

Venezuela: opposition leader Guaidó asks US military for ‘strategic planning’ help

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Formal request for a meeting is the closest the Guaidó camp has come to requesting US military intervention to help oust Maduro



Juan Guaidó at a rally in Caracas, Venezuela Saturday. Photograph: Fernando Llano/AP

The head of Venezuela’s national assembly, Juan Guaidó, has asked for a meeting with the [US military](#) for “strategic and operational planning” in the power struggle between the Guaidó camp and the government of Nicolás Maduro.

In a [letter](#) to the head of US Southern Command (SouthCom), Guaidó’s representative in Washington, Carlos Vecchio, pointed to worsening conditions in Venezuela as the standoff continues and “the impact of the presence of uninvited foreign forces that place our country and others at risk”.

Vecchio wrote: “We welcome strategic and operational planning so that we may fulfill our constitutional obligation to the Venezuelan people in order to alleviate their suffering and restore our democracy.”

The formal request for a meeting between SouthCom commander, Adm Craig Faller, and “appropriate members of the Guaidó administration” is the closest the Guaidó camp has come to requesting US military intervention to help oust Maduro, since a [30 April uprising failed](#) to draw significant backing from the country’s generals.

SouthCom’s headquarters in Florida did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the Vecchio letter. Faller said [in a tweet](#) last week that he was willing to meet the “legitimate” Venezuelan government to discuss “how we can support the future role of those [Venezuelan army] leaders who make the right decision, put the Venezuela people first and restore constitutional order”.

Guaidó told supporters at a rally in Caracas on Saturday that he would send Vecchio to meet SouthCom “to be able to establish a direct and far-reaching relationship in terms of cooperation”.

The national assembly is debating a possible return to a cold war agreement, Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, known as the Rio pact, which would provide a possible legal basis for intervention. [Venezuela](#) and other left-leaning Latin American states pulled out of the pact in 2012. The US and much of western Europe and Latin America recognise Guaidó as Venezuela’s head of state on the grounds that Maduro’s re-election last year was rigged. Maduro’s allies include Russia, Cuba and China.

“I think that the [Guaidó camp] are more willing to entertain the idea or at least to look at what the options might be. And it might not be an invasion. [It could be] send an aircraft carrier or send more naval assets or send more advisers and things to Colombia and Brazil,” said Adam Isacson, director for defence oversight at the Washington Office on Latin America.

“Just about everybody who supports a military option in Venezuela – which I don’t – their hope is that they can just rattle the sabers really loudly and really close to Venezuela, and that alone would cause enough division in the Venezuelan military that the military would pull away from Maduro.”

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