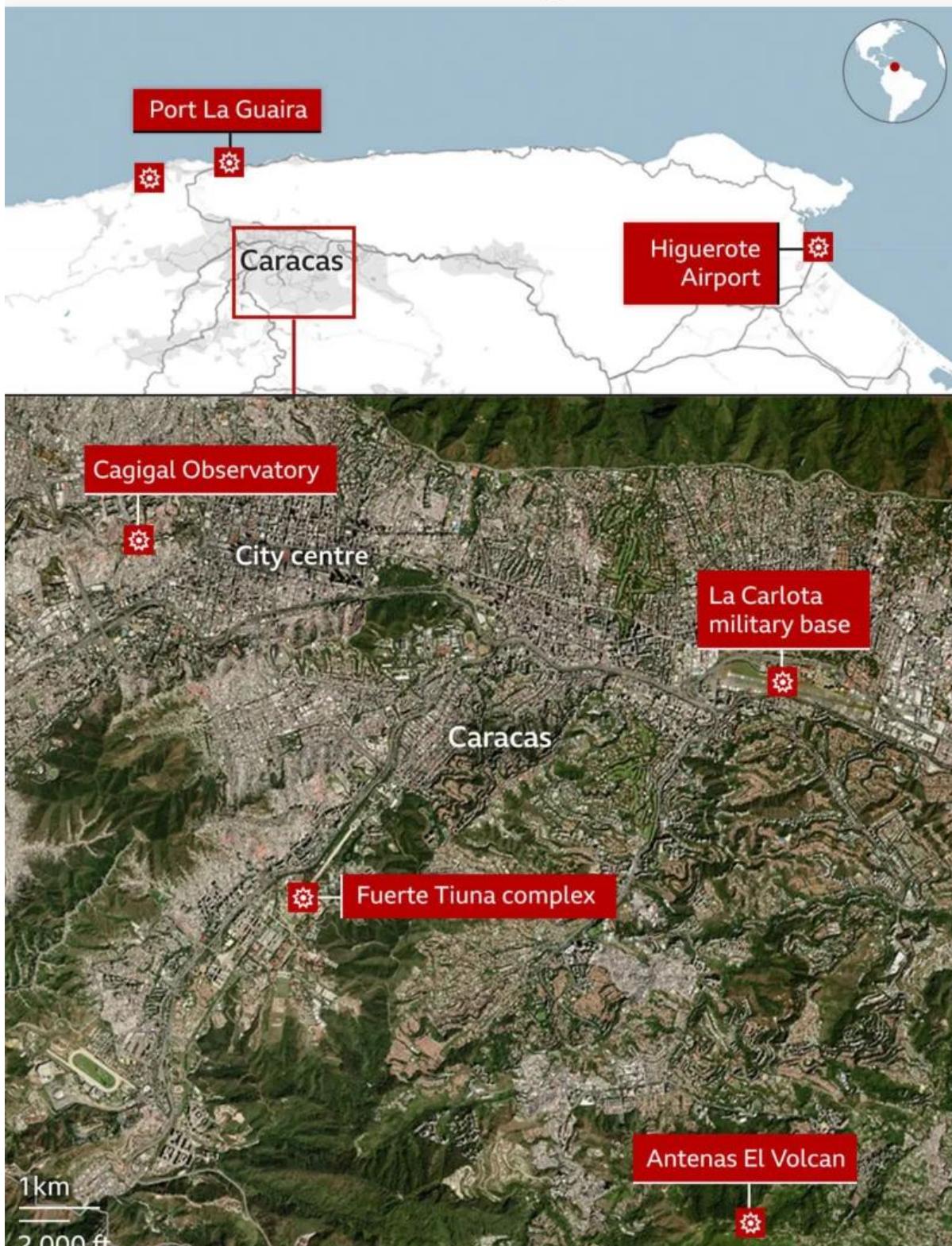


Trump released a photo of Maduro on board USS Iwo Jima

► Trump says **US oil cos** to go into Venezuela, which has the largest oil reserves in the world. **'We're going to make a lot of money. They stole our oil...'**

- **US spies tracked Maduro's every move for months.**
- Beginning in August, a **small CIA team on the ground gathered detailed intelligence on Maduro's daily routines**, which one source said made his **capture straightforward**, reported Reuters. Beginning in August, the **CIA also deployed a covert team of officers inside Venezuela** who collected intelligence on Maduro's **"pattern of life"** and movements, a person familiar with the effort said, a report by **The New York Times** noted.
- As per Reuter's source, a **core group, including senior Trump adviser Stephen Miller, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, and CIA Director John Ratcliffe**, worked on the matter for months, holding frequent meetings and calls, sometimes on a daily basis.
- According to US officials, more than **150 aircraft, including bombers, fighter jets, and surveillance planes**, were involved over the course of the night.

US air strikes in Caracas and along coast



- The Pentagon directed a large-scale military buildup in the Caribbean, deploying an aircraft carrier, 11 warships, and more than a dozen F-35 fighter jets.

mintInside the US Plan to Capture
Venezuela's President Maduro

THE STRIKE

- Attack lasted under 30 minutes
- At least 7 explosions reported
- Military infrastructure targeted
- More than 150 US aircraft involved
- Aircraft carrier, 11 warships deployed

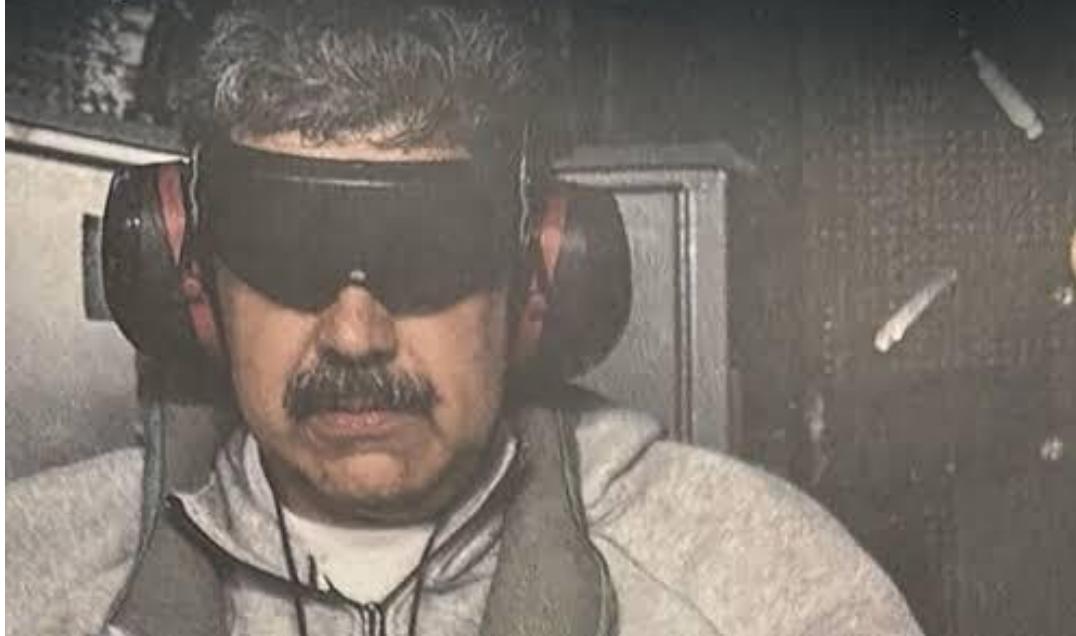


- At least seven explosions were reported during the attack, which **lasted less than 30 minutes** and appeared to target military infrastructure.

mint Inside the US Plan to Capture Venezuela's President Maduro

CASUALTIES & ESCALATION

- Preliminary reports: at least 40 killed
- Civilians and military among dead
- Comes after weeks of US strikes
- 35 strikes reported, over 115 deaths
- Part of expanded US counter-narcotics push



Question for debate:

- *Do you think it is justified for US to attack Venezuela?*

Enlist key reasons for USA attack of Venezuela?

Reasons	Description
Official U.S. Justifications	<p>The U.S. government publicly offered several reasons for the attack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narco-terrorism and drug trafficking: ● U.S. officials accused Maduro's government and allied criminal networks (e.g., Cartel de los Soles) of facilitating large-scale drug trafficking into the United States. ● Threat to U.S. security: ● The administration linked Venezuelan instability to migration pressures at the U.S. southern border. ● Criminal indictment: ● Maduro had been under a long-standing U.S. indictment for drug-related crimes, and a reward had been offered for his capture.



Nicolas Maduro Moros

+1-202-681-8187

SUBMIT TIPS TO

Phone, WhatsApp, Signal



CartelSolesTips@usdoj.gov

Underlying Strategic & Economic Factors	<p>Beyond public justifications, analysts and reports point to deeper geopolitical and economic motivations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oil and natural resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves. ○ Control of these resources has long been of strategic interest to the U.S. and global markets. ● Geopolitical influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Venezuela has aligned with China, Russia, and other U.S. geopolitical rivals. ○ Washington has expressed concern about losing influence in Latin America. ● Decades of tensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ U.S.–Venezuela relations were already strained for years due to ideological differences, sanctions, and disputes over governance and elections
--	---

Questions for Debate:

- *Was the U.S. attack on Venezuela justified under international law on grounds of narco-terrorism and criminal indictment of a sitting head of state?*
- *Are non-traditional security threats (drugs, migration) sufficient grounds for armed intervention?*
- *Is the U.S. intervention an attempt to reassert dominance in Latin America amid rising multipolarity?*

What is Monroe Doctrine?

MONROE DOCTRINE — WHAT IT IS

TOI

The Monroe Doctrine is a cornerstone of early US foreign policy, **announced in 1823** by then US President James Monroe.



CORE IDEA

The doctrine warned **European powers not to colonize or interfere in the affairs of countries in the Western Hemisphere** (North and South America). In return, the United States said it would not interfere in European conflicts.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- 1.** No new European colonization in the Americas.
- 2.** No interference by European nations in Western Hemisphere nations.
- 3.** Any attempt to control or influence nations in the Americas would be seen as a hostile act against the United States.
- 4.** The US, in turn, would avoid involvement in European wars.



Question for Debate:

Does this episode reflect a revival of the Monroe Doctrine in modern form?

Who is Maduro and why has he been captured?

- Prez Maduro rose to prominence under the leadership of left-wing President Hugo Chávez, succeeding him as president in 2013.

- Maduro has been at odds with Trump over the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants in the US and the movement of drugs into the US, in particular fentanyl and cocaine.
- But counter-narcotic experts say Venezuela mainly acts as a country through which drugs produced elsewhere are smuggled, while fentanyl is mainly produced in Mexico and typically enters the US via their shared land border.
- Trump has designated two Venezuelan drug gangs, Tren de Aragua and Cartel de los Soles, as Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs) and has alleged that the latter was led by Maduro himself.
- Maduro has vehemently denied being a cartel leader and has accused the US of using its "war on drugs" as an excuse to try to depose him and get its hands on Venezuela's oil.
- In recent months, US forces carried out more than two dozen strikes in international waters on boats they allege were used to traffic drugs, killing more than 100 people.

What have US officials said about Maduro's abduction?

- US Attorney General Pam Bondi said in a post on X on Saturday that Maduro and his wife "will soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts".
- US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a press conference that the military raid to **abduct** Maduro was an action carried out on behalf of the US Department of Justice.

Where were Maduro and his wife indicted?

- The indictment was filed in the Southern District of New York under seal before **Christmas Day, December 25**.

- The document, which was unsealed on Saturday, accuses the **abducted Venezuelan president of heading a “corrupt, illegitimate government” fuelled by an extensive drug-trafficking operation that flooded the US with thousands of tonnes of cocaine.**
- In the indictment, US authorities have also charged five other individuals.
- They include **Maduro’s wife, Flores, and son, Nicolas Maduro Guerra**, who were identified as **central to the US prosecutors’ corruption case**.
- **Diosdado Cabello**, the **current minister of interior, justice and peace**, and former Interior Minister **Ramon Rodriguez Chacin** are also **charged in the indictment**.
- The charges are the same as those in an earlier indictment brought against him in a **Manhattan federal court in 2020**, during the **first term of US President Donald Trump**.

What are the charges against Maduro?

- The **main charges** brought against **Maduro and his identified associates** relate to **“narco-terrorism” and **conspiracy to import cocaine****. The offences carry **potential maximum sentences of life imprisonment under US law**.



FOX 5 ATLANTA

MADURO MAKES FIRST APPEARANCE



CHARGES AGAINST NICOLÁS MADURO

- NARCO-TERRORISM CONSPIRACY
- COCAINE IMPORTATION CONSPIRACY
- POSSESSION OF MACHINE GUNS & DESTRUCTIVE DEVICES
- CONSPIRACY TO POSSESS MACHINE GUNS & DESTRUCTIVE DEVICES AGAINST THE U

- In the indictment, charges are on four counts: “narco-terrorism” conspiracy, cocaine importation conspiracy, possession of machine guns and destructive devices, and conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices.
- The US officials **accuse Maduro** and others of working hand in hand with the **region’s largest drug trafficking groups, including in Colombia and Mexico.**
- Trump has recently claimed that **Maduro** is behind the **Tren de Aragua** gang that Washington has proscribed as a “**Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO)**”.

Is the US operation in Venezuela legal under international law?

- **New York Times** said in its Saturday editorial **calling Trump’s attack on Venezuela 'illegal and unwise.'**
- It cited a **United Nations recent report** which **detailled** more than a decade of killings, **torture, sexual violence and arbitrary detention by henchmen** against Maduro political opponents in the Latin American nation.
- Experts that spoke with global media suggested that **US action has likely violated** the terms of the **UN charter, which was signed in October 1945** and **designed to prevent another conflict on the scale of the second world war.**
- **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter** says that **states must refrain from using military force against other countries.**
- The **United Nations**, said on Saturday, that **President Trump's move sets a dangerous precedent for the world.**
- “**The reality is that America is in breach of the United Nations charter,**” Geoffrey Robertson KC, a founding head of Doughty Street Chambers told the Guardian.
- **Elvira Domínguez-Redondo**, a professor of international law at Kingston University in conversation with the **Guardian** described the operation as a ‘**crime of aggression and unlawful use of force against another country’.**

- Susan Breau, another professor of international law and a senior associate research fellow at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, agreed that the attack could have only been considered lawful if the US had a resolution from the UN security council or was acting in self-defence.

How Venezuela reacted to the US action?

- The Venezuelan authorities described the event as an “imperialist attack” and called on citizens to take to the streets.
- The Bolivarian Government calls on all social and political forces in the country to activate mobilization plans and repudiate this imperialist attack.
- As the dust settles in Caracas, Venezuelans are reacting to the news of President Nicolás Maduro's capture by the US with hope, fear, and uncertainty.
- People began to emerge in the streets after a night rocked by explosions in the Caracas Valley, with moods that ranged from celebration to condemnation.
- Supporters of Maduro's government have also been rallying in the streets of Caracas, demanding the US release their leader.

How did the world reacted to the US bombing of Venezuela, ‘capture’ of Maduro?

Countries	Reaction
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Alerting the whole world that they have attacked Venezuela,” Colombian President Gustavo Petro wrote in a series of statements posted on the social media platform X. • “The Republic of Colombia reiterates its conviction that peace, respect for international law, and the protection of life and human dignity must prevail over any form of armed confrontation,” Petro said.

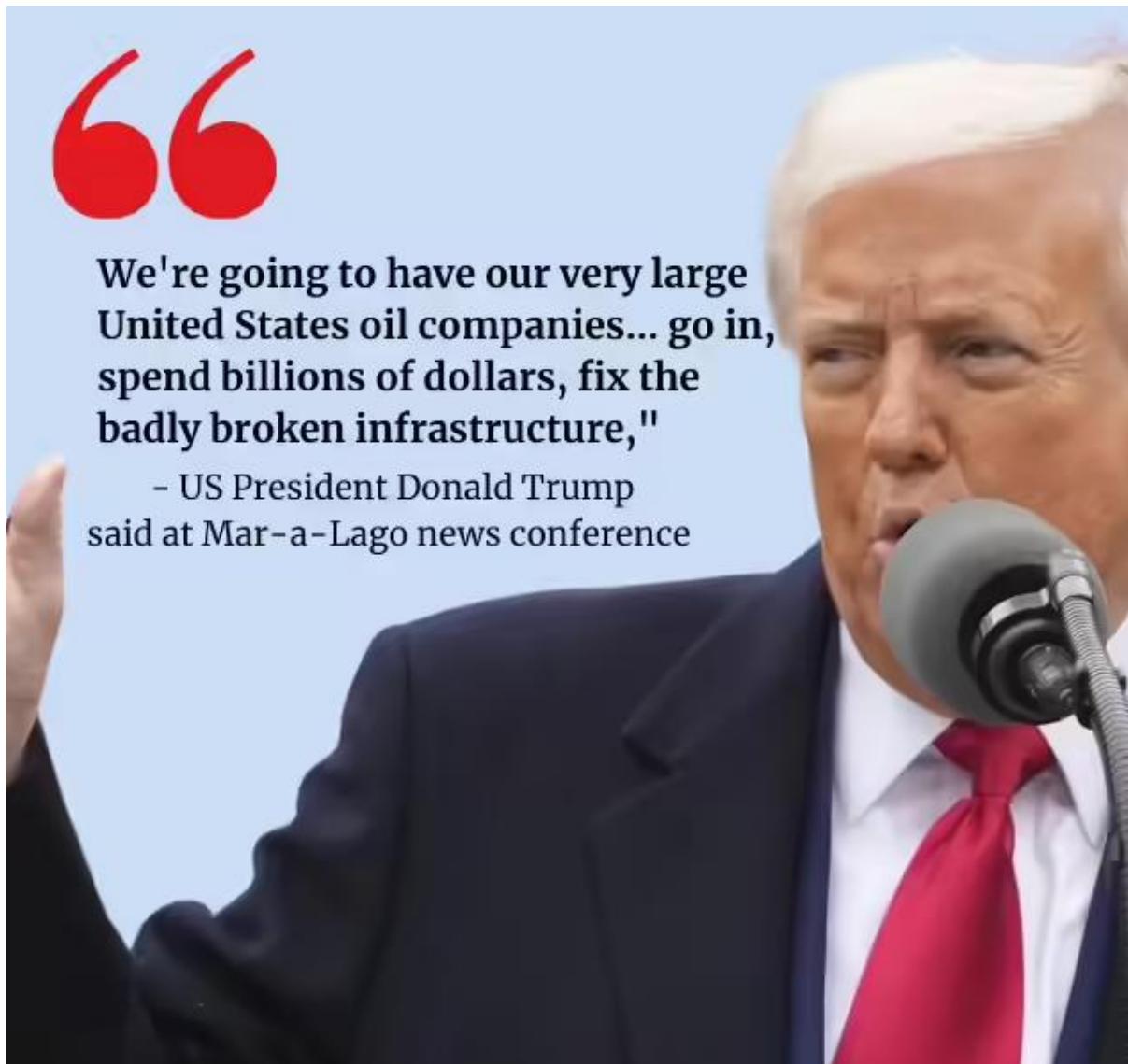
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China's foreign ministry said Beijing was "deeply shocked and strongly condemns the use of force by the US against a sovereign country and the use of force against the president of a country." • "China firmly opposes such hegemonic behaviour by the US, which seriously violates international law, violates Venezuela's sovereignty, and threatens peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean."
Mexico	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a statement on X, President Claudia Sheinbaum said, "Mexico condemns the military intervention in Venezuela." • She also included in her post an article in the UN Charter which states: "The Members of the Organization, in their international relations, shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moscow is deeply concerned and condemned an "act of armed aggression" against Venezuela committed by the US, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. • The ministry said, "Venezuela must be guaranteed the right to determine its own destiny without any destructive, military intervention from outside." • The ministry also said it was "extremely concerned" about the capture of Maduro and his wife, adding that if such actions took place "constitute an unacceptable violation of the sovereignty of an independent state."
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India expressed "deep concern" over the United States' attacks on Venezuela and the capture of President Nicolás

	<p>Maduro by American forces, and called on all parties to address issues peacefully through dialogue to ensure stability in the region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India issued an advisory urging its citizens to avoid all non-essential travel to Venezuela. ● It also advised Indians in Venezuela to exercise extreme caution, restrict their movements, and remain in contact with the Indian embassy. There are around 50 non-resident Indians and 30 people of Indian origin in Venezuela.
European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas said she has spoken with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the EU ambassador in Caracas regarding the latest developments in Venezuela. ● “The EU is closely monitoring the situation in Venezuela,” Kallas said in a statement on X.

What's next for Venezuela?

- The **Constitutional Chamber of Venezuela's Supreme Court** ordered Vice President **Delcy Rodriguez** to serve as **acting president following the US's abduction of Maduro.**
- The court also said it would work to determine the **applicable legal framework to guarantee the continuity of the State, the administration of government, and the defense of sovereignty** in the face of the forced absence of the President of the Republic”.
- During his news conference on **January 3, 2026**, **Trump announced that the US would “run” Venezuela** until a new leader was chosen.
- **“We're going to make sure that country is run properly. We're not doing this in vain,” Trump said. “This is a very dangerous attack. This is an attack that could have gone very, very badly.”**

- The **president did not rule out deploying US troops** in the country and said he was “**not afraid of boots on the ground if we have to**”.
- **Trump** also, somewhat surprisingly, **ruled out working** with opposition figure and **Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado**, who had dedicated her prize, which he wanted to win himself, to the US president.



- **Trump** had said earlier on Saturday that the **US would not occupy Venezuela**, provided Rodriguez “**does what we want**”.

GRAPHIC OF THE DAY

VENEZUELA BRACES FOR US OFFENSIVE

The threat of a US attack on Venezuela loomed after President Donald Trump announced a closure of the airspace over the country and sent a US aircraft carrier task force into its neighbouring waters. What are the country's options in the event of a US offensive?



Caracas prepares 2-pronged response

The country has two plans in the the event of a US attack

1 Guerrilla-style resistance

The response has been referenced publicly by high-ranking officials, who refer to it as "prolonged resistance", and would involve small military units at more than 280 locations carrying out acts of sabotage and other guerrilla tactics.

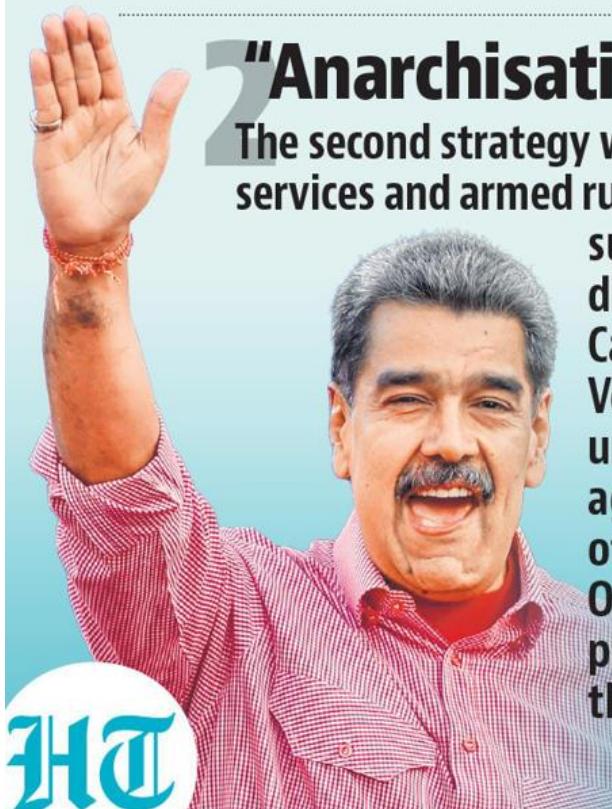
5,000

Russian-made Igla missiles have already been deployed. Military orders are for units to disperse and hide at various locations if there is an attack, one source said.

2 "Anarchisation"

The second strategy would use intelligence services and armed ruling-party

supporters to create disorder in the capital Caracas and make Venezuela ungovernable, news agency Reuters quoted officials as saying. Officials have not publicly mentioned this method.



HT



Are there other armed actors in Venezuela?

Colombian guerrilla forces like the National Liberation Army operate in the west of Venezuela, which is also a hub for the cultivation of coca, the base ingredient in cocaine. Ruling party supporters called colectivos, or collectives, often mobilise in motorcycle convoys to confront protesters. They are sometimes armed.

Venezuelan opposition groups, NGOs, Washington and some Latin American governments have accused Maduro and the Venezuelan military of ties to drug trafficking groups, who are also accused of violence.

The government has consistently denied such links and says the US is seeking regime change to take control of Venezuela's vast oil reserves.

Questions for Debate:

- *“Does the U.S. action set a dangerous precedent for unilateral interventions globally?”*
- *“Can interim leadership under foreign pressure be considered genuine*

transition leadership?"

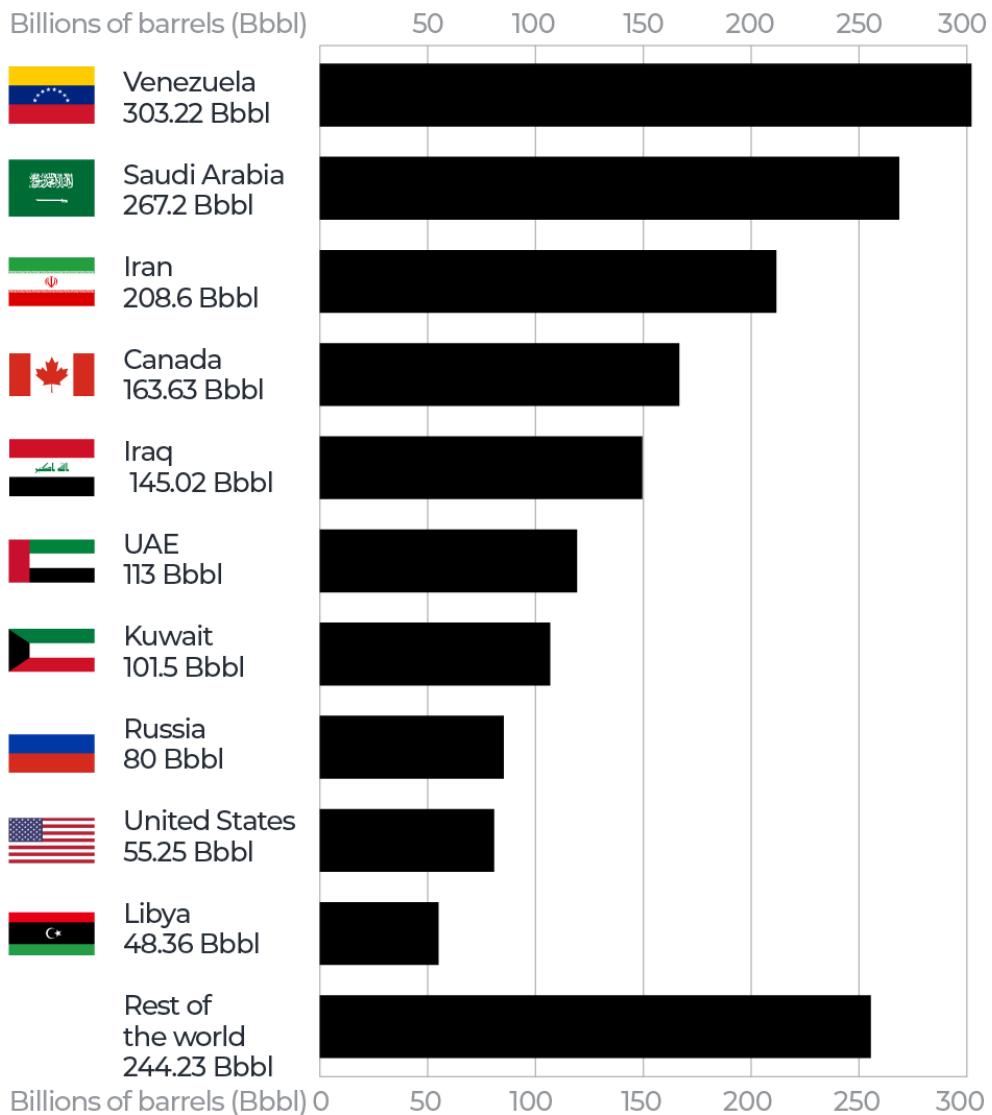
- “Will this conflict deepen mistrust between the Global South and Western powers?”
- “Does threatening a nation’s leader for compliance constitute coercion incompatible with international norms?”

Mention about the Venezuela’s oil reserve?

ENERGY

Worldwide proven crude oil reserves

As of 2023, global proven oil reserves stand at approximately 1.73 trillion barrels, with Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Canada accounting for more than half of the total.



ENERGY

Venezuela's oil fields and pipelines

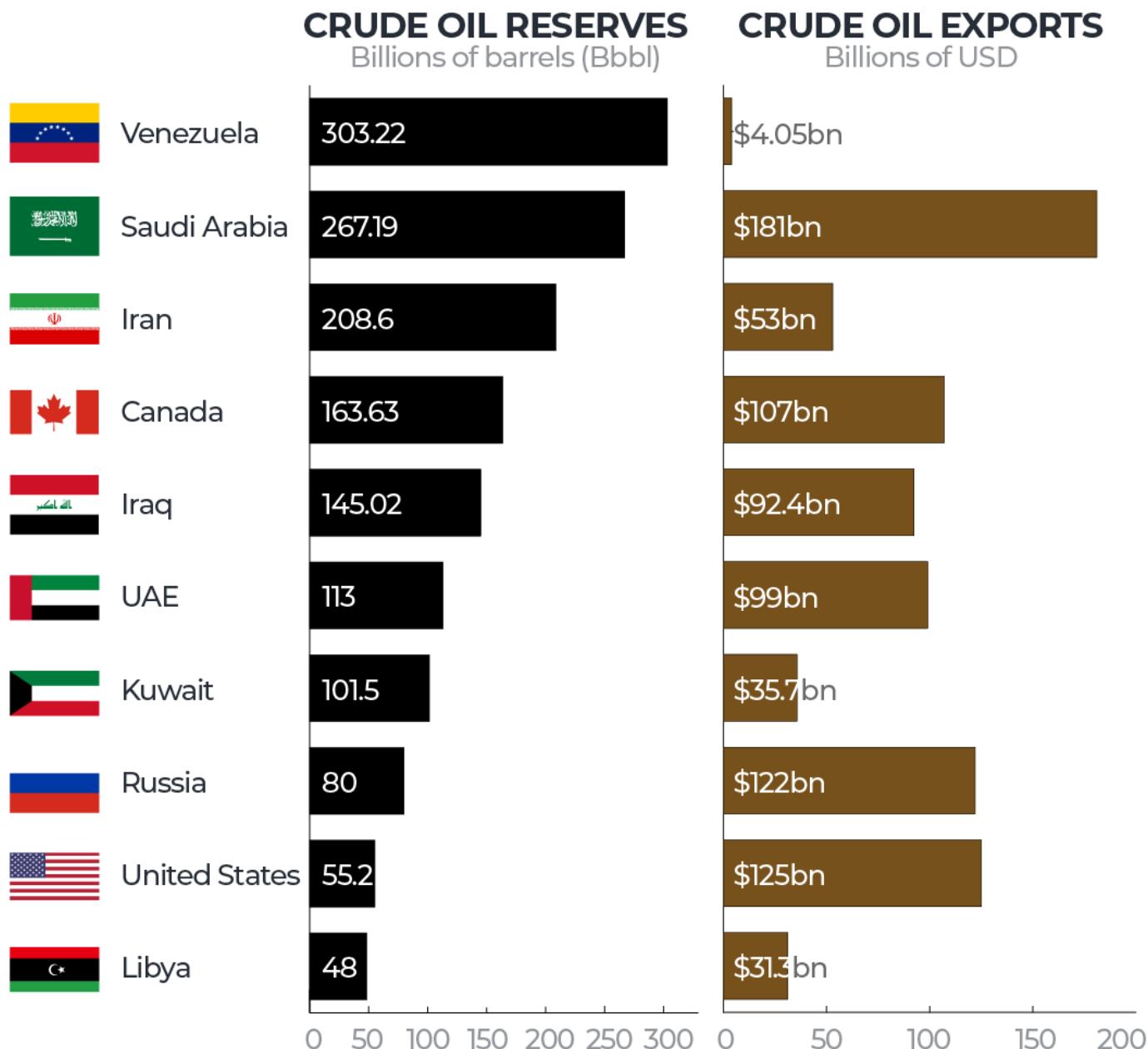
Venezuela has vast oil reserves in the Orinoco Belt, where extra-heavy crude requires advanced extraction techniques, making production expensive and limiting exports.



ENERGY

Crude oil reserves vs exports

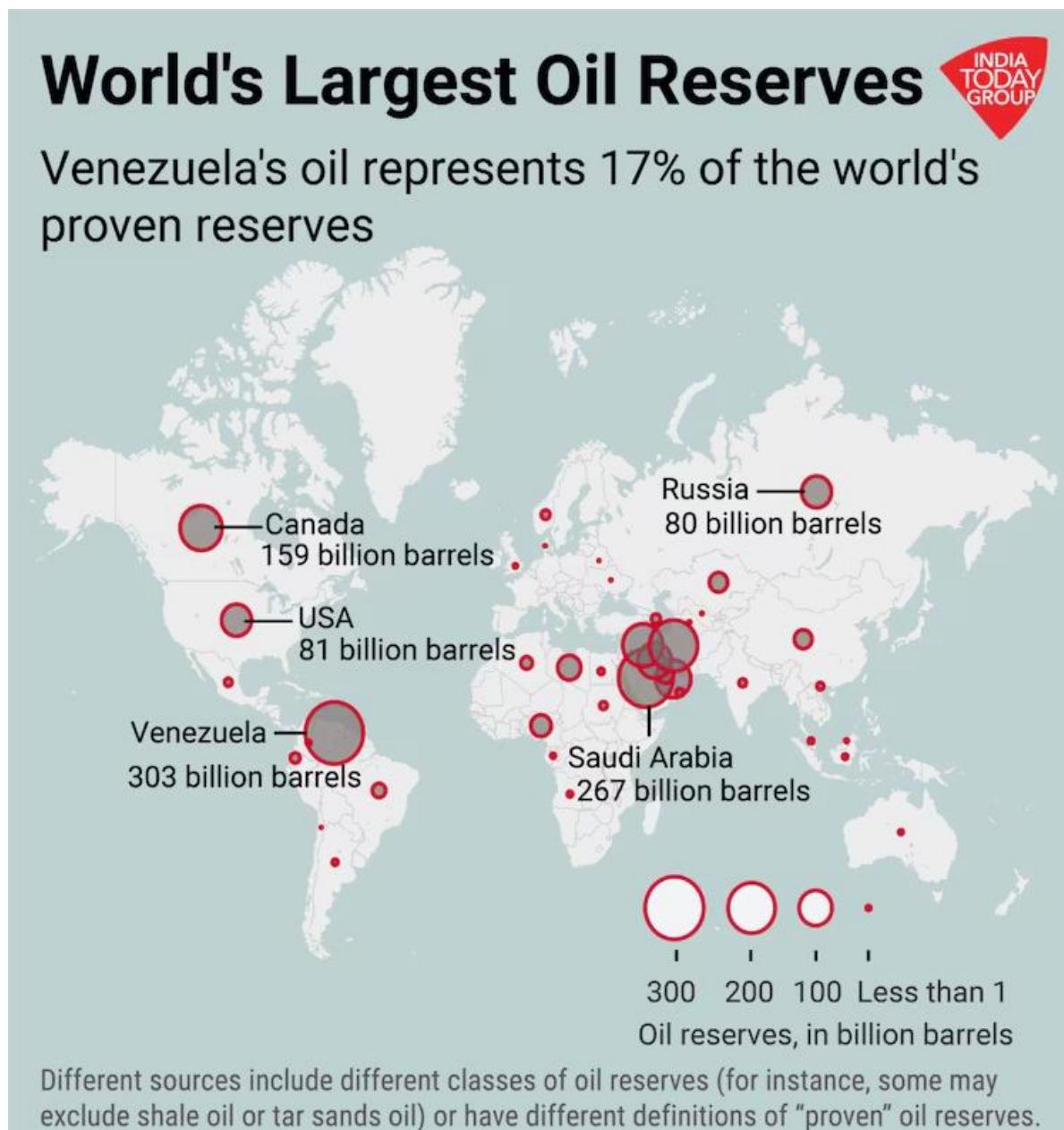
Venezuela holds the world's largest proven oil reserves, more than five times the United States. But in 2023, the US exported about \$125bn of crude, far more than sanction-hit Venezuela.



What is Venezuela's oil paradox?

- Venezuela holds nearly 20% of the world's proven oil reserves, but pumps less than a percent of global crude.

- After capturing its leader, **Trump is now promising that US companies will revive production.**
- This gap is the **result of decades of political mismanagement, corruption, chronic underinvestment, US sanctions, and the technical complexity of extracting Venezuela's extra-heavy crude.**



- According to news agency Reuters, **Washington believes a production increase of Venezuelan crude to 2 million bpd by 2030 could shave \$4 per barrel off global oil prices.**

Venezuela's Oil Paradox

World's biggest reserves. Crumbling production.



303 Billion Barrels

- 17% of Global Oil Reserves
- Largest in the World, Ahead of Saudi Arabia

Production Collapse



◆ Mismanagement • Sanctions • Underinvestment

OPEC Legacy



Founding OPEC Member



7% of Global Output



Now a Marginal Producer

Joint Ventures



PDVSA Controls Majority



Foreign investment opened in 1990s, rolled back after 1999.

Exports & Sanctions

US Was Top Buyer

→ **China** Now Main Destination

Exports Halted After Dec 2025 Blockade



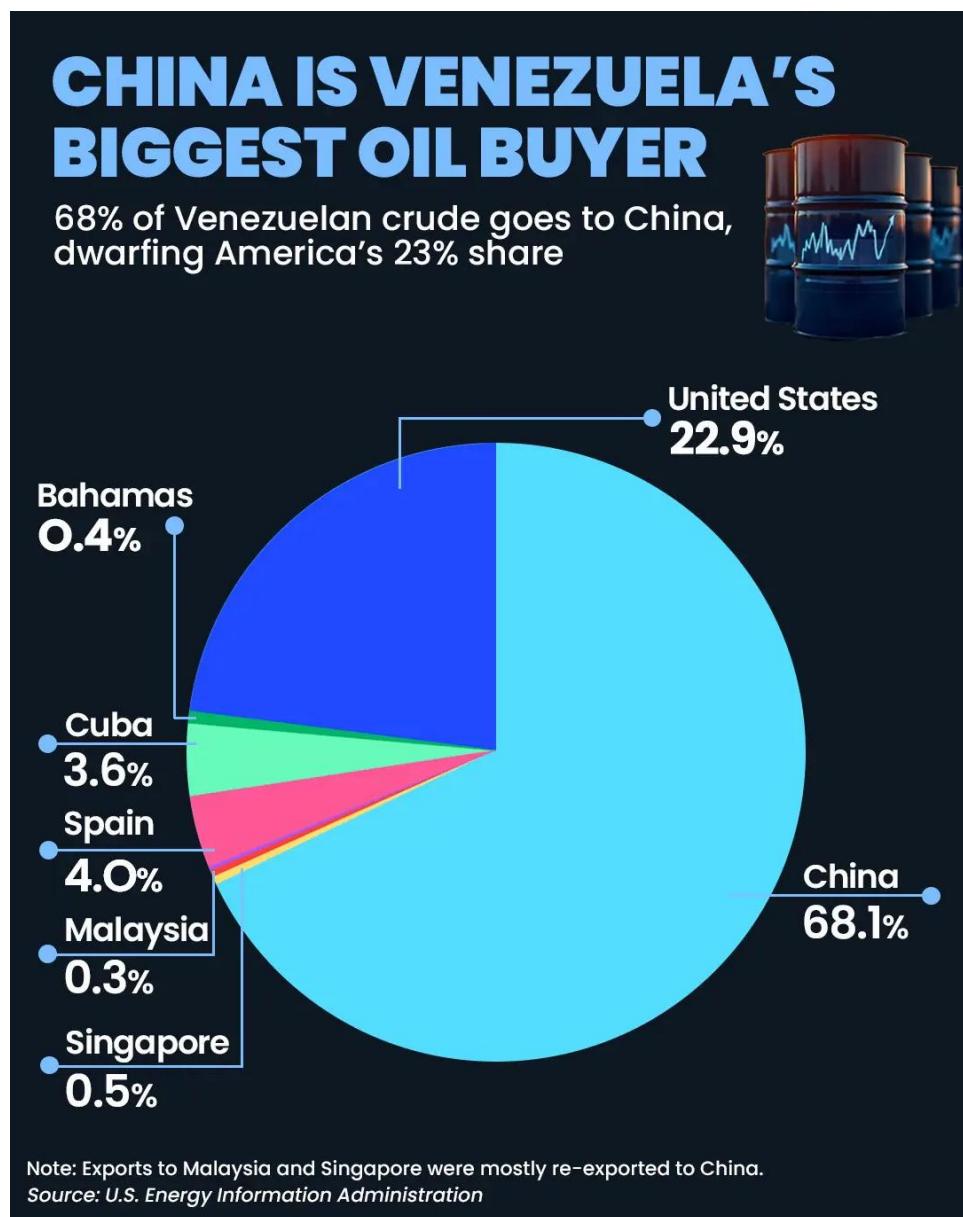
Refining & CITGO



- PDVSA Owns CITGO (US)
- Legal Battles Rage On
- Creditors Seek Control in US Courts

“Even regime change won’t restore oil supply quickly.”

— Energy Analysts on Libya & Iraq

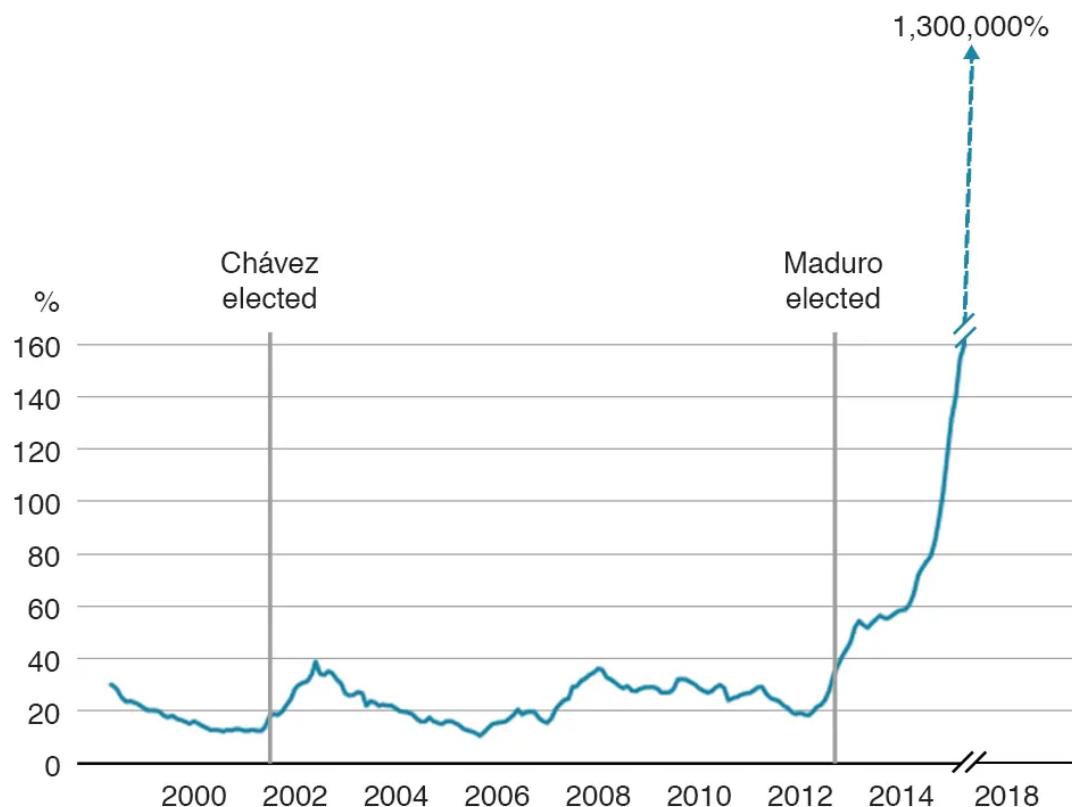


What is the socio-economic condition of Venezuela?

- The roots of Venezuela's economic crisis lie in a toxic mix of economic mismanagement, international sanctions, and systemic corruption.
- The country entered a severe recession in 2016, with GDP contracting sharply and inflation spiralling out of control.
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated inflation at between 254 and 500 per cent in 2016, while Venezuela's own central bank reported 274 per cent.

Venezuela's inflation spiked after Maduro's election

Estimate for 2018 is off the scale



- Independent estimates were even higher. **Hyperinflation eroded the government's ability to maintain oil infrastructure** and pay for imports of equipment and chemicals essential for production.
- The **situation worsened in 2017** when the **US imposed sanctions on Venezuela's state oil company, PDVSA**, cutting off its access to global financial systems and key markets. This move **choked off revenue and foreign investment**, leaving PDVSA unable to service its debts or attract partners.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF VENEZUELA

An overview of key demographic and
macroeconomic indicators

Population **2.8 Crore**

2024



 **GDP**
(Constant 2015)

2024
\$42.64
Billion

 **GDP per capita**
(Constant 2015)

2024
\$1,501

 **GDP Growth**
(Annual)

2024
5.3 %

 2024
Unemployment
5.5 %

 Apr 2025
Inflation
172 %

 2024
Corruption Index
Rank 178/180

Global Hunger Index
Rank **49/136**

2025

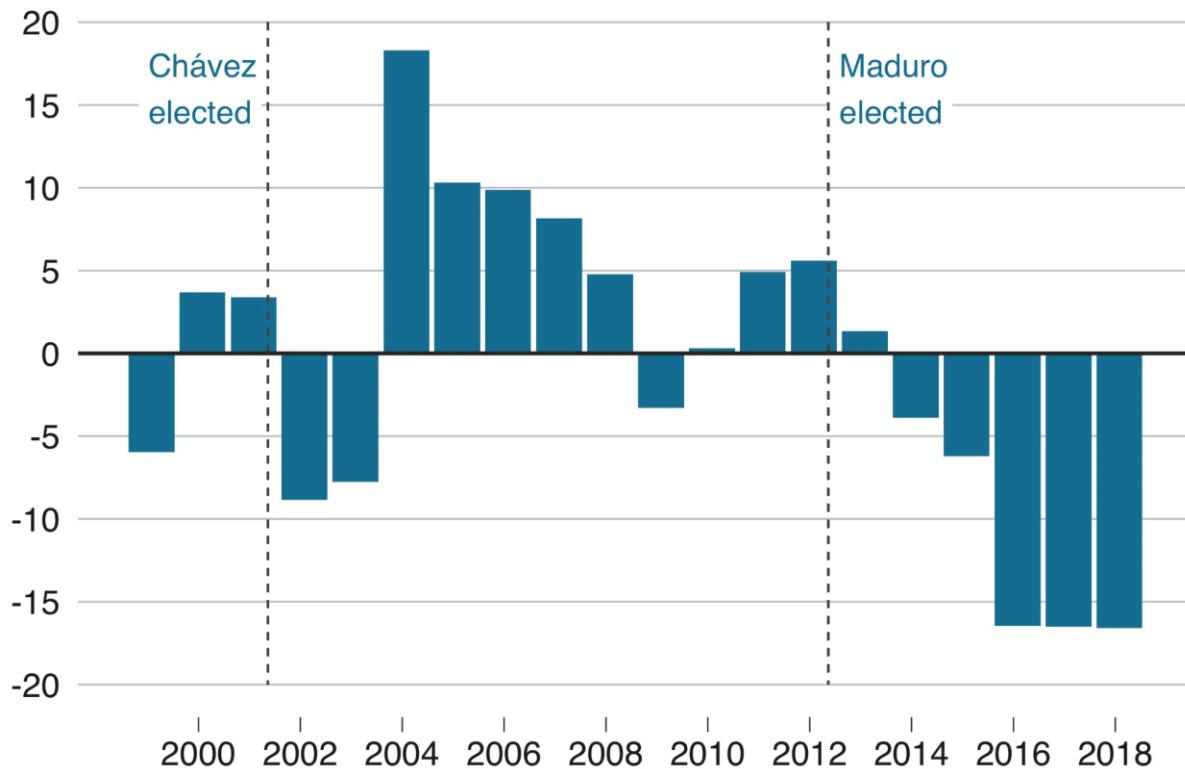
Population Extreme Poverty
34 Lakh
Households

2024

Source: World Bank, UN, Trading Economics, Transparency International.org ,
Global Hunger Index & ENCOVI Survey 2024

Venezuela's economy collapsed under Maduro

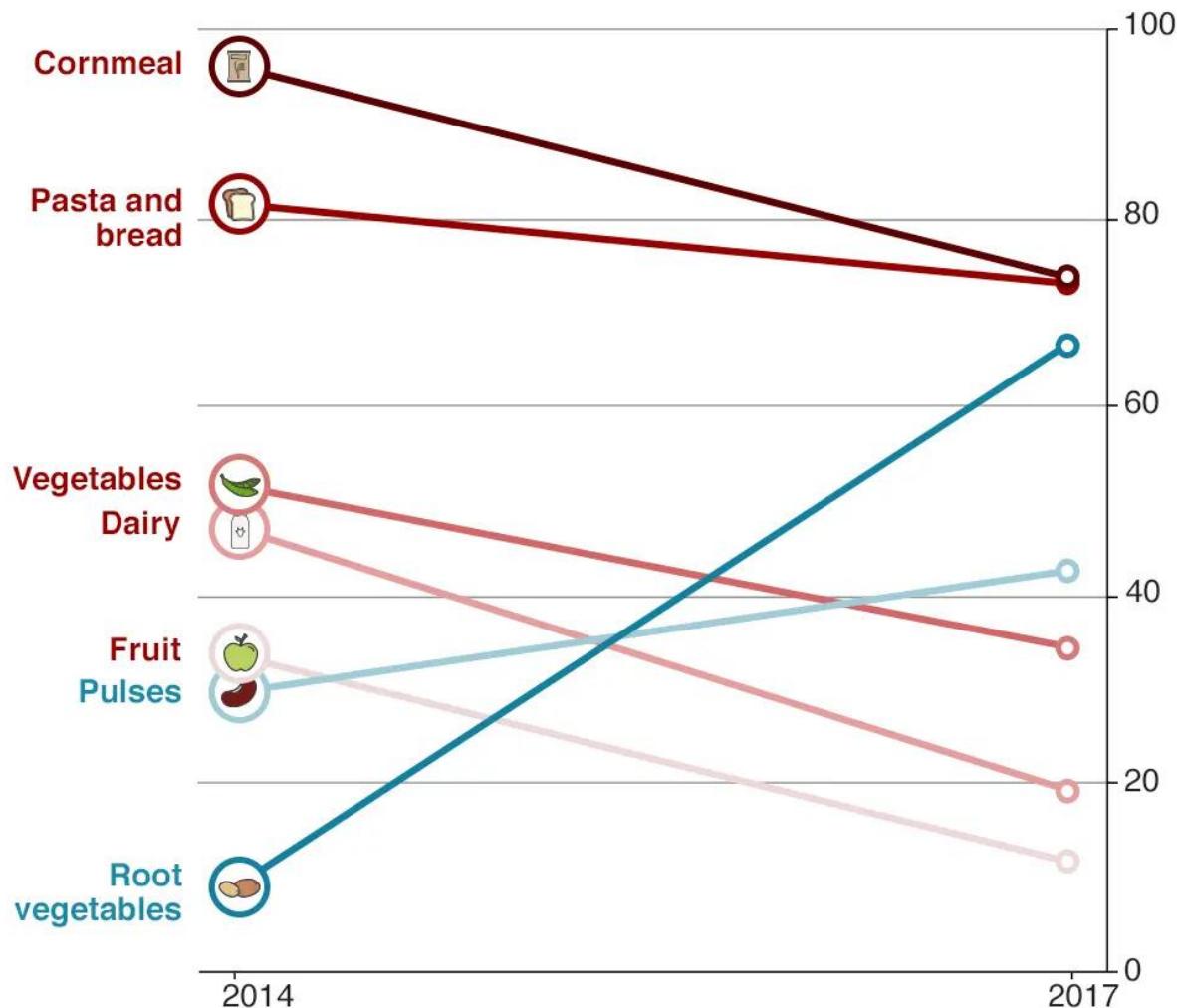
% GDP growth



- According to the **country's annual living conditions survey** (Encovi 2017), **eight out of 10** said they were **eating less** because they did not have enough food at home.
- Six out of 10** said they **had gone to bed hungry** because **they did not have the money to buy food**.

Venezuelans are being forced to choose different foods

% of families who said they bought each product

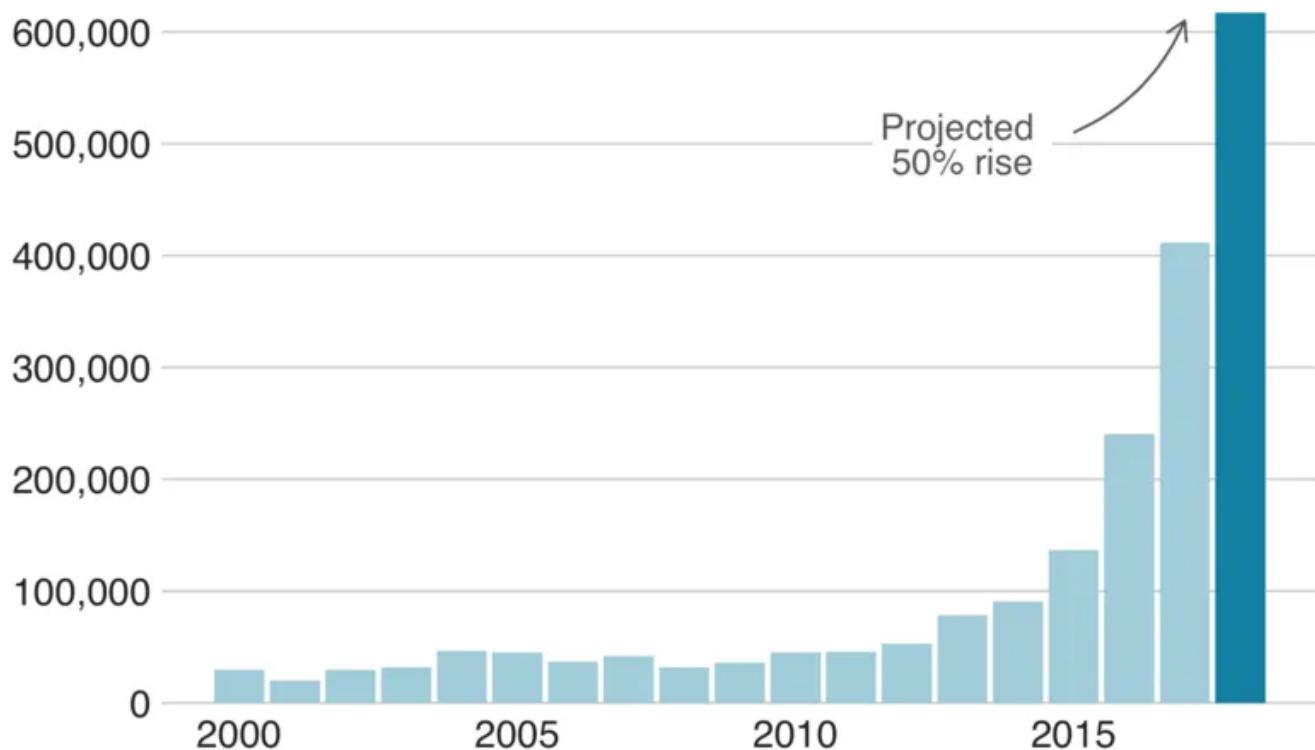


Source: Bengoa-Enconvi 2017

BBC

- Venezuela has suffered a **huge rise in the number of malaria cases in recent years** - in stark **contrast** to neighbouring **countries in Latin America, where numbers are falling**.

Rising cases of malaria in Venezuela



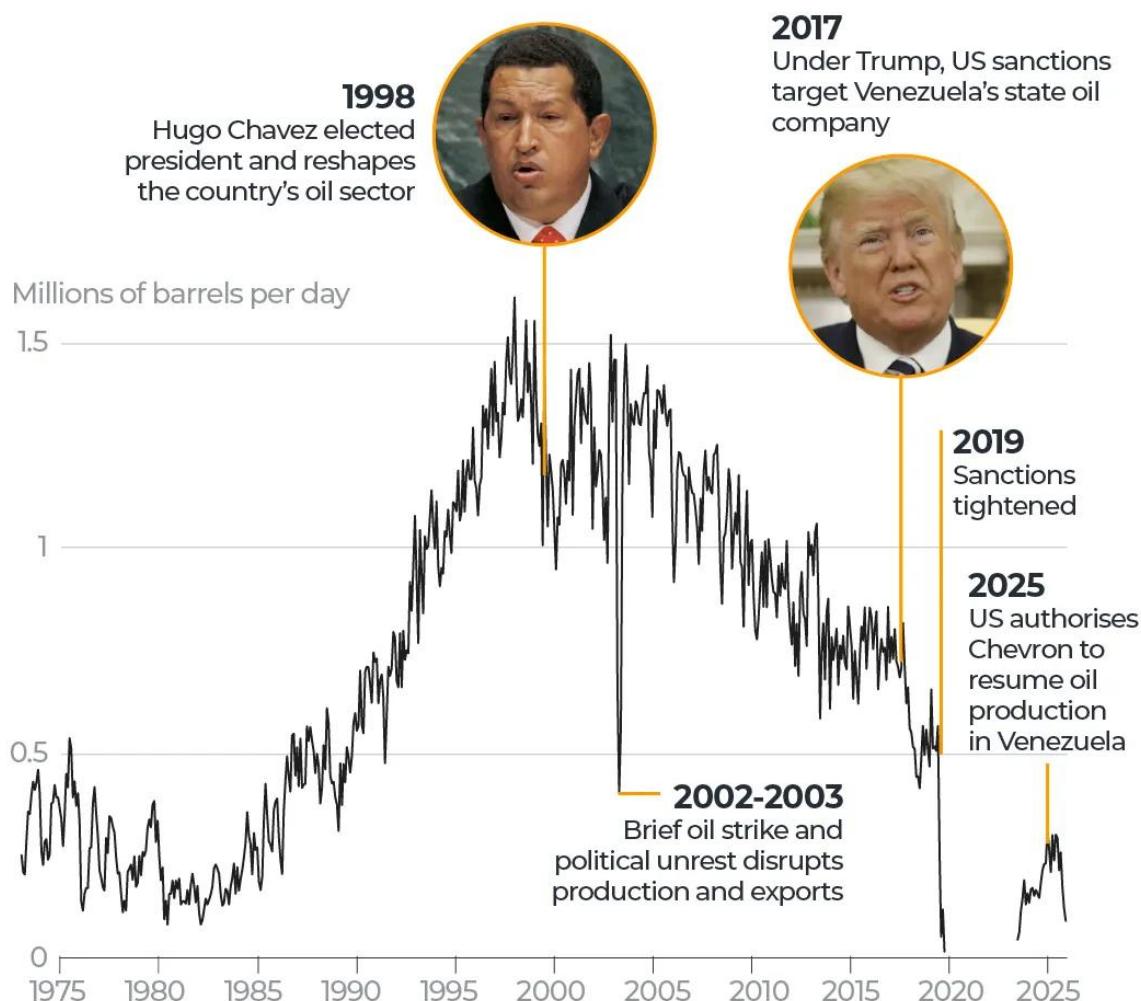
Note: Projected figure for 2018 - Sociedad Venezolana de Salud Publica

What are the reasons for declining Venezuela's Energy sector?

ENERGY

US oil imports from Venezuela

The United States was once a major buyer of Venezuelan oil, peaking in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Imports declined sharply after Hugo Chavez's rise and US sanctions in 2017 under the Trump administration.



- The roots of Venezuela's oil crisis lie in a toxic mix of economic mismanagement, international sanctions, and systemic corruption.

Reasons	Description
The Expertise Exodus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rot began under the rule of Maduro's mentor and former president, Hugo Chavez. In 2002–2003, a strike at the state oil company PDVSA led

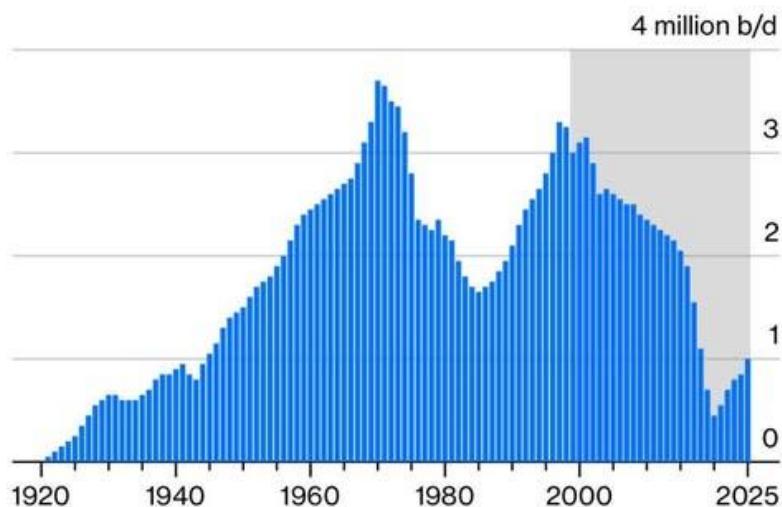
	<p>to the firing of almost 20,000 workers, about 40% of its personnel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These were the engineers and managers who knew how to handle Venezuela's notoriously difficult crude.
The US Sanctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. restrictions on Venezuela began in 2005, when the U.S. State Department determined Venezuela was failing to cooperate on anti-drug and counterterrorism efforts. President Barack Obama imposed further sanctions in 2015, targeting officials said to be involved in human rights abuses, corruption, and undermining democratic institutions. The situation worsened under President Nicolas Maduro, Hugo Chavez's successor, when the Trump administration imposed US sanctions, first in 2017 and then tightened those in 2019.
Nationalisation of Oil Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2007, president, Hugo Chavez's government forced foreign companies out through nationalisation. This replaced professional management with politically loyal appointees, according to a report in Forbes.
Infrastructure Decay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The above factors have led to a long-term decline in the quality of Venezuela's pipelines, many of which are more than 50 years old. PDVSA has estimated that updating pipeline infrastructure alone would require \$8 billion just to return to late-1990s production levels.
Corruption and Mismangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Billions of dollars in oil revenues have reportedly been lost to embezzlement, fraudulent contracts, and other corrupt schemes within PDVSA and the government.

Ent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue that should have been invested was diverted to fund social programmes. Corruption flourished and infrastructure decayed. 												
Decline in production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraguana Refining Center which is one of the world's largest, was running at just 10% of its 940,000-barrel-per-day capacity as of late 2023. 												
	<p>Oil Production in Venezuela is Falling Fast</p> <p>Number of active oil rigs and amount of crude oil produced in Venezuela (2012-2019)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of active oil rigs</th> <th>Crude oil produced (in million barrels/day)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>79</td> <td>2.37m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>53</td> <td>2.18m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>27</td> <td>1.22m</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of active oil rigs	Crude oil produced (in million barrels/day)	2012	79	2.37m	2016	53	2.18m	2019	27	1.22m
Year	Number of active oil rigs	Crude oil produced (in million barrels/day)											
2012	79	2.37m											
2016	53	2.18m											
2019	27	1.22m											

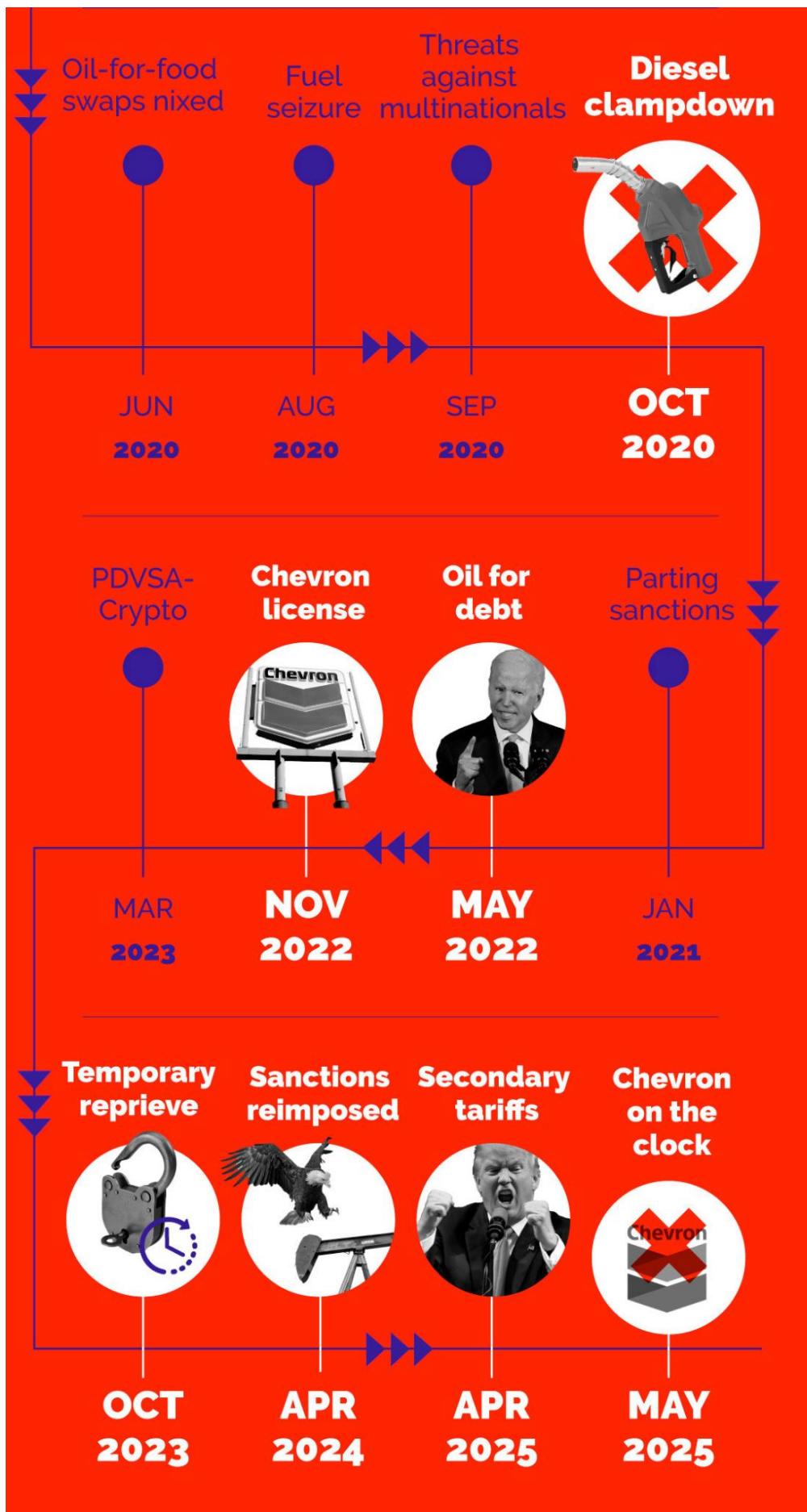
The Crash of the Venezuelan Oil Industry

The Latin American nation was once the world's largest oil exporter, well ahead of Saudi Arabia. But then socialism arrived and a collapse followed

■ Hugo Chavez / Nicolas Maduro governments



Source: Adapted by Bloomberg Opinion from 'Political Conflict and Economic Growth in Post-Independence Venezuela', BP and International Energy Agency



What are Venezuela's military capabilities?

What are Venezuela's military capabilities?

The military's equipment, much of it Russian-made, is lacking. The country bought some 20 Sukhoi fighter jets in the 2000s, but they are considered inferior to the US's B-2s. Venezuela also has Russia-made helicopters, tanks and shoulder-fired missiles.

8 million

civilians training in militias, according to Maduro

However, officials have estimated that only thousands would really participate in defensive actions.



Spartan air force

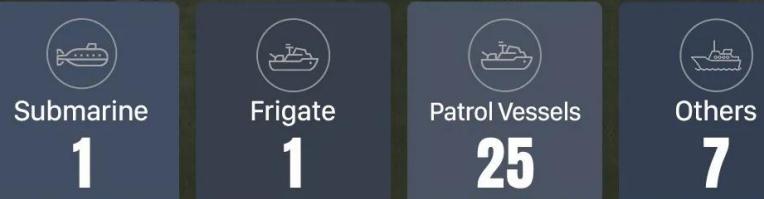
Little precise information is available about Venezuela's air force. The country bought a clutch of F-16s (pictured) from the US in the 1980s. It is unclear how many of those survive

MILITARY STRENGTH OF VENEZUELA

Military Aircraft: 229



Naval Assets: 34



Military Personnel

3.3 Lakh



What is Delta Force?

**MOST ELITE FORCE OF U.S.
WHAT IS DELTA FORCE?**



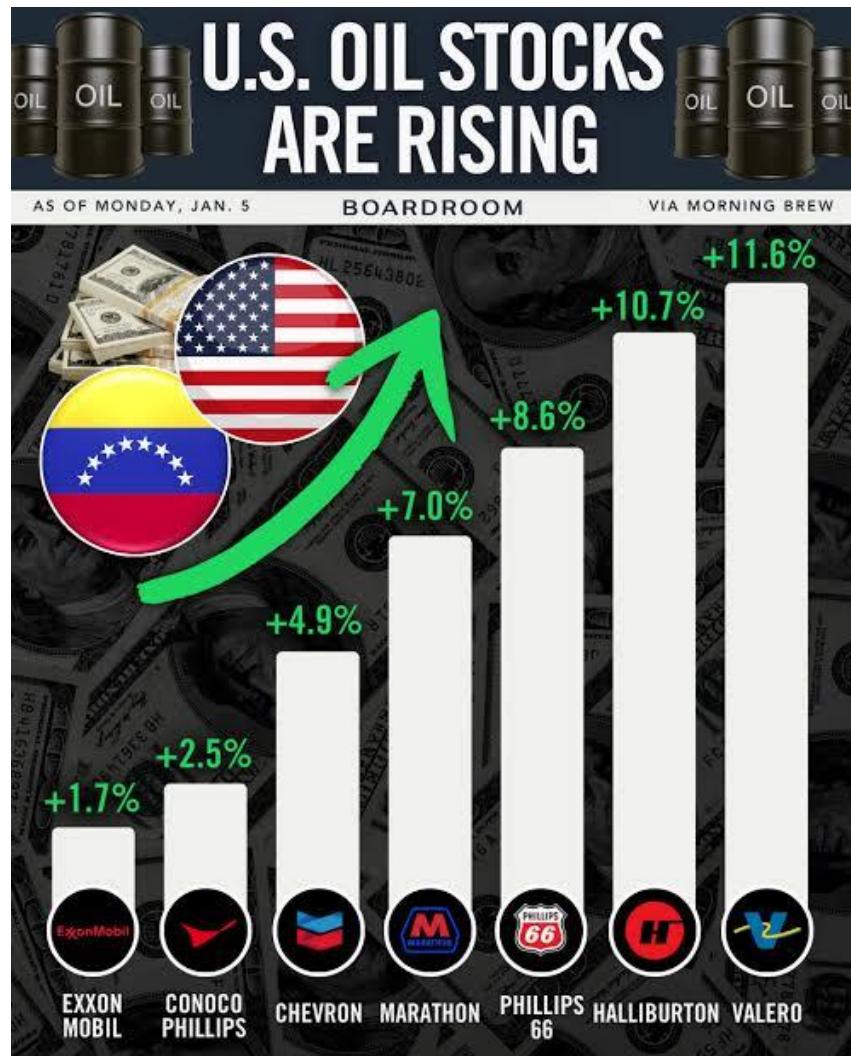
- The **United States Army's elite Delta Force** recently had a significant role in Venezuela by leading the military operation, known as "**Operation Absolute Resolve**," to capture former **President Nicolás Maduro** on January 3, 2026
- Founded in 1977 and based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, **Delta Force is one of the most elite and secretive military units in the world.**
- It operates under the **US Army Special Operations Command** and is answerable to the **Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC).**
- It is also known as **1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (1st SFOD-D).**
- Its structure is modeled after the **British SAS (22nd Special Air Service Regiment)**, which inspired Delta's founder, **Colonel Charles Beckwith.**
- Considering its **gravity** and super-secrecy of work, it has been rumoured to have used various names such as **Army Compartmented Elements (ACE), Combat Applications Group (CAG) or Delta.**
- The **unit specialises in high-risk, high-value missions** and is primarily tasked with **counter-terrorism operations, hostage rescue, elimination** and capture of terrorist threats, and special reconnaissance.
- Some of the famous Delta Force operations are **Operation Prime Chance, 2001 Hunt For Bin Laden, Baghdad Airstrike, Iraq Hostage Rescue, Operation Gothic Serpent, Somalia, Operation Urgent Fury, Grenada, and the Raid on ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.**

Highlight geopolitical consequences of US attack on Venezuela?

Geopolitical Consequences	Description
Minimal immediate global disruption	Venezuela's direct economic significance remains limited. The country produces approximately 800,000–900,000 barrels of oil daily , accounting for less than 1% of global supply.

	<p>Its gross domestic product (GDP) represents roughly 0.1% of the world economy, containing direct contagion risks. However, longer-term implications warrant attention. Trump's pledge that 'we're going to have our very large US oil companies go in, spend billions of dollars, fix the badly broken infrastructure and start making money for the country' may change the oil supply landscape.</p>
<p>Geopolitical precedent raises broader concerns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The indirect implications carry greater weight. By demonstrating willingness to deploy military force for regime change, the US has established a precedent that draws attention from both allies and adversaries. ● This action coincides with Trump's interest in Greenland and China's ambitions regarding Taiwan, intensifying fears of escalating territorial disputes. ● The intervention amplifies tensions beyond the Americas. China and Russia, both close allies of the Maduro regime, swiftly condemned the operation and demanded his release. ● China had extended over \$60 billion in loans to Venezuela and purchased 80% of its oil exports, whilst Russia provided key military and diplomatic support.
<p>Energy markets show modest movement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oil prices demonstrated moderate volatility. Brent crude oil and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures both rose just below 2% on Monday before paring gains. ● Venezuela's current production level cannot

materially shift global supply-demand dynamics.



Profitability concerns cloud prospects of energy companies

- The investment case for US oil companies in **Venezuelan oil recovery** faces significant hurdles.
- **Francisco Monaldi**, director of Latin American energy policy at **Rice University**, estimates **infrastructure restoration would require over \$100 billion** and take at least a decade before production could reach its **peak of 4 million barrels daily**.
- Venezuela produces **heavy, sour crude requiring specialised refining equipment** and technical expertise, making operations capital intensive and operationally complex.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysts estimate production costs of \$30–\$40 per barrel in Venezuela, whilst the crude typically sells at approximately 30% discount to Brent crude oil, adding challenges on profitability.
--	---

What are the implications of the US–Venezuela tensions for India?

- From an Indian perspective, the latest political developments in Venezuela are significant.
- China remains the largest buyer of Venezuelan oil.
- India's trade ties with Venezuela earlier remained focused on oil imports though these had dropped to negligible levels in 2021 and 2022 due to US sanctions.
- The oil trade rebounded in 2023–24, with India's petroleum imports from Venezuela rising to nearly \$1 billion.
- In December 2023, India briefly emerged as the top buyer of Venezuelan crude, according to a report by The Financial Express.
- Data from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics and the UN COMTRADE database shows India's average oil imports from Venezuela rose to around 63,000–100,000 barrels per day in 2024, marking a nearly 500 per cent increase from the previous year.
- According to the IEA, India remained the third-largest buyer of Venezuelan oil after China and the US for most of 2025, although imports began to decline in the latter part of the year amid renewed geopolitical tensions and tighter US sanctions.

Other Implications for India	Description
Limited Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Venezuela accounted for a tiny fraction of India's

Economic or Trade Impact	<p>crude oil imports and overall merchandise trade.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sanctions and past disruptions have already reduced Indian imports to near zero. ● Overall trade between India and Venezuela is a small percentage of India's global trade volume, so direct economic loss is limited. ● Even if tensions remain high, India's overall trade and energy supply are unlikely to be meaningfully disrupted.
Impact on Global Oil Prices and Energy Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short-term price volatility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Geopolitical tensions can push international crude prices up temporarily, affecting India's import bill and inflation. ○ Market risk sentiment (fear premium) may also lift prices of safe-havens like gold. ● Medium-/Long-term supply considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Venezuela has huge crude reserves, and if sanctions ease or production recovers under new political control, discounted heavy crude could re-enter global markets. ○ This could eventually help diversify India's crude sourcing, which may benefit complex Indian refineries that can process heavy oil.
Financial Market and Risk-Sentiment Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rising global geopolitical risk can lead to volatility in Indian equities, currency markets and foreign investment inflows. ● Sectors sensitive to oil prices (e.g., airlines, logistics, chemicals) may face cost pressures if crude prices

	jump significantly.
Diplomatic and Strategic Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India's foreign policy traditionally emphasises peace, restraint, and protection of civilians: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ India has expressed concern over military action and called for prioritising humanitarian safety. ○ As a global actor balancing relations with the US, Russia, Latin America, and others, India aims to maintain strategic autonomy without being drawn into great-power confrontation.
Legacy Energy Investments and Future Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indian firms (e.g., ONGC Videsh) have past investments in Venezuelan oil fields: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Renewed stability or eased sanctions could unlock long-pending dividends or investment opportunities. ○ But structural challenges in Venezuelan oil infrastructure remain significant. ○ India's upstream and refining sectors may see medium-term opportunities if the political landscape stabilises.

What are the key take away of US attack on Venezuela?

Key Takeaway	Description
Expanded presidential power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The attack cements the new doctrine of an imperious president, one who executes orders without waiting for congressional approval, legal validation or media opinion. ● With checks and balances weakened, the second

	<p>Trump administration is free to present the new order as a question of urgent security.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trump identifies himself with historic, founding American presidents like Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt. ● All three were charismatic leaders, and with the 250th anniversary of the US republic approaching such comparisons feed into Trump's authoritarian rhetoric.
(Latin) America for the (US) Americans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On the international stage, the attack on Venezuela advances a diplomatic agenda that is rooted in the defence of national interests. ● The concept of "America for the Americans" has made a strong comeback with Panama, Mexico and Canada have all been made to bow to Trump's will, while the administration continues to push for control of Greenland. ● In Latin America, Brazil and Colombia's left-wing governments lead regional opposition to the US, while Chile's newly elected José Antonio Kast and Argentina's Javier Milei are Trump's ideological allies. ● The continent as a whole is witnessing a broad shift towards nationalist, right-wing parties that oppose migration.
Control of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Once again, it's all about oil, but for different reasons than in Iraq. ● In a world where globalisation has shifted to geoeconomics, the United States wants to project its power in international energy markets and regulation. Venezuela's infrastructure, ports and minerals are key

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to making this happen. The US therefore doesn't just want Venezuelan oil to supply its domestic market but it also wants to impose international prices and dominate supply. Its new vision aims to align energy sovereignty and technological development with trade and security
Geopolitical realignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The American view of territory fuels a revisionist foreign policy based on sovereignty similar to those of China, Israel, or Russia which is rooted in the concept of "nomos", as defined by mid-20th century German philosopher Carl Schmitt. This is a worldview where the division of nations into "friend or foe" prevails over a liberal worldview governed by cooperation, international law, democracy and the free market. Under this logic, China would dominate Southeast Asia, Russia would scale back its war in exchange for 20% of Ukraine and control over its material resources and energy, and Israel would redraw the map of the Middle East and strike trade agreements with neighbouring countries.

What is the relevance of the topic for UPSC CSE?

For Prelims:

- Map and Geographic location of Venezuela, Monroe Doctrine, Multilateralism, United Nations Charter.

For Mains:

- Monroe Doctrine and its relevance in the 21st century, Great power rivalry and its impact on the Global South, Strategic Autonomy.

Some previous years prelims questions

Q.1 Consider the following statements: (2024)

Statement-I: Recently, Venezuela has achieved a rapid recovery from its economic crisis and succeeded in preventing its people from fleeing/emigrating to other countries.

Statement-II: Venezuela has the world's largest oil reserves.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II explains Statement-I
- (b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, but Statement-II does not explain Statement-I
- (c) Statement-I is correct, but Statement-II is incorrect
- (d) Statement-I is incorrect, but Statement-II is correct

Answer: (d)

Some previous years mains questions

Q.1 “With the waning of globalization, post-Cold War world is becoming a site of sovereign nationalism.” Elucidate. (10 Marks-2025)

Some questions from this year and previous years interview transcripts.

Board Sujata Chaturvedi mam:

- Why is Venezuela in news?

Board Sheel Vardhan Singh Sir:

- What is resource curse and how it is related to Venezuela?

Board Suman Sharma Mam:

- What is your take on the US Venezuela issue?

Some questions for QUIZ.

Q.1 Consider the following Countries:

1. Bolivia	2. Brazil
3. Colombia	4. Guyana
5. Surinam	

How many of the above-mentioned countries share a border with Venezuela?

(a) Only two	(b) Only three
(c) Only four	(d) All five

Answer: (b)

Some questions for POLL.

Q.1 Will US–Venezuela tensions significantly affect India’s overall trade?

(a) YES	(b) NO	(c) Can’t say
---------	--------	---------------

Q.2 Will geopolitical tensions involving Venezuela cause short-term volatility in oil prices impacting India?

(a) YES	(b) NO	(c) Can’t say
---------	--------	---------------

Q.3 Do US–Venezuela tensions test India’s policy of strategic autonomy?

(a) YES	(b) NO	(c) Can’t say
---------	--------	---------------

Q.4 Is this tension an example of declining globalization and rising sovereign nationalism?

(a) YES	(b) NO	(c) Can’t say
---------	--------	---------------

Q.5 Does the US–Venezuela conflict reflect the decline of post-Cold War globalization?

(a) YES	(b) NO	(c) Can’t say
---------	--------	---------------

Q.6 Is the Monroe Doctrine still influencing US foreign policy today?

Q.7 Is the Global South becoming more vulnerable to great-power rivalries?

Q.8 Do US interventions in Latin America undermine the principle of state sovereignty?

