

# Pentagon Mulling New Venezuela Options to Deter Russia, China & Cuba - Report

On Monday, the Russian Foreign Ministry slammed US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's recent allegations related to Moscow's "intervention in Venezuela" as unacceptable. China, in turn, berated Pompeo for his claims that Beijing's friendship with Latin American countries is "pretended".

The US Department of Defence is considering new military options related to Venezuela to deter alleged Russian, Cuban and Chinese influence in the Latin American country, CNN cited an unnamed Pentagon official as saying.

The source said that the deterrence options are being developed by the Pentagon's Joint Staff and the Southern Command, which oversees "any US military involvement in the southern hemisphere".

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This comes after National Security Adviser John Bolton instructed acting Defence Secretary Patrick Shanahan last week to formulate ideas on how to deal with the Venezuela crisis.

Instead of major military action, the options could include US naval drills and more military interaction with neighbouring countries to prevent Moscow, Havana and Beijing from obtaining "unchallenged access to the region", according to the official.

The remarks follow the Russian Foreign Ministry's statement on Monday that during his recent tour of Latin American countries, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo "made a number of unacceptable statements about our country, particularly in the context of events in Venezuela".

"The undiplomatic manners of the current US foreign policy chief cast doubt on the fact that he sees Russian-American contacts at the relevant level as an opportunity for constructive dialogue", the ministry underscored.

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Speaking to Chilean broadcaster Mega TV last week, Pompeo specifically claimed that Russia “intervened” and “went against the leadership of the country of Venezuela”, also describing Russia as a “hostile power”.

Separately, he warned that “every single tool and every single option” for what he described as US efforts “to restore democracy” in Venezuela remains on the table.

Earlier this month, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez described Washington’s pledge to take certain actions against Cuba over Venezuela as blackmail.

He was responding to remarks made by US Vice President Mike Pence, who previously told the UN Security Council that Washington would soon announce new action against Cuba in response to what it calls Havana’s “malign influence” in Venezuela.

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Beijing, meanwhile, refuted claims that China sent military personnel to help Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. This came after Venezuelan authorities confirmed they received 65 tonnes of medicine from China in late March, with Caracas noting the “important and strategic level” of its partnership with Beijing.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang also stated that statements by Pompeo about Beijing’s allegedly “pretended” friendship with the countries of Latin America are “baseless slanders” and “deliberate provocation”.

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Also in March, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov responded to US President Donald Trump’s call to Moscow to get out of Venezuela by stating that Russian servicemen are stationed in Venezuela on a legal basis and they are helping to carry out maintenance of previously supplied Russian military equipment.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, for her part, said that the Russian military's presence in Venezuela was in accordance with the defence agreement between Moscow and Caracas, adding that the personnel would remain in Venezuela as long as the two sides deem their presence necessary.

The statement came after a group of Russian military personnel arrived in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas earlier last month to take part in consultations with the country's officials on defence industry cooperation.

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