
"Trump Gave Order To Kill Me": Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

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Moscow: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro accused Donald Trump of ordering neighbouring Colombia's government to kill him, but said he was open to the possibility of talks with the U.S. leader and his own domestic foes.

In an interview with Russia's RIA agency, Maduro [rejected calls for an early election](#), said an order to arrest his rival Juan Guaido had not yet been given, and promised Caracas would honour debts to Russia and China.

Facing the biggest [challenge of his six-year rule](#), the 56-year-old socialist leader also said his armed forces remained loyal and President Vladimir Putin was firmly behind him.

Maduro's comments were published on Wednesday as the fight for control of Venezuela escalated with the government preparing an investigation into self-declared interim president Guaido, and new street protests planned.

Venezuela plunged further into turmoil last week after the United States recognised Guaido, 35, as acting president, while Russia, which has lent Caracas an estimated \$17 billion since 2006, continued to back Maduro.

"Donald Trump has without doubt given an order to kill me and has told the government of Colombia and the Colombian mafia to kill me," Maduro told RIA.

Though the Venezuelan was reprising an old allegation that critics scoff at as a smokescreen, there was speculation of military plans after Trump adviser John Bolton appeared on Monday with a pad showing the words "5,000 troops to Colombia."

"If something happens to me one day, Donald Trump and Colombian President Ivan Duque will bear responsibility," Maduro said of his right-wing foes.

"I am legitimate"

Despite their increasingly militant opposition to Maduro, whom they regard as a dictator, both Washington and Bogota have repeatedly denied accusations of plots to kill him.

Maduro, who survived what he called an assassination attempt in August last year, said he was well protected, guaranteeing him a long life. He declined to comment on reports Russia sent private military contractors to help guard him.

He also dismissed calls for a snap presidential vote, saying his re-election last year was fair despite widespread allegations of fraud and the barring of two opposition rivals.

"I won 68 percent of the vote," he told RIA. "I won legitimately... If the imperialists want a new election, let them wait until 2025."

Despite alleging Trump wanted him dead, Maduro said he was ready to meet him "wherever he wants", but thought the prospect unlikely given what he described as attempts by Trump's advisers to prevent it.

He said Mexico, Uruguay, Bolivia, Russia, the Vatican and several unnamed European countries wanted talks between him and the opposition.

"I am ready to sit at the negotiation table with the opposition for us to talk for the benefit of Venezuela," Maduro was quoted as saying.

Regarding the investigation and possible arrest of Guaido, he said: "As far as I know, this measure has not yet been taken. Let's wait for the internal constitutional and legal processes to see what the results will be. We won't rush, we'll wait."