

# **Venezuela President Maduro wanted by DOJ for drug trafficking, Barr announces**

The U.S. Department of Justice on Thursday unsealed a searing criminal indictment against Venezuelan socialist leader Nicolas Maduro and several “co-conspirators,” accusing them of an array of narcotics and trafficking-related crimes, including efforts to smuggle drugs into the United States.

At a press conference on Thursday morning, the Department of Justice officials announced a slew of charges pertaining to Maduro’s conspiracy to commit narco-terrorism – which carries a minimum of 50 years behind bars. The DOJ underscored that while he is currently in Venezuela, the 57-year-old is known to travel outside and is now offering a \$15 million reward for information that will lead to his capture.

The DOJ, emphasizing that the latest round of indictments are the result of many years of investigation, charged a number of high-ranking “co-conspirators” and offered \$10 million rewards for information leading to their capture.

## **CORONAVIRUS HITS DESPERATE VENEZUELA’S ALREADY BROKEN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

The department also accused the country’s Chief Justice of money laundering and bribery, which resulted in thousands of Venezuelans to lose their jobs and livelihoods, and Venezuela’s military head of further drug-trafficking violations.



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, center, and first lady Cilia Flores, wave to supporters as they leave the National Pantheon after attending a ceremony to commemorate an 1800's independence battle, in Caracas, Venezuela, Wednesday, Aug. 7, 2019. (AP)

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According to U.S. officials, Venezuela has long allowed Colombians connected with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known by its Spanish initials, "FARC," to utilize its airspace to fly cocaine north through Central America and into North America.

Moreover, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Geoffrey Berman claimed that the illicit cooperation between the Colombians and Venezuelans had been in place for over 20 years, and represented a deliberate endeavor by Maduro and his regime to "flood the United States with cocaine."

## **VENEZUELA, IRAN AND HEZBOLLAH - ALL HOSTILE TO THE US - FORGE CLOSER TIES**

The announcement of the charges followed months of pressure by President Trump's administration on Maduro's regime, which the United States considers illegitimate following an election not deemed satisfactory by many world powers.

While the United States and more than 100 other countries no longer recognize Maduro as the legitimate president of Venezuela - instead throwing their support

behind opposition figure Juan Guaidó - coupled with a laundry list of economic sanctions, Maduro has maintained his position at the helm in the capital Caracas, overseeing the socialist regime and commanding the security forces.

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The indictment of a functioning head of state is highly unusual and is bound to ratchet up tensions between Washington and Caracas. However, the U.S. has long accused Maduro and his government of human rights abuses, torture, corruption, and paving the way for cartels, terrorist groups and traffickers to exploit the oil-swathed nation, once the wealthiest in Latin America.

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