
New Lima Group? Mr. Rubio's Lies XI

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In 2017, also in August, the government of the first Trump administration conceived the creation of an anti-Venezuelan monstrosity called the Lima Group, during the solemn founding ceremony at the Torre Tagle Palace, headquarters of the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Peruvian capital.

Well, it turns out that now Mr. Rubio has had no better idea than to recycle this project, seeking, under new pretexts, as we know, to confront drug trafficking, another regional entente against the Bolivarian revolution.

A brief history reminds us that the Lima Group came to nothing, although formally it still exists, and not even the corridors of the foreign ministries of the countries involved remember the farce.

The purpose of embracing the absurd project of the self-proclaimed President Guaidó was the formal motivation put forward by the various governments that made up the Group. Shortly after, they all followed their own paths, with the host government, led in August 2017 by Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, being held captive for corruption, being the most significant.

Lima Group 2.0

At Trump's last cabinet meeting, in TV show mode, Mr. Rubio celebrated the formation of a regional coalition to "bring order to the fight against drug trafficking," with its sights set on the nonexistent Cartel of the Suns and its "boss," Maduro.

But let's see who makes up the new version of the Lima Group 2.0. First, the countries that accept the aforementioned Venezuelan cartel story as true, in order of appearance, are Ecuador, Paraguay, and Argentina.

The big question that suddenly arises is what morality these three Latin American governments have in place as standard-bearers in the fight against drug trafficking and its close cousin, corruption.

Ecuador is probably the worst off in this regard. Drug cartels do operate here. Here, its president, specifically his family, the richest in the country, was caught up in a revelation about massive drug shipments in banana containers, primarily to Europe, through the Noboa Trading Co.

It's true that Daniel Noboa, the president, denies any involvement in these exports and even conducts high-profile media actions against drug trafficking, although suspicious analysts associate this with his attempts to eliminate competition in this lucrative Trading Co. business.

The case of Paraguay, although less well-known to the general public, indeed has much to explain given what everyone there knows: the iron grip that former President Horacio Cartes exerts over the current President Santiago Peña, as head of the ruling Colorado Party.

Many things can be said about Cartes, particularly relevant in this case are the accusations that arose when he was the country's president, 2013-2018, accused of being the largest smuggler in South America. In 2019, Operation "A ultranza PY" revealed drug trafficking links with politicians, including those close to Cartes. Cartes was sanctioned by the US three years later, given his support for drug trafficking with groups such as the Brazilian-born Comando Vermelho (Red Command) and the Insfrán clan.

Peña Nieto, loyal to his boss and political godfather, is accused of tolerating drug trafficking operations in the border areas with Brazil, where the cartel known as the First Capital Command operates shamelessly and without oversight. Having begun in the 1990s in Rio de Janeiro, it now has global reach, with a presence in Europe and the United States.

In the case of Javier Milei, Argentina's libertarian president, any epithet alluding to his lack of ethics would be surpassed by reality. Corruption allegations have accumulated over the past 20 months of his term, totaling no fewer than 9 publicized ones. It's no wonder that 85% of Argentines believe high-level corruption originates from the Casa Rosada, where Milei's offices are located.

Corruption in the chainsaw man's government ranges from the misappropriation of public funds intended for the care of the disabled and other segments of the population, to the famous LIBRA cryptocurrency scandal, which, for the worst possible reasons, specialists associate with a probable money laundering operation. "Where does it come from?" An almost rhetorical question, if there ever was one, given which business is the main repository for this type of money laundering.

Seen in perspective, the sum of drug trafficking-related events by prominent members of the Lima Group 2.0 dwarfs the ambiguous accusations against the Chavista leadership. Indeed, Mr. Rubio seems to have the partners he deserves to better understand each other. This story is getting increasingly interesting.

In light of Mr. Rubio's ongoing relationship with the Cartel of the Suns, Colombian President Gustavo Petro insisted there is no evidence of such a cartel, and instead revealed the existence of bands grouped together in the so-called Drug Trafficking Junta, made up of diverse, small-scale, and very well-coordinated gangs that extend their opioid business into the United States, and curiously do not appear on US Navy radar.

Furthermore, such radars are highly unlikely to detect any significant drug trafficking in the Caribbean; DEA and UN reports claim that 85% of the drug flow to the US travels through the Pacific Ocean; so why send a costly air-naval expedition elsewhere? Mr. Rubio will have to sharpen his pencil to explain such an inconsistency.

There is also a, so-called domestic, side to what goes on behind the scenes in the US. Experts suggest that the current filing of this war alarm case against Venezuela is useful for influencing and justifying an increase in the defense budget for fiscal year 2026, which is expected to begin execution on October 1st.

There's a lot to discuss regarding this budget. While Trump proposed around \$848 billion, with an emphasis on national security spending (anti-immigrant and anti-drug policies), Democrats are pushing to lower these spending levels. Republican lawmakers, for their part, are demanding that these amounts total no less than \$1 trillion. In the middle of the bidding war is Nobel Peace Prize hopeful Trump the peacemaker, as his admirers call him.

And in this dust-up, another usual suspect appears. According to imperial jurisdiction, operations in the Caribbean are under the control of the Southern Command. And where is this Command located? In a district in South Florida whose new representative in Congress is Carlos Giménez. Yes, a representative in the place where the

aforementioned budget debate is taking place. How much does Giménez expect to pocket with an unjustifiably increased budget for a "venue" in his district? Draw your own conclusions.

Returning to the now-famous deployment/withdrawal of the anti-Venezuela naval detachment, alleged evidence appears practically every day in the press about the movements of ships, nuclear submarines, and other devices, never concretely confirmed or perhaps only half-confirmed, such as when Navy spokespersons claim there will be movements, without specifying the Venezuelan destination.

At this point, there's evidence. Beyond the fact that the anti-Venezuelan naval operation materializes, which obviously must be assumed to be very possible, the truth is that Mr. Rubio is leading an extraordinary propaganda operation, as has been said, to intimidate Bolivarians, influence congressional debates in his country, and, in the process, show that there is some point in holding the positions he holds today.

On occasions like this, when a threat of war looms over Venezuela, it's always good to remember the conclusions people draw, which help us understand the level of collapse of the hegemon. Regarding the US invasions, particularly in Afghanistan, there's a very emblematic one that says: It took the US 20 years, billions of dollars, thousands of deaths, including civilians, and four presidents to replace the Taliban with the Taliban!

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