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Driving to Colombia? New photos show Juan Guaido in car with 'drug cartel gangster'

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A Venezuelan official has published photos that he says are further proof of ties between the country's self-proclaimed 'interim president' Juan Guaido and a drug cartel member, who allegedly helped him sneak into Colombia.

In January, Guaido declared himself the rightful head of state in Venezuela and has since made several failed attempts to actually seize power in the Latin American nation, with Washington backing the effort. During one of them in February, he traveled to neighboring Colombia to attend a concert and lead a column of trucks containing US-provided 'humanitarian aid,' which was ultimately stopped by Venezuelan border guards.

Last week, a Colombian NGO published photos showing the would-be president and two other people, who were identified as members of Los Rastrojos, a paramilitary criminal organization operating on the border between Venezuela and Colombia. It was alleged that Guaido had crossed the border with the help of the gangsters.

On Thursday, more photos apparently confirming the theory were published in Venezuela. One shows a smiling Guaido hugging a bulky man identified as Jonathan Orlando Zambrano Garcia, aka 'Patron Pobre,' a Los Rastrojos mid-tier commander. He was driving Guaido, who could be seen sticking out of an open door of the car.

Guaido's clothes in the photos are the same that he wore during his trip to Colombia in February. The images were first revealed by 'Con el Mazo Dando,' a TV program hosted by

Diosdado Cabello, an influential Venezuelan MP.

Cabello also reported that Los Rastrojos had tried to kill a man known as 'El Menor,' one of the two cartel members shown alongside Guaido in photos that emerged last week. He said that assassins had failed to find him and instead killed his parents and two other family members in what he called an obvious attempt to cover up the scandal.

After the initial allegation emerged, Guaido denied that he had received any help from Los Rastrojos and said the two members were among hundreds of people with whom he posed for selfies after crossing the border. Colombian authorities, who support Guaido's claim in Venezuela, confirmed that the two individuals were members of the organization, but said that the opposition leader was not accompanied by any criminal during his visit to the country.

The ties between the man in the new pictures and Los Rastrojos, however, are less clear. According to Colombian newspaper El Espectador, Colombian border guards don't believe him to be part of the criminal organization.

Los Rastrojos are one of several paramilitary groups operating in the border area. They are involved in various crimes including illegal mining, racketeering, trafficking of drugs and gasoline, kidnappings and assassinations.

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