



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 28, 2019

Messages From Maduro's Military Posturing

The hosting of a [parade of Russian military hardware](#) in Caracas on Sunday by Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro delivered at least three messages: 1) I am in charge here; 2) With the help of my Russian, Chinese, and Cuban friends, that is; and 3) No tyranny remains in power very long unless it is maintained by force or the threat of force.



The show was enhanced with tank rounds being fired into a nearby hillside and by Maduro exclaiming, "Nobody respects the weak, cowards [or] traitors. In this world what's respected is the brave, the courageous [and] power." It was further enhanced with video of soldiers kneeling before the dictator and Maduro bellowing "Are you coup plotters?" and their response: "No!"

These messages were delivered after the defection of Colonel Jose Luis Silva, Maduro's Washington attaché for the last five years. He told Reuters on Saturday that "the top brass of the military and the executive branch are holding the armed forces hostage. There are many, many, who are unhappy."

And then he addressed them directly:

Enough! Leave aside the illegal control of our territory and the executive power. The leaders have become millionaires on the backs of the people. Captains, commanders: think about everyone who suffers. Don't forget that your wives also can't find milk for your children. Don't forget that your mothers and fathers also can't find pills for their [high blood] pressure.

Enough already! Let's recognize the man who, under the law, is the true president of Venezuela, Juan Guaido.

The pressure on Maduro to step down continues to mount despite his claims that he has the unflinching and complete support of his military. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo addressed a special session of the United Nations Security Council on Saturday where he described Maduro as part of an "illegitimate mafia state" and asking the members to join the United States in recognizing Guaido as the country's only legitimate interim president. Pompeo minced no words: "Now it is time for every other nation to pick a side. No more delays, no more games. Either you stand with the forces of freedom, or you're in league with Maduro and his mayhem."

Pompeo denounced both China and Russia by name, accusing them of "propping up a failed regime in the hopes of recovering billions of dollars in ill-considered investments and assistance made over the years."

President Trump's recognition of Guaido has already been supported by many Latin American



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countries, including Brazil, Colombia, and Argentina. Following Pompeo's demand, Britain, France, and Germany got in line as well.

Vassily Nebenzia, Russia's ambassador to the UN, pushed back: [The] U.S. has now stated that all options are on the table which is ... dangerous. If it evolves into something more military, that is even more regretful. We think it should be avoided at any cost."

European Union members met Saturday to discuss the crisis after which they issued a statement that called for "the urgent holding of free, transparent and credible presidential elections." The statement hinted that the EU could recognize Guaidó if Maduro didn't announce new elections promptly.

Guaidó celebrated the developments, telling a rally in Caracas on Sunday, "We have the EU support. They took a firm step toward our fight for democracy."

Students of history noted his use of the word "democracy" as a goal to be achieved rather than a danger to be avoided. Those same students wouldn't be surprised to learn that Guaidó has a long history of supporting the socialist impulse. He is a member of Venezuela's Popular Will party, which is a full member of the Socialist International. That gaggle of left-wing political parties has as its goal the establishment of democratic socialism around the world.

Not surprisingly Guaidó, in preparing to take Maduro's place, is proposing to grant amnesty to Maduro as part of his transition to the presidency. This was noted by Rafael Valera, the communications director of the Venezuelan campaign group Rumbo Libertad:

Guaidó is a member of the Socialist International.... Guaidó's Popular Will party has also supported dialogue with Maduro in the past and has called the Venezuelan population to participate in the rigged elections.

They are also proposing that dangerous Chavistas be part of the transition, continuing their systematic impunity. They want to pardon mercenaries, criminals, and prominent Chavistas like [former minister] Miguel Rodríguez Torres, [former state oil company head] Rafael Ramírez or [former prosecutor general] Luisa Ortega Díaz.

Guaidó's party can tell us, by its background, that it doesn't want to really tear the Communist system down but to give more life to it.

That's the final lesson that Maduro's posturing in Caracas on Sunday teaches: Socialism not only destroys the price system that allows a free market to operate, thus making way for government controls; it also destroys the culture of independence and morality that grows out of a free market. Guaidó's ascension to Venezuela's presidency raises the question: How will a new suit occupying that office be any better than the old?

Image of Venezuelan military leaders: [France 24 English](#)

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