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Maduro to Obama: Worry About Your Own Country

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Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro sat down for an exclusive interview with teleSUR host Ernesto Villegas, for the debut of his new program, tackling tough questions on the economic war being waged against the country, while addressing allegations made against his government.

President Maduro, as the first guest on Villegas' new program called "Siete Preguntas," or "Seven Questions," sought to put to rest rumors and accusations brought against him by the opposition.

Maduro was frank in his assessment of the challenges facing Venezuela but remained optimistic that the present challenges would be overcome.

"We are going through difficult times but we are here ... Our project is destined to be victorious," said Maduro.

President Maduro had harsh words for U.S. President Barack Obama, who is nearing the end of his time in the White House, saying that Obama bid goodbye to Venezuela in a manner befitting his predecessor, George W. Bush.

"In the U.S. there are thousands of children deported, the prison in Guantanamo, (Obama) also denies his responsibility in the disasters in Libya, Iraq," the president said.

"Obama, who are you to comment about Venezuela, you should worry about your country."

In light of Obama's official visit as president to Cuba this month, the Venezuelan leader said he saw through Obama's strategy to sow division between Venezuela and Cuba.

"We and Cuba will continue building socialism," said Maduro, who said that the bond between the two countries was as strong as ever, adding Obama's visit to Cuba also represents a victory for the island.

The Venezuelan president also fielded difficult questions regarding corruption among state officials and the still rampant problem of hoarding of basic items and the selling of contraband goods.

Maduro called on Venezuelans to act in their neighborhoods to eliminate the sale of contraband goods and replace them with "solidarity distribution networks."

He was sincere in his evaluation of the work done thus far by the state to root out corruption.

"We've seen important progress but not as fast as one would wish," said Maduro.

The president also emphasized that a "mafia" continues to hoard goods, adding that authorities recently discovered yet another warehouse full of Venezuelan-produced food.

It's economic schemes like this, the president says, along with the lowered income from oil that is destabilizing Venezuela's economy.

The Venezuelan president emphasized the need to move away from the country's dependence on oil income, highlighting a dramatic drop in oil revenue.

"We have minimal, minimal, minimal income from oil," Maduro said.

Villegas also asked the president if the opposition victory in parliamentary elections last December signaled a defeat of socialism in Venezuela.

Maduro said he attributes the opposition's December victory not as a rejection of socialism but a victory for the economic war being waged against the country, while acknowledging that Venezuela's democracy was working as it should, imposing limits on the executive's powers.

"I cannot dissolve the National Assembly," he said. "I am head of state and head of government but I have limits."

Despite his criticisms of Obama, he and Maduro have at least one thing in common. President Maduro, like Obama, has been accused of being unable to hold office for allegedly not having been born inside the country.

As with the infamous "Birther movement" in the United States, members of the Venezuelan opposition are trying to create doubt to discredit the legitimacy of the presidency. This accusation formed the basis of one of the questions asked of the Venezuelan leader.

The opposition cannot "distort the truth" that I am Venezuelan, Maduro said, adding that his birth certificate is a public document.

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