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Trump Admin. Pressured Spain Gov't to Support US-Backed Coup in Venezuela: Report

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“The US diplomat made two demands: for Spain to immediately recognize Guaidó as the legitimate president, and to cut off all dialogue with Maduro,” El Pais reported.

The United States has exerted considerable pressure on the left-leaning government in Spain, led by Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, in order to come out against the Venezuela president Nicolas Maduro, recognize the opposition lawmaker Juan Guaido as the country “interim president,” and not to endorse or participate in any talks or dialogue between the opposition and the government, the Spanish newspaper El Pais reported Friday.

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“We are under a lot of pressure – I won’t tell you from whom but you can figure it out – to vote against the creation of this group,” Foreign Minister José Borrell told El Pais, alluding to an EU-sponsored international contact group meant to foster dialogue in Venezuela.

The newspaper reported that in several meetings ahead of Jan 23, the day

Guaído proclaimed himself the interim president, and since, that U.S. diplomats and senior officials placed pressure on counterparts in the Spanish government and other in the European Union to follow the same position as that of the United States and its right-wing allies in Latin America.

In a meeting on Jan. 22, Washington began lobbying Spain in favor of its plans in Venezuela, without specifically revealing Guaído's plans the next day or Washington's plan to recognize him immediately

Spain's secretary of state for Cooperation and Ibero-America Juan Pablo de Laiglesia was in Washington to meet with the assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Kimberly Breier where the U.S. officials told the Spanish official that "important events" were expected in Venezuela in the coming days.

A day later and just hours before the Guaído unconstitutional declaration, a call was placed from the U.S. embassy in Madrid, according to El País, stating, "It is likely that Guaído will declare himself president today, and we are going to recognize him."

On Jan. 24, the Spanish foreign minister met with U.S. Ambassador Duke Buchanan III, and urged Spain and Portugal to take Guaído's side because of their ability to shape the position of the rest of the EU on this matter, several sources familiar with the conversation told EL País.

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The United States was quick to recognize Guaído as "interim president" after he proclaimed himself as such on Jan 23, in violation of the country's constitution, and Washington's right-wing allies in the region followed suit in what the elected Venezuelan government of Maduro calls a parliamentary coup.

Since then, the U.S. has approved fresh sanctions against Caracas including economic sanctions against the country's national oil company. Several senior U.S. officials called on the country's military to intervene in support of Guaído. However, the country's military has asserted its support for the constitutional government and rejected calls for a coup.

Under mounting pressure from the Trump administration, Spain and other major countries in the EU have failed to maintain an independent stance on the Venezuelan situation and have said they would be recognizing Guaído as the interim head of state within days but while calling for elections and asking for a

peaceful transition.

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