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Venezuelan army disavows self-proclaimed leader, will defend national sovereignty – defense minister

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The Venezuelan military will not accept a president imposed by “dark interests,” Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino said after Washington and a number of its allies recognized a lawmaker as the new leader in Caracas.

The army will continue to defend the constitution and national sovereignty, Padrino said on Wednesday afternoon, hours after opposition lawmaker Juan Guaido was proclaimed interim president by the National Assembly, in a direct challenge to President Nicolas Maduro.

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The US quickly recognized Guaido as Venezuela’s legitimate leader, with the Organization of American States (OAS) [following Washington’s lead](#). Canada and France have also recognized Guaido, while Mexico has declined to do so “for now.”

Bolivia declared “solidarity with the people of Venezuela and brother Nicolas Maduro” in resisting the “claws of imperialism” in South America, President Evo

Morales tweeted.

Maduro responded to the US announcement by cutting diplomatic ties with Washington and giving American diplomats 72 hours to [leave Venezuela](#).

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Guaido, however, countermanded that in a tweet and [promised](#) that Venezuela “will continue to maintain diplomatic relations with all the countries of the world.”

The issue of diplomats has raised the stakes in the US-Venezuela confrontation, as Senator Marco Rubio (R-Florida) – one of the driving forces behind the recognition of Guaido – argued that US diplomats should stay put, since leaving would mean recognition of Maduro’s legitimacy.

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