



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on October 22, 2025

Another Suspected Drug Boat Destroyed; GOP Senator Rand Paul Objects Again

War Secretary Pete Hegseth has announced the destruction of yet another of what the Trump administration calls “drug boats,” this one in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

The strike is the third in the last week. U.S. forces kinetically struck a boat on October 17, Hegseth reported, and another on October 14.

Thus far, the Trump administration avers, the strikes have vaporized more than 30 drug-toting terrorists.

The strikes, *Politico* reported, have inspired a united front inside the administration. Then again, after the latest, Republican Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky again questioned the strikes’ legality and morality. He says the attacks amount to non-judicial summary execution of the suspects.



AP Images
Rand Paul



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Secretary of War Pete Hegseth




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Yesterday, at the direction of President Trump, the Department of War conducted a lethal kinetic strike on a vessel being operated by a Designated Terrorist Organization and conducting narco-trafficking in the Eastern Pacific.

The vessel was known by our intelligence to be [Show more](#)

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Latest Three Strikes

The third of the three strikes in the last week was yesterday, against a boat that was “operated by a Designated Terrorist Organization and conducting narco-trafficking in the Eastern Pacific,” Hegseth wrote on X:

The vessel was known by our intelligence to be involved in illicit narcotics smuggling, was transiting along a known narco-trafficking transit route, and carrying narcotics. There were two narco-terrorists aboard the vessel during the strike, which was conducted in international waters. Both terrorists were killed and no U.S. forces were harmed in this strike.

Narco-terrorists intending to bring poison to our shores, will find no safe harbor anywhere



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in our hemisphere. Just as Al Qaeda waged war on our homeland, these cartels are waging war on our border and our people. There will be no refuge or forgiveness—only justice.

On Sunday, Hegseth announced the October 17 destruction of a boat linked to the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) terror cartel “that was operating in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility.”

“The vessel was known by our intelligence to be involved in illicit narcotics smuggling, was transiting along a known narco-trafficking transit route, and carrying narcotics,” he noted about this attack as well.

That strike also erased two narco-terror suspects.

The [Director of National Intelligence counterterrorism website](#) reports that the ELN, “the oldest and one of the most powerful insurgent groups in Colombia,” seeks to “control critical areas of the country — particularly those associated with drug trafficking—and frequently engages in armed confrontations with Colombian authorities.” The outfit also has leaders in Cuba and Venezuela.

On October 14, Hegseth reposted President Trump’s announcement of the first of the three strikes.



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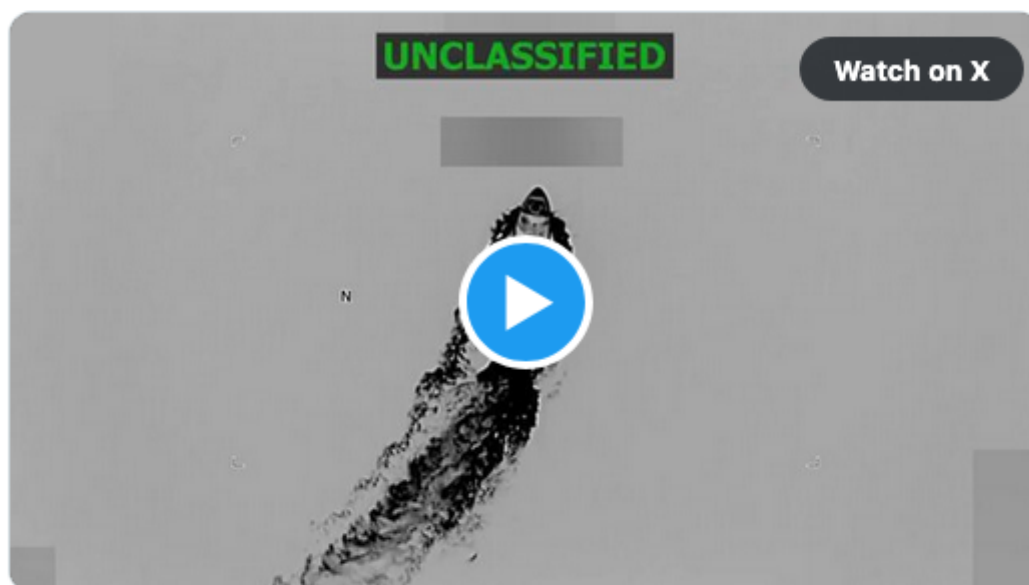
Secretary of War Pete Hegseth

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On October 17th, at the direction of President Trump, the Department of War conducted a lethal kinetic strike on a vessel affiliated with Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), a Designated Terrorist Organization, that was operating in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility.

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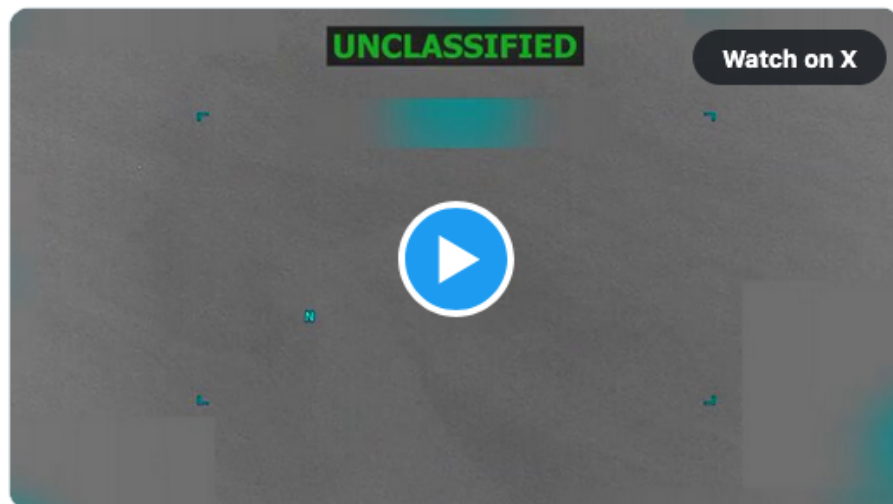
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Pete Hegseth
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Donald J. Trump
 @realDonaldTrump

Under my Standing Authorities as Commander-in-Chief, this morning, the Secretary of War, ordered a lethal kinetic strike on a vessel affiliated with a Designated Terrorist Organization (DTO) conducting narcotrafficking in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility — just off the Coast of Venezuela. Intelligence confirmed the vessel was trafficking narcotics, was associated with illicit narcoterrorist networks, and was transiting along a known DTO route. The strike was conducted in International Waters, and six male narcoterrorists aboard the vessel were

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A kinetic strike is one in which the target is destroyed by the power and velocity of the projectile.

The anti-drug-boat campaign began on September 1, as [The New American reported](#). President Trump announced the strike, and Hegseth told Fox News that national security officials “knew exactly” who was on the boat.

“We knew exactly who was in that boat, we knew exactly what they were doing, and we knew exactly who they represented, and that was Tren de Aragua, a narcoterrorist organization designated by the United States, trying to poison our country with illicit drugs,” Hegseth said.



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(Donald J. Trump - Sep 02, 2025, 5:22 PM ET)

Earlier this morning, on my Orders, U.S. Military Forces conducted a kinetic strike against positively identified Tren de Aragua Narcoterrorists in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility. TDA is [Show more](#)



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So far, the [strikes have killed](#) at least 32 people. Two others were captured.



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Support for the Strikes

Politico reported that the strikes have united “regime change advocates and immigration hardliners,” notably White House aide Stephen Miller and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

“A newfound alliance between Secretary of State Marco Rubio and deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller has been at the center of President Donald Trump’s increasingly aggressive actions against Venezuela, according to three people familiar with internal conversations,” the [website reported](#):

The two top officials — who previously disagreed about how combative to get with the Venezuelan government — have coalesced around the current no-limits approach to combating drug trafficking, the people said. ...

Miller and Rubio are now moving in lockstep on Venezuela, the three people said. They’re both “on the same page” about the U.S. government approaching the South American petrostate as akin to a transnational criminal group, said another one of the people familiar with discussions.

Together, they’ve managed to sideline a third group: those who want to preserve some access for oil majors to the petrostate’s vast energy reserves and generally normalize relations with Caracas. That group had pushed for diplomatic engagement with Caracas. Now many in that corner are resigned to the idea that Trump will hit Venezuela hard.



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Trump's boat strikes unite regime change advocates and immigration hardliners



politico.com

Trump's boat strikes unite regime change advocates and immigration ...
Deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller and Secretary of State Marco Rubio are "on the same page" about the U.S. government approachin...

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Opposition

Paul, the senator from Kentucky, is skeptical.

"We have dangerous people in a lot of American cities but we just don't go in and shoot them," Paul told Piers Morgan on his *Uncensored* program:

I mean, we have trials, they get legal representation and even on the high seas, it's been that way for generations.

Paul said that 25 percent of the boats stopped by the Coast Guard off the coast of Florida on the suspicion of hauling drugs don't carry them. Yet despite that, he said, U.S. forces are now simply destroying boats.

"Interdicting drugs has always been a criminal activity [as opposed to a military responsibility], a



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criminal, anti-crime sort of activity, where we don't just summarily execute people. We actually present evidence and convict them," he said.



Rand Paul

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The U.S. should not be blowing up boats without even knowing who's on them.

There's no due process in that — no names, no evidence, no oversight.

I'll be co-sponsoring a War Powers resolution to make sure military action abroad has congressional approval. We can't drift into [Show more](#)



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"The U.S. should not be blowing up boats without even knowing who's on them," Paul wrote on October 8. "There's no due process in that — no names, no evidence, no oversight."

On the same day, [Reason excerpted](#) one of his speeches on the Senate floor.

"The blow-them-to-smithereens crowd, at this point, will loudly voice their opinion that people in international waters whom we label as terrorists deserve no due process," Paul said:

Vice President [J.D.] Vance asserts: "There are people who are bringing — literal terrorists



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— who are bringing deadly drugs into our country.”

Which, of course, raises the questions:

1. Who labelled them and with what evidence?
2. What are their names, and what specifically shows their membership and guilt?

Even John Yoo, the deputy assistant attorney general under President George W. Bush who justified the use of torture on terror suspects, Paul noted, questioned the strikes. “There has to be a line between crime and war,” Yoo said:

We can’t just consider anything that harms the country to be a matter for the military.
Because that could potentially include every crime.



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Senator Rand Paul
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The American people do not want to be dragged into a forever war without public debate or a vote.

I took to the Senate floor to defend what the Constitution demands: deliberation before war.

Watch my remarks



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Paul has invited fury from President Trump because the libertarian senator doesn't march in lockstep with the administration. Trump called him a "nasty liddle guy" and a "sick wacko" because he [voted against](#) the "One Big Beautiful Bill" and, more recently, [against GOP spending plans](#) to reopen the government, as [The Hill reported](#).



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