



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on July 13, 2016

Venezuela Now a Military Dictatorship

Venezuela's Marxist President Nicolás Maduro (shown, left) closed the loop on Monday night, [declaring](#) under powers granted to himself by his "emergency decree" announced in January (later to be declared "constitutional" by his hand-picked Supreme Court) that his new Great Sovereign Supply Mission would be run by the country's defense minister, Vladimir Padrino López (shown, right).



Maduro put everything that moves into the hands of Padrino: "All the ministries, all the ministers, all the state institutions are at the service [of] and in absolute subordination [to the new mission]."

Padrino, the head of Venezuela's armed forces, now will be in charge of transporting and distributing what's left of products supplied by the crippled economy, enforcing price controls, and "stimulating" the economy.

A former head of the armed forces commission in the now emasculated congress, Luis Manuel Esculpí, said, "This is now a completely militarized government. The army is Maduro's [sole] source of authority."

Juan Pablo Olalquiaga, president of Venezuela's chamber of commerce, Conindustria, sees what's coming: "If all the factories now have to run everything by the military, this isn't going to make raw materials appear all of a sudden. The president is showing [instead that] he does not understand how to manage the economy."

What it does show is that Maduro has learned how to cement his administration into place, to the detriment of Venezuela's suffering citizens. By concentrating all power in the military, Maduro needs only to watch Padrino instead of the hydra-headed monster of government agencies and ministers that has continued since the days of Hugo Chávez.

Those who pose any sort of threat are jailed without charge and without end. Example: Antonio Ledezma, former mayor of Caracas and now a guest of SEVIN, Venezuela's state security police. Late in the afternoon of September 19, 2015, his offices were raided by 80 members of SEVIN, some carrying automatic rifles, and the others armed with semi-automatic pistols. They smashed through the glass door of his office on the sixth floor of a downtown office building and, when confronted with the outraged mayor who demanded they show him a search warrant, they beat him mercilessly and then hauled him away in a black Humvee.

It was a setup from the beginning. Maduro, in explaining how this "threat" to his administration had been neutralized, referred to a full-page ad that Ledezma and two other "troublemakers" allegedly ran in a local paper that challenged Maduro's authority and called for an election to oust him.

Observers said that coup-plotters rarely signal their intentions with a full-page newspaper ad and then wait around to be arrested.

All public references to Ledezma — his whereabouts, the status of his so-called "trial" that opened a



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year after his arrest — have disappeared.

Venezuelan resident Nelson Agelvis — a college professor, business consultant, and travel expert — recently described what life is like there:

In Venezuela, what Nicolás Maduro dictates gets done, period. There are no checks and balances; there is no division of power. There is no organ of the state that will tell him “No, you can’t, it’s against the constitution.” [His] PSUV government party controls all organs of the state including the Supreme Court and the Electoral Council — yes, the vote counters....

Any ruler who is all-powerful, who controls all instances of power ... the executive branch ... the judicial and electoral, and who keeps the military happy ... is a dictator. He dictates, and it gets done by any means, and citizens are defenseless against him. That’s a dictatorship.

According to this definition, Venezuela is a dictatorship.

Photo: AP Images

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a 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.

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