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# **Informational Conflict: Crisis in Venezuela**

## **Scenario Document in support of the DARPA AIDA Program**

**Version 1.1**

**December 17, 2019**

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# Change Log

V1.0, September 18, 2019. First release

V1.1, December 17, 2019: Changes:

- Updates to section on “2014 Disease Outbreak in Venezuela (Topic T201)”:
  - New image for Figure 1.
  - Modifications to the Background section to make it clearer how the event unfolded and its connection to the presence of chikungunya in Venezuela in 2014.
  - More facet-level hypotheses for the points of informational conflict.
  - Additional English-language information sources (URLs).
- Updates to section on “Drone Explosions in Caracas (Topic T203)”:
  - Additional English-language information sources (URLs), specifically, sources that assert that no drones were involved.
- Minor changes:
  - Minor typos and formatting consistency corrections.
  - In “Purpose of this Document” section (this page), removed references to specific past dates of NIST evaluations.
  - Updated information for *La Razón* (page 14).

## About this Document

### Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to describe a scenario that is part of an open technology evaluation run by the National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST), as well as to support several of the research and development goals of the DARPA Active Interpretation of Disparate Alternatives (AIDA) program. In support of planned NIST evaluations, this scenario document is intended to provide a narrative description of the scenario, including the informational conflict that is inherently part of the selected scenario.

In the context of this document, a *scenario* is a real-world situation within a specific subject domain, a situation that is broad enough to encompass multiple events or components, as is the case with international conflicts or natural disasters. To make the scenario more manageable, it is broken down into one or more *topics* – with the exact number of topics dependent on the breadth of the scenario and also the elements of informational conflict that are part of the scenario. In the context of this scenario, a topic is a real-world event about which there are conflicting assertions in the open source data, to include text, audio, images, and video data.

For each scenario and its associated topics, participants will be provided with the following materials:

1. A scenario document (such as the one you’re reading now on the Crisis in Venezuela). Content includes the following:
  - A description of the scenario and topics, with relevant historical, political, and cultural context.

- Links to online text and video which participants can (a) review to gain a deeper understanding of the subject domain and/or (b) collect as additional data related to the scenario.
2. Annotated training data on topics in the scenario (as well as annotated data not related to the scenario), which will be provided by the Linguistic Data Consortium.

## Organization of this Document

This document is organized as follows:

- The initial section provides an introduction to the crisis in Venezuela, its historical background, and the resulting divergent narratives that prevail.
- The next section provides a brief introduction to the topics within the scenario. These topics are explored in greater detail in a later section of the document.
- The next section provides pointers to a variety of English, Spanish, and Russian language data sources available on the web relevant to the Venezuela crisis in general, but not specific to any topics.
- The remainder of the main document is divided in sections dedicated to each of the scenario topics. Within each of these sub-sections, competing perspectives for each topic are presented, as well as pointers to English, Spanish, and Russian language data sources on that topic.

## A Note about Data Sources

In order to best illustrate real-world informational conflict, this scenario document references many sources of data, including some that are considered untrustworthy by media analysts. Inclusion or citation of a data source in this scenario document in no way represents endorsement of that source, nor does it imply that the information cited is correct or reliable.

## General Overview of the Crisis in Venezuela

Since the death of Hugo Chávez, in 2013, Venezuela has faced severe socioeconomic and political difficulties. This crisis had been brewing since 2010 and directly affects the day-to-day lives of the Venezuelan population. Significant shortages of such basic supplies as food, personal hygiene items, and medicines have become widespread.<sup>1</sup> These difficulties persisted and deepened in the years following, as Nicolás Maduro became Venezuela's President after Chávez's death. The production of oil is one of the principal drivers of the Venezuelan economy, yet the price per barrel of the commodity began a precipitous drop at the end of 2014 and continued its steep decline into early 2016.<sup>2</sup> Among many explanations for this crisis is Venezuela's major dependence on oil for the production of income, as well as its heavy reliance on imported commodities from the US and neighboring countries. Moreover, the agricultural and industrial infrastructure in need of capital and development to sustain economic viability and growth of internal markets, and the inability to maintain social investments, have put

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<sup>1</sup> Venezuela: Dire living conditions worsening by the day, UN human rights experts warn, United Nations Human Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22646&LangID=E>

<sup>2</sup> Entenda a crise na Venezuela que provocou forte onda migratória ao Brasil, O Povo-online, <https://www.opovo.com.br/noticias/mundo/2018/03/entenda-a-crise-na-venezuela-que-provocou-onda-migratoria-ao-brasil.html>

Venezuela's economic, social and governmental systems under increasing strain. As food and basic human necessities have come into short supply, violence has increased and record homicide rates have been recorded.<sup>3</sup> The resulting decline in the quality of life and the rule of law and the increase in repression by the government have all contributed to social and economic instability and unrest.

The Venezuelan healthcare system has likewise fallen into disarray. Essential medical supplies are scarce; the Pharmaceutical Federation of Venezuela reports dramatic shortages of medicines, food, and basic supplies (such as gloves) in hospitals.

Government data shows infant mortality rose 30 percent in 2016 and malaria infections increased by 76 percent in that same year.<sup>4</sup> The government alleges the elite is hoarding medicines to promote civil unrest. The medical community accuses the government of withholding critical health information, keeping the medical practitioners from knowing about national trends and threats.<sup>5</sup>

Inflation, already high during Chávez's government, had reached the status of hyperinflation in 2016. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the annual inflation in August 2018 was 48.76%.<sup>6</sup> Venezuela's unemployment rate has spiked from 7.5 in 2013 to 34.3% in 2018, according to the International Monetary Fund. The threat of expropriation of private companies by the government also persists. Under Chavez, numerous private enterprises were expropriated, reaching a record high of 1,147 companies between 2007 and 2012.<sup>7</sup> The Venezuelan government claims to be a victim of an "economic war," attributing the shortages and hyperinflation to not only international action intended to destabilize the economy and affect the popularity of the incumbent government, but also to the deliberate use of speculation by pro-opposition actors in the economic sector as well as hoarding of imported goods.<sup>8</sup>

## Political Opponents

Politically, Venezuela is sharply divided. In recent years, economic recession has engendered political radicalization of both the government and the opposition. Violent confrontations between the two parties have been increasingly frequent. While the government seems to prioritize the maintenance of its power, the opposition seems to use the government's socioeconomic and political failures to gain strength. Paramilitary groups have been formed by the opposition to promote attacks against the

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<sup>3</sup> Venezuela, a Failing State, The New Yorker, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/14/venezuela-a-failing-state>

<sup>4</sup> Venezuela's Health Care System Ready To Collapse Amid Economic Crisis, NPR, <https://www.npr.org/2018/02/01/582469305/venezuelas-health-care-system-ready-to-collapse-amid-economic-crisis>

<sup>5</sup> Infant mortality and malaria soar in Venezuela, according to government data, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-health/infant-mortality-and-malaria-soar-in-venezuela-according-to-government-data-idUSKBN185260>

<sup>6</sup> Venezuela's Great Bolivar Scam, Nothing But A Face Lift, Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevehanke/2018/08/18/venezuelas-great-bolivar-scam-nothing-but-a-face-lift/#a72711a4c23e>

<sup>7</sup> The Root's of Venezuela's Failing State, Origins/OSU <http://origins.osu.edu/article/roots-venezuelas-failing-state>

<sup>8</sup> Venezuela's crisis explained from the beginning, Aljazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/04/venezuela-happening-170412114045595.html>

government.<sup>9</sup> In a similar fashion, the government has promoted the action of “colectivos” (in existence since 1970s), acting as “enforcers for the government”, working with the Armed Forces and the ruling-party United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), from whom it receives patronage.<sup>10</sup>

In Venezuela, the opposition to the Maduro regime and the Bolivarian Revolution is pursued by a coalition formed in 2008 under the umbrella of the Democratic Unity Roundtable (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática) — known under the acronym “MUD.” MUD is now made up of over 50 political parties, some national and some regional, with a variety of political platforms (ranging from right-centrist to left wing ideologies).

In 2015, MUD-affiliated candidates were elected to 112 of 167 seats in the National Assembly. In 2017, however, the National Assembly was largely stripped of its powers when the Constituent Assembly was elected with the mission of re-writing the Venezuelan Constitution. Since then, both the National Assembly and the Constituent Assembly have convened separately, with the National Assembly largely opposing the Maduro regime and the Constituent Assembly largely supporting the regime.

Although Venezuelan political parties and governmental organizations play a leading role, they alone do not comprise the sole components of the complex framework making up the opposition to the Bolivarian Revolution and the Maduro regime. The opposition to the Bolivarian Revolution is comprised of a complex cast of characters classified according to geography, organizational affiliation, activity types, and level of influence. Private media outlets, part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, certain university student organizations, some military officials and groups, employers’ organizations such as FEDECÁMARAS (at one point, part of Central of Workers of Venezuela [CTV]), and other civil organizations, such as SÚMATE, have all played roles in the opposition.

The “Resistance,” a self-proclaimed opposition group making its first appearance during the opposition protests of 2014, gained strength during the massive 2017 protests against the government for stripping the National Assembly of its power. The Resistance, comprised of different factions, of which the Venezuelan youth -- especially students -- make up great part, view themselves as the “escuderos” or “shields” for those who march to depose Maduro. With the internal divisions within the weakened MUD, unable to effectuate a change in regime, the Resistance took to the streets as a “shock” unit against the military and police action during the protests of 2017, their identities generally concealed by gas masks and scarves. The government calls them “terrorists,” and holds them responsible, for instance, for the armed attack of the military base Francisco Miranda, also known as “Carlota,” in June 2017, amongst other things. The majority of its members do not identify themselves with opposition leaders or any political affiliation; most claim to be united in the cause for regime change.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Colectivos de izquierda de Venezuela: ¿Criminales o revolucionarios?, Insight Crime, <https://es.insightcrime.org/noticias/analisis/colectivos-izquierda-venezuela-criminales-revolucionarios/>

<sup>10</sup> Armed Civilian Bands in Venezuela Prop Up Unpopular President, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/22/world/americas/armed-civilian-bands-in-venezuela-prop-up-unpopular-president.html>

<sup>11</sup> La rebelión de los encapuchados, [https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/07/26/actualidad/1501104066\\_003012.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/07/26/actualidad/1501104066_003012.html)

## Summary

Violence, political upheaval, widespread corruption, hyperinflation and lack of food and supplies, all directly affect the daily life of the Venezuelan population. Economic hardship, social unrest, and political repression all combine and reinforce each other to create an overall environment of instability in financial, governmental and basic social institutions.

## A Note About the Continued Unrest

Since the time that this scenario was originally developed in 2018, the situation in the country of Venezuela has continued to evolve and remains quite volatile to this day. International attention intensified on Venezuela in 2019 due to controversy surrounding competing claims to the presidency. On January 10, 2019, the National Assembly ruled that Maduro's 2018 election was invalid and declared Juan Guaidó (the leader of the National Assembly) to be interim President pending a new election. Maduro maintains his authority and called the effort to unseat him an attempted "coup d'état."<sup>12</sup> The United States, together with many European and Latin American countries, have recognized Guaidó as acting President, while Russia, China, Turkey and other nations have supported Maduro.<sup>13</sup> However, for the purposes of the DARPA AIDA scenario, no events beyond 2018 are currently within scope. The above summary is likewise restricted to Venezuela's situation prior to 2019.

## Topics Explored in this Scenario Document

Of the many topics related to the Venezuela crisis, a subset was selected to be the focus of practice and evaluation data. The following topics will be used to generate practice data.

| Dataset  | Topic                                         | ID   |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------|------|
| Practice | 2014 Disease Outbreak in Venezuela            | T201 |
| Practice | 2017 Venezuelan Constituent Assembly Election | T202 |
| Practice | Drone Explosions in Caracas                   | T203 |

For additional information on each topic, see the sections below under Specific Informational Conflict Topics.

## Data Sources Related to Venezuela

This section lists online content related to Venezuela. Articles and videos related to individual topics are contained in sub-sections under "Specific Informational Conflict Topics," later in this report. Participants should note that these data sources are being identified in this scenario document in order to enrich the reader's understanding of the scenario. These articles, videos, and images may or may not be present in the data distributed to program performers.

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<sup>12</sup> El Parlamento de Venezuela, liderado por la oposición, declara a Nicolás Maduro "usurpador" de la presidencia, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-46890362>

<sup>13</sup> Guaidó suma más apoyo internacional: Parlamento Europeo lo reconoció como presidente interino, <https://www.semana.com/mundo/articulo/guaido-suma-mas-apoyo-internacional-parlamento-europeo-lo-reconocio-como-presidente/599722>; Rusia y China, los aliados y acreedores de Maduro, <https://www.elpais.com.uy/informacion/rusia-china-aliados-acreedores-maduro.html>

In addition to the sources listed below, the reader is encouraged to explore the collection of links hosted by Venezuela Analysis (<https://venezuelanalysis.com/links>).

## Background Information

The World Factbook, CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ve.html>

## Wikipedia

Venezuela, Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venezuela> (English)  
<https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venezuela> (Spanish), [Венесуэла](#) (Russian)

Presidency of Nicolás Maduro, Wikipedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency\\_of\\_Nicol%C3%A1s\\_Maduro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency_of_Nicol%C3%A1s_Maduro) (English)  
[https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidencia\\_de\\_Nicol%C3%A1s\\_Maduro](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidencia_de_Nicol%C3%A1s_Maduro) (Spanish)

Crisis in Venezuela, Wikipedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis\\_in\\_Venezuela](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis_in_Venezuela) (English)  
[https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis\\_en\\_Venezuela](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis_en_Venezuela) (Spanish)  
[Политический кризис в Венесуэле](#) (Russian)

Government of Venezuela, Wikipedia.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government\\_of\\_Venezuela](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Venezuela) (English)  
[https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poder\\_P%C3%ABlico\\_Nacional\\_\(Venezuela\)](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poder_P%C3%ABlico_Nacional_(Venezuela)) (Spanish)

Politics of Venezuela, Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics\\_of\\_Venezuela](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Venezuela) (English)  
[https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pol%C3%ADtica\\_de\\_Venezuela](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pol%C3%ADtica_de_Venezuela) (Spanish)

Shortages in Venezuela, Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shortages\\_in\\_Venezuela](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shortages_in_Venezuela) (English)  
[https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escasez\\_en\\_Venezuela](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escasez_en_Venezuela) (Spanish)  
[Экономический кризис в Венесуэле](#) (Russian)

Media of Venezuela, Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media\\_of\\_Venezuela](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_of_Venezuela) (English)

## Timelines, Overviews, and Documentaries

The reader can consult the following timelines and overviews to become familiar with the domain.

Venezuela divided: a timeline of events, CHTN, July 23, 2017.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_bmo2XbnD8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_bmo2XbnD8)

The collapse of Venezuela, explained, VoX, August 25, 2017.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1gUR8wM5vA>

From riches to rags: Venezuela's economic crisis | The Big Picture, Al Jazeera English, February 14, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mL8d91vdR9g>

FULL DOCUMENTARY - Venezuela: State of Disaster, The Big Story, by Real Vision™, December 11, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qdO2pFoGgw>

How Venezuela Descended into Turmoil, CNBC, March 1, 2019.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytrS0SntUSQ>

## Anti-Govt / Anti-Chavista / Pro-Protesters

**Transparency International** – criticized by MediaRoots for being backed by enemies of Venezuela and socialism.

URL: <https://www.transparency.org/>

Has been criticized for bias and lack of transparency:

[https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Transparency\\_International](https://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Transparency_International)

**Caracas The Devil's Excrement in English** – Anti-Chavista blog that offers political commentaries.

URL: <http://devilsexcrement.com>

**Caracas TalCualDigital.com in Spanish** – Website of privately owned daily, highly critical of the Chavez administration; mocked Chavez in front-page editorials.

URL: <http://www.talcualdigital.com>

**Caracas El Nacional Online in Spanish** – Website of privately owned daily that was highly critical of the Chavez administration.

URL: <http://www.el-nacional.com>

**Caracas LaPatilla Online in Spanish** – News portal critical of the government created by former Globovision Director Alberto Ravell; as of June 2014, top news site and 12th overall in the country, according to Alexa.com.

URL: <http://www.lapatilla.com>

### **El Libertario**

Published by CRA (The Commission of Anarchist Relations) since 1995.

URL: <http://periodicoellibertario.blogspot.com/p/el-libertario.html>

### **El Nuevo País**

Second in daily circulation.

URL: <https://elnuevopais.net/>

**El Pitazo** – “Medio digital informativo con investigaciones periodísticas y noticias propias verificadas. Venciendo la censura en Venezuela” [“Digital media with journalistic research and own verified news. Overcoming censorship in Venezuela”-- Blocked three times by the government with no explanation: <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2018/08/13/the-government-blocks-el-pitazo-for-a-third-time/>]

URL: <https://elpitazo.com/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCehmligXGWQbJGQF12cK9UA>

### **NotiActual**

URL: <http://www.notiactual.com/>

### **Noticiero Digital**

Denied accusations of being employed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to destabilize the Chávez government in 2007.

URL: <http://www.noticierodigital.com/>

### **NTN24**

Colombia-owned digital tv, once with rights to terrestrial broadcast in Venezuela. Maduro revoked such rights as well as blocked its website, accusing NTN24 of fomenting violence against the government. The only way to access it in Venezuela is by visiting its YouTube channel.

URL: <http://www.ntn24.com/en-vivo/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/ntn24>

### **Venezuela Conspiracy Theories Monitor**

URL: <https://venezuelaconspiracytheories.blogspot.com/>

### **Venezuelan Politics and Human Rights (blog)**

URL: <https://venezuelablog.org/>

## **Venezuelan Opposition**

### **hashtags**

#VenezuelaUnidaNoSeRinde

#VenezuelaNoSeRinde

#SoldadosDeFanelas

#MNSF

### Anti-Maduro hackers:

#TeamHDP

#LaListaJustin

### **Anonymous Venezuela**

@AnonymousVene10

### **Resistencia Venezuela**

Movimiento Pacifista, Miembros de la Junta Patriótica Estudiantil y Popular 2014, Integrantes de La Resistencia Unida de Venezuela [Pacifist Movement, Members of the Student and Popular Patriotic Board 2014, Members of the United Resistance of Venezuela].

URL: <http://resistenciav58.com/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ResistenciaV58>

### **Unidad Venezuela**

About: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic\\_Unity\\_Roundtable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Unity_Roundtable)

URL: <http://www.unidadvenezuela.org/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/UnidadVenezuela>

Hashtag: #SeñalsinReservas

### **Voluntad Popular**

URL: <https://www.voluntadpopular.com/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/voluntadpopularvideo>

## **Venezuelan Resistance (youths)**

### **ForoLibertad**

URL: <http://www.forolibertad.com/>

"Venezuelan media of libertarian approach with the aim of influencing cultural and political changes. Project of @VFutura."

found through: <http://www.forolibertad.com/fake-news-in-venezuela/>

Websites: <http://www.forolibertad.com/> (SP), <http://www.forolibertad.com/?lang=en> (EN)

Twitter: @VFutura, @ForoLibertad

Displays "Rumbo Libertad" banner

### **Rumbo Libertad**

Movimiento Libertario de la Resistencia [Liberation Movement of the Resistance].

URL: <https://rumbolibertad.org/>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/Rumbo\\_Libertad](https://twitter.com/Rumbo_Libertad)

About: [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumbo\\_Libertad](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumbo_Libertad) ; <http://www.forolibertad.com/que-es-rumbo-libertad/>

YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvSUSs\\_jKtsOi5nx36K7eTw?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvSUSs_jKtsOi5nx36K7eTw?view_as=subscriber)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbplcfTOopl>

**Venezuela News and views** – "A blog about life under, and resisting, a dictatorship."

URL: <http://daniel-venezuela.blogspot.com/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/danielduquenal>

## **Multi-Perspectives / Balanced**

**Caracas Chronicles** – "Venezuelan politics in English. Keeping tabs on the Revolution since 2002."

URL: <http://www.caracaschronicles.com/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CaracasChron>

**Caracas UltimasNoticias.com.ve in Spanish** – Website of generally balanced daily with relatively objective news coverage.

URL: <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve>

### **Globovision2**

Globovisión is a 24-hour television news network in Venezuela and Latin America.

Purchased in 2013 by a business group with alleged Chavista ties headed by Juan Domingo Cordero; website ranks 33rd in Venezuela. Since its sale in 2013, Venezuela's Globovisión TV has backed off from its anti-Chavista tone and Globovisión's managerial staff stated that the editorial line would be changed and would be forced to move to the "centre".

URL: <http://globovision.com/> (Spanish)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfJtBtmhnlYfUB6RqXelmMw>

### **Analitica**

Venezuela Analitica is a bi-lingual monthly internet review published in Spanish language and English, devoted to the economic, social, and cultural concerns of Venezuela.

URL: <https://www.analitica.com/>

About: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venezuela\\_Analitica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venezuela_Analitica)

### **Dinero**

Magazine News Media

URL: <http://www.dinero.com.ve/din/>

### **Efecto Cocuyo (Firefly Effect)**

Website devoted to independent media; receives funding through public donations and has had the founders go to the streets in Venezuela asking for support; also uses crowdfunding. In 2017, the Americas Quarterly named its creator, Luz Mely Reyes, one of the top five Latin American journalists. AQ described the website as "the main digital, independent news site providing real time news to Venezuelans, who keeps reporting in the face of fear."<sup>14</sup>

About: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efecto\\_Cocuyo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efecto_Cocuyo)

URL: <http://www.efectococuyo.com/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL1TMK6T2MpnLUk9mpvMdKQ>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/efectococuyo>

### **El Diario de Caracas**

Social and political critical orientation.

Only in digital form.

URL: <https://diariodecaracas.com/>

### **La Razón**

Independent source of political and economic news, based in Caracas, Venezuela. Sunday circulation only, with a center-left orientation.

URL: <http://www.larazon.net>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LaRazon>

### **Noticias al Día y a la Hora**

URL: <https://www.noticiasaldiayalahora.co/nacionales/page/2/>

### **Reporte Confidencial**

URL: <http://reporteconfidencial.info/>

### **Union Radio**

Although it has tried to maintain an impartial editorial line, it has been criticized by Chávez and Maduro.

URL: <https://unionradio.net/>

### **Zeta**

Magazine News Media

URL: <http://revistazeta.net/>

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<sup>14</sup> "AQ Top 5 Latin American Journalists: Luz Mely Reyes," July 2017.

<https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/aq-top-5-latin-american-journalists-luz-mely-reyes>

## Pro-Government

**Caracas El Universal Online in Spanish** – Website of privately owned daily with alleged government ties; daily circulation of 85,000 copies.

URL: <http://www.eluniversal.com>

### MediaRoots

URL: <http://mediaroots.org/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/mediarootsnews>

From MediaRoots About page: “Media Roots is a citizen journalism project that reports the news from outside of party lines while providing a collaborative forum for conscious citizens, artists and activists to unite.”

### Ultimas Noticias

Center-left; friendly towards the government.

URL: <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/>

### Noticiero Venevision

News program, part of open television of Venezuela; since 2012, part of Alianza Informativa Latinoamericana [Latin American Information Alliance].

URL: <http://www.noticierovenevision.net/>

## Venezuelan Government

**Caracas National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Spanish** – Official website of the Venezuelan National Assembly.

URL: <http://www.asambleanacional.gov.ve>

**Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Comunicación e Información [The Ministry of Popular Power for Communication and Information]**

URL: <http://www.minci.gob.ve/>

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Venezuela**

URL: <http://www.mre.gov.ve/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/venezuelamfa>

**Vicepresidencia de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela** [Vice presidency of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela]

URL: <http://www.vicepresidencia.gob.ve/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrQidgOchKhJPfa5uwd2U1g>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ViceVenezuela>

**Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores** [The Ministry of the Popular Power for Interior, Justice and Peace]

URL: <http://www.mre.gov.ve/> OR <http://mppre.gob.ve/en/mfa-venezuela/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CancilleriaVE>

**Ministerio del Poder Popular de Economía y Finanzas** [The Ministry of the Popular Power for Economy and Finance]

URL: <http://www.mppef.gob.ve/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdZNvA0puiuf6UO4-C0lLOQ>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/minecofinanzas>

**Ministerio del Poder Popular de Petróleo** [The Ministry of Popular Power for Oil]

URL: <http://www.minpet.gob.ve/index.php/es-es/> (SP) [Available also via the website in English and Russian, but the URL is the same]

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/MPPEYP>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MinPetroleoVE>

**Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Defensa** [The Venezuelan Ministry of People's Power for Defense]

URL: <http://www.mindefensa.gob.ve/mindefensa/>

Radio (TIUNA FM 101.9): <http://www.tiunafm.com.ve/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPW82IMZFB1ERlhiDq6QVOg/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/prensaFANB>

## Venezuelan Government/State-run

### teleSUR

URL: <https://www.telesurtv.net/> (Spanish), <https://www.telesurtv.net/english>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/telesurenglish> , <https://twitter.com/teleSURtv>

about: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telesur\\_\(TV\\_channel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telesur_(TV_channel))

"publishes anti-imperialist pieces and videos"

Headquartered in Caracas; pan-Latin American outlet owned and funded by the governments of Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Bolivia

### VTV

Description: Venezolana de Television (VTV) is the government's leading network, broadcasting nationwide with 24-hour news, talk, and cultural programming.

URL: <http://vtv.gob.ve/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/MultimediaVTV>

### Vision Venezuela (ViVe)

URL: <http://www.vive.gob.ve/>

Twitter: [twitter.com/vive\\_television](https://twitter.com/vive_television)

"a cultural television network funded by the Venezuelan national government that was inaugurated on November 11, 2003 and whose objective consists of spreading information related to achievements made by Hugo Chávez's political process and the encouragement of Venezuela's culture." -Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ViVe> )

Has Internet video streaming.

**Caracas Correo del Orinoco Online in Spanish** – Website of government-owned newspaper launched in August 2009.

URL: <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve>

**Caracas AVN in Spanish** – Website of the official Venezuelan government news agency, Agencia Venezolana de Noticias.

URL: <http://www.avn.info.ve> (Spanish), <http://www.avn.info.ve/english> (English)

Twitter: @AVNVE <https://twitter.com/avnve> , @AVNEnglish <https://twitter.com/avnenglish>

**Caracas Radio Nacional de Venezuela Online in Spanish** – Official website of government-owned radio network, also known by acronym RNV .

URL: <http://www.rnv.gov.ve>

**Empire Files** [run/owned by teleSUR?]

URL: <http://theempirefiles.tv/>

e.g.,

Leftist Debunks John Oliver's Venezuela Episode, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fV-C1Ag5sl>

Abby Martin Meets the Venezuelan Opposition,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtu1DwHo1Zg>

**Asamblea Nacional Televisión (ANTV)**

Created in 2005 to cover the proceedings of Venezuela's National Assembly.

URL: <http://www.antv.gob.ve>

**Defensoría del Pueblo de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela [Ombudsman of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela]**

URL: <http://www.defensoria.gob.ve/>

**Diario VEA**

Daily, described as “the mouth piece of the Bolivarian Revolution”.

URL: <http://www.notiactual.com/tag/diario-vea/>

**Radio Mundial YVKE**

URL: <http://www.radiomundial.com.ve/>

**TVes**

Government says it aims to portray the identity of Venezuela; created to replace RCTV whose license to broadcast was revoked by the Venezuelan government.

URL: <http://www.tves.gob.ve/>

## Pro-Chavez / Pro-Bolivarian Revolution

**Venezuela Analysis** (English)

URL: <https://venezuelanalysis.com/rss/all>

They have PODCASTS.

**ABN** (Regime's news wire)

URL: <http://www.abn.info.ve/>

**Noticias 24** (once anti, now pro)

URL: <http://www.noticias24.com/>

**MinCI** (Propaganda Ministry)

URL: <http://www.mci.gob.ve/boletinesingles.asp>

**Aporrea** (Forum and news in Spanish)

URL: <http://www.aporrea.org/>

**RNV** (Regime's radio)

URL: <http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/index.php>

## Socialism

**World Socialist Web Site**

URL: <https://www.wsws.org/>

**Socialist Appeal** – “Socialist Appeal is a Marxist organisation which stands for the socialist transformation of society.”

URL: <http://www.socialist.net/>

[Has text, video, and audio posts]

**Socialist Worker UK**

URL: <https://socialistworker.org/>

**The Red Phoenix** – “All Power to Working People!”

URL: <https://theredphoenixapl.org/>

**MorningStar** – “For Peace and Socialism”

URL: <http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/>

**In Defense of Marxism**

URL: <https://www.marxist.com/venezuela/>

**La Radio del Sur**

Inaugurated in 2010 by President Chávez

URL: <https://laradiodelsur.com.ve/somos-radiosur/>

**Fuerzas Bolivarianas de Liberación (FBL)** [Bolivarian Forces of Liberation]

Communist guerrilla organization operating in Venezuela.

URL: <http://fuerzasbolivarianasdeliberacion.blogspot.com/>

About: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolivarian\\_Forces\\_of\\_Liberation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolivarian_Forces_of_Liberation)

**Alba Ciudad 96.3 FM** (radio)

URL: <http://albaciudad.org/>

**Ciudad CCS** – “Revolución a Diario”

Ciudad CCS is a newspaper published in Caracas, Venezuela. Owned by the Venezuelan Ministry of Popular Power for Communication and Information ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciudad\\_CCS](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ciudad_CCS)).

URL: <http://ciudadccs.info/>

**La Iguana TV** – “Portal de análisis e información sobre noticias y actualidad política en Venezuela y el mundo” [“Portal of analysis and information on news and political news in Venezuela and the world”].

URL: <http://www.laiguana.tv/>

YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCc2H9\\_eNnU7ucq2n7Sh3Rg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCc2H9_eNnU7ucq2n7Sh3Rg)

**El Abrelata** – “Noticias del acontecer nacional e internacional” [“News of national and international events”].

URL: <http://elabrelata.com/>

## Other Sources on Venezuela

### **CNN Venezuela Channel**

YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTCVxi1wLWwPad\\_I4Endg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTCVxi1wLWwPad_I4Endg)

### **Venezuela Daily Brief**

URL: <http://venezuelandailybrief.blogspot.com/>

“published in association with the DVA Group and the Selinger Group, the Venezuelan Daily Brief provides biweekly summaries of key news items affecting bulk commodities and the general business environment and Venezuela.”

### **Confirmado**

URL: <http://confirmado.com.ve/>

### **El Periodico Venezolano**

URL: <http://elperiodicovenezolano.com/>

### **El Mundo**

Daily evening newspaper; digital only.

URL: <http://www.elmundo.com.ve/> (redirects to <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve> )

### **Entorno Inteligente**

URL: <https://www.entornointeligente.com/>

### **Informe 21**

URL: <https://www.informe21.com/>

### **Noticias**

URL: <http://www.noticias.com.ve/>

### **Noticiero 52**

URL: <https://noticiero52.com/>

### **Planeta Noticias**

URL: <https://planetanoticias.com.ve/>

**Red Press**

URL: <http://www.redpres.com/>

**Súmate**

Volunteer civil association founded in 2002 by María Corina Machado and Alejandro Plaz; describes itself as a vote-monitoring group; it has also been described as an election-monitoring group.

URL: <http://www.sumate.org/>

**Venezuela on Twitter (Spanish)**

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/venezuela>

## Venezuelan Human Rights Organizations

**Foro Penal**

Non-profit NGO offering pro-bono legal assistance to those with limited economic resources who are detained arbitrarily, tortured, assaulted or murdered during protests.

URL: <https://foropenal.com/>

Twitter: @PorHumanidad

**Observatorio Venezolano de Conflictividad Social (OVCS)**

ONG founded in 2010 to promote human rights and study social conflict in Venezuela.

URL: <http://www.observatoriodeconflictos.org.ve/>

**PROVEA (Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos)**

ONG promoting and defending human rights in Venezuela.

URL: <https://www.derechos.org.ve/>

## Russian Perspectives

**RT in Spanish**

URLs: <https://actualidad.rt.com/> , [http://actualidad.rt.com/en\\_vivo](http://actualidad.rt.com/en_vivo)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ActualidadRT>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2mtXUpAYLYJIZ2deSPHlqw>

**Sputnik in Spanish**

URL: <https://mundo.sputniknews.com/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/sputnikmundovideo>

**Pravda International**

URL: <http://www.pravdainternacional.com/> (ES)

YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5f\\_aA\\_xX9KstT-cCKYANow/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5f_aA_xX9KstT-cCKYANow/)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/@pravdaInt/>

**Tiwy – “Russian website dedicated to Latin America, Russia and China”**

Run by Telecommunications Systems, LLC, located at Kadashevskaya Street in Moscow. Website contains news articles and videos, and discussion forums.

URLs: <https://www.tiwy.com/esp.phtml> & <https://www.tiwy.com/foro/esp.phtml> (SP),  
<https://www.tiwy.com/eng.phtml> & <https://www.tiwy.com/foro/eng.phtml> (EN) ,  
<https://www.tiwy.com/rus.phtml> & <https://www.tiwy.com/foro/rus.phtml> (RU) ;  
 See also: <https://www.tiwy.com/pais/venezuela/eng.phtml>  
 YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/tiwycom/videos>  
 Twitter: [https://twitter.com/tiwy\\_com](https://twitter.com/tiwy_com)  
 RSS: <https://www.tiwy.com/data/rss/eng.rss>

#### **Russian Embassy in Venezuela**

URLs: <http://rusia.embajada.gob.ve/>  
 YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOpfduXUoasC5rJ5EoxTDqg>  
 Twitter: <https://twitter.com/EmbavenezRusia>

**Vivavenezuela.** The official website of the Friendship Society of the Peoples of Russia with the People of Venezuela named after F. de Miranda.

URL: <http://vivavenezuela.ru/> [Not updated since 2016]

### **Twitter Accounts of Venezuelan leaders**

| Official                        | Affiliation | Twitter Handle  |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Nicolas Maduro                  | Government  | NicolasMaduro   |
| Diosdado Cabello                | Government  | dcabellor       |
| Tareck El Aissami               | Government  | TareckPSUV      |
| Hector Rodriguez C.             | Government  | HectoRodriguez  |
| Vladimir Padrino                | Government  | Vladimirpadrino |
| CiliaFlores                     | Government  | ConCiliaFlores  |
| Francisco Arias                 | Government  | PanchoArias2012 |
| Elías Jaua                      | Government  | JauaMiranda     |
| Henrique Capriles <sup>15</sup> | Opposition  | hcapriles       |
| Henry Ramos Allup               | Opposition  | hramosallup     |
| Maria Corina Machado            | Opposition  | MariaCorinaYa   |
| Leopoldo Lopez                  | Opposition  | leopoldolopez   |
| Julio Borges                    | Opposition  | JulioBorges     |
| Henri Falcon                    | Opposition  | HenriFalconLara |
| Jesus Torrealba                 | Opposition  | ChuoTorrealba   |

<sup>15</sup> <https://twitter.com/hcapriles> : “Henrique Capriles has frequently been mentioned as the main face of the opposition for more than a decade. And the government has sought to block him from making an impact as a result. In 2013, he was defeated by Maduro by only 224,000 votes. In April, he was banned from seeking election for 15 years. And in May, he had his passport confiscated when en route to the United Nations to report human rights violations.”

# Specific Informational Conflict Topics

## 2014 Disease Outbreak in Venezuela (Topic T201)

This topic concerns an outbreak of a severe unidentified illness that occurred in 2014 in Venezuela.



Figure 1. Conflicting Claims about Sudden Deaths<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Ángel Sarmiento announces an outbreak of an unidentified illness (left) and Governor of Aragua Tareck El Aissami denies the outbreak, saying that false photos on social media seek to terrorize Venezuelans (right)

### Background

In a radio interview on September 11, 2014, Dr. Ángel Sarmiento, President of the State Bar Association of Medical Doctors in Aragua, warned the public that eight people had died from an acute unidentified illness at Maracay Central Hospital in Venezuela. Symptoms were severe, including spots on the body that turned to boils and blisters, high fever, internal hemorrhaging, bleeding from the nose, mouth, and ears, and organ failure. All the patients died within 72 hours.

Government officials initially denied there was a problem. Tareck El Aissami, then-Governor of Aragua state, said each of the victims had died of different causes, none of which involved hemorrhaging.<sup>17</sup>

He also denounced Dr. Sarmiento, pointing out that he was a member of Accion Democratica (Democratic Action) party and thus it was “no surprise” he was perpetrating a “terrorist campaign” and “psychological warfare” against the public.<sup>18</sup> In addition to targeting the doctor, President Maduro authorized El Aissami to launch investigations and legal action against reporters who had written about the outbreak. Even foreign media (in particular, the U.S.) were threatened with legal reprisals. President

<sup>16</sup> Source: [https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/09/140915\\_venezuela\\_enfermedad\\_maracay\\_dp](https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2014/09/140915_venezuela_enfermedad_maracay_dp)

<sup>17</sup> Venezuelan Governor Denies Existence of Fast-Acting Deadly Virus.  
<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2351964&CategoryId=10717>

<sup>18</sup> Possible Ebola In VZ Kills 8 In 72 Hrs - Hospital Quarantined, September 13, 2014.  
<http://rense.com/general96/possebola.html>

Maduro echoed El Aissami's denials about an outbreak, yet undermined this claim by also requesting an investigation into whether the Opposition had introduced a virus as a form of biological warfare.<sup>19</sup>

Widespread public speculation and rumors about the cause of the deaths led to numerous conflicting claims, including Ebola, which was frequently in the news and already causing world-wide concern.

Sarmiento had originally said that the fatal illness was not caused by Ebola, meningitis, dengue, or chikungunya (CHIKV<sup>20</sup>), a mosquito-borne virus that was already known to be present in Venezuela.<sup>21</sup> However, by September 17 the head of the infectious diseases department at the Hospital Universitario de Caracas, Maria Eugenia Landaeta, reported, "What we're thinking, based on the symptoms, is that it could be an instance of complicated cases of chikungunya."<sup>22</sup> Finally, around September 22 a definitive diagnosis emerged of chikungunya.<sup>23</sup> Two more people had died in the meantime.

Even before it was revealed that these sudden deaths had been due to chikungunya, chikungunya had been a topic of dispute. For example:

In July, Francisco Armada, former health minister, criticized a series of reports in national papers on suspected gaps in the health system that indicated weaknesses in dealing with the Chikungunya virus and the supply of anti-retroviral drugs in Venezuela.<sup>24</sup>

Debate also centered around how extensive the rate of infection from chikungunya had been in 2014. The Venezuelan government was accused of underreporting the number of cases.

### Informational Conflict

The points of informational conflict surrounding this disease outbreak are as follows:

- Whether there really is an outbreak vs. it's a "terrorist campaign" / "psychological war" perpetrated by Dr. Sarmiento and foreign media<sup>25</sup> in an attempt to alarm the public, possibly for political motivation in an attempt to discredit the Maduro government.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Venezuela's Maduro denounces "psychological war" waged by opposition: President vows to go after anyone who spreads information about mysterious virus or bacteria, September 19, 2014.

[https://elpais.com/elpais/2014/09/19/inenglish/1411136258\\_789165.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2014/09/19/inenglish/1411136258_789165.html)

<sup>20</sup> aka "CHIK", "Chik-v", "chick v virus"

<sup>21</sup> This conflicts with prior reports, in which it had been reported that Dr. Sarmiento concluded the deaths were not caused by chikungunya: <https://www.latinpost.com/articles/21499/20140915/venezuela-virus-2014-mysterious-disease-reportedly-infects-aragua-area-governor.htm>

<sup>22</sup> September 17: Chikungunya, September 17, 2014. <https://in-venezuela.com/2014/09/17/september-17-chikungunya/>

<sup>23</sup> In Venezuela, doctor flees after being accused of terrorism amid fever outbreak, September 23, 2014. <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2014/09/venezuela-doctor-flees-after-being-accused-terrorism-amid-fever-outbreak>

<sup>24</sup> Reporting on possible Ebola outbreak in Venezuela treated as campaign against the state, September 16, 2014. [https://www.ifex.org/venezuela/2014/09/16/reportaje\\_ebola/](https://www.ifex.org/venezuela/2014/09/16/reportaje_ebola/)

<sup>25</sup> Maduro named specific media outlets, incorrectly conflating the two: "The *Miami Herald*, or el *Nuevo Herald*, is a newspaper in Miami that is the repository of all the lies against Venezuela," Maduro said. "They're poisoning a large number of Venezuelans who live in Florida. They're poisoning them and filling them with hate and craziness." <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/venezuela/article2159127.html>

<sup>26</sup> Reporting on possible Ebola outbreak in Venezuela treated as campaign against the state, September 16, 2014. [https://www.ifex.org/venezuela/2014/09/16/reportaje\\_ebola/](https://www.ifex.org/venezuela/2014/09/16/reportaje_ebola/)

- Cause of death
  - Rumor-mill hypotheses included the diseases chikungunya, Ebola, dengue, meningococemia, and variants of less specific terms such as “hemorrhagic fever”
  - The patients actually died from specific medical conditions caused by the disease. These include the following:
    - hemorrhaging
    - disseminated intravascular coagulation
    - organ failure / multiorgan failure
    - liver failure
    - kidney failure
  - The government claimed that the victims had died of unrelated causes; in particular:
    - poisoning
    - hypovolemic shock
    - cancer
    - skin infections
    - leukemia
    - diabetes
    - and not febrile hemorrhages
- Number of deaths in the September outbreak (8, 9, 10 – depending on the date; two more died after the initial report of eight)
- Number of cases of Chikungunya in 2014 overall as of September 2014 (hypotheses include: 398, 634, 798, more than 34,000, at least 65,000, between 65,000 and 117,000, between 65,000 and 120,000)
- Where the disease came from, though this narrative is a minor one:
  - An English-speaking video accuses a “developed country” of attacking Venezuela with a virus. Commenters on the video mock the accusation.<sup>27</sup>
  - A statement from President Nicolás Maduro on September 18, 2014 appears to allude to a “bacteriological war” initiated by the opposition. It's not clear whether this is referring to the aforementioned “psychological warfare” allegedly aimed at frightening the populace, or whether he’s referring to a literal bio-attack<sup>28</sup>, though *El Pais* reported that Maduro “asked the World Health Organization to help investigate alleged attempts to introduce “some sort of virus” into the country as part of “biological warfare.”<sup>29</sup> This narrative was not pursued.

## Hashtags

#Chikungunya

<sup>27</sup> Ebola in Venezuela, September 21, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfUPJZOH9-4>

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Maduro: “La derecha pretendía iniciar guerra bacteriológica” [Maduro: “The right tried to start bacteriological war”], September 18, 2014. <https://elcomercio.pe/mundo/latinoamerica/maduro-derecha-pretendia-iniciar-guerra-bacteriologica-365267>

<sup>29</sup> Venezuela’s Maduro denounces “psychological war” waged by opposition President vows to go after anyone who spreads information about mysterious virus or bacteria, September 19, 2014. [https://elpais.com/elpais/2014/09/19/inenglish/1411136258\\_789165.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2014/09/19/inenglish/1411136258_789165.html)

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Перечень инфекционных болезней и стран, в которых отмечено эпидемиологическое неблагополучие по болезням, в отношении которых необходимо осуществлять санитарно-карантинный контроль в пунктах пропуска через государственную границу РФ за 2018 г [List of infectious diseases and countries in which epidemiological distress due to diseases is noted, in respect of which sanitary and quarantine control should be carried out at checkpoints across the state border of the Russian Federation for 2018], Date Unknown.  
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## 2017 Venezuelan Constituent Assembly Election (Topic T202)

The focus of this topic is an election that was held in Venezuela on July 30, 2017 to select members of a Constituent National Assembly, whose role was to draft a new constitution for Venezuela.



Figure 2. A protester holds up a sign saying “Constituent without consultation is fraud” <sup>30</sup>

### Background

The Constituent Assembly election in July occurred in the larger context of the 2017 Venezuelan constitutional crisis. Earlier, on March 29, 2017, the Venezuelan Supreme Court, known as the Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ), issued a ruling which annulled the legislative powers of congress, known as the National Assembly, and shifted such powers to the court. The ruling was considered by the opposition to be a “coup,” and there was widespread international condemnation. On April 1, 2017, the TSJ reversed its decision, thus reinstating the powers of the National Assembly. However, the general crisis in Venezuela persisted, with the protests that had begun in January escalating further throughout April.

On May 1, President Nicolás Maduro called for a constituent assembly to rewrite the existing constitution, which was established in 1999 when his predecessor, President Hugo Chávez, was in office. The 1999 Constituent National Assembly had been convened by a public referendum, whereas the 2017 election was convened by the presidential decree of President Maduro. Maduro stated that his call for a new constitution was necessary to counter the actions of the opposition and promote “reconciliation and peace.” The opposition parties in Venezuela and some members of the international community viewed this maneuver as an attempt by Maduro to gain even greater control over all branches of the

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<sup>30</sup> Source: AFP image, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-40804551>

government, and that he did not have the legal right to convene the assembly.<sup>31</sup> Over 40 countries and some supranational organizations such as the EU and the Organization of American States did not recognize the new assembly.<sup>32</sup>

There was a counter referendum held by the Opposition on July 16.<sup>33</sup> It is relevant to the topic primarily for two reasons: one, the results of this referendum are cited when contesting the results of the official government election; and two, it is a potential source of event co-reference confusion.

### Informational Conflict

The primary informational conflict observed in the reporting on the Constituent Assembly Election centers around three items:

- Validity of the election, with accusations of illegality and forced participation
- Voter turnout percentages and counts, with accusations of manipulated results
- Deaths
  - During the election: number killed overall
  - In the weeks leading up to the election: number killed overall, and for individual deaths, who killed them and how they were killed

As mentioned above, prior to the election there were disagreements about the legality of Maduro's convening of the assembly. During the election, there were also accusations from both sides of improper influence on the voters. There was also evidence that there were organized attempts on the part of the opposition to physically prevent people from reaching the polls, using a combination of barricades, attacks on the polling stations, and destruction of polling materials.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, witnesses reported that their participation was coerced by the government, under threats of losing their jobs and government benefits.<sup>35</sup> Finally, after the election, there were claims that the government had tampered with the results. On August 2, the company that had provided the election technology announced that the voter turnout figures had been manipulated by at least a million votes.<sup>36</sup> The government had claimed that over 8 million citizens had voted, or 41.53%. Internal electoral council

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<sup>31</sup> Venezuela's embattled socialist president calls for citizens congress, new constitution, May 1, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/05/01/maduro-citizens-congress/101175468/>; 8 important keys to understanding Venezuela's controversial election, July 29, 2017.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/07/29/8-important-keys-to-understanding-venezuelas-controversial-election/?noredirect=on>

<sup>32</sup> 40 countries protest Venezuela's new assembly amid fraud accusations, August 2, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/02/venezuela-voting-fraud-corruption-allegations-protests>

<sup>33</sup> Update: Five Fast Numbers on Venezuela's July 16 Referendum, July 17, 2017.

<https://www.as-coa.org/articles/update-five-fast-numbers-venezuelas-july-16-referendum>

<sup>34</sup> Maduro Vows to Fight Foes, July 29, 2017. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-07-29/venezuela-crisis-enters-new-phase-with-sunday-vote>

<sup>35</sup> Guayana: Your Vote or Your Job, July 30, 2017. <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2017/07/30/guayana-your-vote-or-your-job/>

<sup>36</sup> Turnout figures for controversial Venezuela vote were 'tampered with', says ballot firm, August 2, 2017. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/venezuela-vote-turnout-figures-tampered-with-ballot-firm-smartmatic-nicolas-maduro-powers-a7873956.html>

data reviewed by Reuters indicated that only 3.7 million people had voted by 5:30 PM on July 30.<sup>37</sup> Some members of the opposition said that no more than 2.1 million voters participated.<sup>38</sup> Maduro's administration denied all accusations of tampering.<sup>39</sup>

Against this backdrop of controversy were violence and deaths. Under threat of imprisonment, the government banned protests for the duration of the election; however, demonstrations and other acts of protest persisted, and there were numerous deaths associated with these disturbances. Accounts differ as to how many people ultimately died in these events, with the tallies changing rapidly on the day of the election, leading to a high level of informational conflict at any given time. But even the final tallies differ. A 2018 report issued by the Organization of American States listed 14 murders related to the election violence that occurred on July 30.<sup>40</sup> However, we identified at least three additional election-related deaths that occurred that day, bringing the total to 17. Other numbers reported in the data range from 9 to 17. Their names are listed below.

### **Known Deaths on July 30, 2017, Related to the Election**

- Daniela De Jesús Salomón Manchado (aka Daniela de Jesus Salomon Macho)
- Ender Rafael Peña Sepúlveda (aka Gilbert Peña)
- Juan Gómez
- Luis Beltrán Zambrano Lucena
- Julio Manrique
- Albert Rosales
- Adrián Smith Rodríguez Sánchez
- Wilmer Smith Flores Carrascal (aka Wilmer Smith Flores)
- Luis Eduardo Ortiz (aka Luiz Ortiz)
- Ángelo Yordano Méndez Sánchez
- Eduardo Olave
- Ricardo Campos
- Marcel Pereira
- Iraldo Gutiérrez
- Ronald Ramirez Rosales
- Adrian Romero
- Anthoni Labrador

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<sup>37</sup> Exclusive: Venezuelan vote data casts doubt on turnout at Sunday poll, August 2, 2017.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-vote-exclusive/exclusive-venezuelan-vote-data-casts-doubt-on-turnout-at-sunday-poll-idUSKBN1AIOAL>

<sup>38</sup> We Witnessed Chaos During Venezuela's "Sham" Elections (HBO), VICE News, August 1, 2017.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r9ukUFelHQ>

<sup>39</sup> Venezuela Officials Deny Controversial Election Results 'Manipulated', August 3, 2017.

<https://www.voanews.com/a/venezuela-denies-misreporting-voter-turnout-by-controversial-election/3970491.html>

<sup>40</sup> Report of the general Secretariat of the Organization of American States and the panel of independent international experts possible commission of crimes against humanity in Venezuela, May 29, 2018, pg. 68.

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Informe-Panel-Independiente-Venezuela-EN.pdf>

There were also deaths associated with the unrest that occurred in the weeks leading up to the election. In addition to differing reports on the number of deaths related to the unrest, sometimes details about the deaths vary, including where somebody died and who killed them. For the latter, the typical contrast is between one side who identifies a specific “who” and “what” (e.g., colectivos with firearms or security personnel with firearms) versus the pro-government side who claims that it is uncertain who was responsible and/or how the person died.<sup>41</sup>

On the day of the election, there was also a case of a young man being reported killed, and then a correction on social media was posted saying that he had survived.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, the man died due to his injuries. Adding to the confusion about this individual was the variety of ways his name was written. He appears in the OAS report and elsewhere as Ender Rafael Peña Sepúlveda, or the expected short form, Ender Peña, but elsewhere as Gilbert Peña. A careful examination of the facts and images of the man indicates that it is the same person being referenced in all these sources.

Another name confusion is present with Xiomara Soledad Scott, aka Xiomara Escot, who was reported shot by colectivos on motorcycles during the counter-referendum on July 16. Her age is also variously reported as 60, 61, or 62 years.

### **Sub-Event: Government ID Cards are Hacked and as a Result, Maduro’s Nationality is Questioned Again**

On the day of the election CBS News reported the following:<sup>43</sup>

In an unusual moment this morning when Maduro cast his own ballot on state-controlled national television, his national ID card was to be scanned. He intended to make a statement that his vote was counted and said: “We are going to verify my national ID card so that the record shows that I came to vote and my ID card will show this for posterity, that I voted on this historic day of the constituent assembly of July 30th.”

When the female official of the National Electoral Council (CNE) proceeds to use a smartphone to scan Maduro’s card, a second camera zooms in to reveal that according to CNE’s own system, that “person does not exist, or the card has been revoked.” After scanning Maduro’s national ID card, the smartphone read: “person does not exist, or the card has been revoked.”

Maduro appears livid but doesn’t acknowledge the mishap, pauses for a second and then grabs his wife’s ID card for scanning.

Social media was abuzz with the mishap, which fanned the flames of speculation about the place of birth of the socialist president, whose mother is rumored to be a Colombian national. Following an opposition-mandated special commission investigation into the matter, the socialist-majority Supreme Court issued a ruling last October that stated that Maduro had been born in Caracas in 1962, but did not produce a birth certificate.

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<sup>41</sup> In Detail: The Deaths So Far, July 11, 2017. <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13081>

<sup>42</sup> <https://twitter.com/SergioVergaraG/status/891791760371978240> : “Doy Gracias a Dios por haberme equivocado. Gilbert fue atendido por médicos voluntarios y estabilizado. Dios con él.”

<sup>43</sup> Death toll rises amid deadly protests over controversial vote in Venezuela, July 30, 2017. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/venezuela-democracy-vote-protests-death-toll-caracas-nicolas-maduro/>

Some opposition leaders continue to sustain that they have proof that Maduro was born a Colombian national, which would make him constitutionally ineligible to occupy the presidency.

Maduro's highly vocal critic and former president of Colombia ridiculed Maduro in a tweet that reads: "My fellow countryman, didn't they let you vote?"

Paisano ¿ No te dejaron votar? <https://t.co/ouVWI4eMtS>

— Andrés Pastrana A (@AndresPastrana\_) July 30, 2017

Other media outlets covered the scanning failure:

When Venezuela President Maduro went to vote, computer said 'this person does not exist' The message, displayed on the screen of a poll worker's cell phone, was captured by TV cameras and soon went viral online, July 31, 2017. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/when-venezuela-president-maduro-went-to-vote-computer-said-this-person-does-not-exist/story-ibgWS02ZA69XU2TUamR8UK.html>

<https://twitter.com/afp/status/891836237983604736>

AFP tweet: " "This person does not exist or the ID was canceled" - voting computer rejects ID card of Venezuela President Maduro <http://u.afp.com/424h>"

With low turnout, Venezuela's election will create what opponents call 'puppet congress', July 31, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/defying-international-calls-venezuela-holds-contentious-election/2017/07/30/be3cd614-7089-11e7-8c17-533c52b2f014\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/defying-international-calls-venezuela-holds-contentious-election/2017/07/30/be3cd614-7089-11e7-8c17-533c52b2f014_story.html)

"La persona no existe o el carné fue anulado" Nicolas Maduro, July 30, 2017. [VIDEO]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnnSXFjzCus>

<https://twitter.com/lafm/status/891684718403604480>

"Cuando Maduro fue a votar en su carnet le salió: "la persona no existe o el carné fue anulado" July 30, 2017.

Despite the claim in the CBS News article that "social media was abuzz with the mishap, which fanned the flames of speculation about the place of birth of the socialist president," we could find very little such speculation in English-language or Spanish-language social media about Maduro's nationality on the day of the election or shortly thereafter. We did find the following:

Anti-Maduro Birthers Now A Thing In Venezuela, July 31, 2017. [VIDEO]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLNefoxLPZA>

<https://twitter.com/colominaM/status/891434213794349056>

"Y q tal si ahora q Santos y Maduro están peleados le pedimos a Santos que nos dé la partida de nacimiento d Maduro?" July 29, 2017.

Prior to the election, the opposition had challenged Maduro's nationality while also citing the constitutional requirement that anyone serving as president must be a citizen of Venezuela, and not holding dual citizenship. The controversy stems from his mother being Colombian. An overview can be found here:

English: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicol%C3%A1s\\_Maduro#Birthplace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicol%C3%A1s_Maduro#Birthplace)

Spanish: [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicol%C3%A1s\\_Maduro#Lugar\\_de\\_nacimiento](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicol%C3%A1s_Maduro#Lugar_de_nacimiento)

As it turns out, a Venezuelan hacker took credit for the card's scan failure. Caracas Chronicles reported:<sup>44</sup>

Today's sham election began with none other than early riser Nicolás Maduro, casting his ballot amid little fanfare, ostensibly to avoid another egg-throwing debacle. Social media lit up after State TV showed his carnet de la patria being rejected by a smartphone (an illegal Carnet de la Patria identification station was added outside some voting centers in an effort to intimidate voters). In a serendipitous bit of poetic justice the device read that the "person doesn't exist" or the "id was annulled." Venezuelan hacker YoSoyJustin\_ claimed responsibility for the snafu.

Other sources reported that @YoSoyJustin was working with another hacker that went by the twitter handle @HDPYO:

CON ESTE MENSAJE advirtieron a Maduro lo que pasaría con el carnet de la Patria [WITH THIS MESSAGE they warned Maduro what would happen with the ID card of the Fatherland], July 30, 2017. <http://www.vanguardia24.com/con-este-mensaje-advirtieron-a-maduro-lo-que-pasaria-con-el-carnet-de-la-patria-video/>

The accounts of @YoSoyJustin\_ and @HDPYO have since been suspended. The actions of YoSoyJustin had been in the news prior to the election:

Venezuelan hacker @YoSoyJustin brings down regime ID website, leaks info on high ranking officials, May 5, 2017. <https://twitter.com/invenezuelablog/status/860708418469986304>

## Hashtags

### Constituent Assembly Election

#30Jul  
#ConstituyenteFracasoEvidente  
#MaduroDICTADOR  
#CentrosVacíos / #CentrosVacios  
#HablaLaUnidad  
#Catia  
#VzlaREPUDIAFraudeConstituyente  
#VenezuelaVotaHoy

### Opposition counter-referendum:

#16Julio  
#HoyElPuebloDecide

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2017/07/30/30j-roundup-bullets-over-ballots/>

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Venezuela's embattled socialist president calls for citizens congress, new constitution, May 1, 2017.

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Venezuela: What You Need to Know About Elections for the Constituent Assembly, May 25, 2017.

<https://www.telesurenglish.net/analysis/Venezuela-What-You-Need-to-Know-About-Elections-for-the-Constituent-Assembly--20170525-0017.html>

Government Forces Murder 4 More Protesters In Venezuela, Bringing Death Toll To 80, TeleSUR English, July 2, 2017. <https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2017-07-02/government-forces-murder-4-more-protesters-venezuela-bringing-death-toll-80>

Update: A Tale of Two Venezuelan Votes in July, July 13, 2017. <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/update-tale-two-venezuelan-votes-july>

Message from the OAS Secretary General on Venezuela, "My message to the People of #Venezuela this #16J, day of plebiscite @OAS\_official", July 14, 2017. [8:20 VIDEO, over 100 applies, Spanish language with English subtitles]

[https://twitter.com/Almagro\\_OEA2015/status/885984703811137537](https://twitter.com/Almagro_OEA2015/status/885984703811137537)

Opposition leader highlights video of police brutally beating lone man in Venezuela: Opposition leader María Corina Machado tweeted the video out to her 3.7 million followers, July 15, 2017. [TEXT, VIDEO] <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/venezuela-police-brutality-footage-united-nations-mar-a-corina-machado-a7842586.html>

from this tweet: <https://twitter.com/MariaCorinaYA/status/885966412296138752>  
(Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado)

At Least One Killed, Three Injured by Gunfire During Voting in Venezuela, July 16, 2017.

<https://sputniknews.com/latam/201707161055596044-deaths-injuries-gunshots-venezuela-vote/>

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Venezuela: woman shot dead as thousands vote in unofficial referendum, July 17, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/17/venezuela-protests-death-thousands-vote-unofficial-referendum>

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## Drone Explosions in Caracas (Topic T203)

This topic is about an incident that occurred in Caracas, Venezuela, in which two airborne drones exploded near the location that president Nicolás Maduro was giving a speech.



Figure 3. Screenshots from Video of the Two Drones<sup>45</sup>

### Background

On August 4, 2018, President Nicolás Maduro was hosting a ceremony in honor of the National Guard in Caracas. While Maduro was giving a speech, hundreds of soldiers were standing in formation along the road “Avenida Bolívar.” It was being broadcast live on Venezuelan state television. About an hour into the speech, the camera jiggles, and Maduro, his wife, and others ranked behind him flinch and look up. The state television coverage breaks away to an anonymous soldier, but another camera, from Ruptly TV, continues to roll on Maduro. In this footage, an explosion is audible, then men rush to surround Maduro and protect him with shielding.

Initially, no one knew exactly what happened. Rumors and fear spread rapidly on social media, and there was no official word as to whether Maduro had survived. Maduro was, in fact, uninjured, and details of the incident emerged. Authorities and most observers ultimately agreed that two DJI-M600 drones had exploded near where President Maduro was giving his speech. The first one exploded less than a block down the street from where the president was standing, in his line of sight. The second explosion occurred 14 seconds later, two blocks away. Videos taken by spectators showed drones in the air. Although Maduro was unharmed, the Venezuelan government claimed seven soldiers were injured.

<sup>45</sup> Source: How the Drone Attack on Maduro Unfolded in Venezuela | NYT - Visual Investigations English, August 12, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpFNCqCwVzo>

## Informational Conflict

Informational conflict can be found for the following facets of this event.

Nature of the incident: There's the question as to whether this was in fact an assassination attempt, which impacts how the event is described in the news and social media. The Maduro government called it an assassination attempt and a "terrorist attack." Others pointed to the surprising speed at which people were arrested and speculated that it was staged by the Maduro administration itself, to provide an excuse for cracking down on members of the opposition. The leading opposition group in Venezuela, Frente Amplio Venezuela Libre ("Venezuelan Liberation Front"), said it was unclear if the incident was "an attack, a fortuitous accident, or any of the other stories being shared on social media".<sup>46</sup>

Who was responsible for the incident:

Several theories as to who was responsible for the attack have been advanced.

- Maduro's first reaction was to accuse the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, claiming he had colluded with ultra-right groups in Venezuela.
- Others claimed that the attack was a hoax, staged by the Venezuelan government in order to justify crackdowns against opposition and dissent. This is also the theory put forth by opposition leader Juan Guaidó: "I think this was something internal, done by the government. It ends up making them look like victims."<sup>47</sup>
- The Venezuelan government made multiple arrests of suspects and others who were accused of being planners, financiers, etc.<sup>48</sup> Among the accused were opposition leaders Julio Borges and Juan Requesens and former Venezuelan security official Juan Carlos Monasterios Vanegas.<sup>49</sup> Communications Minister Jorge Rodríguez released what the government claimed was a videotaped confession from jailed opposition member Juan Requesens, even though he never mentions the drone attack or admits to any role in the attack.<sup>50</sup>
- One source proclaimed: "We don't know if this is an attack from Russia, or the United States, or any other country".<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> "El Movimiento Nacional Soldados de Fanelas se adjudica atentado contra Maduro" [The Shirt Soldiers movement claim attack on Maduro], August 5, 2019. <https://laopinion.com/2018/08/05/venezuela-lo-que-se-sabe-del-atentado-en-contra-del-presidente-de-nicolas-maduro-y-del-grupo-que-se-lo-atribuyo/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/14/americas/venezuela-drone-maduro-intl/index.html>

<sup>48</sup> Inside the Coup Plotting Before the Venezuela Drone Assassination Attempt, August 17, 2018.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-17/two-coup-plotting-groups-met-weeks-before-venezuela-drone-attack> See also the Wikipedia article on this incident [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caracas\\_drone\\_attack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caracas_drone_attack)

<sup>49</sup> Maduro Claims Opposition Leaders Are Linked to Drone Assassination Attempt, August 8, 2018.

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/maduro-claims-opposition-leaders-are-linked-to-drone-assassination-attempt>

<sup>50</sup> Arrests in Venezuela point to military elements in attempted drone attack on Maduro, August 12, 2018.

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/aug/12/nicolas-maduro-assassination-attempt-puts-venezuel/>

<sup>51</sup> Breaking! Venezuelan President Survives Drone Attack - Full Video Sweet Trends TV, August 4, 2018.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeQvfO\\_FqfE8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeQvfO_FqfE8)

Claims of responsibility (though some point out that the messages are actually vague as to extent of involvement):

- Soldados de Franelas (“Soldiers in T-shirts”): On Twitter, the rebel movement Soldados de Franelas (associated with groups that contest the regime like Anonymous Venezuela, the Resistance Venezuela, and the National Equilibrium for Venezuela) claimed responsibility for the alleged attack. In its posting, the group stated that “[t]he operation was to have two drones loaded with C-4 explosives fly overhead toward the presidential podium. Special Honor Guard snipers knocked down the drones before they reached the target. We have shown that they are vulnerable, not achieved today but it is a matter of time”. Later, the group, in a communication sent to Journalist Patricia Poleo’s YouTube channel, named the attack “Operación Fénix” (“Operation Phoenix”).



Figure 4. Tweet from Soldados de Frenaelas, Claiming Responsibility for the Attack

- Wikipedia reports that Salvatore Lucchese at first seemed to claim to have some involvement, but then later walked that back: “Salvatore Lucchese, a former Chief of Police of San Diego Municipality, Carabobo and former member of the Popular Will opposition party, claimed in an interview with Reuters in Bogotá that he largely organized the events...The day after, Lucchese tweeted that he “didn’t do anything” and was “one more soldier fighting for freedom””
- Peruvian-American journalist Jaime Bayly claimed that he had known about the attack during the week before and he supported it.<sup>52</sup>
- Unnamed civilian group: The aforementioned Bloomberg article reported that a group made up mostly of civilians approached the military dissidents in Colombia, “and wanted to assassinate Maduro and suggested joining forces. They showed videos of armed drones shipped from Miami and being tested on a Colombian farm.” According to the article, the military dissidents did not

<sup>52</sup> With Sentence Included. <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2018/08/08/with-sentence-included/>

join forces with them, and the implication is that the civilians went ahead with the attack on their own.

- The Resistance<sup>53</sup>
- In March 2019, CNN reported an anonymous source who claimed to be the organizer of the attack, one of a group of a Venezuelan army defectors.<sup>54</sup> He provided videos of them performing practice flights in Colombia, but said that the government of Colombia had not been involved in the attack. According to the anonymous source, he met with "U.S. officials" several times after the attack. CNN reporting that military defectors were involved echoes an earlier August 2018 report from Bloomberg, which stated "Venezuelan military dissidents were holed up in neighboring Colombia plotting to overthrow the government of President Nicolas Maduro" in a plan called "Operation Constitution."
- The United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Commenters on the CNN video on YouTube express doubt about the reporting and alleged connections between CNN and the U.S. government. In essence, the claim seems to be that CNN is merely a mouthpiece for CIA, and it is not a coincidence that they happen to have access to the organizer of the plot. In reply, these people are labelled as conspiracy theorists by other commenters. CNN reported that "US officials briefed on the intelligence tell CNN they believe it was a genuine attack gone wrong."

Number injured: 6, 7, 8 soldiers (reports varied over time)

How many drones: 0 (drones not involved) vs. 2 vs. 3 drones

What caused the drones to fail/crash: radio frequency inhibitors caused the drones to lose their signal; cell phone signal blockers caused the explosive payloads to detonate; snipers (shot down by police) – though plastic explosives cannot be detonated with bullets, as pointed out by Venezuelan Vice Admiral Mario Carratu<sup>55</sup> ; one fell on its own and hit an apartment building ; operators lost control of the device in flight and then soldiers shot it down

Cause of explosion drone closest to Maduro: plastic explosives<sup>56</sup> vs. gunpowder and lead<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See Arrests in Venezuela point to military elements in attempted drone attack on Maduro, August 12, 2018 . <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/aug/12/nicolas-maduro-assassination-attempt-puts-venezuel/> and Exjefe de policía se adjudica papel en ataque con dron en Venezuela [Former police chief claims role in drone attack in Venezuela], August 7, 2018. <https://lta.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idLTAKBN1KS2F0-OUSLD> .

<sup>54</sup> Inside the August plot to kill Maduro with drones, March 14, 2019.

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/14/americas/venezuela-drone-maduro-intl/> and Inside the drone attack that nearly killed a world leader, CNN, March 14, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPgbKRgYwpc>

<sup>55</sup> Venezuelan Expert: Maduro Vulnerable to New Attacks, August 10, 2018.

<https://www.voanews.com/americas/venezuelan-expert-maduro-vulnerable-new-attacks>

<sup>56</sup> Venezuela drone attack: Here's what happened with Nicolas Maduro, August 7, 2018.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/08/06/venezuela-drone-attack-nicolas-maduro-assassination-attempt-what-happened/913096002/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.caracaschronicles.com/2018/08/08/with-sentence-included/>

Cause of explosions and fire near Building Don Eduardo, located at the Este 12 Av. (Santa Rosalía sector):  
drone with explosives (C4); not C4; gas cylinder (propane tank) exploding

Where the drone was detonated from: U.S. vs nearby buildings/somewhere nearby

Who the drones belong to: military vs. various other perpetrators

“Rocío San Miguel, a military expert and the head of Control Ciudadano, an investigative website focused on security, said that at least one drone belonged to the military, who lost control of the device inflight. Soldiers then shot it down. The nearby building explosion was coincidental, he said.”<sup>58</sup>

Troop movement:

Video footage showed the National Guard troops scattering and fleeing the scene; however, Minister of Communication, Jorge Rodríguez, stated that the troops maintained their ranks in the parade.”<sup>59</sup>

## Wikipedia Articles

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[Покушение на Николаса Мадуро](#), Wikipedia.

## Groups & People

### Soldados de Fanelas (“Soldiers in T-shirts”)

@soldadoDfranela

<https://twitter.com/soldadodfranela>

tweet some say is claiming responsibility:

<https://twitter.com/soldadoDfranela/status/1025883640755093510>

#SoldadosDeFanelas #MNSF

<http://soldadosdefranela.com/>

Note: Bellingcat (<https://www.bellingcat.com/news/americas/2018/08/07/drones-attack-maduro-caracas/>) says

“However, it is not clear from any of the group’s messages that they are unequivocally claiming responsibility for the event. The group’s tweets, along with a written message shared on social media by a Venezuelan journalist, are written in the passive voice, and allude to the event from a distance, rather than clearly claim its authorship. The group’s claim that the drones were shot down by snipers does not appear to be supported by the open source information available.”

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<sup>58</sup> Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro survives apparent assassination attempt, August 4, 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/04/nicolas-maduros-speech-cut-short-while-soldiers-scatter>

<sup>59</sup> Dos explosiones y una ‘cosa voladora’: testimonios del presunto ataque contra Nicolás Maduro.

<https://www.nytimes.com/es/2018/08/05/ataque-maduro-venezuela-drones/>

## Julio Borges (accused in incident)

His response: “Borges tweeted a statement from Bogotá telling Maduro that he was “not fooling anybody”, calling the supposed attack a “farce” that Maduro “staged to justify the persecution of opponents”. - Wikipedia

The tweet: <https://twitter.com/julioborges/status/1027027737972752384>  
<https://twitter.com/julioborges>

## English-Language Articles and Multimedia

### *The Incident Itself and Immediately after the Incident*

Venezuela’s Nicolás Maduro survives apparent assassination attempt, August 4, 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/04/nicolas-maduros-speech-cut-short-while-soldiers-scatter>

Venezuela’s President Maduro survives drone ‘attack’, Al Jazeera, August 4, 2018. [VIDEO]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J71BT0stT3k> [shows Soldados de Franelas tweet claiming responsibility]

VIDEOS show Maduro’s speech cut midway by explosion, panic ensues, August 4, 2018.

<https://www.rt.com/news/435134-venezuela-maduro-assisination-video/>

Venezuela President Maduro survives ‘drone assassination attempt’, August 5, 2018.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-45073385>

Foreign powers, or hoax: who’s behind Venezuela ‘drone attack’?, August 5, 2018.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/05/foreign-powers-rebels-or-a-hoax-whos-behind-venezuela-drone-attack>

Venezuela ‘drone attack’: Soldiers seen running - BBC News. August 5, 2018. [VIDEO]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdSnWnCiAo08>

Maduro TV Address Interrupted by Drone Assassination Attempt (VIDEO), August 5, 2018.

<https://sputniknews.com/latam/201808051066959713-venezuela-maduro-tv-adress-tribunes/>  
[contains links to tweets]

2 Blasts, a Stampede and a ‘Flying Thing’: Witnesses Tell of Attack on Maduro, August 5, 2018.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/05/world/americas/venezuela-drone-attack-nicolas-maduro.html>

Venezuela’s Maduro Targeted In Assassination Attempt Using Explosive Drones, August 5, 2018.

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