



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 14, 2017

Trump Doesn't Rule Out Use of Military Force in Venezuela

Following the issuance of the "Lima Declaration" on Friday stating that "Venezuela is no longer a democracy," signed by nearly a dozen South American countries as well as Canada, President Trump had the opportunity to back off on previous threats of possibly using military force to oust its Marxist dictator Nicolás Maduro. Instead [he ramped them up](#), declaring: "We have many options.... This is our neighbor. We are all over the world and we have troops all over the world in places that are very, very far away. Venezuela is not very far away and the people ... are suffering. They're dying. We have many options for Venezuela including a possible military option, if necessary.... I'm not going to rule out a military option. Venezuela is a mess."



But as Henri Falcon, the opposition governor of the Venezuelan state of Lara, responded, "This mess is ours! Sort out your own, of which you have plenty."

Mish Shedlock, a Trump supporter, asked the president a number of questions about why he is threatening Venezuela:

Did US nation building in Iran, Iraq [and] Afghanistan work?

Did not Vietnam turn out OK starting the moment we left?

Did the US intervene to stop hyperinflation in Zimbabwe? Argentina? [Venezuela is suffering from hyperinflation.]

Are there not more repressive regimes [than Maduro's] in Africa?

What's different about Venezuela? By any chance is this about oil? [Venezuela has the largest crude oil reserves in the world.]

Other than that, what ... business is Venezuela of ours?

All very good questions. As of this writing, Shedlock has not heard back from the president.

The situation in Venezuela is very different from the crisis in North Korea. That communist country has threatened Guam, an unincorporated territory of the United States. The dictator, Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un, has fired several ICBMs that, according to U.S. military experts, not only have the range to reach Guam but the capacity to carry nuclear payloads.

But with North Korea, President Trump is putting diplomacy ahead of military threats. Joint Chiefs of



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Staff General Joe Dunford made that very clear on Sunday:

As a military leader, I have to make sure that this president does have viable military options in the event that the diplomatic and economic pressurization campaign [against North Korea] fails.

[But] even as we develop those options, we are mindful of the consequences of executing those options, and that makes us have more of a sense of urgency to make sure that we're doing everything we absolutely can to support Secretary [of State Rex] Tillerson's current path.

In Venezuela, Trump has ruled out diplomacy. When Maduro offered to meet with Trump next month while attending the UN General Assembly in New York City, the White House's snub was emphatic: "The United States stands with the people of Venezuela in the face of their continued aggression by the Maduro regime. President Trump will gladly speak with the leader of Venezuela as soon as democracy is restored in that country."

Little discussion could be found anywhere in the media about the powers that the president actually has under the Constitution, and what authority he has to exercise any one of those "military options" in Venezuela. Searches for the "War Powers Resolution" or the "War Powers Act" in connection with Venezuela came up empty.

The Founders of our Republic well knew the propensity of an individual to wage war given the opportunity to do so without restraint. So the powers to "declare war" were intentionally split between the Congress and the Executive Branch. The Founders also added, however, that Congress "shall have power to provide and maintain a Navy" and "to make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces." Add in the "Necessary and Proper Clause" found in Article I, Section 8, Clause 18, and with the passage of time the president now has the power to wage war anywhere he wants for apparently any reason, without congressional restraint. That's why that clause is also referred to as the "Elastic Clause," the "Basket Clause," and the "Sweeping Clause." The "Necessary and Proper Clause" is now understood to mean that Congress shall have the power to make all laws necessary and proper for carrying out not only its own powers granted under the Constitution, but also all other powers vested in the national government. That, apparently, includes the power to give away its authority to the Executive Branch.

In fact, it was Congress that gave the president that power in an unconstitutional act in 1973, when it overrode a presidential veto and put in place the "War Powers Resolution" or "War Powers Act." That act requires the president to notify Congress within 48 hours of sending troops abroad where they, under the act, may stay abroad for a maximum of 60 days. But the act also allows another 30 days for "withdrawal" of those forces without congressional authorization or a declaration of war.

And so, while the president has deemed North Korea a threat to the national security of the United States, he is using diplomacy to defuse and resolve the crisis. But in Venezuela, which isn't conceivably posing any sort of threat to the national security of the United States, he is skipping the diplomacy part altogether and threatening military "options" to get rid of Maduro.

All of which brings back Shedlock's question: "What ... business is Venezuela of ours?"

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