



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 6, 2018

## Maduro Rounds Up “Dissidents” After Assassination Attempt

Whether [the attack on Venezuela’s Marxist strongman Nicolás Maduro \(shown\) on Saturday](#) was legitimate, a botched attempt, an accident causing an explosion in a nearby apartment building, or staged to generate support for the failing socialist regime, Maduro is taking advantage of it. In his retelling of the incident, ([available here](#)), the dictator said, “This was an attempt to kill me!” adding that “They have tried to assassinate me and everything points to the Venezuelan ultra-right in alliance with the Colombian far right and that the name of [Colombian President] Juan Manuel Santos is behind this attack.”



Maduro’s mouthpiece, Information Minister Jorge Rodríguez, echoed Maduro’s plaint: “At exactly 5:41 p.m. in the afternoon [Saturday] several explosions were heard. The investigation clearly reveals they came from drone-like devices that carried explosions.” Regurgitating the canard was Maduro’s Interior Minister Néstor Luis Reverol, who said he not only saw two drones but identified them as M600 drones capable of carrying payloads of more than 20 pounds. Neither of them, said Reverol, reached Maduro or his phalanx of military generals standing with him on the podium.

Except that TV footage of the event, and citizens’ iPhone videos, reveal no drones, no explosions from bombs being carried by them, and no photos of wreckage of the alleged drones that would most certainly have proven the claims to be true.

But retribution for Maduro’s “dissidents” began almost immediately. Following the so-called attack, Maduro happily announced that “I am fine. I am alive, and after this attack I’m more determined than ever to follow the path of the revolution.” And that path is over the dead bodies of anyone deemed to be a danger to his dictatorship. There are already nearly 250 political prisoners being held in Maduro’s jails, and dozens more are likely to be joining them shortly. Promised Maduro: “There will be ruthless punishment. Justice! Maximum punishment! And there will be no forgiveness!”

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David Smilde, a senior fellow at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) who has spent decades studying Venezuela, said that, legitimate or not, false flag or not, botched attempt or not, Maduro “will use it to concentrate power. Whoever did this [doesn’t matter]. He’ll use it to further restrict liberty and purge the government and armed forces [of dissidents].”

Eric Farnsworth agrees. Vice president of the Americas Society and Council of the Americas, Farnsworth said Maduro “will use the incident to radicalize; likely, to purge the military, strengthen his personal guard, and embellish the narrative about being under attack from the U.S. and Colombia and others in a bid for sympathy and support.”



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Additional oppressive measures designed to secure his position as dictator are more likely to end that position sooner rather than later. The country is on the verge of total collapse. Maduro's government and state-owned oil company are in massive default on their bonds, and crude-oil production is less than a third of what it was just two years ago. The paper currency is worthless, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimating that inflation will hit one million percent this year. Hundreds of thousands have already fled the country, taking with them the skills and experience needed to keep a highly industrialized economy operating. On their way out many of them scavenged the oil company, PdVSA, of anything that can be sold on the black market, including, according to the *New York Times*, vital equipment, vehicles, pumps and copper wiring. As a result, those remaining are so poor they can't leave, with most of them living in poverty. Maduro controls the courts and his packed legislative body has replaced the legitimately elected National Assembly.

With that kind of dictatorial power, shortly to be enhanced as a result of the so-called assassination attempt, Maduro is living on borrowed time. The tighter his grip, the more likely those "dissidents" will slip through his fingers.

He should consider the fate of another "Nicolas" — Nicolae Ceaușescu, the communist dictator who ruled Romania for two decades before being executed by a firing squad in December 1989. From Biography.com:

As Romania's standard of living failed to improve, Ceaușescu's grip on power started to weaken. In November 1987, in a scene that would have been unthinkable just a few years before, thousands of workers stormed the Communist Party headquarters in Brasov. Records were destroyed, as was a grand portrait of Ceaușescu.

Finally, in December of 1989, a popular revolt, aided by the army, pushed the Ceaușescus from power and into the courtroom. As Romania wrestled with violence, the country's new leaders wanted to show the population that it no longer needed to worry about the Ceaușescus.

On December 25, in a show trial that lasted less than an hour, the couple [Nicolae and his wife Elena] was charged with genocide and other crimes. Shortly after their conviction, the Ceaușescus were led outside and executed by a firing squad. The two were buried at the Ghencea Cemetery in Bucharest.

*Photo: AP Images*

*An Ivy League graduate and former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at [badelman@thenewamerican.com](mailto:badelman@thenewamerican.com).*

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