

Mike Pompeo pitches Halliburton for US-run Venezuela

The Grayzone's Max Blumenthal and Aaron Mate on the former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's deeply revealing plan for Venezuela after regime change. ||| The Grayzone ||| Find more reporting at <https://thegrayzone.com> Support our original journalism at Patreon: <https://patreon.com/grayzone> Facebook: <https://facebook.com/thegrayzone> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/thegrayzonenews> Instagram: <https://instagram.com/thegrayzonenews> Minds: <https://minds.com/thegrayzone> Mastodon: <https://mastodon.social/@thegrayzone> #TheGrayzone

#Max

So, yeah, this is the plan. I mean, the plan is very out in the open. This is what the neocons and the gusano industrial complex want to do to Venezuela, as expressed by Mike Pompeo, former CIA director and secretary of state. He spells it out right here pretty clearly.

#US

But there are many things we can do to support them. Most importantly, we can help rebuild what's been a disastrous set of policies for their economy that's destroyed their capacity to thrive — their oil sector. So American companies can come in and sell their products. Schlumberger, Halliburton, Chevron — all our big energy companies can go down to Venezuela, build out an economic capitalist model that will restore Venezuela to what it was. Brian, you and I remember, it was a great economy for so long, and this knucklehead has destroyed it. Right?

#Max

So, Halliburton.

#Aaron

I mean, it's unbelievable. Okay, so his argument is that Venezuela destroyed its own economy, but the sanctions he imposed target Venezuela's economy and its main source of revenue. That's what Francisco Rodriguez, the Venezuelan economist you mentioned, has shown in his work. If you look at the graphs he puts out, the moment the U.S. imposes these crippling sanctions under Trump, that's when Venezuelan oil exports crater — as they were designed to do. So, on the one hand, you design sanctions that destroy an economy, and then you go blame Venezuela for destroying its own

economy. And you continue to impose those sanctions that make economic growth impossible, or at least very, very difficult. And let me ask you — he says there that we all remember a time when Venezuela's economy was great, it was doing wonderful. I mean, what's the reality there?

#Max

Well, the reality is that before Hugo Chávez came in, Venezuela had a 70% poverty rate — sorry, 70% poverty and 40% extreme poverty.

#Aaron

The “good old days,” according to Mike Pompeo.

#Max

Almost 50% of the population was denied the ability to vote through complex ID schemes. They were in the dark. Entire sections of Caracas weren't even on maps. The population lived in absolute misery. And in 1989, Carlos Andrés Pérez was president — known as CAP — basically the president of Venezuela at the time. This is the democracy they want to go back to. They had this agreement in a city called Punto Fijo, in which two parties mimicked European-style or German parties. One was Acción Democrática, the Social Democratic Party modeled after the SPD in Germany. The other was COPEI, the Christian Democratic, center-right party modeled after the CDU in Germany. They would just exchange power every few years in procedural elections.

And no one from the outside who was populist or nationalist, who wanted to talk about nationalizing resources in a more comprehensive way, was allowed in. So in 1989, there were basically bread riots — riots against an austerity package, *El Paquete*, imposed by the IMF under Carlos Andrés Pérez, who had pledged to improve social conditions and was actually responsible for the first nationalization of the oil sector in 1976. Which is interesting, because Trump says that Chávez and Maduro stole the U.S.'s oil, but it was actually a U.S.-aligned president who first nationalized it. It gets more complicated from there. The point is, the population just rioted — they were sick of IMF austerity. The military came in, mowed people down; scores were killed in the streets, and mass graves were dug to bury the bodies and conceal the evidence.

It was one of the most painful moments in Venezuelan history. Three years later, Hugo Chávez led a very popular coup with fellow military officers to try to topple this neoliberal regime — the Punto Fijo regime, essentially imposed by the IMF and the U.S. People supported what Chávez did, but he failed, was jailed, and came to power later. So that's what they want to go back to. And they want to bring in Halliburton — I mean, Mike Pompeo openly says it. What did Halliburton do during the Iraq War? Wyatt Reid has a good post about this on his Substack podcast, which everyone should subscribe to. He points out — and I mean, we all lived through this, Aaron. You lived through it; you were at *Democracy Now!* at the time.

They were talking about it constantly — a \$7 billion no-bid deal in 2003, in which Dick Cheney owned millions in stock because he was the former CEO of Halliburton. Then a million Iraqis were killed in the invasion. Thousands of Americans came back with no limbs or no lives. And then the Pentagon audited Halliburton and found that it had ripped off U.S. taxpayers for \$1.4 billion. So that's what they want to do in Venezuela. And María Corina Machado, the sort of face and voice of the regime-change policy in Venezuela, has pledged to sell off \$1.3 trillion in Venezuelan assets to the highest bidder — basically Trump cronies. I mean, they're just being so obvious about it, and it's not very popular.

#Aaron

And meanwhile, you have thousands of U.S. troops deployed on these ships surrounding Venezuela. Trump recently bragged that Venezuela is surrounded and nothing can go in or out. Is he really just going to send all these troops there and do nothing with them—just have them linger, spend their holidays away from their families, basically engaging in piracy, stealing Venezuelan assets? That's the part I worry about. He's such a, you know, self-styled tough guy that he's just going to send all these forces there and do nothing with them—just have them steal. That's like the best-case scenario at this point: that he just has them stealing Venezuela's oil and not engaging in military strikes. But to have them there and do nothing is just going to keep some pressure on him to make some kind of decision and possibly escalate.

#Max

Well, he's threatened Denmark as well. He's threatened Canada. It's very clear that there's a deeper crisis at play — that the system of global capitalism isn't growing, and the Western empire needs to plunder more resources in order to expand. So they've set their sights on the Western Hemisphere particularly, but it also has to do with competing with China, which controls the bulk of rare earth minerals and has the production capacity to overtake the U.S. So there's a sense of desperation here. I don't think Trump has the mental acumen to know what the endgame is or what the ultimate strategy is. It costs a lot to deploy this much of a naval force. Deploying the USS *Gerald Ford* was, I think, Marco Rubio's idea — to trap Trump into a sense of, um, kind of pressuring him by saying, "Look, ten of U.S. naval assets are there. Let's do a forward deployment of special ops forces," which they did this week. Let's just keep deploying and deploying until Trump has to decide that he either does something or he loses face and looks weak in the face of Maduro. Because it's not clear Trump wants to do this, and there are all kinds of negotiations taking place — which I'll talk about in a second.