



US-Venezuela Crisis: A New Phase Begins. US Special Forces Board Venezuelan Tankers, Third Ship Intercepted.

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The crisis between the United States and Venezuela enters **a completely new and more aggressive phase**, marked by the shift from economic sanctions to **direct operations at sea**. According to [today's report by Reuters](#), Washington has intercepted **a third oil vessel** off the Venezuelan coast, deemed subject to international sanctions.

It is no longer just about diplomatic pressures or financial measures: **special units are boarding the tankers**, seizing them in international waters with methods typical of **high-risk military operations**.

This is the latest step in an escalation that, in its "first phase", [targeted vessels linked to drug traffickers](#), then escalated with [the entry of US F/A-18 fighters into Venezuelan territory](#). Now it

consolidates at sea with an interdiction campaign that **directly targets the economic heart of Caracas**: oil.

Strategy Shift: Military Boardings Entrusted to Special Forces

The breaking point is represented by the nature of the operations. The images released show **military helicopters, specialized units, and maritime interdiction procedures** that resemble more a counter-terrorism operation than an international police action.

The change of pace was confirmed by the US Secretary of Security, **Kristi Noem**, who publicly claimed the seizure of an oil tanker last docked in Venezuela. The operation, **conducted before dawn on December 20, 2025**, saw the **United States Coast Guard** act with the **direct support of the Department of Defense**.

But the most significant data is the **rapid progression** of interventions: after an initial action attributed to US forces **on December 10, 2025**, the seizure confirmed by Noem **on December 20, 2025** was followed, according to Reuters, by a new operation **on December 21, 2025**, when US officials reported the **interception of a third oil vessel** in waters near Venezuela. In other words: **not isolated incidents**, but an **accelerating campaign**, with a clear operational logic.

The political message was explicit: Venezuelan oil trafficking is considered by Washington **a threat to regional security**, accused of financing **criminal networks and drug trafficking**.

Today, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, and the United States Coast Guard, with support from the Department of War, executed a seizure warrant for a crude oil tanker used to transport sanctioned oil from Venezuela and Iran. For multiple... pic.twitter.com/dNr0oAGI5x

— Attorney General Pamela Bondi (@AGPamBondi) [December 10, 2025](#)

The De Facto Naval “Blockade”

These actions follow President **Donald Trump**'s announcement of a true **“blockade” of sanctioned tankers** entering and leaving Venezuela. Although not formally declared as such,

the device deployed has all the characteristics of a **selective maritime interdiction**.

The repetition of interventions, a few hours apart from each other, outlines a precise picture: not sporadic initiatives, but **rules of engagement and command chain already active**, with a direct message to companies, intermediaries, and third states: those attempting to move cargoes connected to Caracas risk being stopped. In other words, the pressure is no longer just economic: it is **maritime, visible, and coercive**.

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President Donald Trump recently announced a “blockade” of sanctioned tankers entering and leaving Venezuela: a measure not formally declared, but with characteristics of selective maritime interdiction, followed by repeated interceptions and a campaign aimed at targeting oil, the economic heart of the Venezuelan regime - Photo Free Copyright Creative Commons

Caracas: “Attempted Overthrow”

On the opposite side, Venezuelan President **Nicolás Maduro**, deemed illegitimate by the White House, interprets these operations as a hostile act aimed at **overthrowing the government** and taking control of the country's energy resources.

According to Caracas, the increase in US military presence in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific represents a **direct threat to national sovereignty**, a prelude to even more serious scenarios.

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Nicolás Maduro, President of Venezuela, and Diosdado Cabello, Minister of Interior, Justice and Peace, and a key figure of the regime. The two are at the center of the international controversy and a source of growing tensions with the United States - Photo: EFE

A Threshold Crossed

From a military and strategic point of view, the systematic boarding of tankers marks the **crossing of a critical threshold**. Maritime operations with special units indicate that the crisis is no longer confined to political rhetoric or sanctions, but has transformed into **operational confrontation on the ground**, or rather, at sea.

For the first time, the US-Venezuela crisis takes on the contours of a **hybrid conflict**, where economy, international law, and military force merge into a single strategy of pressure.

A new phase has begun. And, as often happens when special forces and clandestine operations come into play, **the risk of escalation is now higher than ever.**