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STRIKE AND CAPTURE

U.S. hits Venezuela, seizes Maduro, wife

President Trump says U.S. to run country



BY REGINA GARCIA CANO, ONSTANTIN TOROPIN and ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — Hours after an audacious military operation that plucked leader Nicolás Maduro from power and removed him from the country, President Donald Trump said Saturday that the United States would run Venezuela at least temporarily and tap its vast oil reserves to sell to other nations.

The dramatic action capped an intensive Trump administration pressure campaign on the South American nation and its autocratic leader and months of secret planning resulting in the most assertive American action to achieve regime change since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Legal experts immediately raised questions about whether the operation was lawful. Venezuela’s vice president Delcy Rodríguez demanded in a speech that the U.S. free Maduro and called him the country’s rightful leader, before Venezuela’s high court ordered her to assume the role of interim president.

Speaking to reporters hours after Maduro’s capture, Trump revealed his plans to exploit the leadership void to “fix” the country’s oil infrastructure and sell “large amounts” of oil to other countries.

Maduro and his wife, seized overnight from their home on a military base, were first taken aboard a U.S. warship on their way to face prosecution for a Justice Department indictment accusing them of participating in a narco-terrorism conspiracy.

A plane carrying the deposed leader landed around 4:30 p.m. Saturday at an airport in New York City’s northern suburbs. Maduro was escorted off the jet, gingerly making his way down a stairway before being led across the tarmac surrounded by federal agents. Several agents filmed him on their phones as he walked.

He was then flown by helicopter to Manhattan, where a convoy of law enforcement vehicles, including an armored car, was waiting to whisk him to a nearby U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration office.

A video posted on social media by a White House account showed Maduro, smiling,

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President Donald Trump speaks at his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Fla., on Saturday. Trump said that the United States would run Venezuela at least temporarily and tap its vast oil reserves to sell to other nations.

Louisiana leaders react to U.S. military operation

Johnson calls it ‘justified’;
Carter says it’s ‘reckless’

BY MATTHEW ALBRIGHT
and CLAIRE GRUNEWALD
Staff writers

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson on Saturday called the U.S. military operation to capture Venezuela’s president “a decisive and justified operation that will protect American lives.”

“Nicolas Maduro is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans after years of trafficking illegal drugs and violent cartel members into our country — crimes for which he’s been properly indicted in U.S. courts and an arrest warrant duly issued — and today he learned

what accountability looks like,” Johnson, a Republican from the Shreveport area, said in a statement.

But U.S. Rep. Troy Carter, D-New Orleans, said the attack was “reckless” and unconstitutional, since it was carried out without Congressional approval.

“Congress cannot stay silent while this president ignores the rule of law,” Carter said in a statement.

President Donald Trump ordered the operation to capture Maduro within Venezuelan territory. Multiple explosions rang out and low-flying aircraft swept through the Venezuelan capital. Maduro’s government accused the United States of attacking civilian and military installations, calling it an “imperialist attack” and urging citizens to take to the streets.

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PHOTO PROVIDED BY TRUTH SOCIAL
President Donald Trump posted this picture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on his Truth Social platform with the caption ‘Nicolas Maduro on board the USS Iwo Jima.’

From grassroots star to political outcast

Mayor LaToya Cantrell will leave office under a cloud of scandal and scrutiny

BY JAMES FINN
Staff writer

Four years ago, Mayor LaToya Cantrell stood on the steps of Gallic Hall and declared that better days were ahead.

New Orleanians, she told the

crowd gathered for her second term swearing-in, had faced “unimaginable crises, one after the next.” COVID-19 had taken 1,015 lives in the city. Hurricane Ida had recently left thousands without power in crushing heat, snarling trash pickup and hardening a sense of desperation lingering from the pandemic.

Yet she had reason to feel optimistic. Cantrell had mostly earned plaudits from her Democratic base for her handling of COVID, and the pandemic was waning. The city’s coffers were flush with millions of

federal pandemic aid dollars. No major candidate had challenged her for reelection, and she won with more than 65% of the vote.

“Our time is now,” Cantrell told her supporters, the gold trim on her blue dress sparkling in the sun. “And the best is yet to come.”

Before the year was out, the shine had faded. With Ida woes lingering, Cantrell faced a recall push. Over the coming months and years, an ascendant City Council would start chipping away at her

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Mayor LaToya Cantrell’s refusal to back down endeared her to supporters for years. But in her second term, an unwillingness to accept criticism or advice left New Orleans’ indicted mayor increasingly alienated from allies.

STAFF FILE PHOTO
BY SOPHIA GERMER

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