



South Dakota Congressional delegation applauds strikes

MIKE BROWNLEE
Journal staff

South Dakota's Congressional delegation celebrated military strikes against Venezuela and the capture of its president and first lady.

President Donald Trump announced early Saturday, Jan. 3, the United States carried out a "large-scale" strike against the South American country and also took President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, into custody.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota issued a statement on the actions through his office, which noted "federal drug fugitive Nicolás Maduro was captured for the purposes of being held accountable for his crimes."

In his statement, Thune said the actions were made "through the execution of a valid Department of Justice warrant" and noted the U.S. has indicted Maduro on drug charges.

"For years, Nicolás Maduro, the cartel he leads, and other cartels in Latin America have trafficked drugs into the United



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States, which have killed hundreds of thousands of Americans," Thune said. "President Trump's decisive action to disrupt the unacceptable status quo and apprehend Maduro, through the execution of a valid Department of Justice warrant, is an important first step to bring him to justice for the drug crimes for which he has been indicted in the United States."

The U.S. indicted Maduro and other Venezuelan officials in 2020 on "narco-terrorism" conspiracy charges, the Associated Press reported. In a social media post, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said Maduro and his wife, "will face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts."

"I am grateful for the brave men and women of our armed forces who carried out this necessary action. I spoke to



MIKE BROWNLEE, JOURNAL STAFF

South Dakota's Congressional delegation listens during a memorial event for Wounded Knee Massacre victims on Monday, Dec. 29, on Pine Ridge Reservation.

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US CAPTURES VENEZUELAN LEADER



MATIAS DELACROIX, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Men watch smoke rising from a dock Saturday after explosions were heard at La Guaira port, Venezuela.

REGINA GARCIA CANO, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN AND ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — The United States captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and flew him out of the country in a military operation early Saturday, plucking a sitting leader from office after months of escalating pressure on the oil-rich South American nation.

A plane believed to be carrying the deposed leader landed late Saturday afternoon in New York, where he was expected to face criminal charges.

President Donald Trump said the U.S. government would run the country at least temporarily and tap Venezuela's vast oil reserves to sell "large amounts" to other countries.

"We're going to run the country until such time as we can do a safe, proper and judicious transition," Trump said at a Mar-a-Lago news conference where he boasted this "extremely successful operation should serve as warning to anyone who would threaten American sovereignty or endanger American lives."

There were no immediate signs the U.S. was running the country. Venezuelan state TV continued to air pro-Maduro propaganda, broadcasting live images of supporters taking to the streets in



ARIANA CUBILLOS, ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Nicolas Maduro, then Constituent National Assembly President Delcy Rodríguez, left, and first lady Cilia Flores wave May 24, 2018, as they arrive to the National Assembly in Caracas, Venezuela.

Caracas in protest.

The legal authority for the incursion, done without congressional approval, was not immediately clear.

The Trump administration did not notify congressional leaders about the military action until after it was already underway, which Secretary of State Marco Rubio said was necessary to preserve the operation's integrity.

Lawmakers from both political parties in Congress raised

reservations and objections to the U.S. attacks on boats suspected of drug smuggling near the Venezuelan coast. Congress has not specifically approved an authorization for the use of military force for such operations in the region.

Maduro and other Venezuelan officials were indicted in 2020 on "narco-terrorism" conspiracy charges. The Justice Department released a new indictment

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Answering Libertyland questions

Discussion about development loan, nearby mobile home lot and impact on local economy

FRANK ESPINOZA
Journal staff

The conversation about the Destination District Tax Increment Financing District and Libertyland continues, and a recent public forum raised concerns about loan responsibility, a nearby mobile home lot and downtown Rapid City businesses.

Inside the Minneluzahan Senior Center, more than 100 people came to listen and inquire through a public forum. The TIF is up for a public vote, with absentee ballots available as of Thursday, Jan. 1, and early voting beginning Monday, Jan. 5. Election Day is Jan. 20.

At the Dec. 27 forum, representatives from both sides of the yes-no divide spoke, with local business owner Nick Reid moderating the discussion. The sides gave introductions, opening statements and allowed residents to pose questions.

Lisa Pustejovsky, chair of the No Free Rides committee, retired attorney Jay Davis and South Dakota Citizens for Liberty member Tonchi Weaver represented the "no" vote.

The Team Rapid City campaign, which advocates for a "yes" vote, was represented by John Way, a retired business development officer, and Mark Merchen, the founder of M3 Strategies, a company that aids political campaigns through data analytics.

The Destination District TIF, which includes the development of the Libertyland project, is a \$125 million TIF that aids in the infrastructure development for the future erection of above-ground construction.

The project site is located north of Rushmore Crossing off East Mall Drive. It will include a lifestyle center, special events center, a Western-themed hotel, a conference center and indoor waterpark, an RV resort and campground, Black Hills village and a residential district with single-family and multi-family residences.

When a TIF is established, the value of the district is calculated. When infrastructure is approved or a development is added to the district, the value of that land increases. The government sets aside any tax dollars generated from that additional value to pay off the infrastructure or development costs.

The developer is exempt from paying taxes on the additional value as long as the TIF remains active. TIFs are used for affordable housing and economic development, among other things.

Davis noted during the forum residents will note be voting on the sports complex.

Who's on the hook for the loan?

At the forum, Weaver and Pustejovsky posed questions about who's responsible for paying for the TIF costs

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