

# AFTER SEIZING MADURO, TRUMP SAYS U.S. WILL ‘RUN’ VENEZUELA



Venezuela’s largest military complex after explosions in Caracas early Saturday during a strike by U.S. Special Operations forces.



On Saturday morning, President Trump offered no details on how the U.S. would oversee Venezuela, or for how long.



Other U.S. strikes in Venezuela included one on an apartment building in Catia La Mar, leaving an 80-year-old woman dead.

## Inside Mission to Stalk Maduro, Learning His Routine and Room

This article is by **Julian E. Barnes, Tyler Pager and Eric Schmitt.**

WASHINGTON — In August, a clandestine team of C.I.A. officers slipped into Venezuela with a plan to collect information on Nicolás Maduro, the country’s president, whom the Trump administration had labeled a narco-terrorist. The C.I.A. team moved about Caracas, remaining undetected for months while it was in the country. The intelligence gath-

ered about the Venezuelan leader’s daily movements — combined with a human source close to Mr. Maduro and a fleet of stealth drones flying secretly above — enabled the agency to map out minute details about his routines. It was a highly dangerous mission. With the U.S. embassy closed, the C.I.A. officers could not operate under diplomatic cover. But it was highly successful. Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at a news conference that because of the in-

### Managing Surprise and Cutting Off Escape

telligence gathered by the team, the United States knew where Mr. Maduro moved, what he ate and even what pets he kept. That information was critical to the ensuing military operation — a predawn raid on Saturday by elite Army Delta Force commandos, the riskiest U.S. military op-

eration of its kind since members of the Navy’s SEAL Team 6 killed Osama bin Laden in a safe house in Pakistan in 2011. The result was a tactically precise, swiftly executed operation that extracted Mr. Maduro from his country with no loss of American life, a result heralded by President Trump amid larger questions about the legality and rationale for the U.S. actions. Mr. Trump has justified what was named Operation Absolute

## A Raid Caps Off a Monthslong Campaign Against a Leader

This article is by **Eric Schmitt, Tyler Pager, Anatoly Kurmanaev and Carol Rosenberg.**

WASHINGTON — The United States captured the Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro, in a swift and overwhelming military operation early Saturday morning and flew him to New York to face criminal charges. It was a stunning culmination of a monthslong campaign by President Trump and his aides to oust the authoritarian leader. Hours after the raid that captured Mr. Maduro and his wife, Mr. Trump said at a news conference that the United States would “run the country” until a proper transition of power could be arranged, raising the prospect of an open-ended commitment. He offered few details, however, and it was not clear whether he meant U.S. forces would occupy the country, although he said he was not afraid of “boots on the ground.”

It was not evident how much control the United States had over the country. There were no obvious signs of a U.S. military presence in Venezuela on Saturday, as Venezuelans began to assess the damage from the American airstrikes and the ground incursion that led to the capture of Mr. Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores.

Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at the news conference that U.S. warplanes had dismantled Venezuelan air defenses so that Special Operations forces could go into Caracas in helicopters to extract Mr. Maduro and Ms. Flores from a residence. Mr. Trump said that Caracas was in darkness, implying that the Americans had cut the power.

Mr. Maduro’s whereabouts in Venezuela had been monitored by a fleet of stealth drones as well as a C.I.A. source within the Venezuelan government, according to people briefed on the operation.

General Caine said that the helicopters had taken fire from Venezuelan forces, but that none were lost. The whole operation lasted about two hours and 20 minutes, he said.

Mr. Trump, who watched the operation by video from Mar-a-Lago, his Florida residence, said the Venezuelan military had been quickly overwhelmed. “They knew we were coming,” he said at the news conference. “Not a single American service member was killed,” he added, though two U.S. officials said later that about half a dozen soldiers were injured.

At least 40 people in Venezuela were killed in Saturday’s attack, including military personnel and civilians, according to a senior Venezuelan official who spoke on condition of anonymity to de-

scribe preliminary reports. Images emerging from the country showed damage to military facilities and to an apartment building outside Caracas.

After their capture, Mr. Maduro and Ms. Flores were taken by helicopter to the U.S.S. Iwo Jima, one of the American warships that have been prowling the Caribbean. Mr. Trump posted a photo on social media of Mr. Maduro aboard the Iwo Jima, blindfolded and handcuffed and wearing a gray sweatshirt and sweatpants.

Later on Saturday Mr. Maduro and Ms. Flores were flown by plane to Stewart International Airport north of New York City. More than two dozen federal law enforcement agents, some recording with their cellphones, surrounded Mr. Maduro as he was led onto the tarmac. He and his wife were on the way to jail to face drug and weapons charges in federal court in Manhattan, where Attorney General Pam Bondi said they would “soon face the full wrath of American justice.”

The remarkable seizure of a country’s leader by another country brought immediate comparison to other landmark moments in American military history, including the capture of Saddam Hussein of Iraq in 2003 and Manuel Noriega of Panama in 1990 and the killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011.

Mr. Maduro, a self-described socialist, had led Venezuela since 2013, and the Biden administration accused him last year of stealing the election that kept him in power.

Mr. Trump offered no details about how the United States would oversee Venezuela, or for how long. Asked who was running Venezuela, Mr. Trump said “a

Continued on Page 10



President Nicolás Maduro has led Venezuela since 2013.

**FALLOUT** Democrats in Congress plan to seek limits on the president’s war powers. PAGE 11

## For Some Nazi Loot, Value Is Beyond Historical

By **MILTON ESTEROW and MICHAELA TOWFIGHI**

Marie Hélène Sagaspe never met her father, Jean Iribarne. He died in 1945, two months after she was born and a year after he had been arrested for guiding Jews fleeing the Nazis across the French border into Spain. Iribarne lived in Camou-Cihigue, a small village of 100 people in France that was mainly home to

### Uniting Personal Items and Rightful Heirs

sheep farmers. When the Gestapo arrested him, Iribarne began a lethal journey that would take him from concentration camp to concentration camp. For most of her life, Sagaspe, 80, knew little about her father. Then

she got a call from a volunteer for the Arolsen Archives, a German organization dedicated to researching and returning items that were stolen from Holocaust victims. The volunteer had her father’s wallet. He wanted to return it. In March, in the local town hall of Camou-Cihigue, the director of the organization hand-delivered the leather pouch. Inside it was a

Continued on Page 12

## Tamed After Watergate, Presidency Is Unleashed

By **MATTHEW PURDY**

A power-hungry president had twisted the government into a tool for his personal political benefit. His aides kept an “enemies list” of opponents to be punished. His cronies ran the Justice Department and he made puppets of other agencies that were meant to be independent. Corporations that wanted favorable treatment from the White

### NEWS ANALYSIS

House were pressured to make illegal contributions to the president’s political coffers. As revelations of rot in the Nixon administration tumbled out through the 1970s, Senator Lawton Chiles, Democrat of Florida, captured the alarm of the Watergate era: “Nothing will bring the Republic to its knees so

quickly as a bone-deep mistrust of the government by its own people,” he said. “We have seen other democracies fall within our own lifetime. Fall through internal corruption rather than outside invasion.” The Watergate scandal had convulsed the nation. Coming near the end of the disastrous war in Vietnam, the scandal sent trust in the presidency into a

Continued on Page 16

<b>INTERNATIONAL 4-12</b> <b>New Ambassador to Greece</b> Kimberly Guilfoyle, the former fiancée of Donald Trump Jr. and the former wife of Gov. Gavin Newsom, has become the talk of Athens. PAGE 6	<b>ARTS &amp; LEISURE</b> <b>‘Secret Sauce’ for Video Hits</b> As Generation Alpha’s attention drifts from television and movies, video creators like Alan Chikin Chow are eager to fill the void on YouTube. PAGE 8	<b>SUNDAY STYLES</b> <b>In Love, Despite Her Past</b> A retired widower married a woman who shot at President Ford in 1975 and served over 30 years in a federal prison. It tore his family apart. PAGE 1	<b>SUNDAY BUSINESS</b> <b>Challenges for NPR Chief</b> Katherine Maher has taken an unyielding approach to her organization’s biggest battles, putting her at odds with some in public media. PAGE 1	<b>SUNDAY OPINION</b> <b>The Editorial Board</b> PAGE 6
---	---	--	---	---

Regent

SEVEN SEAS CRUISES

EXPERIENCE THE UNRIVALED

UPGRADE your HORIZON

FREE 2-CATEGORY SUITE UPGRADE\* and 50% REDUCED DEPOSITS ACROSS ALL DESTINATIONS

plus \$500 SHIPBOARD CREDIT ON 2026 VOYAGES

RESERVE BY FEBRUARY 28, 2026

CRUISE IN ALL-INCLUSIVE, UNRIVALED LUXURY™

CALL 1.855.509.5613 OR CONTACT YOUR TRAVEL ADVISOR

VISIT [RSSC.COM/UPGRADE-YOUR-HORIZON](https://rssc.com/upgrade-your-horizon)

\*For Terms and Conditions, visit [RSSC.com/legal](https://rssc.com/legal)