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TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026 | MCDONOUGHVOICE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Trump: Case against Maduro 'infallible'



Deposed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro is escorted toward the Daniel Patrick Manhattan United States Courthouse in New York City to face U.S. federal charges on Jan. 5. ADAM GRAY/REUTERS

Venezuelan leader's trial may not start until 2027

**Thao Nguyen, Christopher Cann,
Bart Jansen and Chris Kenning**
USA TODAY

Deposed Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro was transported by helicopter on Jan. 5 to a federal courthouse in Manhattan for an arraignment on federal narco-terrorism charges.

Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were facing a four-count indictment linking them to a 25-year narco-terrorism conspiracy. Speaking to reporters on Air Force One, President Donald Trump described the case against Maduro as "infallible." Maduro has long denied any involvement in drug trafficking.

Maduro was being held at the notorious Metropolitan Detention Center

in Brooklyn, days after he and his wife were captured by U.S. forces in a surprise attack inside the oil-rich country.

Cuban state media reported that 32 Cuban nationals providing security for Maduro were killed in the attack. Neither the United States nor Venezuela has confirmed the death toll, but American officials said several soldiers were injured in the operation.

The attack marked a significant escalation against the South American country after months of rising tensions, threats and oil tanker seizures. The military operation has drawn support from Trump's allies but also bipartisan criticism as some lawmakers have questioned the legality of an operation to seize the head of state of a foreign power.

After Maduro's capture, the governance of the South American country remains unclear, with Trump saying the United States is "in charge" of Venezuela and Secretary of State Marco Rubio saying the focus remains on using leverage to force the oil-rich country to act in line with American interests.

Rodríguez adopts softer tone

While speaking to reporters late on Jan. 4, Trump said his administration is "dealing with the people that just got sworn in," in an apparent reference to Venezuela's Vice President Delcy Rodríguez, who has been named as acting president.

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Rubio takes charge of Venezuela's future

Ex-senator long dreamed of overthrowing Maduro

**Francesca Chambers
and Michael Collins**
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife was a personal victory for a key member of Trump's administration: Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants, has for years been advocating for the removal of Maduro and his predecessor, President Hugo Chávez, arguing the former is not the legitimate president of the Caribbean nation of more than 28 million people.

 **Rubio** Now, his close ties to the Cuban and Venezuelan diasporas in the United States have landed him a direct role in shaping Venezuela's future.

President Donald Trump said the United States would run Venezuela until there can be "a safe, proper and judicious transition." He signaled Rubio and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth would be in charge, alongside Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez, who was sworn in as interim president on Jan. 4.

Rubio is under immense pressure to deliver on his vision for a free and prosperous Western Hemisphere. For the native Miami son, the transition is both a personal and existential one that those who know him say he is uniquely positioned to manage.

"Rubio identifies with the plight of the Venezuelan people," said Jason Marczak, vice president and senior director at the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center.

"This is really Marco Rubio's moment to shine," he said. "What we saw occur in the early morning hours in Venezuela would not have happened if Marco Rubio was not at the top tiers of the Trump

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Denmark Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Jan. 4 it "makes absolutely no sense to talk about the U.S. needing to take over Greenland. The U.S. has no right to annex any of the three countries in the Danish Kingdom."

JOHN THYS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Leaders urge Trump to end threats

Countries respond after Cuba, Colombia remarks

Kim Hjelgaard and Antonio Fins
USA TODAY NETWORK

Greenland's leader declared "enough is enough" and Denmark's prime minister urged the White House to "stop the threats" about taking over Greenland after President Donald Trump reiterated his wish to do so.

And Trump suggested Venezuela won't be the only Latin American country to face upheaval as he addressed reporters Jan. 4 on Air Force One while flying back to Washington from Florida, where he spent the holidays.

Denmark Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Jan. 4 it "makes absolutely no sense to talk about the U.S. needing to take over Greenland. The U.S. has

no right to annex any of the three countries in the Danish Kingdom."

With ousted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in U.S. custody, Trump also continues eyeing Cuba and Colombia, and he previously has spoken about the Panama Canal.

"When the President of the United States says that 'we need Greenland' and links us to Venezuela and military intervention, it's not just wrong. It's disrespectful," Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen said.

A day after the U.S. military captured Maduro and removed him from the seat of power in Caracas, Trump spoke with reporters at Mar-a-Lago, saying the communist Cuban regime on a Caribbean island 90 miles from U.S. shores remains in his sights. He spoke more Jan. 4 on the flight.

"Cuba looks like it's ready to fall," Trump said. "I don't know if they're go-

ing to hold out. But Cuba now has no income. They got all of their income from their Venezuela, from the Venezuelan oil."

"They're not getting any of it. And Cuba is literally ready to fall."

The president also reiterated aggressive comments toward Colombian President Gustavo Petro, who last month denigrated the Trump administration as a "clan of pedophiles," citing investigatory files from sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

As for Colombia, led by the leftist Petro, Trump said the country is "run by a sick man who likes making cocaine and selling it to the United States."

Asked Jan. 4 whether the United States will conduct an operation in Colombia, Trump said: "Sounds good to me."

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Volume 170 | No. 126
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