

Maduro government claims plot to assassinate Venezuelan leader thwarted

By Lucia I. Suarez Sang
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[Video](#)

[*Contested President Nicolas Maduro remains in control of Venezuela*](#)

Trump administration officials say Russia and Cuba are helping Maduro maintain power; State Department correspondent Rich Edson reports.

An assassination attempt against [Venezuelan](#) leader [Nicolas Maduro](#), which Maduro claimed was a part of a “fascist” plot to overthrow the government, was thwarted, officials said.

Maduro spokesman Jorge Rodriguez said on state television a network of mostly retired police officers and soldiers planned to bomb a key government building, seize a Caracas airbase and loot the country’s central bank.

Rodriguez said the alleged network planned the attack for June 23 and wanted to kill Maduro, his wife, and several high-ranking government officials.

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[Video](#)

He also claimed the plot also involved opposition leader [Juan Guaido](#), who is backed by the [United States' government and several dozen countries who recognize him as Venezuela's legitimate leader.](#)

Guaido, who said members of his own political team were confronted by armed men from Maduro's security forces early Wednesday, dismissed the latest claim as yet another attempt by the government to distract from Venezuela's real problems.

"Let it be clear to the regime that they will not intimidate us," Guaido said at a news conference, urging members of the police and military to stop taking orders from Maduro's regime.

VENEZUELAN CRIMINALS CURSE ECONOMIC CRISIS, COMPLAIN THAT BULLETS ARE UNAFFORDABLE, PEOPLE HAVE NO MONEY TO STEAL

Maduro, in a nationally televised address, said later the plotters were cowards backed by the United States.

"That's not called politics," Maduro said. "That's called fascism."



[Video](#)

Meanwhile, Rodriguez appeared to suggest the alleged coup has been brought down by informers within the group.

“We were in all the meetings to plan the coup,” he said. “We were in all the conferences.”

The government has claimed various plots have been averted over the years, generally offering little-to-no evidence to back its charges. The opposition contends Maduro uses such claims to justify his crackdown on dissent.

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Maduro came under attack in August 2018 by two drones loaded with explosives, which detonated near the president while he spoke at an outdoor military celebration. He was not harmed in the attack, which officials called an assassination attempt.

Rodriguez said the purported network wanted to steal a helicopter to liberate Raul Baduel, a former defense minister now in jail, and install him as president.

He also charged Colombian President Ivan Duque Marquez and Chilean President Sebastian Pinera backed the alleged thwarted coup plot, but he didn't provide evidence.

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Venezuela was thrust into a political tug-of-war earlier this year when Guaido, the leader of the opposition-led National Assembly, invoked the country's constitution and declared himself interim president.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.